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David and Ming Li returned to the dark alley in the western district of Jade Immortal City and found the abandoned hut.

The young cultivator was hiding inside, counting his Yuan Crystals. Seeing the two return, he was so startled he nearly scattered the crystals all over the floor.

“You two...you two seniors, I really only know that much. Asking further is useless!”

he said tremblingly.

David didn’t speak, but simply took out a larger cloth bag and placed it on the ground.

The bag was slightly open, revealing at least five hundred high-grade Yuan Crystals shining brightly, along with several bottles of excellent healing and cultivation pills.

The young cultivator’s eyes widened instantly, and his breathing became rapid.

“We’re not here to make things difficult for you,”

David’s voice was calm, yet carried an undeniable authority. “We’re looking for the forces within Jade Immortal City that are secretly resisting the divine race and the oppression of the Jade Immortal Palace.”

“Since you’re mingling here, making a living by selling all sorts of information, you must have connections.”

The young cultivator’s eyes struggled; he glanced at the Yuan Crystal, then at David’s deep, sharp eyes.

He then licked his dry lips: “Senior... this kind of thing could really cost you your head, and even your soul could be taken to Fallen Soul Slope.”

“That’s precisely why we’re looking for them,”

Ming Li interjected. “We have a common goal. These Yuan Crystals and pills are your reward, and also a thank you for the introduction. After the matter is settled, there will be a greater reward.”

A generous reward will surely attract brave men.

The young cultivator gritted his teeth, grabbed the cloth bag and stuffed it into his robes, whispering, "Come with me, don't make a sound, and don't look around."

He led David and the other man through the maze-like alleyways, sometimes climbing over ruins, sometimes crawling into hidden tunnels.

After walking for a full half hour, they arrived at what appeared to be the abandoned mansions of a wealthy family.

The houses here were tall, but mostly dilapidated, overgrown with vines, and lifeless.

The young cultivator stopped in front of a courtyard with a half-broken door hanging on it, and rhythmically knocked on the door frame three long knocks followed by two short ones.

After a while, the door creaked open a crack, and a pair of wary eyes looked out.

"Monkey, is that you? Who are they?"

a deep voice came from behind the door.

"Brother Leopard, they are... they are the ones I found. They want to join us, and they're tough guys."

The young cultivator called Monkey lowered his voice, "They brought generous gifts and are genuinely interested in doing something big."

There was a moment of silence inside, then the door slowly opened, and a burly man with a scar on his face stepped aside: "Come in, quickly."

The courtyard was large, and surprisingly, it was a hidden world inside, quite well-maintained, with faint traces of array fluctuations that isolated the aura and sounds from the outside.

A few cultivators were meditating or polishing their weapons in the corners, and they all cast scrutinizing glances at the newcomer.

The scarred man, Brother

Leopard, led them through the front yard to a quieter courtyard in the back.

Standing in the courtyard was a tall woman in a light blue outfit, her back to them, gazing at a clump of bamboo.

The woman slowly turned, revealing a beautiful yet spirited and aloof face, her eyes sharp as an eagle, her cultivation clearly at the fourth rank of the Upper Immortal Realm.

“Boss, Monkey brought two people, saying they want to join us,” Brother Leopard said respectfully.

The woman’s gaze swept over David and Ming Li, lingering briefly on David.

David deliberately concealed his cultivation level, while Ming Li’s fifth-rank Upper Immortal Realm cultivation wasn’t completely hidden; this combination seemed somewhat peculiar.

“Who are you? Why are you looking for us?”

the woman asked, her voice cold.

The monkey hurriedly stepped forward, bowing and scraping, “Sister Lianxing, these two seniors want to inquire about the Jade Immortal Mansion and the Divine Clan, especially... especially about the matter at Fallen Soul Slope a while ago. They offered a very high price. I don’t think they’re spies, so...”

The woman called Lianxing interrupted the monkey with a cold glint in her eyes, “The matter at Fallen Soul Slope is something you can inquire about? Monkey, you’re becoming more and more ignorant of etiquette.”

The monkey trembled in fright.

David stepped forward and cupped his hands, saying, “Fellow Daoist, please don’t blame him. I am David, and this is Ming Li. We inquired about Fallen Soul Slope because the two who were beheaded are likely my old acquaintances.”

“This enmity is irreconcilable. There is no turning back for me with the Jade Immortal Mansion and the Divine Clan behind them. I heard there are like-minded people here, so I came to visit them. It’s not about spying, but about cooperation.”

Lianxing stared at David, seemingly trying to discern the truth from his eyes.

David’s gaze was calm, though he tried his best to conceal the deep sorrow and icy killing intent within him, a trace of which still escaped, causing Lianxing, who had experienced life-and-death battles, to feel a slight chill.

“Words are meaningless

,” Lianxing said indifferently. “Who knows if you’re just bait sent by the Jade Immortal Palace to lure us out? We’ve lost quite a few brothers lately.”

“We can swear an oath to the Heavenly Dao,” Mingli said.

“An oath to the Heavenly Dao?”

Lianxing’s lips curled into a mocking smile. “In the Azure Nether Immortal Continent, where the influence of the Divine Race is deepening, whether the Heavenly Dao is still as impartial as before is still unknown. Besides, there are loopholes in oaths.”

David frowned slightly: “Then how will you believe me, fellow Daoist?”

Lianxing turned and looked at the bamboo grove: “Come with me, let’s talk somewhere safe.”

She led the way into the bamboo forest. David and Mingli exchanged a glance and followed.

Monkey also wanted to follow, but was stopped by Leopard Brother’s gaze.

The bamboo forest appeared ordinary, but upon entering, David immediately felt the space slightly distorted, and the flow of spiritual energy became peculiar.

After walking about a dozen steps, Lian Xing’s figure suddenly blurred and vanished into thin air!

At the same time, the surrounding bamboo swayed without wind, its leaves rustling, instantly becoming so dense that it blocked out the sun, as if transforming into a giant green cage.

A powerful binding force surged from all directions, and streaks of azure array patterns rose from the ground, like living vines, wrapping around David and Ming Li’s feet.

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“Hmph, as expected, you harbor ulterior motives!”

Lianxing’s voice echoed from all directions of the bamboo forest, carrying a cold mockery. “You dare to try and spy with such paltry tricks? Today, I’ll make sure you don’t leave alive, a perfect opportunity to unleash my newly refined Thousand Bamboo Soul-Locking Array!”

Mingli's ghostly aura surged, ready to resist.

David, however, raised his hand to stop him.

His expression was calm as his gaze swept over the shifting bamboo forest and the array patterns moving across the ground, and he shook his head.

"The array is not bad, borrowing the spirit of natural bamboo and wood, fusing the three elements of illusion, confinement, and killing. The one who set it up is quite accomplished in wood-based array formations."

David's voice wasn't loud, but it clearly penetrated the rustling of the bamboo leaves. "Unfortunately, while following the natural way, it has lost its true essence. Forcing change only creates stagnation."

As he spoke, he took a light step forward.

This step, seemingly casual, landed precisely on a tiny node where several wandering array patterns converged.

The instant his foot touched the ground, there was no earth-shattering roar, only a soft, shattering "crack."

Centered on his foot, the wandering azure array patterns trembled violently, then, like a long snake stripped of its tendons, rapidly dimmed and disintegrated.

The wildly swirling green bamboo around him abruptly stopped, the countless bamboo leaf illusions receding like a tide, revealing the bamboo forest's true form.

David took another step, his figure seemingly piercing through an invisible curtain of water, already appearing on the other side of the bamboo forest.

Lianxing stood beside a thick purple bamboo stalk, her hands forming a hand seal, her face still showing astonishment and disbelief.

Her proud Thousand Bamboo Soul-Locking Array, which had once trapped and killed several Upper Immortal Realm cultivators, had been broken so easily in a single step!

She hadn't even seen how he had done it!

In the instant she was stunned, David's figure appeared like a ghost, three feet in front of her.

There was no overwhelming aura, no dazzling magical light; simply, he pointed his fingers like a sword towards her brow.

Before his fingertip, the space slightly collapsed, a wisp of chaotic gray light flickering uncertainly, emanating a terrifying aura that froze her very soul.

Her protective aura was as fragile as paper before this fingertip; instinct told her that if this finger struck, she would surely die!

Lianxing's pupils constricted, her whole body turned ice-cold, and she didn't even have time to think of dodging or blocking!

His fingertip stopped steadily half an inch before her brow.

David withdrew his finger, stood with his hands behind his back, and calmly looked at her: "Now, can we talk properly?"

The bamboo forest was silent.

The killing formation and illusions from before seemed as if they had never occurred.

Only a bead of cold sweat on Lianxing's forehead and her slightly trembling fingers testified to the life-or-death terror of that moment.

Leopard

Brother, Monkey, and the others rushed in from outside the formation, and upon seeing this scene, they all stood frozen in shock.

Lianxing took a deep breath, forcibly suppressing the turmoil in her heart. Looking at David again, her eyes were completely different, filled with shock, fear, and a glimmer of hope...

The person who could break the formation so easily, who could bring her such a death threat, could not possibly be a lackey of the Jade Immortal Mansion.

If the Jade Immortal Mansion had such a figure, they would have been uprooted long ago.

"Senior... your supernatural powers are astonishing. Lianxing was blind and has offended you greatly."

Lianxing cupped her hands, her tone becoming respectful. "Please come with me, let's... talk in detail."

She paused, looking at the dumbfounded Monkey beside her, her eyes complex: "Monkey, you come too. This time... you've truly brought a remarkable person."

Upon hearing this, Monkey was first bewildered, then overjoyed, his gaze towards David filled with awe and excitement.

David nodded slightly and followed Lianxing deeper into the bamboo forest, towards a secluded dwelling entirely constructed of emerald bamboo.

Lianxing led David and Mingli into the dwelling, with the monkey cautiously following behind.

The dwelling was simply furnished, with only a few bamboo chairs and a bamboo table, but the spiritual energy was much richer and purer than outside, clearly indicating that a spirit-gathering array had been set up.

“Senior, please sit,”

Lianxing gestured for David to take a seat, while she herself sat opposite him, her expression solemn.

David sat down and, without beating around the bush, asked directly, “Fellow Daoist Lianxing, what do you know about the male and female cultivators beheaded at Fallen Soul Slope? What were their crimes? And who carried out the execution?”

Lianxing sighed and shook her head, saying, “To be honest, senior, this matter is a closely guarded secret within Jade Immortal City. Although we have some channels, we’ve only managed to glean some superficial information.”

“Jade Immortal Prefecture publicly stated that these two were executed for breaking through the barrier without permission and leaving the Thirteenth Heaven to travel to the lower realm, thus violating the divine decree.”

“Traveling to the lower realm without permission?”

David frowned. “Are there any similar precedents? And why such a severe punishment?”

“That’s precisely what’s suspicious.”

A sharp glint flashed in Lianxing’s eyes. “It’s not that cultivators haven’t secretly traveled to the lower realm in the past; most were fined, imprisoned, or given minor punishments as a warning.”

“To be so openly executed, and in such a perilous place as Fallen Soul Slope, using a Soul Refining Array... this is unprecedented.”

“Therefore, we suspect that those two seniors were not merely guilty of crimes committed in the lower realms, but rather that they learned some secrets they shouldn’t

have known, or perhaps they touched upon the fundamental interests of the Jade Immortal Palace, or even the divine race behind it, which led to their deaths, and even the possibility of their souls being refined to eliminate any future threats.”

David’s heart sank.

This matched his guess.

Senior Mu Sha was knowledgeable, and his wife was no ordinary cultivator. Their sudden return to the Thirteenth Heaven, and their appearance in the Azure Nether Immortal Continent where the divine race’s influence had infiltrated, might indeed indicate that they had discovered something.

“Do you know when they were captured? Where were they captured? Did they resist or leave any words?” David pressed.

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Lianxing shook her head again: “The exact time and place are unknown. All we know is that they suddenly appeared on the Jade Immortal Mansion’s wanted list a month ago, accused of trespassing and spying on forbidden areas.”

“The arrest process seemed quick, without causing much of a stir.”

“There are rumors that they initially seemed to want to infiltrate the vicinity of the City Lord’s Mansion, but for reasons unknown, they disappeared without a trace, only to reappear at the execution ground at Fallen Soul Slope.”

“As for whether they left any words...”

She paused, “The execution ground was isolated by an array, so no sound could be heard from the outside. Our people were too far away at the time; they only saw the execution process and couldn’t hear what they said.”

David was silent for a moment, suppressing the surging anger in his heart, and said in a deep voice, “Then, who gave the order? And who carried it out?”

Lianxing’s expression turned solemn: “The one who gave the order was most likely the current city lord of Jade Immortal City, the head of Jade Immortal Prefecture, Yu Wuji.”

“He is one of the representatives of the Divine Race here, with unfathomable cultivation, at least a seventh-grade Upper Immortal, and he wields great power.”

“Such a serious punishment must be given by him personally, or at least approved by him.”

“As for the specific executor...”

Lianxing glanced at Brother Leopard beside her, who immediately stepped forward and whispered, “We made inquiries from various sources and confirmed that the one who led people to Fallen Soul Slope to supervise the execution and preside over the Soul Refining Array that day was Fei Qing, the chief steward of the city lord’s mansion.”

“This man is Yu Wuji’s confidant, with a cultivation level around the fifth rank of the Upper Immortal Realm. He is skilled in formations and executions

, and is ruthless and vicious.” “The ones who actually carried out the beheading were two senior executioners from the City Lord’s Mansion’s Execution Hall, brothers named Tu Gang and Tu Meng. Both are fourth-rank Upper Immortal Realm body cultivators, specializing in executions, and their methods are cruel.”

“Tu Gang, Tu Meng...”

David slowly recited these two names, his eyes icy cold without a trace of warmth, “Where are they now?”

Lian Xing sensed the almost tangible killing intent emanating from David and her heart skipped a beat.

However, he still replied, “These two usually live in the executioner’s quarters on the west side of the City Lord’s Mansion, taking turns on duty. Today... according to our observation, Tu Meng should be on duty, while Tu Gang is off duty.”

“Tu Gang is addicted to drinking and gambling. On his days off, he often goes to the Drunken Immortal Pavilion in the West District to drink, and then goes to Qianjin Fang to gamble a few rounds. It’s getting late now, so he’s likely at the Drunken Immortal Pavilion.”

David stood up and cupped his hands to Lian Xing, saying, “Thank you for informing me, fellow Daoist. This information is crucial to us.”

Lian Xing quickly returned the courtesy, “Senior is too kind. The Jade Immortal Mansion and the Divine Race have been oppressing us for a long time. Senior’s cultivation

is extraordinary; if you can shake them, it would be our good fortune.” “However... although Tu Gang is an executioner, he is still a member of the Jade Immortal Mansion.

If he makes a move within the city, it will likely immediately attract the patrols and the City Lord's Mansion's experts. Senior must be cautious."

"I know what I'm doing."

David's tone was calm, yet contained an undeniable determination. "Ming Li, you stay here with Fellow Daoist Lian Xing and continue to gather more detailed information, especially regarding Yu Wuji and Fei Qing's movements, preferences, and weaknesses. Monkey..."

The monkey straightened up, startled. "Senior, please give your orders!"

"Take me to Zui Xian Lou. Identify Tu Gang."

David glanced at him. "Afterwards, there will be a reward, and I can also arrange for you to temporarily leave this dangerous place."

A struggle flashed across the monkey's face, but thinking of the bag of high-grade Yuan Crystals and David's unfathomable cultivation, he steeled his heart. "Yes! This junior will lead the way! I'll recognize Tu Gang even if he's reduced to ashes!" David nodded and said to Lian Xing, "Do not spread today's events."

"We'll discuss the follow-up when I return." After saying this, he said no more, signaling the monkey to lead the way, and his figure disappeared into the deepening night. Lianxing gazed at the direction David had disappeared in for a long time before softly saying to Mingli,

"Senior Mingli, what exactly is Senior Chen's cultivation level? Just now, with that single finger strike to break the formation, I couldn't muster the slightest power to resist." Mingli's gaze was deep as he slowly replied, "Mr. Chen's cultivation level is beyond our comprehension."

You only need to know that Jade Immortal Mansion... has probably really bitten off more than it can chew this time." ... Drunken Immortal Pavilion was the largest restaurant in the West District, brightly lit and bustling with activity.

Cultivators, merchants, and even some prominent rogue cultivators gathered here, creating a distorted kind of prosperity amidst the noise. The monkey, familiar with the place, led David to a shady spot opposite the restaurant, pointing to a bald, muscular man with several hideous scars drinking heavily by the second-floor window. "Senior, that's Tu Gang."

He has a scar on his right eyebrow, making him very easy to recognize," the monkey whispered, his voice trembling slightly. David looked up. Tu Gang, a burly man with a face full of scars, was drinking and playing drinking games with several equally imposing companions.

His voice was booming, and his behavior was savage. His cultivation level as a fourth-grade Upper Immortal was undisguised, radiating a murderous aura. Was this the man who had personally severed Senior Mu Sha's head? David's eyes were calm and unwavering, but his aura seemed to blend completely with the surrounding shadows.

Even the monkey, standing close by, couldn't sense his presence, only feeling a strange chill. "Go back and find Ming Li. The rest is none of your business,"

David said to the monkey. The monkey, as if granted a pardon, nodded hastily and silently retreated into the darkness. David didn't act immediately. He simply stood quietly in the shadows, like the most patient hunter, watching the noisy window on the second floor.

Time passed slowly. When the moon was high in the sky, Tu Gang seemed to have finished drinking. He staggered to his feet, exchanged a few words of laughter and banter with his companions, and went downstairs alone. Then he headed down a quieter alley, seemingly heading to the next casino.

David moved. Like a wisp of smoke in the dark, he followed silently. The alley deepened, the light dim, with only a few lights in the distance. Tu Gang hummed a vulgar tune, completely unaware of death's approach. Just as he reached the middle of the alley, at a corner piled with clutter, the shadow before him suddenly came alive. Without warning, a slender hand seemed to reach out from the void, gripping his throat.

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Tu Gang's drunkenness instantly turned into cold sweat!

His eyes widened, and the surging Yuan energy within him was about to erupt when he was horrified to discover that an indescribable power, seemingly capable of annihilating everything, surged into his body from that palm, binding all his meridians, dantian, and even his soul!

He couldn't move a single finger, and could only watch in terror as the figure slowly emerged from the shadows.

It was a young, calm man, but his eyes were like an icy pool, coldly staring at him.

"You...who are you..."

Tu Gang managed to squeeze out a few words from his throat.

David didn't answer, but leaned close to his ear and calmly asked in a voice only the two of them could hear:

"A month ago, at Fallen Soul Slope, were you the one who killed that man and woman?"

Tu Gang stiffened, disbelief and a deeper fear flashing in his eyes.

The other party had come for that matter!

And so directly, so... terrifying!

He wanted to deny it, but under the gaze of those double pupils, he didn't even have the courage to lie, and could only nod with difficulty.

"Who gave the order? Yu Wuji? Or Fei Qing?"

David continued to ask, his voice flat.

"It was... it was Steward Fei... who carried the city lord's order... ordering us brothers... to carry out the execution..."

Tu Gang felt like he was suffocating.

"Did they say anything before they died?" David's fingers tightened slightly.

"No... no... the formation blocked it... they seemed... very angry... glaring at Steward Fei..."

Tu Gang felt like his soul was being frozen and cracked by that cold power, "I... I was just following orders... spare..."

Before he could utter the word "spare,"

crack .

A faint, almost inaudible cracking sound.

The light in Tu Gang's eyes froze and dimmed instantly.

All his vitality, along with his soul, was completely annihilated by the surging chaotic power, leaving no trace.

David released his grip, and Tu Gang's burly body slumped to the ground like mud. Then, under the erosion of the chaotic power, it quickly turned into ashes, leaving not even his clothes behind, completely dissipating in the night wind.

The alley remained silent, as if nothing had happened.

A fourth-grade Upper Immortal was, in David's eyes, as easy as slaughtering a dog...

David stood there, the night enveloping his calm face.

First.

He raised his head, looking towards the direction of the City Lord's Mansion, where the lights were bright, symbolizing the supreme power of Jade Immortal City.

David's gaze pierced through the night, locking onto the relatively independent and heavily guarded complex of buildings to the west of the City Lord's Mansion, the Executioner's Residence.

The lights there were noticeably sparser, exuding a cold and murderous aura.

According to Lianxing's intelligence, the person on duty at this moment should be Tu Gang's elder brother, Tu Meng. Killing

Tu Gang is only the beginning. Tu Meng must also die. Neither of these executioner brothers, stained with the blood of Senior Mu Sha and his wife, will escape.

His figure once again merged into the darkness, moving like a ghost through the rooftops and alleys of Jade Immortal City. His speed was extreme, yet he did not cause the slightest fluctuation of spiritual energy, nor even the slightest disturbance from the wind.

His control over his own power had reached a state of perfection. The closer one gets to the core area of the City Lord's Mansion, the more stringent the security becomes. On the surface, squads of Jade Immortal Mansion guards, dressed in blue Daoist robes and exuding a powerful aura, patrolled in a crisscross pattern along fixed routes.

In the shadows, there were also hidden detection restrictions and warning arrays, densely packed like a spider web. However, in David's eyes, these were not impenetrable. His divine sense, like invisible mercury, spread out silently, precisely avoiding conventional detection points and penetrating the subtle gaps in the array's operation.

The characteristics of chaotic power allowed him to perceive and manipulate energy to an unbelievable degree. What he saw was not only the external form of the array, but also the flow of its energy and the nodes where laws intertwined. The Executioner's

Residence was located inside the west wall of the City Lord's Mansion, separated from the core inner area by several courtyards and gardens.

It was considered a relatively peripheral functional area, but its defenses were still not to be underestimated. The residence was surrounded by a light blue membrane, a basic protective and warning barrier capable of withstanding attacks of a certain intensity and sensing unauthorized intruders.

David stopped in the shadow of a rockery a few dozen feet away from the barrier. He did not rashly touch the barrier, but observed it carefully.

The energy flow of the barrier followed a fixed pattern, rising and falling like breathing. In the instant of each "breath" transition, there is an extremely brief energy "blind spot," an unavoidable momentary delay during the formation's self-adjustment.

This blind spot is so subtle as to be almost imperceptible, lasting less than one-hundredth of a breath. Ordinary cultivators' divine sense cannot detect it, let alone utilize it. But David can. He silently calculated the frequency of the barrier's energy fluctuations, patiently waiting.

The night wind blew through the garden, rustling the leaves, and a patrol passed by not far away, their footsteps fading into the distance. Now! In that one-in-a-billionth of a second, as the barrier's energy fluctuations reached their peak and were about to turn to their trough, David's figure moved. Without afterimages, without the sound of air being torn apart, he seemed to transform into a wisp of smoke, passing through that fleeting "gap" with perfect precision, and entering the interior of the barrier.

Throughout the entire process, the barrier's light membrane did not even ripple. Entering the courtyard area, the oppressive feeling intensified. The air was filled with a faint smell of blood and a malevolent aura formed from long-term immersion in killing.

The dormitory's architecture was rugged and austere, primarily constructed of black stone, standing out starkly from the other areas of the Jade Immortal Mansion with their otherworldly atmosphere.

David's divine sense cautiously extended like tentacles. The dormitory occupied a considerable area, comprising dozens of independent courtyards, most of which were dark, with only a few illuminated. However, the "duty room" in the central location was brightly lit, with two guards of considerable strength standing watch at its entrance.

Based on the rough layout and aura sensing provided by Lianxing, David quickly located a relatively secluded courtyard near a corner, which was now faintly emanating the unique blood and qi fluctuations of a fourth-grade body cultivator at the Upper Immortal Realm.

That blood and qi carried the same origin as Tu Gang's, but was more condensed and ferocious; it should be Tu Meng.

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As expected, a separate warning array was also set up around the courtyard, even more sophisticated than the outer perimeter barrier.

The array was connected to several key points within the courtyard; once triggered, it could not only issue an alarm but also launch an attack or trap the enemy.

David held his breath, his gaze fixed on several inconspicuous rune imprints on the ground and walls at the courtyard entrance.

This was a composite "Earthbound Spirit Net Array," combining sensing, binding, and earth spike attacks.

The array's core should be underground in the center of the courtyard.

Forcing its way in or violently breaking through would inevitably alert those inside, and might even affect the entire dormitory.

David once again demonstrated his astonishing mastery of array formations.

He extended his right index finger, a point of chaotic gray light condensing at its tip, extremely subtle, almost imperceptible.

He pointed in mid-air, and the gray light at his fingertips transformed into several threads finer than a hair, silently disappearing into the key rune nodes on the ground.

The power of chaos, the source of all laws, could also assimilate and annihilate them.

These fine, thread-like strands of chaotic power precisely cut into the energy flow channels of the formation, without damaging its structure, but rather performing an operation akin to "paralysis" and "misdirection."

They temporarily severed the formation's "perception" of external intrusions, creating several tiny, self-circulating "dead ends" within its internal energy cycle.

The entire process was silent, like the most skilled physician performing the most delicate surgery.

Three breaths later, the formation at the courtyard entrance was still operating, its light flickering, but under David's manipulation, it had become blind and deaf, oblivious to everything that was about to happen.

David's figure flickered, drifting over the courtyard wall like a wisp of smoke, and landing in the courtyard.

The courtyard wasn't large. In the center were three black stone houses. To the left was a stone platform for cultivation, and to the right was a small weapon rack with several heavy ghost-headed swords and chains hanging on it, reeking of blood.

Dim light streamed from the windows of the main house, where a burly figure sat cross-legged on a futon, seemingly meditating, but his breathing was slightly disordered, and his brow was furrowed.

It was Tu Meng.

His face bore a seven or eight-tenths resemblance to Tu Gang, but was more somber, with a deep scar on his left cheek that made him look particularly ferocious.

At this moment, his chest heaved slightly, and a fine sheen of sweat appeared on his forehead; he was restless.

Just moments ago, while circulating his internal energy, Tu Meng's heart had inexplicably pounded violently, and an indescribable chill had instantly swept down his spine, as if he were being watched by some extremely dangerous being.

The feeling came and went quickly, but it prevented him from entering a meditative state.

He and Tu Gang were twin brothers; although their minds weren't perfectly aligned, there was a subtle connection between them.

At this moment, he felt a vague sense of unease and emptiness, as if he had lost some important connection.

"What's going on?"

Tu Meng opened his eyes, a fierce glint in them, filled with doubt and vigilance. "Could it be that kid A-Gang has gotten into trouble again? Or..."

He recalled the execution at Fallen Soul Slope a month ago, the hateful and defiant eyes of the man and woman before their deaths, especially the man, whose cultivation

was clearly suppressed, yet whose gaze seemed to see through people's hearts, giving him several nightmares afterward.

He shook his head, trying to dispel the unease: "Hmph, two ignorant fools, even their souls were refined after death, what could they possibly do? They must have been too hasty in their cultivation lately."

Although he comforted himself with this thought, he still decided to go out and patrol, and check the security situation at the inn tonight.

He got up, walked to the door, and prepared to push it open. Just as his hand was about to touch the door, a sudden change occurred! Behind him, a barely perceptible ripple spread across the space, like an invisible pebble dropped into a calm lake.

A figure seemed to step directly out of the void, abruptly appearing within three feet of him! There was no killing intent, no wind, not even a change in temperature.

It wasn't until that hand, as gentle as a lover's caress, touched his vital point on the back of his heart that Tu Meng was startled to realize what was happening!

"Who?!" He was terrified, his muscles instantly tensing like iron, his protective aura surging instinctively, as he lunged forward, opening his mouth to shout and alert the guards outside.

However, it was all too late. The hand on his back suddenly emitted an indescribable, terrifying suction force and destructive energy! It wasn't ordinary spiritual power, nor was it chilling ghostly energy or blazing true fire; it was a chaotic void that seemed to devour, decompose, and annihilate all things in heaven and earth!

His powerful protective aura, before this force, was as fragile as ice and snow under the sun, instantly melting and disintegrating. That force penetrated his body, rupturing and disintegrating his meridians inch by inch.

His dantian, like a punctured balloon, saw its accumulated vital energy, cultivated over hundreds of years, dissipate wildly, only to be mercilessly devoured by the chaotic power.

Even more terrifying, this force rushed straight into his sea of consciousness, firmly imprisoning his terrified soul, which was just about to coalesce for a self-destruction or to transmit a message.

Then, like a millstone, it slowly crushed and disintegrated him! "Ugh... Heh heh..." Tu Meng's eyes bulged, bloodshot, his mouth wide open, but he could only utter hoarse, leaky hoarse sounds, unable to utter a single word.

He felt his consciousness being dragged into boundless darkness and nothingness, all his power, all his senses, rapidly leaving him. He wanted to turn around, to see who was killing him, but his neck was stiff, unable to even turn an inch. Through his blurred vision, he only saw the outline of a long, steady hand, seemingly containing the ultimate truths of heaven and earth.

A voice, calm to the bone, seemed to resound directly from the depths of his soul: "Sending you down to join your brother." Brother? A-Gang? A final flicker of extreme fear and disbelief flashed in Tu Meng's eyes before his consciousness completely sank. *Poof! * A muffled sound, like a bag full of sand bursting open.

Tu Meng's burly body, starting from the inside out, rapidly turned into a cloud of gray-black dust, falling down like weathered rock. Even his clothes and storage ring were eroded by the chaotic power, vanishing completely into the air.