

The Order 10031

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As a member of the Ghost Clan, Ming Li was naturally adept at concealment. Now, she rendered her ghostly aura invisible, closely following Chen Ping, once again marveling at Chen Ping's unfathomable stealth abilities.

About an incense stick's time later, the two silently approached the high western wall of the Jade Immortal Mansion.

This wasn't the main gate, and the guards were relatively weak, but faint defensive runes still flowed across the tall jade wall, and there were hidden sentries at intervals.

Chen Ping didn't choose to climb over the wall. He led Ming Li around to the base of the wall, where several ancient vines, their tendrils intertwined, covered almost half of the wall.

More importantly, Chen Ping's divine sense detected a long-abandoned, narrow pipe inside the wall, used to drain the residual spiritual spring water.

Due to years of neglect, most of the internal protective array had long since failed, and because it was so subtle and hidden, it hadn't been covered by the routine maintenance array.

"Go in this way."

Chen Ping transmitted his voice, a flash of chaotic gray light appearing at his fingertips as he lightly touched a brick in the wall hidden by the old vines.

The gray light seeped in, and several extremely faint "clicks" came from inside the brick, as if an internal mechanism had been quietly unlocked.

Immediately afterwards, a section of the wall, about a foot square, silently caved in, revealing a dark opening, just wide enough for one person to pass sideways. A musty, damp smell wafted out.

Without hesitation, Chen Ping slipped inside first, followed closely by Ming Li.

Once inside, Chen Ping touched a spot on the inside of the loose brick, and the opening silently returned to its original state, appearing identical to the surrounding walls from the outside.

Inside was a narrow, downward-sloping stone path covered in slippery moss, the air thick with a musty smell and a faint dampness.

The two descended several dozen feet along the path, where a fork in the road appeared ahead.

Based on the markings on the Lianxing map and his own divine sense, Chen Ping chose the deeper, more secluded passage on the left, almost half-blocked by collapsed earth and rocks.

They moved like the most agile pangolins, navigating the narrow, complex, and treacherous abandoned pipes and underground crevices.

In some places, they needed to subtly corrode the rusted iron fences blocking their path with chaotic power; in others, they had to carefully avoid fragments of ancient restrictions that still retained a faint sense of aggression.

Throughout the process, Chen Ping demonstrated an astonishing insight and control over energy and structure, always finding the safest and fastest path.

Ming Li followed silently, his heart growing increasingly apprehensive.

This was not merely a matter of superior strength; it required extremely rich experience and a frighteningly calm mind.

Just how many perilous situations had Chen Ping endured to hone such abilities?

After about the time it takes for an incense stick to burn, a faint light and fresh air appeared ahead.

Chen Ping stopped before an exit overgrown with weeds, his divine sense spreading outwards like flowing water.

Beyond the exit lay a long-abandoned corner of a garden; the artificial hills were crumbling, the pond dried up, and weeds grew rampant.

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In the distance, the magnificent eaves of the Jade Immortal Mansion's inner palace could be seen, but this place had clearly been forgotten for a long time.

"We're already in the abandoned area outside the Hundred Flowers Garden," Chen Ping transmitted telepathically.

"The Listening Pine Path is to the east. Go through this abandoned garden, then past a small bamboo grove, and you'll find it. Fei Qingruo is coming from Qingxin Pavilion; the Listening Pine Path is her only route. Let's go there beforehand to make arrangements."

The two emerged from the underground cave like ghosts, quickly disappearing into the shadows of the abandoned garden, stealthily heading towards the Listening Pine Path.

The Listening Pine Path lived up to its name. A winding bluestone path was hidden among tall, dense ancient pine trees.

The pine trees, each as thick as several people could encircle, stood for countless years, their branches gnarled and strong, their needles forming a canopy that dappled sunlight into fine patches, scattering it across the moss-covered stone slabs.

The jagged rocks on either side of the path added to its winding and secluded nature. The place was exceptionally quiet; apart from the rustling of the wind through the pines, almost no other sound could be heard, and no one could be seen.

Chen Ping quickly scanned his surroundings, his gaze sharp as lightning.

He chose a hollow at a bend in the path, flanked by tall artificial rocks and several exceptionally thick ancient pines. There were many blind spots, and the intertwined branches above created a natural, concealed space.

“Ming Li, hide behind that boulder and conceal your presence. Don’t attack without my signal.”

“Your task is, in case of any unexpected events—for example, if patrolling guards happen to pass by, or Fei Qing’s guards try to sound the alarm—you must immediately and discreetly stop them, creating chaos or misleading them to buy us time.”

Chen Ping quickly assigned the task.

“Understood.”

Ming Li nodded, his figure flickering, disappearing like smoke into the shadow of the boulder, his presence vanishing without a trace, as if no one had ever been there.

Chen Ping himself leaped, silently climbing a perfectly positioned ancient pine tree, hiding behind its dense needles.

From this angle, he could clearly see the area of about ten feet before and after the bend in the path below, yet remain extremely difficult for anyone below to detect.

Next, it was a matter of patiently waiting, and... silently making preparations.

Chen Ping stretched out his hands, the tips of his ten fingers simultaneously glowing with a barely perceptible chaotic gray light. He traced lines in the air, and countless fine, gray threads shot from his fingertips, merging into the surrounding air, pine needles, cracks in the rocks, and the ground.

He was setting up an array.

An extremely simple, yet highly targeted, temporary trapping and isolation array.

The core of the array was not lethality, but rather “delay,” “interference,” and “isolation.”

The array patterns, outlined by chaotic energy, cleverly utilized the abundant wood-attribute spiritual energy and earth-stone energy of the area, creating a field resembling a chaotic interplay of natural spiritual energy.

Once triggered, intruders will instantly feel the surrounding space become viscous, spiritual energy flow become sluggish, and divine sense perception be severely interfered with.

Furthermore, sound, light, and even energy fluctuations within the array’s range will be greatly weakened and distorted, making them difficult to transmit.

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Setting up such a temporary array requires Chen Ping to have extremely high levels of array mastery and control over chaotic power.

He must complete it without causing any abnormal fluctuations in external spiritual energy, and ensure that the array perfectly integrates with the environment.

Even if someone carefully scans the area with their divine sense, they will only feel that the spiritual energy here is slightly “congested,” and will not suspect that it is a man-made array.

Time passes second by second.

The pine trees remain unchanged, the light and shadow dappled.

Chen Ping, like the most patient hunter, becomes one with the ancient pine, his breath completely absent, even his heartbeat and blood flow almost stopped.

His entire mind is focused on sensing the movements at both ends of the path.

About half an hour has passed.

They've arrived!

Chen Ping's heart stirred slightly. His divine sense detected three swift but deliberately concealed auras approaching rapidly from the southern end of the path.

The leader, Fei Qing, possessed a deep and refined aura, carrying a chilling quality. His cultivation was clearly at the fifth rank of the Upper Immortal Realm!

Two steps behind him were two guards dressed in black, with cold, hard faces and hawk-like eyes.

Both were at the fourth rank of the Upper Immortal Realm, their auras synchronized and their movements in unison, clearly well-trained masters of combined attack.

The three moved at a moderate pace, maintaining a high level of vigilance.

Fei Qing's narrow eyes constantly scanned the surroundings, his hand seemingly holding some kind of detection artifact, which faintly emitted a spiritual light.

The two guards flanked Fei Qing, subtly protecting him from the middle, their sharp eyes scanning every corner where danger might lurk.

Closer and closer... thirty zhang... twenty zhang... ten zhang...

Just as the three were about to step into the array set up by Chen Ping, reaching the bend in the path, a sudden change occurred!

It wasn't an attack launched by Chen Ping, but by Fei Qing himself!

Fei Qing, walking at the front, suddenly paused, and the detection artifact in his hand flashed a faint red light!

His expression changed abruptly, and he shouted, "Something's wrong! An ambush!"

Before he finished speaking, without even checking what kind of ambush it was, he retreated rapidly to the side and rear!

At the same time, he flicked his sleeve, and several azure ice spikes, carrying a chilling aura, shot out in a fan shape towards the suspicious area at the bend in the path!

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These ice spikes weren't random attacks; they contained exquisite ice laws, freezing the air in their wake with white frost—their power was astonishing!

What a vigilant old fox!

Chen Ping inwardly praised Fei Qing, but his movements were swift.

Just as Fei Qing retreated and fired his ice spikes, a hazy gray sword light, seemingly breaking through spatial limitations, appeared atop the ancient pine tree where Chen Ping was hiding, striking first despite being behind.

Silently, it struck the ground of the area Fei Qing was about to step into!

Buzz!

A low, muffled sound rang out.

The simple array Chen Ping had set up beforehand was fully activated!

But not by Fei Qing; Chen Ping himself had activated it to its maximum power!

Instantly, the space within a ten-zhang radius of the bend in the path froze!

The air seemed to thicken into glue, light distorted slightly, and all sound seemed to be swallowed up.

Even the several sharp ice spikes that had shot towards him visibly slowed down, their surface gleaming dimming slightly.

The two black-clad guards reacted with lightning speed, instantly flanking Fei Qing the moment he shouted.

A pair of jet-black short halberds appeared in their hands, their runes glowing, ready to counterattack in the direction of the incoming sword light. One of them opened his mouth to howl, clearly intending to sound an alarm!

However, the array's effects had already manifested.

Their movements became sluggish, as if stuck in quagmire.

The guard who had tried to howl felt his voice blocked by an invisible force, only managing a short, labored "hoarse" sound, unable to form any effective sonic transmission!

It was this lightning-fast delay!

Chen Ping's figure swooped down from the ancient pine tree like a ghost!

His target wasn't the two guards, but Fei Qing, who was being retreated, slightly shielded by them!

Fei Qing's eyes flashed with a cold light. Although he was shocked by the ambush's strangeness and his opponent's precise and ruthless attack, he was, after all, a veteran of countless battles and remained calm under pressure.

He reached for his waist with his right hand, and a palm-sized, tortoise-shell-shaped black shield, exuding an ancient and heavy aura, instantly enlarged, blocking his path.

Simultaneously, his left hand formed a hand seal, and he chanted incantations. A dense surge of Xuan Yin cold energy suddenly erupted around him, condensing into a layer of crystal-clear ice armor covered in mysterious runes!

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The “Mystic Tortoise Spirit Shield” combined with the “Mystic Yin Ice Armor”—this was his strongest defensive combination!

He was confident that even if he took a full-force attack from a sixth-grade Immortal Realm cultivator, he could survive!

However, Chen Ping’s attack was not about brute force over skill.

His swooping figure twisted strangely in mid-air, like a fish, narrowly escaping through the gaps in the hastily swung halberds of the two guards, heading straight for Fei Qing!

Facing the Xuan Turtle Spirit Shield radiating a heavy spiritual light and the chilling ice armor, Chen Ping neither dodged nor evaded, but simply pointed his fingers like a sword, a point of deep, chaotic gray light, like the dawn of the universe, condensing at his fingertip.

He pointed!

There was no grand display, no blinding brilliance.

His fingertip gently touched the center of the Xuan Turtle Spirit Shield.

Pop...

A soft sound, like a bubble bursting.

The seemingly invincible, radiant Xuan Turtle Spirit Shield, at the point touched by his fingertip, abruptly lost its spiritual light.

Countless spiderweb-like gray-black cracks rapidly spread across the shield's surface from that point!

Immediately afterward, the entire shield, like a rock weathered over millions of years, silently turned to ashes, fluttering down!

Fei Qing's pupils constricted, utterly horrified!

This Xuan Turtle Spirit Shield was an ancient treasure he had acquired at great cost, possessing extremely strong defensive capabilities, yet it had been shattered by a single finger?!

Before he could activate his ice armor or any other means, Chen Ping's finger, imbued with chaotic power, had already struck the Xuan Yin Ice Armor on his chest with unstoppable force!

Crack!

A crisp cracking sound rang out.

The Xuan Yin Ice Armor, strong enough to withstand divine weapons, was equally fragile before the power of chaos, instantly disintegrating!

The terrifying power contained in the fingertip, capable of annihilating all things and returning to chaos, had already penetrated his body!

"Ugh!"

Fei Qing groaned, feeling an indescribable, cold, deathly, and destructive force surge into his body. Wherever it passed, meridians froze, magical power dissipated, and even the soul felt a piercing pain and a sense of utter despair!

His Xuan Yin magical power, cultivated for hundreds of years, melted away rapidly before this force, like snow meeting boiling water!

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“Stop him!”

Fei Qing roared hoarsely, desperately urging his remaining magical power to retreat hastily.

At the same time, a crimson jade talisman slid from his sleeve, which he was about to crush! It was the life-saving talisman he had urgently used to plead for help from Yu Wuji!

However, the two guards were now in even greater trouble.

Just as Chen Ping attacked Fei Qing, Ming Li, hidden behind the boulder, made his move.

He didn't reveal himself, but suddenly shot out two thin, almost invisible “Netherworld Soul Threads” from the shadow of the boulder!

These soul threads weren't physical attacks, but rather targeted directly at the soul—extremely vicious!

The two guards were struggling to cope with the pressure from Chen Ping and the sluggishness caused by the formation. They had no idea such a bizarre attack lurked in the shadows.

The Netherworld Soul Silk instantly pierced the back of their heads!

The two men froze simultaneously, a flicker of confusion and pain in their eyes, their movements instantly halted.

Although their Immortal Realm cultivation and unwavering will prevented their souls from immediately collapsing, making an effective reaction or sounding an alarm was extremely difficult.

Chen Ping didn't give Fei Qing a chance to crush the jade talisman.

As he pierced the ice armor and the chaotic power invaded Fei Qing's body, Chen Ping's left hand shot out like lightning, grabbing Fei Qing's right wrist, which was holding the crimson jade talisman!

Crack!

A teeth-grinding sound of bone cracking rang out!

Fei Qing's wrist was instantly crushed!

"Ah!"

Fei Qing let out a short scream, the crimson jade talisman flying from his hand.

Chen Ping didn't even glance at the jade talisman. His right hand transformed from fingers into a palm, striking Fei Qing's dantian!

This palm strike was perfectly controlled.

A surge of boundless chaotic power rushed in like a raging tide, but instead of immediately destroying Fei Qing's dantian, it transformed into countless fine, resilient gray chains, binding and sealing his dantian, meridians, and sea of consciousness layer by layer!

Simultaneously, another force surged directly into his soul, forcibly suppressing and imprisoning his consciousness!

Fei Qing felt a sudden darkness before his eyes, his strength receding like a tide.

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His consciousness rapidly blurred, the last remaining sensation being the cold, deep eyes of his opponent, eyes that seemed to contain an endless starry sky.

Thump!

Fei Qing's burly body collapsed to the ground, eyes closed, breath faint, already unconscious, completely imprisoned by the chaotic power.

From the moment Fei Qing sensed something was wrong and retreated, to Chen Ping appearing, breaking the shield, shattering the armor, and capturing the guards, and then Ming Li secretly intervening to restrain the guards, the entire process was swift and swift, taking only two or three breaths!

Fast!

Too fast!

And the coordination was impeccable, the calculation precise!

The two guards, injured by the Netherworld Soul Silk, had barely recovered a sliver of clarity from the piercing pain in their souls when they saw Fei Qing already collapsed to the ground.

A calm-faced young man stood beside Fei Qing, his gaze indifferent as he looked at them.

The two men were terrified, knowing they had run into a brick wall; their leader had been captured, and they themselves would likely not escape death.

They exchanged a glance, then simultaneously roared, burning their life essence, and charged towards Chen Ping without regard for anything else.

The short halberds in their hands erupted with blinding black light, clearly indicating their intention to die together, or at least to create a great commotion and alert the mansion!

“Stubborn to the end.”

Chen Ping snorted coldly, making no visible movement, only a slight flick of his sleeve.

An invisible, intangible yet as heavy as a mountain, seemingly capable of suppressing everything, descended with a deafening roar!

The two guards felt as if a towering mountain had crushed them, their forward momentum abruptly halted.

Their bones creaked, their internal organs felt as if they were about to shift, their burning essence was forcibly suppressed, and even breathing became incredibly difficult!

They exerted all their strength, yet they couldn't even move a finger, let alone launch an attack or make a sound.

This was Chen Ping's simulation of the "Suppress" technique using chaotic power, though not as refined as that of cultivators who specialized in it.

But with his solid foundation and the characteristics of chaotic power, it was more than enough to suppress two injured fourth-grade Upper Immortals.

Without further delay, Chen Ping swiftly stepped forward and, using the same method, imprisoned the souls and cultivation of the two guards with chaotic power, plunging them into a deep coma.

He quickly scanned the battlefield.

Besides the three unconscious figures lying on the path, there were no other traces.

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Although the exchange was brief and intense, the energy fluctuations and sound were greatly limited by the isolation and slowing effects of the array, and did not travel far.

The distant pine trees continued to rustle, as if nothing had happened.

Chen Ping waved his hand to collect the fallen crimson jade talisman, then quickly searched Fei Qing and the two guards.

He removed their storage bags, personal jade pendants, and other items that might carry tracking or identification, especially several items on Fei Qing that were clearly identification credentials and communication artifacts.

“Ming Li, take these two guards and we’re heading back the way we came. Retreat quickly!”

Chen Ping, lifting the unconscious Fei Qing, instructed Ming Li, who had now revealed himself.

“Yes!”

Without a word, Ming Li picked up the two unconscious guards, one in each arm.

Chen Ping checked the surroundings again, confirming there were no obvious traces left, especially the remnants of the temporary array he had set up, which he had completely erased with his chaotic power.

Then, just as they had come, the two of them blended into the shadows and quickly retreated along the path they had taken towards the hidden entrance to the cave in the abandoned garden.

The return journey was even more tense.

After all, carrying three living people inevitably hampered their movements, and they had to be even more careful to avoid potential patrols.

Fortunately, the path Chen Ping chose was sufficiently concealed, and he seemed to have an intimate understanding of the security patterns around the Jade Immortal Mansion, managing to narrowly avoid several routine patrols.

Returning safely to the corner covered in old vines, Chen Ping reopened the hidden entrance. The three men, along with the prisoners, entered one by one and restored the opening.

Only as they walked back along the damp, narrow underground passage did Chen Ping breathe a sigh of relief.

The most dangerous and crucial part of the capture was finally complete.

But what remained were the enormous challenges: how to get the prisoners out of the martial law-bound Jade Immortal City, and how to extract the truth from Fei Qing.

However, once they had captured the prisoners, the initiative was in their hands.

When Chen Ping and Ming Li, carrying the unconscious Fei Qing and two guards, reappeared in the secret room where Lian Xing and the others had moved,

even though Lian Xing and the others were somewhat prepared, they were speechless with shock at the scene before them.

They really... captured them!

And under the full martial law of Jade Immortal City and with the Inner Palace on high alert, they not only captured the most crucial Grand Steward of the Inner Palace, Fei Qing, but also managed to free his two trusted guards! "This efficiency, this method... it's simply unbelievable!"

"Senior... are you... are you alright?"

Lianxing looked at Chen Ping's still calm face, and at Fei Qing, who was lying in his arms, barely breathing like a dead dog. Her voice was hoarse.

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"I'm fine."

Chen Ping threw Fei Qing on the ground like a bag of trash. "Find the most secluded, soundproof, and well-insulated room. Wake him up; I have questions for him. These two guards..."

He glanced at the two men Ming Li had tossed into the corner. "Lock them up for now; they might be useful."

"Yes! There's a specially made interrogation room at the deepest part of the underground. It was originally used to detain and interrogate important prisoners. It's fully equipped with arrays; it's absolutely isolated."

Brother Leopard quickly replied, his eyes filled with awe. He stepped forward and, together with Monkey, carried Fei Qing to the underground.

Lianxing took a deep breath, forcing herself to calm down, and began directing her subordinates to handle the aftermath.

"Immediately activate the highest level of concealment array in the safe house. No one is allowed to leave. Leopard, go check the outer perimeter and make sure there are no tails."

"Monkey, you cooperate with Senior Mingli to deal with these two..." She pointed to the two unconscious guards.

Soon, everyone was busy with their respective tasks.

This seemingly ordinary safe house, like a sophisticated machine, began to operate efficiently.

Chen Ping went straight to the underground interrogation room.

He knew that extracting the truth from Fei Qing might not be much easier than capturing him.

This old fox's fear of Yu Wuji and the Divine Race likely far surpasses his fear of death itself.

But regardless, the truth behind the tragic deaths of Senior Mu Sha and his wife must be revealed.

And Fei Qing is the key to opening this dark door.

In the dimly lit, cold interrogation room, filled with various restrictive runes, Fei Qing was firmly bound to a cold metal chair by special spirit-suppressing chains.

The chains gleamed with a dark light, not only imprisoning magical power but also continuously generating a faint pain that eroded the soul, keeping him constantly conscious yet utterly weak.

Chen Ping sat in an ordinary wooden chair opposite him, with Ming Li standing behind him like a statue.

Lian Xing stood in the doorway, observing with a solemn expression.

Brother Leopard brought a bucket of icy water and splashed it violently on Fei Qing's face.

"Cough cough... Ouch..."

Fei Qing's body trembled, and he slowly awoke.

The icy water mixed with the excruciating pain of the chains eroding his soul instantly jolted him fully awake from his unconsciousness.

He struggled to lift his head, and the first thing he saw was Chen Ping's deep, calm eyes, eyes that seemed to pierce through all illusions.

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Fei Qing's heart sank to the bottom.

He recognized those eyes—the terrifying young man who had appeared like a ghost on Listening Pine Path, breaking through all his defenses with incomprehensible means and capturing him alive!

“You...who are you?”

Fei Qing’s voice was hoarse and dry, filled with undisguised weakness and fear.

He tried to circulate his magical power, but found his dantian as if cast in molten iron, his meridians as if bound by iron chains. He couldn’t mobilize even a trace of power, and even his divine sense was suppressed within his sea of consciousness, unable to be projected outwards.

This feeling of utter powerlessness, of being a lamb to the slaughter, filled this Grand Steward, accustomed to the power of life and death, with unparalleled terror and humiliation.

Chen Ping didn’t answer his question, but calmly looked at him and slowly spoke. His voice wasn’t loud, but it seemed to carry immense weight, each word striking Fei Qing’s heart:

“Mu Sha, Liu Qingyin. Fallen Soul Slope. Soul Refining Crystal, Jiaxu 73.”

Fei Qing’s pupils contracted sharply, his face instantly turning deathly pale!

Although he tried his best to control himself, the fleeting extreme terror and guilt he felt didn’t escape Chen Ping and Lian Xing’s eyes.

As expected!

He knew!

And the impact and shock this had on him far exceeded his expectations!

Chen Ping leaned forward slightly, his gaze like a knife, locking onto Fei Qing: “Tell me, why did they die?”

“Who gave the order? What are you hiding? Where is the Soul Refining Crystal now? Tell me everything you know. Perhaps, I can give you a quick death.”

Fei Qing trembled, his eyes filled with a mixture of fear, struggle, and hesitation.

He opened his mouth, as if to say something, but ultimately shut it tightly, lowering his head with an air of utter defiance.

He knew that once he spoke, not only would he surely die, but his very soul would likely suffer unimaginable torment.

He knew better than anyone the methods of Yu Wuji and the terror of the gods.

In comparison, the threat posed by this young man, though terrifying, perhaps... perhaps there was still a glimmer of hope?

Or perhaps, the other party was merely trying to bluff him?

“Refusing to speak?”

Chen Ping’s voice remained calm, but the temperature in the room seemed to drop several degrees.

He stood up, walked to Fei Qing, and extended his right index finger. A point of chaotic gray light shone from the tip, like the only source of light in the darkness, yet emanating an aura that sent shivers down one’s spine.