

# A WARRIOR UNDEFEATABLE

C 6031-6040

## A Warrior Undefeatable

Momentum flipped in a heartbeat. The duel that had begun as a test was now a rout.

After a whirlwind hundred rounds, Venerable Glacier found himself cornered, guard high, breath shallow.

The Ice Crystal Longsword dulled under spreading grey veins, chains snapping in midair. Three deep wounds carved across his torso refused to close.

Jared spared a thread of mind to keep the microcosm whole; that leash kept the fight alive, barely.

"Impossible! Impossible!" The venerable's shout cracked, half plea, half denial.

A wild tremor ran through him, and the chill that once ruled the hall now tasted of panic.

Jared caught the flicker of that question in the man's eyes: how could a seventh-tier elder be forced back by a ninth-ranked wanderer?

"Frostbound Seal!" The shout rang like cracking ice.

Blue flames licked from his pores as he burned blood and soul, stacking every shred of power into the spell.

His form blurred into a lance of radiant blue, intent on ramming straight through Jared and freezing the world around him.

Jared let a quiet laugh slip. "A firefly pretending to rival the moon?"

He dismissed the Chaotic Longsword, palms meeting before his chest. As they drifted apart, darkness sliced the air between them.

A newborn chaotic fissure yawned, thin as a hair yet carrying the hush of endings.

"Return to the Void!" Jared's shout cracked through the clotted haze of his pocket world.

The hairline chaotic fissure between his palms ripped open.

It ballooned into a starving black maw and lunged to gulp down the ice-blue sealing beam streaking toward him.

Not a hiss, not a spark.

The collision landed in perfect silence, like two ghosts brushing past one another inside a dream.

The ice-blue sealing beam, packed with Venerable Glacier's last fury, kissed the darkness and unraveled.

Color melted first, then shape-flakes of drained light drawn inward without a trace.

A cool rush answered Jared, threading through muscle and marrow before sinking into his core.

The swirls of gray mist around him thickened, the small world pulsing, stronger than a breath ago.

A wet crack echoed.

Jared glimpsed golden droplets arcing from Venerable Glacier's lips as the elder doubled over.

Backlash slammed into Venerable Glacier like a falling mountain.

His aura shrank to a thin, shuddering shell while another mouthful of pale gold blood splattered across the shifting air.

Jared stepped once.

Space bent, and he reappeared in front of the crippled venerable, iron fingers clamping around the man's throat and lifting him off the ground.

His free hand pressed to the crown of the man's skull.

A flood of chaotic force poured inside, snuffing every thread of divine power and locking the soul in a gray vise.

"Urgh... hrrk..." A broken rattle leaked past the crushed airway.

Venerable Glacier's limbs twitched uselessly.

His wide eyes found Jared's, terror blooming like frost across a windowpane.

Jared's gaze stayed flat, colder than the oldest ice.

"Now I ask, you answer. One lie, and I'll show you a pain a thousand times worse than soul-refining."

A shiver ran through the captive.

Gray motes skimmed the edge of his soul, each pass nibbling at existence and promising oblivion.

"You... who are you, really?" Venerable Glacier rasped, voice thin as cracked ice.

"Who I am doesn't matter."

"Then tell me this-why did the celestials execute Sidney and Cadence and forge their souls into crystals?"

"Was it only because they uncovered secrets and tried to resist?"

Venerable Glacier's gaze darted, but the tightening gray vise left no refuge.

"Yes... and not entirely. They were digging into where soul crystals ultimately go. That alone breaks taboos!"

"More than that," he gasped, eyes rolling. "Their bodies carried a trace of Primal Origin Breath. The Grand Venerable decreed that any such stain must be erased."

"Primal Origin Breath?" The words tasted sharp on Jared's tongue.

Jared's pupils tightened. The revelation slammed against half-formed suspicions swirling in his mind.

"Keep talking. You harvest mountains of soul crystals-why? What are they truly for?" His grip on the man's crown hardened.

Terror stretched the venerable's face thin.

"Soul crystals are keys... and sacrifices. They keep the Heaven-Ascending Path open, a tribute for those above."

"Above? What sits above us? And what exactly is this Heaven-Ascending Path?" The questions hammered outward before he could rein them in.

"I... I can't speak it. The moment I do, my essence will shatter. Even my true spirit would be-" He shook, soul-light flickering.

Raw panic rippled off him. The restraints hidden inside his soul stirred, like chains ready to tear him apart from the inside.

Jared eased the pressure a hair, calculating.

One wrong word, and the man would vanish before he learned anything useful.

"Fine. Other question. Outside you five, what celestial bases hide in the eastern region?"

"What is your true aim in level thirteen? Where is the Grand Venerable?"

"Outposts... scattered across five lands," he wheezed.

"The core sits on the Central Heaven-Origin Sacred Continent. The purpose... harvesting. The Grand Venerable, he..." The words tangled, his soul-light stuttering.

Cracks of golden lightning skittered across his essence.

The hidden gears had noticed the breach and was tightening the noose.

Jared's voice dropped to a deadly calm.

"One last thing—the A11-73 Soul Crystal from the Morse couple. Besides being a key or tribute, can it still awaken or preserve any shred of their spirits?"

"Once a soul crystal is forged, it's pure fuel."

"Their remnants are long gone—unless Primal Origin could reverse it, but that's forbidden... impossible..." His reply frayed into whispers.

A blinding gold rune flared deep inside his eyes. It detonated without warning.

He had been waiting for it.

Jared released the throat and threw up a shell of chaotic force between them.

Golden brilliance washed over the world, not to scorch but to cleanse. Everything it kissed began to disintegrate, edges smoothing into nothing.

Venerable Glacier's body and tattered soul melted like frost under sun.

When the light faded, only a wisp of pure ice-aligned power and a handful of ownerless treasures drifted in the air.

Jared flicked his wrist, scattering the lingering glow.

His expression stayed storm-dark.

Venerable Glacier was gone—body, soul, even echo. The fail-safe had erased him

utterly.

Fragments of answers whirled in Jared's mind, jagged and incomplete, yet every shard felt explosive.

Primal Origin Breath. Heaven-Ascending Path. Those above. Harvesting. The Grand Venerable. Each term pounded like a war drum inside his skull.

The Morse couple had drawn

attention by touching Primal Origin Breath their remnants inside the

soul crystal were likely erased Unless Primal Origin Force could reverse the damage.

A cold new path opened before Jared.

The last of the golden haze drifted away. Jared's throat felt raw, yet a single word

broke free, softer than a whisper.

"Primal Origin..."

Heat rolled beneath his skin. Streams of chaotic force coursed along his veins, pressing against bone and muscle until every heartbeat thudded like a hammer.

He steadied his breath. Each inhale drew that wild power higher, swirling up his spine, edging toward his crown, eager, almost jubilant.

The thought stirred before he could stop it. The lines he had carved into memory from the Chaotic Scripture flared, one after another, matching the rhythm inside him. Was this throbbing surge nothing less than Primal Origin Force wearing a different name? If so, what had he really been shaping within himself all this time? Phrases dangled in the silence the way broken chains swing in a storm: Heaven- Ascending Path, the ones above, the harvest.

He saw again the celestials' cold halls sprawled across level thirteen, their vaults heaped with soul crystals that pulsed like trapped hearts.

The picture knit itself together, ugly and relentless. Every shard of stoten life fed a tunnel that clawed upward, or worse, fined an altar meant for something higher. fo

The realization crawled under his

ribs. The war wasn't only for territory it was

a long, grinding, sacrifice, and the victims never even knew the name of the thing they were nourishing.

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"Central Heaven-Origin Sacred Continent... Grand Venerable..."

The half-spoken phrase drifted into the air, soft yet weighted, as though the speaker feared the very syllables might crack open a wider secret.

Jared's gaze sharpened. Cold focus gathered behind his eyes, like a blade sliding free of its sheath, ready to cut through whatever lay ahead.

So the Eastern Region Divine Punishment Hall was only the tip of the iceberg.

That single thought settled, heavy and certain, inside his chest.

Venerable Glacier's rank fell short; the man's reach never touched the deepest vaults of knowledge.

Core secrets remained outside his grasp.

Jared swept the collapsing pocket of chaos with a last measuring look. Fractured space groaned. He flicked a sleeve, pulling pure divine power and scattered treasures into his ring before the realm tore apart.

He closed his eyes.

Light and shadow rippled over his skin.

Bones popped, ligaments tightened, flesh reshaped.

With every muted crack the old face dissolved, replaced by another, colder mask.

Only a few breaths later, Venerable Glacier stood where Jared had been.

The transformation ended in a hush, as though the world itself acknowledged the swap.

A dark robe trimmed in blue draped the new figure. Snow-white hair glittered like ice crystal. High Immortal Realm Level Seven pressure seeped from him, and the contempt in his eyes rang true.

Jared rolled his neck, testing the borrowed shape. The higher status felt like a heavier mantle, yet it fit him perfectly.

"Since Glacier knows so little... time to chat with the other venerables."

The words came out in Glacier's measured, arctic monotone.

His gaze swung toward the memories of four halls: Venerable Redflame, Venerable Greenwood, Venerable Goldsteel, and Venerable Terrabold each occupied their own domain within the Eastern Region Divine Punishment Hall.

Those four shared command with Glacier, yet rumor held they competed in quiet, never forming a single iron front.

That rivalry opened the door for him to break them one at a time.

The plan was simple: wear Glacier's face, cite urgent deliberations, lure each venerable to a secluded spot—or walk straight into their palaces—and repeat the method now perfected.

He smoothed the borrowed robe. The familiar chill of Glacier's perpetual indifference slid over his features once more. One step carried him out of the soon-to-shatter chaos world.

Outside, inside Frigid Silence Hall, everything sat in its ordinary place, as if the earlier life-and-death struggle had never taken place.

He did not linger.

His stride angled toward the nearest target-Redflame Hall.

Venerable Redflame cultivated fire laws, quick-tempered and explosive.

Of all the venerables, he clashed most fiercely with ice-ruled Glacier, which ironically made him the least likely to suspect Glacier's approach.

Common sense said Glacier, if plotting violence, would first rope in Greenwood or Terrabold, allies of milder temperament.

Before long, the scarlet gate of Redflame Hall came into view, its surface flowing like liquid fire.

Two god-guards steeped in flame arts stood watch.

They froze at Glacier's arrival, then bowed in unison.

"Greetings, Venerable Glacier!"

Without so much as a glance, Jared-wearing Glacier-let a sheet of frost line his voice. "This venerable has urgent business with Redflame. Summon him."

The tone carried Glacier's trademark chill and absolute authority.

The guards dared not delay.

One wheeled around and sprinted inside to announce the visitor.

Moments later, a thunderous, impatient roar rolled out of the hall.

"Glacier? You frozen relic-why are you here? Spit it out! I'm busy refining a newly won Earthcore Flame Crystal!"

A giant of a man—nine feet tall, red hair blazing, robe the color of molten iron— strode forth.

Venerable Redflame radiated waves of searing heat with every step.

The heat distorted the air. His eyes, arrogant and bored, slid across Jared with open impatience.

Jared answered with a glacial mask and a faint crease between his brows exactly how Glacier always signaled disgust at Redflame's presence.

"Not here. Follow me."

The words were clipped.

He turned at once, as if another second in Redflame's furnace aura would contaminate him.

Redflame blinked, then barked, "Glacier! What game are you playing? Why can't we talk here?"

Muttering or not, he still lengthened his stride to keep up.

Curiosity tugged at him.

Why had the icebound rival sought him out so suddenly?

The pair, one cold front, one blazing storm, moved through corridor after corridor

until they reached a rarely used Star-Gazing Platform deep inside the Divine Punishment Hall.

Few visited this place.

Barrier runes warded the perimeter, perfect for hushed discussion.

"Well? Speak."

Redflame's patience burned thin.

He snapped again, voice rough with flame-fed annoyance.

Jared's eyes darkened. "Redflame, have you ever heard... of Primal Origin Breath?"

Redflame's pupils shrank to pinpoints. Shock and sudden wariness wiped away the earlier disdain. "How do you know that term? The Grand Venerable forbade anyone from uttering it!"

A pulse flickered behind Venerable Redflame's eyes—first shock, then frantic calculation. Jared caught the flicker and, in that instant, knew Glacier's earlier claim had struck solid bedrock.

Keeping Glacier's monotone, he let syllables fall like sleet. "I have traced signs of a leak of the Primal Origin Breath. The fate of the Eastern Region Divine Punishment Hall—and those above—hangs on it."

He let the wording hang, half veiled, half dire, heavy enough to bend a mountain without naming the mountain.

Color drained and flared across Redflame's face. The phrase those above landed like molten ore on snow, hissing, forcing him backward a step.

He shot questions in rapid fire. "What signs? Where did you find them? Have you reported to the Grand Venerable?"

Jared steadied himself inside the borrowed body. The fish was nibbling. He angled a shoulder, inviting Redflame closer, and whispered, "The clue lies..."

The moment Redflame leaned in, instinct overriding caution, breath brushing cold robes the air bucked.

Jared's right hand, hidden behind his back, snapped forward. Two fingers together, Chaos Shatterfinger compressed into a single needle of gray chaotic force, darted for Redflame's brow faster than

thought could form.

The strike had simmered since they left the hall; at arm's length it became

inescapable.

Redflame had nursed a general wariness, yet slaughter from Glacier's hand still

blindsided him.

Worse, the attack held no hint of ice. It was a gray annihilating power Glacier never displayed, reeking of erasure itself.

"You" He flared protective divine fire and sprang backward.

Too late.

The gray spike slid through the hastily risen flames as a hot knife through fat, landing dead-center between his brows.

Pop.

A muffled crack split the silence.

The retreating giant froze mid-step, every joint locking.

His eyes bulged, horror etched deep.

At his brow, a pinhead-sized gray mote spread like ink in water.

Yet Redflame was still a High Immortal Realm Level Seven master of fire, life force dense and stubborn.

One finger blow wrecked his soul but fell short of the instant obliteration that had ended others before.

"Raaah!"

Agony and fury fused into a roar. A tidal wave of flame erupted from him.

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That blaze was no ordinary fire; it was his lifetime of cultivation condensed-the Heaven-Burning Divine Flame.

Dark-gold tongues seethed, hot enough to liquefy stars; even space warped and sagged.

Wounded, he chose the most brutal answer: burn his own source, drag the enemy into the pyre.

"Whoever you are die with me! Heaven-Burn Annihilation!"

He became a sphere of dark-gold fire wider than ten feet, rolling at Jared with world-ending weight.

Everything it passed over—formations, tiles—vaporized; the Star-Gazing Platform floor slumped into magma.

Jared's gaze sharpened. He had not expected such iron resolve, nor this suicidal backlash.

He could not meet it head-on.

And letting the blast leak outward would trumpet the fight to every corner.

Both hands carved frantic sigils. Gray chaotic force surged and layered shield after shield before him as he sprang away.

Boom-boom-boooooom!

The dark-gold sphere slammed the chaotic barrier, thunder splitting the sky. Each shattering layer swallowed chunks of the divine fire before ripping apart.

The shock punched through Jared's chest, blood churning; he staggered back dozens of paces.

He seized the breathing space, hauled fresh chaotic force, and triggered his spatial art once more.

"Chaos Cage!"

Jared let out a low command.

Gray mist boiled off his sleeves, rushed outward, and filled the air.

Within a heartbeat the churning haze locked together, forming bars of solid-looking energy. A towering cage snapped shut around the dark-gold fireball that was Venerable Redflame.

The inner wall of the cage quivered. Needle-thin cracks flicked open and closed by the thousands.

Each crack ground against the divine fire the way millstones chew grain, shaving sparks away and swallowing them into mute grayness.

"Ah-ah-ah! Give this venerable a break!" The roar burst from the rolling fireball, raw and ragged.

Enraged, Venerable Redflame hurled himself against the bars again and again. Each collision rang along the gray lattice and made the whole construct shiver.

Yet this pocket of space belonged to Jared.

The Chaos Cage refused to splinter; fresh chaotic force flowed from the surrounding void and welded every dent before it could widen.

Heartbeats passed.

The dark-gold sphere shrank to nearly half its size, and its scalding pressure dulled like a forge cooling too fast.

Sensing the ebb, a cold gleam flashed across Jared's eyes.

Fingers flew; seals knitted faster than thought.

He thrust one forefinger toward the cage's heart, every muscle tight with intent.

"Return to the Void-Devour the Heavens!" His voice cut through the roar of flames, steady and merciless.

At the point his finger marked, darkness curled.

In an instant it spiraled into a cavernous vortex, a mouth wide enough to swallow mountains, its pull savage and relentless.

"No!" The single word tore out of Redflame's core, higher and sharper than anything he had shouted before.

The remaining divine fire—alongside flesh and soul—ripped loose and rushed headlong into the vortex.

Inside that spinning maw the pieces ground together, shattered, and sifted into motes of pure fire power and scattered law fragments.

A few breaths later the vortex winked out.

Without its anchor, the Chaos Cage dissolved like fog under noon sun.

Heat still shimmered over the Star-Gazing Platform.

On the cracked tiles lay a marble-sized clump of crimson divine power and several gleaming treasures, their metal casings still sizzling in the air.

Venerable Redflame-gone, body and spirit alike erased.

Only the war-scarred silence acknowledged the fact.

Color drained from Jared's face; opening a pocket world and casting Return to the Void back-to-back had cost him dearly.

He swept the spoils into his sleeve, then settled cross-legged, steadying breath until the surge of chaotic force leveled out.

His lips moved in a whisper the scorched stones alone could hear. "Three more." The chill in his gaze deepened.

Flesh and aura twisted; a heartbeat later the figure of Venerable Glacier stood where Jared had rested.

Without pause he strode toward Greenwood Hall, the next name on his list.

The memory of Redflame's last flare lingered, sharpening caution rather than feeding pride.

Every silent step carried a vigilant edge, as though hidden eyes waited behind each pillar.

Venerable Greenwood, master of wood law, was known for a gentle temper and maintained a cordial balance with Glacier.

Wearing Glacier's face, Jared spoke of Redflame's erratic movements and rumored ties to outside rebels.

The half-true tale lured Greenwood to a secluded bend behind Divine Punishment Hall's rear mountain.

The instant the last warding rune sealed the clearing, Jared struck-no preamble, no warning.

Chaos-drenched fingers sliced out, aiming to end the meeting before a single polite word could form.

Greenwood answered with instant vines and shimmering life aura, cords of emerald light looping to bind, repair, and defend.

Yet each time bark thickened or shoots sprouted, the gray power brushed across them and the color bled away, leaving only brittle ash.

The duel lasted moments more before the final emerald glow guttered out.

Greenwood's life force collapsed inward; body and soul dissolved together into silent dust.

Jared's focus shifted to the next name-Venerable Terrabold.

Terrabold's command of earth law forged walls even star-splitting strikes could scarcely dent; patience and weight were his signatures.

Still in Glacier's guise, Jared proposed bolstering the hall's defenses against potential siege.

Terrabold followed him into a stone-lined chamber buried deep beneath the sanctuary floor.

Down where light could not reach, Jared drew a thread of pressure from the Pentacarna Tower.

That weight pinned Terrabold's mountain-like armor while chaotic force seeped in, cracking bedrock flesh and shattering the soul inside.

Three swift eliminations honed his use of chaotic force; every kill tempered instinct into practiced technique.

A cold, steady confidence settled behind his eyes.

Though realm boundaries held firm, the sharp edge of his combat strength lengthened with alarming speed.

Only the strongest and most suspicious-Venerable Celestial Metal still breathed.

Master of gold law, his strikes were a smith's final blow: decisive, flawless, nearly impossible to parry; keen insight matched the steel in his will.

With Glacier he shared no friendship, only a silent calculation that kept swords sheathed.

Jared knew such restraint would never bend to simple bait.

So he chose a frontal path.

Open doors, open words, sharpened knives hidden beneath.

Wearing Glacier's robes, he announced looming upheaval across the eastern region and summoned all Five Venerables to council.

Then he walked straight toward Celestial Metal Hall, pace neither rushed nor slow.

It was a plan meant to be seen—a daylight stratagem any wary mind could catch.

Celestial Metal could doubt every syllable, yet with three fellow Venerables already "agreeing," refusal would brand him guilty or afraid.

Celestial Metal Hall rose ahead, wrought from Starlight Silversteel, its surfaces pouring a cold silver glow that felt sharp enough to slice exposed skin.

Inside, Venerable Celestial Metal sat upon the central throne, posture straight, presence like a drawn blade waiting to strike.

Around thirty years of age, his face was cut from stone, sword-straight brows set above bright, steady eyes.

He wore a suit of silver-white armor, and two sheathed longswords crossed behind his shoulders.

Even standing still, the man felt like a peerless blade just drawn from its scabbard, every breath throwing an edge that promised to pierce anything in its path.

Celestial Metal Venerable's gaze flickered the moment he saw Glacier step through the door alone; the rest of his face remained carved from marble.

"Glacier, you sent word that the eastern region faces upheaval and the Five Venerables must meet Where are Scarlet Flame,

Greenwood, and Terrabold? His voice never wavered.

Jared kept Glacier's frosty mask in place; his eyes offered no warmth when he answered.

"They will be here shortly. I came ahead because there is a matter I must verify with you alone."

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"What is it?"

Celestial Metal Venerable's eyes narrowed to twin sword points, as though they could slice straight through Jared's assumed face.

Jared closed the gap with two measured steps, dropping his voice to a conspiratorial murmur.

"It's about the recent disturbances along the Heaven-Ascending Path. The Grand Venerable has issued a secret order—we are to hasten the gathering of soul crystals, especially those carrying an unusual aura."

He dangled those names deliberately, knowing only the Five Venerables shared that level of knowledge.

A flicker crossed Celestial Metal Venerable's gaze, yet wariness held firm.

"Where is this order? Why have I not received it?"

"Here is the order."

Jared lifted his hand; a jade slip, softly gilded with light, floated above his palm.

The ripple it gave off matched the signature the Grand Venerable had used—an echo Jared had copied from Glacier's memories.

Celestial Metal Venerable fixed on the slip.

An exploratory thread of spirit sense drifted out to verify it.

The instant that thread brushed the surface-

-the air twisted; the expected quiet inspection flipped into raw chaos.

The jade slip burst apart with a dull crack.

Instead of shards, it dissolved into a storm of hair-fine, ash-gray Needles of Chaos that tore toward his face like rain blown sideways.

In the same breath Jared sprang forward, chaotic force roaring to full power.

His palms multiplied into a blur, each strike homing on a different vital spot around Celestial Metal Venerable.

"I knew there was treachery!"

Surprised but not flustered, Celestial Metal Venerable moved as though he had rehearsed this attack.

The twin swords on his back rang free, spinning into two streaks of silver-white sword aura.

One swept into the oncoming needles; the other cleaved straight for Jared's brow.

At the same moment, his Celestial Metal Divine Armor flared alive, runes racing across the plates until his defense spiked to its peak.

Clang! Clang! Clang! Clang!

A barrage of impacts followed, so fast they blurred into one continuous roar.

Most of the Needles of Chaos shredded under the sword aura, yet several slipped through and pinged against the Divine Armor.

Each impact gouged a tiny crater, gray corrosion spreading across the glow.

The arc aimed at Jared met a gray, chaos-forged palm and skidded off course with a shriek of torn space.

"You're not Glacier! Who are you?!"

Rage boiled in Celestial Metal Venerable's shout; certainty hardened the edge in his eyes.

That suffocating gray force shared nothing with Glacier's frigid laws; it reeked of pure erasure.

"The one who has come to claim your life!"

Jared dropped the last trace of disguise; a bolt of motion, he crashed into Celestial

Metal Venerable, fists and palms weaving a net of chaos.

In an instant, the hall drowned in overlapping sword light and writhing gray turbulence.

The silver-white sword aura stayed impossibly keen, shearing through pillars, walls, air alike.

The murky chaos answered by dissolving whatever it touched, even the underlying laws that gave form to the hall.

Their duel tore from indoors to open sky; each clash toppled another section of palace, split earth wide, and shredded defensive arrays.

True to his reputation as the strongest of the Five, Celestial Metal Venerable's offense stayed relentless, every sword stroke carrying the authority to sever laws themselves.

Jared pushed chaotic force to its limits, spawning wall after wall of gray barriers, palm prints, and fist shadows that met each sword beam head-on, grinding away its edge.

The battle eclipsed every prior fight, each exchange staked on narrower margins and higher stakes.

The longer he traded blows, the deeper the shock carved into Celestial Metal Venerable's mind.

The adversary sat only at the pinnacle of Heavenly Immortal Realm Level Nine.

Yet that gray power stood on another tier; every time his sword aura bit in, it lost sharpness far too fast, its might bleeding away.

Celestial Metal Venerable's slash should have ripped the air wide open.

Yet the gray-robed intruder slid half a step to the side, and the blade whistled past empty space.

Before the ringing stopped, another thrust whiffed against a thin gray barrier that winked out the instant it met steel.

The man's sense for danger was razor sharp-every time Celestial Metal pressed in with maximum force, the counter arrived from the smallest angle and at the cheapest cost.

A hard warning beat inside Celestial Metal's chest. Dragging this duekout only gave the stranger more room to pull tricks. He bared his teeth and growled, "This can't go on. End it fast-now."

Resolve hit like a hammer.

He snapped forward, bit through his own tongue, and spat a hot rope of blood across the two hovering swords. Scarlet sizzled against silver, and both blades quivered as though tasting fresh fuel.

His voice boomed through the torn courtyard. "Celestial Metal Grand Path-slay immortals, wipe out gods!" Each word rang like an iron bell, syncing with the swords' rising pitch.

The twin weapons shuddered, collided, and fused. Sparks welded

et

them into a single silver-white column that punched from ground to clouds. The shaft of light, felt cold enough to cut bare skin from yards away.

Ancient runes crawled across the pillar. Within the glowing script, phantom gods toppled and shattered stars bled fire-a mute prophecy of what the swing could do.

Lifetime cultivation, pure blood,

every law insight he

owned-Celestial Metal poured them

all into that one stroke. It was deadly

enough to butcher anyone at his level and even frighten an eighth tier Upper Celestial.

The sword column locked onto Jared like a giant spear of frost. With a thunderless lurch it dropped, seeking to cleave man and earth in a single pass.

Where it passed, sky and stone fractured like thin panes of glass. Layer after layer peeled away, exposing swirling black currents beneath the shattered space. Gray light washed across Jared's eyes. For the first time tonight, weight settled on his features. That falling pillar would not be shrugged off.

He accepted the fact in a heartbeat. Holding back was no longer an option.

He drew a deep breath. Inside his body, chaotic force spun faster than any wheel he had ever risked.

Ash-colored radiance surged over his limbs until he looked more statue than flesh- a living avatar of primordial dusk.

Both hands rose, palms facing, as though he cradled an invisible globe. In that empty gap a tiny gray bead swelled, dense enough to feel like it dragged the horizon toward itself.

His voice slipped out, low and even. "Chaos... Reversion... Cataclysm."

The bead ballooned into a whirlpool the size of a small room. It spun forward, straight into the descending silver pillar.

No crash followed.

Better to say every sound vanished. The arena fell under a blanket of absolute hush.

The silver blade sank into the vortex the way a stone sinks into fog. Not a ripple escaped.

God-slaying power, space-rending edge-all of it unraveled, chewed away, and swallowed by gray oblivion.

Several breaths later the sword light was simply gone. The vortex rippled once, then thinned into nothing, as placid as a pond after a skipped pebble.

Celestial Metal Venerable's face turned paper white. His aura guttered, leaving him hollow-chested, eyes round with dread he could not mask.

His ultimate attack had dissolved like sugar in water. The realization hammered his mind harder than any physical wound.

A rasp tore from his throat. "No... impossible... what kind of power is that..."

The words bled out with his confidence; the steel core of his Dao heart crumbled into gravel.

Jared's cheeks lacked color as well. The Chaos Reversion Cataclysm had emptied deep wells inside him.

Even so, he gave his foe no window. One gray blur and he was before Celestial

Metal Venerable, palm settling on the crown of the man's head like an executioner's weight.

Chaotic force surged in, locking every meridian and sealing every wisp of strength the instant it met resistance.

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Jared's voice cooled to bare steel. "Now we can have a real conversation."

His gaze never blinked. "Tell me everything you know-celestials, soul crystals, the Heaven-Ascending Path, the Grand Venerable, Primal Origin Breath-leave nothing out."

Celestial Metal Venerable answered with a broken laugh. "Go ahead and kill me. The moment I touch those secrets, the seal in my soul triggers. Body and spirit together-gone. You'll get nothing."

Jared's lip bent into a chill curve. "We'll see."

He summoned a thread of chaotic force, finer than silk yet purer than molten ore, and guided it into the hidden chambers of Celestial Metal Venerable's soul toward the dim golden sigil lurking there.

The instant gray met gold, the sigil flared, ready to blow.

Gray light blazed in Jared's pupils. The single thread split into a lattice of countless filaments, wrapping the rune the way fresh leaves wrap sticky rice.

Szz-szz-szz.

Pale gray nibbled at fierce gold. The rune thrashed, tried to erupt, but the net of chaos pressed tighter, grinding each stroke of golden script.

A muffled groan punched from Celestial Metal Venerable's chest. Thin golden blood trickled from nose, ears, and eyes.

The silent struggle dragged on. Only after the long span of an incense stick did time feel ready to move again.

A full stick of incense burned away.

A faint pop snapped through the charged hush, brief as a bubble bursting.

A beat later, the air quivered with a barely audible crackle the exact note of a thin film giving way.

Deep inside Celestial Metal Venerable's soul, the golden seal rune dimmed, fissured, and collapsed into dust-gray motes.

The chaotic force kept grinding, refusing to let go until every last trace of the sigil lay erased.

"The seal... it's gone?" Celestial Metal Venerable's voice slipped out as a thin rasp, more breath than sound.

He felt the phantom blade that had hovered over his spirit vanish, and the hollow it left chilled him even deeper.

Someone standing before him had just unraveled a soul lock planted personally by the Grand Venerable—an impossibility he could neither grasp nor deny.

Opposite him, Jared's face turned a shade paler, exhaustion flickering beneath eyes that still cut like blades.

He held that glare steady. "Now-talk."

Strength drained away, Celestial Metal Venerable folded onto the floorboards. The fight in him was gone.

"What... what do you want to know?"

"Everything." Jared answered with a single, unyielding syllable.

After a fraught pause, Celestial Metal Venerable began, voice raw.

"The Eastern Region Divine Punishment Hall is only one of five strongholds the celestials raised on level thirteen."

"East, south, west, north, and center-each domain keeps its own hall with a Grand Venerable in command."

"The five of us were merely the Eastern hall's enforcers."

"The Grand Venerable lives deep within the Divine Punishment Sanctuary on the Central Heaven-Origin Sacred Continent. There, an entrance to the Heaven- Ascending Path is kept under guard."

"The Heaven-Ascending Path..."

Awe and dread twitched across his eyes.

"That corridor connects the world above to level thirteen. The celestials rule here and harvest soul crystals for one reason-keeping that passage stable and delivering periodic offerings upward."

"Offerings?"

Jared pressed, "What exactly lies above? Is it only your clan chief? If resources are needed, why not carry them up directly instead of feeding that path?"

Celestial Metal Venerable shook his head. "I don't know. Only the Grand Venerable holds that secret. We simply enforce-suppress resistance, gather high-grade soul crystals."

"Soul crystals are refined from special spirits. The stronger or rarer the soul, the higher the crystal's grade and the better it sustains the path and the tribute." "Materials can't be ferried straight to higher realms. The laws forbid it; if anyone could strip lower worlds at will, those worlds would perish."

"There's a loophole," he added, a bleak laugh catching in his throat. "The Heaven-Ascending Path slips past those laws and their scrutiny."

Hearing that, Jared froze. He had never pictured the celestials-so proud of their purity—using a crack in the rules to pull off petty theft.

They were funneling resources from level thirteen upward in secret.

And to keep the corridor alive, they were turning living people into soul crystals.

That was no different from the rites of demonic cults.

After that, how could they still call themselves celestials?

Jared forced the issue again. "The Primal Origin Breath-what is it?"

Celestial Metal Venerable shook his head once more. "Forbidden. I've only heard whispers: a primal power from the dawn of creation, tied to chaos."

"The celestial upper ranks fear it. Whenever they detect it, they erase all trace. The Morse couple may have stumbled on something they carried that breath downworld..."

The claim punched straight through Jared's composure.

Chaos, the primal, his own Chaotic Scripture-threads converged.

Brows knitting, he wondered whether the Morse couple's link to him had painted a target on their backs upon returning to level thirteen.

He pursued the line. "Across the Five

Domains, how strong are the other Venerables? And inside the Central hall apart from the Grand Venerable, who else stands guard?"

"All five Venerables are High Immortal Realm Level Seven-same realm as us— though strength varies."

"The Grand Venerable sits at the peak of Level Eight. He can crush the five of us together without effort."

"As for the Central Divine Punishment Hall, I can't say how many elites serve him. A Divine Envoy from above might even be present..."

His words faded to a whisper, eyes swimming with terror.

Jared turned the revelations over and over, weighing each one.

The situation was grimmer than he had imagined.

He flexed blood-streaked fingers, tasting copper on his tongue.

Eastern Region Divine Punishment Hall suddenly felt small, no more than a guard post. The real storm waited on the Central Heaven-Origin Sacred Continent, inside the hands of the Grand Venerable.

A chill threaded beneath his ribs.

If the Grand Venerable kept one of those aloof Divine Envoys beside him, Jared's current strength would snap like damp wood.

A moment ago bold certainty had carried him.

Now that same certainty wavered, cracked, and left a sting of doubt burning behind his sternum.

Jared steadied his voice despite the toll.

"Does the Grand Venerable stay inside the Central Divine Punishment Hall all year round?" he asked.

The Celestial Metal Venerable gave a tiny nod, golden blood still drying at the corners of his eyes.

"The Grand Venerable sits there through the years, guarding the Heaven-Ascending Path. He seldom leaves..."

The words scraped out of the man's throat.

"You- you killed four of us in a row. The Grand Venerable may already sense something wrong. Our life sigils rest in his hands..."

The warning had not even finished echoing when the entire Divine Punishment Hall shuddered like a beast roused from sleep!

Overhead, a vast, merciless voice, grand as the law of heaven itself, rolled across the rafters and open courts.

"Which wretch dares trespass in my Divine Punishment Hall and butcher my Venerables?" the voice boomed.

The pressure folded air into iron. Every celestial attendant dropped, knees and foreheads slamming the tiles, their bodies quivering against the unseen weight.

The Grand Venerable awakened!

Jared's gaze sharpened like drawn steel; this was no time for lingering.

He cast a last glance at the Celestial Metal Venerable, whose face had faded to ash, then slammed a palm onto the man's crown.

Chaotic force detonated. The body jerked once; the light inside those eyes guttered out, soul and flesh erased together.

Jared swept up the drifting godforce and scattered treasures.

In the same breath his figure blurred into a gray streak, racing toward the outer gates of the hall.

## A Warrior Undefeatable

He rocketed toward Jade Immortal City, wind peeling at the edges of his torn cloak. Behind him, the pressure from the Eastern hall surged like a solid tsunami.

The Grand Venerable's roar ripped through heaven and earth, "Thief! You will not escape!"

The law-laden sound churned his organs, but he clenched his jaw. Chaotic force roared through his meridians, bracing every bone against the crushing echo.

No turning back-facing the Grand Venerable now would equal suicide, and the clarity of that truth anchored his stride.

He measured his odds with cold precision; against a peak Level Eight Grand Venerable from the Central Region, his chance was barely a sliver.

He triggered Blazing Stride again and again.

Each flash hurled him a hundred miles farther, until the pursuing auras dwindled to faint sparks on the horizon.

Inside the Eastern hall, a golden phantom, a hundred yards tall, hung midair.

Its features blurred, yet the weight it shed made the surrounding space quake, pillars groaning under invisible hands.

The apparition was the Grand Venerable himself, projected by some secret art.

His gaze swept the ruin— Redflame Hall, Greenwood Hall, Terrabold Hall, Celestial Metal Hall—all smashed.

He paused over the scar before Frigid Silence Hall where wisps of chaotic breath still drifted.

"Glacier, Redflame, Greenwood, Terrabold, Celestial Metal..." he intoned.

The words came cold, stripped of mercy, yet a wildfire of rage licked beneath them. "Five Venerables, dead on the same day..."

"Who? Who possessed such skill to cut down five within my hall?" he thundered.

He lifted a palm. Five shattered life-sigil fragments streaked up from the inner vaults and hovered above his hand.

The lingering thread of will within each shard pointed unwaveringly toward Jade Immortal City.

"Jade Immortal City... Jade Wuji..." His eyes flashed frost.

"Could it be him? No. Jade Wuji sits at High Immortal Realm Level Seven; he could not fell five Venerables, certainly not with that eerie gray power."

From the fragments and the battlefield ashes, he discerned a strange, annihilating ripple of energy.

"This force... unheard of. It matches none of the laws known to level thirteen. Could it be 'Primordial'?" he murmured.

A shiver of dread and murderous resolve crossed the phantom face.

"Whoever touches the roots of my celestial race must die."

He thrust his shadowy arm skyward. A lance of gold burst upward, breaking into countless runes that streaked to the horizons.

"By my command," the voice echoed, "all sects and powers of level thirteen will hunt the murderer at once!"

"Any who provide a lead shall receive 1 million top-grade essence crystals and a complete celestial cultivation art!"

"Any who capture or slay the culprit shall claim the title of celestial general!"

The edict split the heavens.

"Anyone who dares shelter or hide the criminal... every branch of the clan will be wiped out. Their souls will be dragged out and refined into crystals!"

Golden runes burst from the Grand Venerable's projection and fanned across the sky like a storm of light.

His thunderous words rode those symbols and, in the blink of a breath, rolled over every layer of level thirteen.

Across level thirteen, mountains quaked, city walls rang, and every living thing felt the tremor echo through bone and soul.

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Jade Immortal City, Hall of Infinity, secret chamber.

Julian reached the chamber first, his robe still swirling from hurried steps.

Rania slipped in after him, worry tightening her shoulders.

Moments later, Luther's black silhouette melted from the passageway, sealing the door so the three stood alone.

The silence pressed hard. Torchlight failed to chase away the weight; moisture collected on the stone as though the tension itself had begun to sweat.

Julian pinched a freshly delivered Messaging Jade Slip between his fingers.

Veins stood out on his hand. The pale shard flickered, throwing sickly light across a face that had gone the color of iron.

Across from him, Rania could not stay still; her knees bobbed, fingers tangled, eyes darting between her father and the sealed door.

Luther's black robe breathed a chill into the room. Even his quiet exhale seemed to frost the air, and the look in his eyes carried the same grim weight.

"Father, what happened? Did Jared... did he really march into the Divine Punishment Hall?"

The question burst from Rania, the last syllable quivering.

Her tone broke on the last word, a fine tremor skating across each syllable and stripping away the composure she had clung to.

Julian drew a long breath, then handed her the slip. When he spoke, dryness scraped every note: "Read it yourself."

Rania accepted the shard with both hands.

She lowered her gaze, spiritual sense pouring into the etched lines in a silent rush.

In the next heartbeat, all color bled from her cheeks. Her body wavered, knees buckling so sharply that the wall seemed to lurch forward to catch her.

The slip held the Grand Venerable's freshly minted Divine Punishment Warrant, its letters carved in relentless gold.

It cataloged the traitor's every feature, then dangled a reward and punishment so suffocating she felt her lungs refuse to fill.

"Jared... he killed all five Venerables of the Divine Punishment Hall?" Her voice fractured on disbelief.

Eyes widening, she shook her head. "That's impossible. He's only at Heavenly Immortal Realm Level Nine!"

"Yet it is fact," Julian answered, each syllable landing like stone.

He let the words settle, then added, "The five life sigils broke together. That cannot be faked."

"The Grand Venerable is enraged  
and has issued the top-level Divine  
Punishment Warrant. Level thirteen  
holds no place for him now he

finished, alarm mixing with O something harder to name

Luther's voice surfaced from the hood's shadow, thin yet biting.

"Mr. Jared's strength runs far deeper than his realm shows. That gray power... I have never seen an energy so strange and domineering. His feat, though shocking, is not impossible."

"But where is he now? Is he safe?" Rania's words tangled with a sob she refused to release.

Tears rimmed her lashes. "The Grand Venerable's warrant means every corner of level thirteen will hunt him. However strong he is, can he fight all the celestials?"

Silence lingered before Julian

replied, "With his caution and skilt, he should already be beyond the Divine, Punishment Hall's reach. My guess... he may try to return to Jade Immortal City."

"Back to Jade Immortal City?" she echoed, hope flashing and fading within a heartbeat.

The light vanished as quickly as it came.

"But the celestial warrant is out. Even Jade Immortal City is exposed. Father, what are we supposed to do?"

Her gaze locked on Julian, a silent plea swelling between them.

Love for Jared burned so fiercely in her chest she could have leapt into ash for him.

Yet the thought of dragging her father and the entire Jade Immortal Manor into ruin twisted the flame into a knot of misery.

Julian met those desperate eyes and exhaled a breath that sounded like surrender.

Of course he understood what churned behind them; no father could mistake it.

Still, as Manor Lord, the weight of millions of lives pressed harder than paternal sympathy.

"Ranran, I do understand," he said, keeping his tone gentle.

Then the gentleness cooled. "But with the celestial warrant issued, if

Jade Immortal Manor openly shelters Jared annihilation will follow Not just you and me  
Jade

Immortal City itself would be

scorched to dust."

Ranran's lips quivered, yet no reply escaped; blood drained from her cheeks until they were almost translucent.

Reason told her he was right, and the realization tasted like ice.

Luther broke the hush. "Manor Lord, perhaps covert aid is still possible. Jared carries a secret and a potential able to shatter celestial rule."

"The risk is vast," he admitted, "yet if it works, the reward would defy measure."

## A Warrior Undefeatable

Julian's gaze flickered beneath the jade lamp. Light slid over his irises, then vanished as he lowered his eyes and kept his mouth shut.

He did want to stand beside Jared against the celestials, yet the freshly issued Divine Punishment Warrant turned that hope into a cliff, the drop steeper with every heartbeat.

A faint ripple ran across the sealed chamber. Air wavered the way heat blurs stone at noon.

In that shiver of space, a gray figure condensed without a footstep or a breath, settling at the very center of the floor.

Jared had arrived.

"Jared!"

Rania burst forward and wrapped both arms around him, relief breaking her voice. She clung so hard that her shoulders trembled.

Jared patted her back, his palm steady and unhurried. "I'm fine," he said, voice warm enough to slow her shaking.

He lifted his eyes to Julian and Luther and gave a brief nod. "Manor Lord Jade."

Julian and Luther studied him in silence, their expressions tangled with caution, shock, and something like respect that refused to settle on any one shape.

The newcomer's breath ran uneven, yet the force wrapped under his skin felt heavier, tighter, like magma sealed by a crust of stone that could crack at any time.

"Jared, you..." The words caught in Julian's throat; for a moment he found no proper place to begin.

Jared loosened his hold on Rania and spoke as if stating weather. "The Five Venerables of the Divine Punishment Hall are gone. I also know about the Grand Venerable's warrant."

Neither haste nor excitement colored the statement; the room might have been discussing a spilled cup of tea.

Julian drew a long breath through his nose. "Jared, do you realize how vast a hole you have pierced?"

"The celestials have ruled level thirteen beyond counting. No one has ever dared slap their face so openly, let alone cut down five Venerables in one stroke!"

"A Divine Punishment Warrant hasn't appeared for a thousand years. Now the entire sky may hold no corner where you can set foot!"

Jared let a small smile curl. "Nowhere to stand? Then I carve a path with blood."

His voice stayed low, yet every syllable landed with the certainty of iron on an anvil.

Rania clutched his sleeve, tears shining. "Jared, don't rush in! The Grand Venerable sits at Top Level High Immortal Realm Eight and may bring even harsher powers. Right now you can't beat him!"

He met her eyes, gentleness softening their steel. "I know. I'm not walking to his door today."

Julian pressed, "Then where do you plan to go?"

Jared's shoulders rose in a faint shrug. "Step by step. Level thirteen is wide enough; somewhere in it, a corner belongs to me."

Luther's cloak rustled. "Mr. Jared, why don't we head for the western region's Myriad Monster Mountain Range?"

"The west?" Jared blinked, puzzled.

From their eastern seat, the central region lay between; to skirt that, they would have to swing past either the south or the north-tens of thousands of miles no matter the route.

He still could not see what chess move Luther intended.

Luther lowered his voice. "While cultivating recently, I sensed Ghost Clan energy in the Myriad Monster Range. Some of our kin still live."

"I'd like to try my luck there, and the mountains' tangled terrain makes hiding from the celestials simpler."

A sharp light crossed Jared's eyes. "Good. Then we go to the Myriad Monster Range."

"What?!" Julian and Rania blurted in perfect unison.

"Jared, are you insane?"

Rania's words tumbled out. "That mountain range is chaos itself right now. The celestials are slaughtering the beast race-entering is walking into a meat grinder!" Julian's tone dropped a note lower. "Jared, the west truly is forbidden. The range is under strict celestial suppression."

"With a warrant on your back, one step inside and your cover rips apart."

Jared shook his head. "Because the range is boiling, the celestials will stare at the beast race first and miss other prey."

"Besides, Luther felt Ghost Clan life. Perhaps his people do wait there."

He paused, turning to Julian. "Manor Lord, once I leave, the celestials may comb Jade Immortal Manor. Be ready."

"If things reach the brink... lay every charge at my door and cut yourselves clear."

Julian's jaw tightened, then loosened, color sweeping across his face before it drained away.

A long breath left his lungs.

He lifted his gaze to Jared. Voice low, he said, "Jared, I, Julian, may not be a hero, yet I am no craven who would sell out a friend for safety."

He kept his shoulders square, though the lines at the corners of his eyes deepened.

"Since we have chosen to stand together, I will do everything I can to protect that accord."

"The celestials hold vast power, and Jade Immortal Manor has only so much to offer."

Jared brought both fists together in salute. "Hearing you say so is more than enough."

Rania suddenly stepped forward, chin up, eyes unblinking. "Jared, I'm going with you!"

"No." Jared's reply came without hesitation. "The western region is far too dangerous. You can't come."

She shook her head, dark hair brushing her shoulders. "I'm not afraid. I want to stay at your side, no matter where it is!"

He met her gaze, warmth and unyielding will braided together. "Ranran, be good. Stay here in Jade Immortal Manor, cultivate well, and wait for my return."

Her mouth parted, a single word trembling at the edge. "But—" Jared's palm landed lightly on her hair. "No buts. Trust me. I will come back safe."

Ranran stared into that unwavering confidence. Realizing she could not move him, she bit her lower lip; tears welled until the world blurred.

Jared turned to Luther. "When do we leave?"

Luther answered at once, "The sooner the better. We can head first to Coldabyss City in the northern region and brief Master Coldabyss."

Jared nodded approval. "Yes, a trip to Coldabyss City is necessary."

A brief dip of his head closed the matter.

They had come to Jade Immortal Manor only to gather information; now they knew the manor had never intended to swallow Coldabyss City at all.

Therefore they needed to return and tell Master Coldabyss to stop aiming at forces from the eastern region.

Jared inclined his head, then faced Julian and Rania, fists clasped. "Manor Lord Jade, Ranran, take care. Until we meet again."

Julian returned the salute with grave formality Jared, travel safely. If circumstances turn dire, Jade- Immortal Manor will always open its gates, and I, Julian, will stake my life to shield you."

Tears were already streaming down Ranran's cheeks. She threw herself into Jared's arms, choking, "You have to come back alive. I'll be waiting!"

He held her tight for one breath, then pressed a gentle kiss to her forehead. "Wait for me."

With the promise spoken, he pivoted, met Luther's eyes, and gave a small nod.

Their figures blurred; two streaks of light slipped out of the secret chamber, out of Jade Immortal Manor, and shot northward without a sound.

Ranran rushed after them, stopping at the threshold only to watch the twin lights fade into the sky, vision shimmering with tears.

Julian stepped beside his daughter,

hand resting on her shoulder. "Ranan, that young man is no pond fish. His road will be payed with blood and storm. All we can do is trust him-and do our own part." .net She dashed the tears away, resolve burning where grief had been. "Father I'm going to grow

stronger-strong enough to help him

instead of hiding behind him

forever!

Pride softened the sternness in Julian's face; he gave a single, approving nod.

## A Warrior Undefeatable

After leaving Jade Immortal Manor, Jared and Luther masked their auras and raced toward Coldabyss City in the northern region.

Their speed was fierce; in only a few short days the snow-cloaked giant city rose before them once more.

Coldabyss City looked unchanged. Black-green walls of profound ice glinted under sunlight, and the gate bristled with guards.

This time, however, the two men met no inspection; Master Coldabyss had clearly issued advance orders.

They flew straight above the streets and descended toward the City Lord's Residence.

The gate guards, far from blocking the way, bowed with respectful silence—another sign of Master Coldabyss's instructions.

Led by a servant, Jared and Luther reached a quiet chamber deep inside the residence.

The room was carved from a single block of ten-thousand-year cold jade; its frozen breath sharpened thought rather than numbing flesh.

Master Coldabyss waited within, still wrapped in an ice-blue robe, gaunt face now carrying a hint of worry between the brows.

On seeing the pair, he rose to greet them, expression complicated.

"Mr. Jared, Luther-you really have returned."

Weariness roughened his voice as he gestured toward the mats. "Please, sit."

"The three of them chose seats—the city lord at the head, Jared and Luther opposite.

A maid glided in, placed steaming spirit tea on low tables, then backed out without a sound.

Quiet folded over the jade chamber; only the three remained."

Elder Coldabyss lifted a hand. Pale runes bloomed in the air and sank into the walls, sealing the room in layered silence.

Only then did he look at Jared, brows tight. "Mr. Jared, word of what you did in the Eastern Region Divine Punishment Hall has already raced through all thirteen heavens."

Jared did not flinch. He raised the thin jade cup, let the warmth travel through his fingers, and took an unhurried sip.

Fragrant steam veiled his eyes. "So the Grand Venerable's Divine Punishment Warrant has reached the northern region after all."

Elder Coldabyss let out a low breath. "It did far more than reach."

"On the very day the warrant was issued, a celestial envoy showed up at my gates," he said.

"They ordered me to cooperate fully, hunt down the criminal, and interrogate every cultivator with ties to the eastern region."

He paused, eyes sliding toward Jared. "The envoy specifically warned that the target might wield a strange gray power unknown to any current path. Mr. Jared, you have stirred the heavens too loudly."

Luther's back straightened. The chill in the chamber seemed to echo his mood.

"City Lord Coldabyss, the celestials have ruled the thirteen heavens by crushing every clan. They ripped out souls to smelt soul crystals—sins beyond counting."

"What Mr. Jared did was strike for the people."

Elder Coldabyss raised a placating hand. "I know, I know."

A sigh slipped from him, white in the cold air. "Yet their power dwarfed ours."

"They stood too high for most of us to even see."

"The Grand Venerable of the Central Region stood at Top Level High Immortal Realm Level Eight."

"Strong allies crowded his banner, and some whispered he was linked to an even higher plane."

"Oppose him and you courted certain ruin."

Jared set the cup down. Porcelain tapped jade, soft but final.

His gaze met the city lord's without blinking. "City Lord, I am not here to pull Coldabyss City into the storm. I have come to prevent misunderstandings between you and Jade Immortal Manor."

Elder Coldabyss straightened. "Oh? And what matter was that?"

Jared answered, "Lord Julian of Jade Immortal Manor was far from content with celestial rule."

"He and I had an accord," Jared continued. "Jade Immortal Manor would secretly back actions that weakened the celestials."

"During the business at the Divine Punishment Hall, Julian did not fight beside me, yet he opened doors and smoothed paths."

Elder Coldabyss's eyebrows leapt. "That old fox Julian... he actually dared? Was he not afraid the celestials would flatten his manor?"

"Fear gnawed at him," Jared said, "yet he was even more weary of being the celestials' lapdog."

Julian was ambitious. Subjugation choked him. The harsher the chains, the deeper the seeds of revolt.

Elder Coldabyss fell silent, turning the thought over.

At length he nodded. "That explained why Jade Immortal Manor has eased its pressure on other eastern factions lately. I assumed they were scheming."

"If what you said held, I need not keep my guard so high against them."

Jared went on. "More than that. Julian's daughter, Rania, was my cultivation partner."

"For public and private reasons alike, I would rather see Jade Immortal Manor and Coldabyss City in harmony, ready to answer each other if need arose."

"Cultivation partner?!" Elder Coldabyss blurted.

He swept Jared up and down as though seeing him anew. "Mr. Jared, you... you even won over Julian's cherished daughter?"

Luther supplied evenly, "The feelings between Mr. Jared and Miss Yu ran deep. By then, he was half a master of Jade Immortal Manor."

Expressions shifted across Elder Coldabyss's face before settling into wry resignation. "Mr. Jared, every visit from you is either a gift or a scare."

He rose and paced, hands clasped behind his back.

"If Jade Immortal Manor truly plans to resist the celestials, then a northern-eastern alliance would be a force the heavens must reckon with."

"Still, the celestial threat is vast. We must tread with utmost caution."

He stopped, turned back. "Mr. Jared, what do you intend next? With a warrant over your head, peace is scarce anywhere in these thirteen heavens."

"We plan to head for the Myriad Monster Mountain Range in the western region," Jared answered.

"The Myriad Monster Mountain Range?!" Elder Coldabyss's voice spiked.

Color drained from his face. "That place is a dragon's den now. The celestials are crushing beastfolk uprisings; war blankets the entire western region!"

Luther stepped in. "City Lord, I sense Ghost Clan traces within those mountains— perhaps kin still survive there. We must investigate."

Elder Coldabyss murmured, "Ghost Clan..."

His brows knitted tight. "The western front is a maze—celestials, beastfolk, and countless outsiders tangle there. Ghost Clan signs are possible, yet—"

He fixed Jared with a grave stare. "Do you two understand the level of danger waiting in the west?"

"The celestials stationed their Beast-Quelling Hall there, led by a Beast-Quelling Venerable at Top Level High Immortal Realm Level Seven.

Five Beast Kings have defected to him, and tens of thousands of troops scour the mountains for rebels."

"The beastfolk once rallied under King Altair, Lady Lysandra, and Lord Stoneback. They gathered a hundred thousand fighters, yet losses mount day by day."

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"King Altair fled, gravely wounded; Lady Lysandra is trapped; Lord Stoneback lies suppressed. What remains of the resistance now clings to life near Skyfiend Sorge

Elder Coldabyss walked to the cold-jade wall. A frosty finger traced lines; ice

bloomed into a rudimentary map.

"Here lies the mountain range; this hollow is Skyfiend Gorge. Celestial forces split into five flanks and oast. the Heavenbound Beastlock Array-there is no escape.

He turned back, voice iron. "If you go now, you walk into the net. The western defenses are tighter than those in the east, and the warrant brands you Discovery means certain death."

## A Warrior Undefeatable

Jared let out a low, amused laugh. The sound rippled through the still air of the jade chamber.

In the eastern region the Divine Punishment Hall kept five Venerables on constant duty, yet the vast western region depended on a single Beast-Quelling Venerable.

Even at Top Level High Immortal Realm Level Seven, one person could never rival five working in concert.

His eyes narrowed, a cool glint sliding across them.

The western beast race clearly lacked true heavyweights; one celestial Venerable already held them in chains. Worse, five Beast Kings had switched sides, trading pride for safety—no better than traitors in fur and claw.

"Senior, that is exactly why we need to go." Jared's tone stayed even, but the words landed like stones dropped into water, sending quiet ripples across the room.

Immortal Coldabyss tilted his head, puzzlement flickering behind the calm mask. "Why?"

"First," Jared said, "Nether must locate his kin. For him, that search matters more than anything else."

He continued without pause.

"Second, the celestials are butchering the beast race precisely because the resistance there burns hottest. The enemy of our enemy is a ready ally; if we link up, their fight becomes our leverage."

A sharper light crossed his gaze. "Third, while the celestials stare west, their watch on every other region loosens. Stirring trouble in the west buys the east and north both time and breathing room."

Immortal Coldabyss fell silent. Thought gathered around him like frost, thick and unbroken.

Only after a long beat did he murmur, "Your reasoning covers every flank. Admirable."

"Yet the journey remains a blade edge. The Beast-Quelling Venerable sits at Top Level High Immortal Realm Level Seven—far above the combined strength of the eastern Five Venerables."

He drew a slow breath. "Those Five Beast Kings are each High Immortal Realm Level Six or Seven, and command hardened armies. Two visitors walking in alone might as well be lambs stepping into a tiger's maw."

Jared answered with a calm smile. "City Lord, if I dared announce this plan, I already hold the means to see it through."

That steady smile carried a faint, gray shimmer. Chaotic force seeped through his pores, weightless yet vast.

The cold-blue walls responded with brittle creaks, and Immortal Coldabyss felt his heartbeat hitch once.

Memories flared—this very young man had climbed to level thirteen with nothing but Heavenly Immortal Realm cultivation, had even slain the Five Venerables of the Divine Punishment Hall.

And that unfathomable gray power... perhaps the boy really could bend impossibility into daylight.

"Very well."

Immortal Coldabyss straightened his sleeves. "Since your mind is set, I won't block the door. The western route is long and mined with dangers. Prepare for every storm before you set one foot outside."

He pulled an ice-blue storage ring from his robe and placed it on Jared's palm.

"Inside are Ice Soul Pills, glacial jade marrow, and several ice-aligned artifacts. The harsh western climate may make each of them priceless."

A sweep of Jared's spiritual sense revealed heaps of pills, refined materials, tens of thousands of top-grade spirit crystals, and several well-made ice-attribute artifacts.

The gift glittered like winter stars inside his awareness.

"Thank you, City Lord." He offered the words with firm, unhurried respect.

Immortal Coldabyss produced a

palm-sized, pitch-black bone shard.

"During my youth I charted the west I

The terrain may have shifted but most landmarks hold."

"Hazard zones and possible resource sites are marked."

Jared's mind slid into the shard. A detailed map unfurled-Myriad Monster Mountain Range, much of the western region and even several celestial strongholds up with faint red markings.

He clasped hands again. "This kindness will not be forgotten."

Immortal Coldabyss waved his hand. "No need for courtesy. Mr. Jared, be careful on your journey to the western region."

"If matters prove impossible, retreat to the northern region at once. I will always leave you a path back."

He paused.

"As for Jade Immortal Manor, I will notify several old friends to stop harassing eastern cultivators.

If Julian truly intends to oppose the celestials, the northern region will answer him in secret."

"Then we won't impose any longer."

"City Lord, we will take our leave."

Jared rose. "Our journey to the western region must begin at once."

Immortal Coldabyss stood as well. "I shall escort you."

Fine snow drifted from an iron-gray sky, the wind cutting straight through cloth and bone.

Fine snowflakes drifted overhead, carried by a razor-cold wind.

"Mr. Jared, Mr. Luther, travel safely," Immortal Coldabyss said solemnly.

Jared and Luther exchanged a glance and cupped their fists. "Take care, City Lord.

We shall meet again."

With that, the two blurred into twin streams of light, shot skyward, and sped west. Moments later they vanished where the vast snowfield met the edge of the sky.

Snow settled on his shoulders in a thin, silent layer.

Snowflakes settled on his shoulders, slowly building a thin, white film.

"Jared... the western Myriad Monster Mountain Range... celestials..." he murmured.

He spoke under his breath, complicated light in his eyes. "Is the sky of the Thirteenth Heaven truly about to change?"

A trusted elder appeared behind him and spoke softly, "City Lord, the celestial envoy has again sent messengers asking if we have found the fugitives."

Immortal Coldabyss turned, the familiar severity back on his face.

"Inform them that Coldabyss City has searched exhaustively and found no trace of the culprits. When news arises, I will report it myself."

The elder bowed. "Yes, my lord." He withdrew in silence.

Immortal Coldabyss looked west once more; expectation flashed in his eyes, joined by a thin thread of worry.

A slow breath fogged the air as he whispered, "Jared, may you truly... return alive."

## **A Warrior Undefeatable**

Jared and Luther launched from the black-ice ramparts of Coldabyss City, twin streaks—one gray, one jet-racing into the vast western sky.

Wind clawed at their sleeves, yet neither slowed; the western region waited.

Between the northern lands and that frontier stretched several hundred thousand miles of wilderness and fractured kingdoms.

Even at their fastest, the journey promised many relentless days in the air.

To avoid celestial patrols or hidden checkpoints, they chose the loneliest path. The Godgrave Mountains straddled the border of the northern and central regions. They followed its shadowed spine westward, trusting solitude over any safe road.

Legends claimed the range was an ancient battlefield where gods and fiends once clashed. Peaks speared the heavens, tips lost inside a choking sheet of gray-black death mist.

Inside that pall, air thinned and heaven's laws twisted. Venomous insects and feral beasts prowled unchecked, while damaged wards still flickered and silent spatial tears gaped, ready to swallow the careless.

Those very horrors made the trail perfect for fugitives; pursuers rarely dared venture so deep.

"Jared, crossing the Godgrave will take at least twenty days," Luther warned, his voice muffled within swirling black haze. "We'll meet no small number of dangers."

Black miasma curled from Luther's robes, forming a loose cocoon that forced the death fog to break and slide away before touching him.

Jared answered with action. A faint gray film of chaotic force settled around him; every corrosive wisp that grazed it dissolved, then flowed inward as harmless motes to feed the turmoil within.

"It's fine," he said, voice steady. "The hardship will temper my new strength."

He had reached Heavenly Immortal Realm Level Nine only days before. His meridians still sought balance amid the sudden tidal surge of power.

The merciless terrain offered the perfect forge, and he welcomed its hammering heat.

They tightened into twin comets and dove headlong into the battered range.

Peril pressed from every side once the jagged peaks closed overhead.

Spectral remnants of primeval beasts lurked within the murk; one lunged without warning, jaws of cold flame snapping for their throats.

The shale beneath a careless step crumbled, unveiling a rift that drank air and light. Farther on, a fractured battle formation flickered awake, loosing phantom arrows by the thousands.

Worse were moments when color bled away and memory rose instead, spawning grim illusions that clawed at buried fears.

The chaotic force treated fear and matter with identical disdain, tearing every hazard apart the instant it entered reach.

The lunging specter unraveled first, essence drawn into the gray vortex and refined as nourishment for Jared's widening soul sea.

With a casual sweep he poured chaos into the quivering rift; its edges knit like wet clay, sealing before the mountain could rupture again.

Ancient runic pillars eroded to dust under a gray drizzle, arrow storms falling silent inside a single breath.

The heart-devil mirages found no purchase; his will had been tempered through too many near deaths, and chaos kept each lie at arm's length.

Moreover, illusion itself obeyed him; a stray thought overturned the phantom landscape, scattering it like smoke before a gale.

Luther, however, stumbled more than once. Each time, Jared flashed to his side, severing fangs, sealing cracks, or burning poison before it could steal a heartbeat.

"Mr. Jared, this chaotic force of yours... it's almost too overbearing," Luther breathed.

Awe lingered in Luther's eyes as Jared dispersed a spatial storm strong enough to erase a High Immortal Level Five; the impossible sight left him momentarily speechless.

Jared replied with a mild smile and let the comment fade into the fog.

Even while traveling, his thoughts probed fresh angles-how else chaos might fold, stretch, or condense into unexpected forms.

Since breaching Level Nine, his grasp of the Chaos Grand Path had deepened.

The energy no longer served only to erase; hints of creation thrummed at its core, begging experimentation.

He tested that growth by molding chaos into flickers of flame, blades of water, even needles of lightning—each imitation weaker than its pure counterpart yet swift enough to catch an unprepared foe.

They pressed westward, sleeping in stone hollows by day and racing beneath moonlight, determined to leave no trail for patrols to follow.

Ten days bled away. By then they had carved a path into the range's gut, far beyond any whisper of civilization.

The death mist now thickened until it almost clotted; visibility shrank to no more than a hundred feet.

Rot tainted every breath, and even time seemed to slog, seconds dragging like feet through mud.

"Mr. Jared, there's an unusual energy pulse ahead," Luther said, halting mid-air, gaze sharpening toward the deeper fog.

Luther stopped without warning.

Ahead, the black fog writhed as if something under the surface had just drawn breath, and his gaze tightened on that bruised-gray knot of vapor.

Loose gravel clicked once beneath his boots and then went still, the rest of his body locked in a hunter's crouch.

Jared felt the disturbance at the same instant.

An icy, hollow energy seeped out of the fog—colder than the mountain's own death miasma, yet carrying the same ancestral scent—and its touch crawled across his skin like frost with a pulse.

"Let's take a look."

Confidence edged Jared's voice; he shot forward first, aura trimmed razor-thin, his figure cutting a gray streak straight toward the source of the pulse.

They skimmed over a low ridge made entirely of sun-bleached bones.

When the ridge dropped away, the view in front of them opened like a curtain yanked aside.

Here the fog parted, exposing a circular clearing roughly 100 feet across; the pale ground inside was completely bare and silent.

In the dead center stood a ruined black stone hall, its silhouette harsh against the pale haze.

The building's style was ancient and

brutal; weather-pitted walls bore carvings of howling ghosts and twisted fiends, many sections collapsed yet the remaining lines still hinted at former grandeur.

The same frigid death energy now poured from somewhere deep inside the hall, steady as a heart that had forgotten how to stop.

"This looks like... an ancient Ghost Clan sacrificial temple?"

Luther's eyes sparked. "I've seen drawings in clan records. The Ghost Clan spanned the heavens in the old era and raised countless temples to honor the Sovereign of the Netherworld."

His breath caught. "Never thought ruins like that would still stand out here."

Jared studied the hall, a faint crease forming between his brows. "Stay alert. Something's inside."

He sensed a presence lurking in the depths—at least High Immortal Realm Level Four—its aura tangled with rage and chaos like barbed wire.

Both men muted their own energy and drifted through the shattered doorway without a sound.

The interior stretched far wider than the exterior shell allowed, proof of spatial expansion magic woven into the stones.

Thick dust and splintered bone covered the floor; half-peeled murals lingered on cracked walls, still showing worship, warfare, and cultivation scenes of the Ghost

Clan.

Deeper in, a ten-foot-tall statue reared above everything else, ferocity frozen in stone.

The idol possessed three heads and

six arms, each hand gripping a

different weapon-blade, sword, halberd, shield, chain, and seal—the formatimage of the Sovereign of the Netherworld revered by the Ghost Clan.

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But time had butchered it: two of the heads lay missing and four arms had snapped away, leaving jagged stumps.

At the statue's feet crouched a living creature, hulking and tense.

The beast resembled an enormous lizard over five feet long. Dark-red scales armored its body, three serried rows of bone spines rose along its back, and a bone-hammer tail lay coiled with malignant promise.

Its head looked almost draconic, but not quite; acidic drool pattered from its jaws, boring fresh pits into the stone floor.

A heavier death aura than the mountain's own swirled around the creature, soaked with resentful wills—same origin, yet refined to a purer, more violent pitch.