

Walker 651

Chapter 651 - Breaking The Bloodline Trinity Formation

Having more than one method was already much better than they would have ever expected, but they were not really proving to be good enough for them.

"The third method can be the easiest and also the most difficult one. Its effectiveness depends on the working of the Bloodline Trinity formation's innate structure. The way it works is that it compares two bloodlines when activated.

The first one is the original bloodline which was inserted in it as a base, while the second will be the person who is trying to open it. The formation then judges how close or how far or close a bloodline is to the other and will open if it finds it sufficiently.

Now, what we can do is to use a person that has a bloodline far stronger than the original bloodline used to make the formation. Theoretically, the formation should find the first bloodline inferior and deactivate itself." Jing Luo explained.

Lin Mu and the rest heard his explanation and were lost in thought. All of the options seemed hard to use at first, but the second one was the most possible to them as of now.

"Can't I just use meld and break apart the vault?" Lin Mu asked Xukong.

"If your skill was high enough, you would have been able to do it easily. But the Bloodline trinity formation is not so easy. It is interwoven between the self destruction formation, such that even if a single inch of it gets unstable, the entire thing will blow up.

If you wanted to use meld to open it, you would need to specifically isolate the layer of the Bloodline trinity formation. But you yourself know how your control of Meld is. You can only control blocks of an area rather than fluidly picking it apart." Xukong answered.

"I see... that will make it quite hard." Lin Mu replied.

"Though the third method to override it using bloodline could work," Xukong spoke.

"It could? You mean with my Great Slumber Bear bloodline?" Lin Mu questioned.

"Yes, it is a bloodline of an immortal beast and should be far stronger than any other from this world." Xukong answered.

"Alright, we'll try if it works." Lin Mu replied and looked at Jing Luo.

"We'll use the third method." Lin Mu stated.

"Mmm," Jing Luo nodded his head, knowing that Lin Mu had a strong bloodline that he didn't fully know about.

"I don't know what exactly seniors will be doing, so I'll leave it all to you." Mu Tao said, finding it all to be a bit too complex.

"Do you need to do anything else to get it ready?" Lin Mu asked Jing Luo.

"No, with the third method it's just letting the formations activating on their own. I may need to stabilize a few of them during the process though, as it can get problematic. You just need to go and drip some blood on the door of the vault." Jing Luo instructed.

Lin Mu nodded his head and walked up to the door. He took out a dagger and pricked his thumb with a little difficulty. It was hard for him to even harm himself, as his defense was quite high at this point. He first needed to deactivate mortal strengthening scripture and then forcefully cut his silk using a high grade spirit weapon.

With the cut, some blood appeared on his skin. Lin Mu quickly put it on the door and waited.

~shua~

The formations started to light up, and runes appeared all around the vault. Mu Tao and Mu Niu gulped their saliva, feeling nervous. Each opening of the vault was associated with trouble for them at this point and thus they mostly had bad memories about it.

Lin Mu closed his eyes and let the formation work, while Jing Luo monitored it for any abnormalities.

~HONG~

A humming sound was heard as the first layer of the formation unlocked, much to the surprising of the Mu clan members. But then came the interruption.

~DENG~

As if a metal plate had been hit, a screeching sound spread in the hall. More runes appeared from the formation array and formed into the shape of an old man. The old man had no facial features except a long beard.

The runes that made his body were glowing red and flickered from time to time. Upon his appearance, the opening of the formation array stopped.

"That's the original bloodline used to make the Formation array," Jing Luo informed.

Lin Mu narrowed his eyes and became a bit tense. In the next moment, his body stirred and an imposing presence exuded from his body.

~ROAR~

The roar of a beast echoed in the hall, the source of it coming from Lin Mu's body. Then, the illusory figure of a large bear appeared over Lin Mu's body and started to enlarge. This figure belonged to none other than the Great Slumber Beast!

The illusory beast looked at the illusory man with anger in its eyes. To it, the old man was an enemy that was blocking it from getting what it wanted.

~ROAR~

The Great Slumber Bear roared and raised its paw up into the sky. The long claws shined as if they were made of the highest quality steel and slammed into the old man.

~boom~

A visible explosion appeared as the old man was blown into smithereens. Mu Tao and Mu Niu were left gawking as they saw what was supposed to be their ancestral bloodline being destroyed, as if it was a paper toy.

~ROAR~

Having destroyed the old man, the Great Slumber bear felt pleased and raised its head before letting out a roar. While its roar could not get out of the underground area, the pressure exuded from it was felt by everyone in the city.

Their bodies involuntarily shuddered and some of them felt weak. Thankfully, this state only lasted a couple of seconds before fading away. If it had lasted any longer, people would have definitely started to faint.

Chapter 652 - Revival Of The Mu Clan

~WEENG~

The runes of the formation array faded away as the door of the vault finally opened up. The illusory figure of the Great Slumber Bear also disappeared back into Lin Mu's body, leaving behind no trace.

'What kind of a bloodline does senior have?' Mu Tao wondered.

'This power... it is not normal...' Mu Niu thought.

~huu~

Lin Mu took a breath upon seeing the door of the vault was finally open. Jing Luo felt relieved as well and checked the formations one last time to ensure that it was stable and it would not explode upon their entry.

"It's safe now, we can enter." Jing Luo spoke.

Lin Mu and the other nodded and carefully stepped ahead.

~shua~

The interior of the vault was illuminated by a small formation that created a string of lights at the top of the vault. This let them all see the items that were contained within the vault.

"Heavens!" Mu Tao couldn't help but exclaim.

The vault was actually not that being, being smaller than those of the Tri Cauldron peony sect. But that was understandable, as that was a vault for an entire sect, while this was for a clan.

In the vault, the resources that could be used for cultivation such as the alchemical pills, spirit stones and spirit herbs were present in plenty. Mu Tao was overwhelmed by just them as they would be enough to solve all of their debt even if just one percent of this was sold off.

In addition to that, there were also the most important parts of the vault, the records of the clan, and the cultivation techniques. While Mu Tao was looking at this, Lin Mu was looking for the puppets that the Mulong clan was said to have used.

"THIS IS IT!" Mu Niu suddenly shouted, a long scroll in his hand.

"What did you find, uncle Niu?" Mu Tao questioned.

"It... it's the manufacturing technique for the puppets!" Mu Niu said out loud. "We are saved! We are saved!"

Lin Mu quickly scanned over the scroll with his spirit sense and found a complicated methodology written on the scroll. There were hundreds upon hundreds of steps written on it, describing the process of the creations of a puppet.

Lin Mu had learned a little about puppets from the memories of the Lost immortal before and knew how they worked. Now that he compared those puppets describe in the memoirs, and he realized these were far more complex.

But in addition to that, they were also quite small in size. A majority of them were no bigger than the size of a hand and the smallest ones were only the size of a grape. One could imagine the detail that went into making a puppet this small.

In fact, one could even consider that making a puppet this small would be far more difficult than making a giant puppet. Lin Mu had read the cultivation technique of the Mu clan and knew that the Thousand Thread Breath Technique allowed them to turn their spirit Qi into threads which would then allow them to control these puppets.

In this way, even a Qi refining realm cultivator could operate a puppet for at least a hundred meter range. One would argue if this was the same as that of spirit sense, but it was not.

While their structure might be the same, their functionality was far different. In the case of the puppets, the threads were more like wires that supplied power to them; and in the case of spirit sense, each tendril of it was like a sensory organ that performed multiple functions.

That was the reason why refining spirit Qi was so hard as the the range increased.

"This all is rather impressive. With this, the Mu clan should be able to grow quite well." Jing Luo commented.

"If everything goes well, yes." Lin Mu agreed.

~pata~

Mu Tao and Mu Niu turned to Lin Mu and Jing Luo before cupping their hands in a salute and bowing their heads.

"I, Mu Tao, the patriarch of the Mu Clan, thank seniors for their help. You are the saviors of our clan, and we shall be eternally grateful. From here on, the Mu clan will do its best in assisting the seniors in whatever it is that needs to be done." Mu Tao said with reddened eyes.

For these past two years, he had been under a great amount of stress. He feared that the Mu clan will be coming to an end under his rule and he would become the sinner of his clan, which let the clan perish.

He had matured a lot over the two years, but even then, there were certain insecurities that he could not resolve. But then Lin Mu came and brought Jing Luo along with him, solving the biggest problem of the Mu clan.

Now that they had access to the vault, Mu tao was sure that they could take care of all their other problems such as the debt, and the council members on their own.

"It is our pleasure that we now have an additional ally to fight against the tyranny of Gu Yao and the Northern Tribes." Lin Mu replied.

"Hmm... our work here is not done yet though. We still have the council members to take care of." Jing Luo commented.

"Of course, now that this part is done we can go ahead with the rest of the plan." Lin Mu said before looking at Mu Tao. "I want you to focus on your clan for now and make sure that all of them are able to take advantage of the vault and its resources.

Your main aim should be to stabilize your clan first and then increase the cultivation base of everyone in the clan. Don't exclude the servants either and nurture them too, they will provide valuable support to the Mu clan now that it has shrunk by so much." Lin Mu advised.

"I shall do as you say, senior." Mu Tao humbly responded.

Chapter 653 - Generosity And Debt

Lin Mu looked at Mu Tao and his cultivation base and compared them to the thousands of enemies they would have. Even some of the servants of the cultivation sects might be stronger than them right now. And Gu Yao had way more of them under his control than just one.

~Sigh~

After secretly sighing to himself, Lin Mu shook his head.

'Even if they are willing to help us, at the speed they will grow, they might not be enough...' Lin Mu thought.

He closed his eyes and thought for a bit before coming to a decision.

"Mu Tao, does your clan have a cultivation area?" Lin Mu questioned.

"A cultivation area?" Mu Tao asked, feeling a bit confused.

"A place where the more talented clansmen can cultivate in a higher concentration of spirit Qi," Lin Mu replied.

"No senior... something like that we cannot dream to have." Mu Tao said, in a slightly sorrowful tone.

"Hmm... alright." Lin Mu said before turning to Jing Luo. "Can you set up a Qi gathering formation array for them?"

~thud~

After saying that, Lin Mu waved his hand and a large object fell to the ground with a thud.

~shua~

In the next moment, the spirit Qi of the area increased by over ten times.

"This..." Mu Tao muttered in shock.

"Heavens... is this what I think it is..." Mu Niu stammered.

Seeing that large spirit stone that Lin Mu had just taken out, Jing Luo understood what he wanted for the Mu clan.

"Setting up a spirit Qi gathering array might be better in the long term. As they are right now, I doubt the Mu clan will be able to resist the more tougher enemies of ours. Best we get them stronger as fast as possible." Jing Luo agreed.

Hearing the conversation between the two, Mu Tao and Mu Niu were both shocked. They were talking about setting up spirit Qi gathering formation array as if they were thinking of making some new furniture.

"How about we split duties, I'll go take care of the clans and you set up the formations here?" Lin Mu suggested.

"Sure, It'll take me a day or two. I'll also add some defensive formation array to the clan. The current one is just... inadequate." Jing Luo said mildly.

Mu Tao felt overwhelmed by all this and felt his eyes redden.

"How will we ever repay this debt seniors?" Mu Tao said with difficulty..

Lin Mu looked at the man who was nearly the same age as him and placed his hand on his shoulder.

"As long as we are allies, there is no need to repay. The best we can do is defeat Gu Yao and his backer, the Northern Tribes." Lin Mu replied.

Mu Tao nodded his head and rubbed his eyes quickly, before a determined expression appeared on his face. If before he was willing to help because of the atrocities of Gu Yao, now Mu Tao was willing to help just because of the generosity Lin Mu had shown him and his clan.

He didn't speak anything and knew that words would not be enough to express his gratitude.

'I need to do my best... no, the entire clan needs to do its best! Even if we are just ten people now, we all will be equal to a thousand individually!' Mu Tao affirmed his heart.

~shua~

In that moment, a spirit Qi fluctuation came from Mu Tao's body and made him tremble. Lin Mu and Jing Luo sensed it and raised their brows.

"That's some good news for the start." Lin Mu said with a smile.

"My bottleneck... it's gone?" Mu Tao said as he looked at his hands.

"Let's get you settled properly for the breakthrough. Core Condensation realm isn't that far for you now." Jing Luo said.

Lin Mu nodded his head and looked up at the ceiling, or rather at clan.

"Let the breakthrough happen in full view of the clan. It should do some good for their morale," Lin Mu advised, before disappearing into thin air.

Once Lin Mu was gone, Mu Tao was left staring at his position.

"Come on, we got a breakthrough to do." Jing Luo stated.

In the sky above the Mu Clan, Lin Mu let his spirit sense spread across the city. He quickly found the three clans that they had targeted and approached the one that was the closest to his position.

The clan in question was the Shu clan and was located right in the middle of the city. From the sky, Lin Mu could see the antlers that illuminated the Shu clan below. He could also see their insignia that was imprinted on the walls of the clan compound.

"Let's get started..." Lin Mu said before disappearing and appearing in one of the rooms of the Shu clan.

In this room, an old man was having a good time drinking wine and listening to a few women playing music on various instruments. Lin Mu had appeared right behind the old man and thus he had not seen him, but the musicians did notice Lin Mu there.

At first, they were stunned and lost a few notes, which led to the old man's displeasure. He had been enjoying the music, and it was going so smoothly, but now there was an awkward pause. The musicians were about to say sometime but then they heard Lin Mu mutter something.

In the next moment, their eyes glazed over and they fell into a daze. The chants didn't just stop here though, even while being very low in volume, they spread across the entire Shu clan, sending them into a daze.

The severing heart sutra showed its might after a long time and allowed Lin Mu to sever lives easily.

The first to die was the old man in front of Lin Mu. He was none other than one of the council members that Lin Mu had seen and also the patriarch of the Shu clan. Lin Mu's hand wrapped around the man's neck before snapping it in a second.

~Crack~

Chapter 654 - Two Clan's Down

A crisp cracking sound was heard as the core condensation realm patriarch died instantly. Lin Mu let the body fall to the side as he moved on to the musicians. But before extending his hand, he took out the communication jade slip and checked something.

"Hmm... not in the list." Lin Mu muttered to himself.

Jing Luo had checked all three clans and had made a list of the people that were absolutely needed to be eliminated. The three clans didn't all have people that needed to die. There were several innocent people living among them as well.

Besides, they didn't need the entire clan to die, rather they just needed to take out the key members of the clan so that they would be weakened permanently. Kind of similar to that of the Mu clan's situation.

Lin Mu left the room and appeared in the corridor.

~Crack~

~Crack~

His hand spread to the two directions and clasped the necks of the guards before snapping them as well. Step by step, he moved through the clan and eliminated the members of the clan.

In less than ten minutes, half of the Shu clan was dead.

"Now let's see where they keep their valuables..." Lin Mu muttered as his spirit sense searched for a vault or safe in detail.

In a few seconds, Lin Mu spotted a suspicious area that was located under one of the bedrooms of the clan. This was evidently the bedroom of the patriarch and was an obvious choice to keep stuff in.

~shatter~

Lin Mu directly uprooted the tiles that were fixed to the ground and revealed the small underground room that was filled with all the valuables of the Shu clan. Lin Mu knew that this was merely a small part of the Shu clan's fortune, as most of their money was in the form of property and fixed assets.

But he wouldn't leave this part of their fortune behind as it would still help the remnants of the Shu clan, which they didn't want. Even if they were innocent, it was obvious that they would want to revive their clan and help fulfill their dead member's wishes.

That would turn out to be a problem for Lin Mu and his plan, and thus it could not be possible to just leave it for them. Storing all of them away for later, Lin Mu took his leave.

"They should still be under the effects of the Severing heart sutra for an hour... should give me enough time to take care of the other clans." Lin Mu muttered to himself.

If the effect of the severing heart sutra wore out quickly, the Shu clan might have raised an alarm and that was not something that Lin Mu wanted. If that happened, the city would be in a sensitive state and it would end up making things tough for Lin Mu.

The remaining Shu clan's men were lucky that Lin Mu's cultivation base was higher and the severing heart sutra could work longer, or he might have ended up needing to kill the entire clan to silence them.

With one clan down, Lin Mu flew to the next one. This one was the Hui clan and was located to the north of the city. There were a lot of pleasure pavilions, taverns, and similar establishments located near it as well.

"So this is the Hui clan... they are apparently involved in the pleasure business and trade in specialized women for that... though it doesn't matter to them if they are willing or not..." Lin Mu muttered to himself.

It was now that Lin Mu was suddenly reminded of someone.

"Wasn't Yue sent by the Hui clan to the Alluring Wisteria Pavilion as well?" Lin Mu suddenly recognized.

For a moment, he remembered the woman who was bubbly on her own and had tried to serve him so hard, only to get rejected. But then Lin Mu realized that if she was in the Wu Lim city when the Red Tide happened, then she was probably dead by now.

~Sigh~

"I can only avenge you in this way for now perhaps..." Lin Mu muttered to himself, not knowing why he was even caring about someone who was only there in his life for a few hours.

In the next moment, his eyes turned cold as the chants of the severing heart sutra came out of his lips, spreading across the entire Hui clan.

This time, Lin Mu had a lot of people that were needed to be killed. The Hui clan in total had fewer members than all of the other members of the merchant council, except for the Mu clan.

In total, Lin Mu could only sense fifty members in the compound, but the number of servants they had was massive. They had over four hundred servants in the entire place, which put the ratio at roughly one member to eight servants.

Plus, there wasn't just one type of servant in there. There were pleasure servants and other such kinds mixed in there as well.

Some worked there voluntarily, but most were here as they were forced. Even if slavery was outlawed in the Fenlong Kingdom, bonded labor was not.

~shua~

A gust of wind spread as Lin Mu flew through the clan, killing the members with a single flick of his hand. If he wanted to, he could have simply sent a spirit weapon to slaughter them all, but this was a bit more mild method that they had tactically chosen.

Not only did Lin Mu and Jing Luo want to reduce the power of the merchant council members that were not in their favor, but they also wanted to strike fear into the hearts of others. That way, even if they had thoughts about betraying them, they would not dare act on it.

Plus, in the short term, they would not know that this was done by Lin Mu and Jing Luo and what was most likely to happen was that the fault will fall on the party that had done something similar to this before.

Chapter 655 - Introspection

Once the Hui clan was eliminated, only the Fei clan was left. This was the same clan that had sent a marriage offer to the Mu clan and had asked for Mu Bing to marry their son, in exchange for getting a part of their business and paying off the debts of the clan.

The Fei clan was also a merchant clan, but they didn't particularly focus on one business. Rather, they preferred to have partnerships in other businesses and own them partially while letting the other party run.

In other words, they liked to take profits but didn't like to work.

Most of the businesses that ended up in a partnership with the Fei clan did not do it intentionally, rather they were forced to do so. The terms of it were unfair and the Fei clan would only provide enough amount to make the business function at the start and then keep on taking the profits.

It was still fine if they were taking a minority of the profit, but they often went for partnerships where they took over sixty percent of the profit.

Of course, most businesses were aware of the Fei clan's predatory practices and avoided them like the plague, but the Fei clan knew how to pick their targets. Most of the people that ended up with them were those that were unfortunate and had no other choice.

Lin Mu was rather surprised that Jing Luo had been able to gather so much information about these three clans in less than a day.

"He's rather good at this, isn't he?" Lin Mu said.

"Well, we do know that he and his family were involved in what was basically a rebellion against the empire. If they had survived till now, it is obvious that they had some skills and had learned them very well." Xukong replied.

"Hmm... I didn't think of it like that. But it does make sense now." Lin Mu agreed.

Lin Mu looked at the Fei clan below and scanned the area. The Fei clan was located at the border of the city, which was a rather strange location for a clan as big as this. They had around four hundred members and nearly the same number of servants.

~Sigh~

"Let's get this over with..." Lin Mu muttered as he quickly got the location theft targets that he was supposed to get rid of.

In the Fei clan, Lin Mu to kill all members except for the children and also around half of the servants as they were often involved in the business as well. The more Lin Mu killed, the more he found it to be easier.

Especially since these were people that had no chance of resisting or fighting back against him. He was basically trampling on ants with the cultivation base that he had right now.

Plus, the severing heart sutra made it so that the Fei Clan members had no chance of responding at all. Lin Mu did not notice this, but his eyes only got colder and colder by the time he was done getting rid of the Fei clan members.

Within the Mysterious ring, the ethereal altar flickered slightly at this moment, but calmed down before it could be noticed by Xukong or Lin Mu.

By the end of the massacre, there was not even a single drop of blood spilled and yet hundreds of lives were taken. Lin Mu ransacked the vaults of the Fei clan as well and cleared them out before retreating to the residence of the Mu clan.

It had merely taken him an hour to finish killing all three clans, which now that he thought of was a terrifyingly less amount of time to kill such a large number of people.

"The power is immense... but also puts pressure on oneself..." Lin Mu muttered to himself as he entered the main hall of the Mu clan.

"Welcome senior Lin Mu!" Mu Niu along with a few other clan members was sitting in the hall.

It was evident that Mu Niu had already informed the other clan members of Lin Mu and why he was here.

"How's Mu Tao?" Lin Mu questioned.

"Patriarch Mu Tao is at the spirit Qi gathering formation that senior Jing Luo made earlier. He will be breaking through as soon as senior Jing Luo is done with the final parts of the formation." Mu Niu answered.

"I see... I'll wait till then." Lin Mu said before taking up a seat in the hall as well.

He closed his eyes for the time being and silently chanted the calming heart sutra, feeling a bit strange.

'Killing all of them was so easy and yet... why doesn't it feel that bad to me?' Lin Mu questioned himself.

Lin Mu wondered if he had gotten too used to killing people and realized that he truly had. He no longer felt averse to the act nor the idea of doing so, as he knew that his life would hang in balance because of that.

Lin Mu spent about an hour in introspection before he was woken up by a spirit Qi fluctuation that came from outside.

"It's time," Lin Mu said as he stood up.

Mu Niu and the rest stood up as well and walked out to the area where the new spirit Qi gathering formation was made. Jing Luo had set up the basic part of the formation and it would function for now, but if he wanted it to last a long time, he would need to work on it more.

But for Mu Tao's breakthrough, it was the perfect addition.

"Seems like your part went well?" Jing Luo questioned.

"Mmmhmm, it went smoothly." Lin Mu answered.

"There hasn't been any commotion though?" Mu Tao questioned, a few spirit Qi fluctuations coming from his body.

Lin Mu nodded his head before speaking. "they should be coming to their senses soon enough. It has been long enough..." Lin Mu said and looked in the direction of the city.

And just as he did, a faint cacophony of cries echoed from afar.

Chapter 656 - Mu Tao's Breakthrough

At first, only Lin Mu heard the cries, but then Jing Luo heard them as well.

"Oh? Just as I asked..." Jing Luo said as he turned his head towards the city.

"What's that seniors?" Mu Niu and others could now hear the sound coming from the city as well.

The sound of cries was mixed and distorted by the time it reached the Mu clan and thus they were unable to tell what exactly they meant.

"That should be the Fei, Hui and Shu clan coming to their senses..." Lin Mu replied, before looking at Mu Tao. "We should start the process, no use wasting time." He added.

"Of course, senior." Mu Tao said before sitting down in the middle of the formation circle.

Jing Luo had only made the initial circle the formation for now so that Mu Tao could take advantage of it. The rest of it could be added later on, once Mu Tao was done with his breakthrough to the Core Condensation realm.

The entire Mu clan had gathered around by now to witness Mu Tao's breakthrough and was quite excited and anxious at the same time.

After the tragedy two years ago, they had only been fed with one bad news after the other and thus their morale was down in the gutter. But now they finally had a little ray of hope that may perhaps lift their spirits.

Lin Mu was also watching on in interest as he wanted to see how a breakthrough to the Core Condensation realm actually happened. This was because Lin Mu had actually not seen anyone breakthrough to the Core condensable realm before.

Even during his own breakthrough, he was asleep and it was brought about due to the bloodline ability of the Great Slumber Bear, the Well of Slumber. Thus, he wanted to see how it would all happen and increase his scope of knowledge.

~shua~

Mu Tao closed his eyes and let the spirit Qi stir within his body. The bottleneck that had restricted him till now was loosed and now more spirit Qi could finally be condensed within his Dantian. The spirit Qi concentrated around him due to the spirit Qi gathering formation made it easy for him to gather and refine.

In less than ten minutes, Mu Tao had refined the necessary liquid spirit Qi needed to reach the absolute peak of the Qi refining realm. Lin Mu was watching the man with his spirit sense to see his progress as well.

It was here that he saw the unique effect of the Thousand Thread Spirit breath technique that the Mu clan used. The spirit Qi within their body did not exist in the form of spirit Qi wisps, but rather in the form of strings.

The same spherical wisps were morphed into the form of a string and flowed through their meridians and accumulated in the Dantian. Within Mu Tao's body, the strings had reached the absolute peak, and they started to join up.

The process started with a random string that floated within the Dantian but it soon, spread to the others. Soon the entire spirit Qi sea within the Dantian started to spin as string after string joined up until a very long string was formed.

But this was just the starting as this long string started to spin in the Dantian until it turned into what looked like a ball of yarn. Looking at this, Lin Mu couldn't help but raise his eyes as it was different from normal core condensation realm breakthrough.

What normally happened was that a continuous spinning vortex formed that kept on spinning till all the spirit Qi was involved in it. This process was called the consolidation of spirit Qi and could be considered to be the halfway point to a complete breakthrough.

The Ball of yarn in Mu Tao's Dantian kept on spinning and started to compress. More pressure was applied by the external spirit Qi, that was trying to rush into his body and Dantian as well.

With each passing minute, the compression kept on increasing and soon reached a limit.

~HONG~

The Ball of yarn was suddenly compressed into the size of a marble. This kept on shrinking the more it spun, and about thirty minutes later, it had reached the size of a tiny pea.

The color of the Core was a pale white, the same as that of the others, but there were multiple striations on the entire core. If one looked at it closely, they would find that the core looked like a crystal piece that had been carved to look like a tiny ball of yarn.

And with this, the breakthrough of Mu Tao successfully completed.

~shua~

The spirit Qi infusion started from this point and more and more spirit Qi flowed into his body from the air. His Dantian, that had become empty of spirit Qi upon being converted into a core, was filled back again.

At first, there were only spirit Qi wisps that floated around, but as they circulated between his meridians and Dantian, they elongated to become strings back again. These strings further kept on being compressed until liquefying into liquid spirit Qi.

"That was faster than expected," Mu Niu spoke.

"With the formation array, of course, it was going to be fast. The stabilization of his core shouldn't take long either." Jing Luo commented.

All the other members of the clan were closely observing Mu Tao and taking notes in their minds. They knew they had to break through to the core condensation realm soon as well and picked a lot of tips from Mu Tao's breakthrough.

Lin Mu also nodded his head upon seeing all this and felt satisfied by it all. This was a rather smooth breakthrough, and he had gotten to learn some new things as well. But just as he was done with this, Lin Mu felt the communication jade slip vibrate.

He took it out of the ring and held it to see what was the message.

"The city is going crazy. Three clans have been slaughtered!" Jingming Shang's nervous voice was heard.

Chapter 657 - Panic At The City

Upon hearing Jingming Shang's message, Lin Mu suddenly realized something.

"Um... we forgot to inform Jingming Shang..." Lin Mu spoke.

"About what?" Jing Luo questioned.

"The three clans," Lin Mu answered.

Jing Luo finally felt it click in his mind and couldn't help but chuckle.

"And what's he saying now?" Jing Luo asked, trying to hold back his laughter.

"He sounds quite nervous." Lin Mu replied.

"You should go meet up, I'll finish up the work here." Jing Luo stated.

"Alright. Though watch out for surprises, we don't know how the other members will respond and Gu Yao too." Lin Mu said before disappearing.

It was a shock to the other members of the Mu clan to see Lin Mu disappear like this. Unlike Mu Tao and Mu Niu they did not know the reason behind it and thus were quite confused.

Alas for them they would not be getting an explanation anytime soon and thus they would have to speculate on their own.

Lin Mu reappeared in the sky above the Jiao Long city and observed the current situation of the city. There were people screaming and crying in a lot of places, with guards running around trying to control it all.

Lin Mu's spirit sense spread around to see the scene of the three clans that he had killed and saw most of the people left there were terrified and crying. Some of the stronger members of the clans that were spared were angry and were wondering how it all happened.

It was now that Lin Mu heard something that made him smile.

"It must be the same people that killed the Mu clan! Only they can do something like this and get away!" Someone in the Shu clan said.

It didn't take long for his words to spread amongst the survivors and from there to the guards of the city. Lin Mu calmly stood in the air while listening to the entire city's voices. The commoners though were the ones that were the least bothered.

"Haha! It was bound to happen on day!" A middle-aged port worker said.

"This is divine retribution I say! What killers like Mu clan? Do you think anyone can kill all three clans at the same time without leaving any traces?"

"This is the judgment of the heavens!" An one eyed old man said out loud.

"Careful you two!" A man shouted.

"Watch your tongues! If the guards hear you, you two will be arrested and killed without much thought." A woman near them spoke.

"Ahah! Do you think I care about that? Those three clans were the worst among the council and have been causing problems for a long time.

"They sank my business, sold Ah Lau's daughter and killed my grandsons too! They deserved it all!" The old man spoke out loud fearlessly.

Lin Mu had already heard about the atrocities of the three clans from Jing Luo but hearing it first hand was far more impressionable. He furrowed his brows and let his spirit sense move towards the other clans.

'Where are the council members now?' Lin Mu wondered unable to find them.

"Perhaps Jingming Shang will know better." Lin Mu muttered to himself before going towards his residence.

In less than a minute, Lin Mu was at Jingming Shang's beach side residence. He could already tell that the man was sitting inside while nervously flipping through registers and muttering to himself.

~shua~

"EEK! Don't kill me!" Jingming Shang yelled as he suddenly felt someone behind him.

"Calm down, it's me." Lin Mu spoke.

~pew~

"Senior! You scared the life out of me!" Jingming Shang complained.

"Ah, sorry." Lin Mu causally replied and sat down.

"Is the Mu clan with us now?" Jingming Shang questioned.

"Yes, they are allied with us now and we will be helping them solve some problems." Lin Mu replied.

"I see... But we have a bigger problem at hand, it seems like Gu Yao has acted again. The Hui, Shu and Fei clans have had a majority of their members killed!" Jingming Shang said while trembling.

"About that..." Lin Mu was about to speak but was interrupted.

"I think Gu Yao has gotten impatient and killed the three clans because they did not join his cause with Shantung and has now sent a message!" Jingming Shang speculated.

"No wait, that's not..." Lin Mu was interrupted again.

"I think we need to act quickly, if Gu Yao has already acted then he may be coming for me soon too!" Jingming Shang continued spewing his words.

~Sigh~

Lin Mu shook his head and chanted the severing heart sutra.

"We shoul—" Before Jingming Shang could continue, he was sent into a daze and made to forcibly stop.

Seeing that he had shut up, Lin Mu stopped chanting the severing heart sutra and looked at Jingming Shang.

"Now then, let me tell you what happened. It's not Gu Yao who killed the three clans, it was me." Lin Mu revealed

Jingming Shang who had finally heard it all was surprised, to say the least, but the effect of the severing heart sutra did not let him display that on his face nor act on it. Lin Mu was at least thankful for that.

"You did senior? Why?" Jingming Shang questioned.

"Is that even a question? Have you seen what the commoners are talking about them? And do you know what they have been doing till now?" Lin Mu counter questioned.

Jingming Shang went silent for a bit before nodding his head.

"I understand... but killing all three without leaving any signs... that's terrifying." Jingming Shang muttered.

He finally understood what kind of a person he was dealing with.

'Thankfully I'm on his side... or I would not even know how I died...' Jingming Shang thought to himself.

~huh~

Jingming Shang took a deep breath to calm himself down and looked at Lin Mu.

"So what are we to do now?" he asked.

"Well, you will be taking over the businesses of the three clans now that they are out of commission. I hope you can do that at least?" Lin Mu replied.

Chapter 658 - The Panic Continues

Hearing Lin Mu's words, Jingming Shang's eyes lit up.

"Of course, senior! You can leave it to me!" Jingming Shang said while thumping his chest.

'He really changed quickly upon hearing business, huh?' Lin Mu thought to himself.

"With the higher ups of the three clans gone, the remaining members of the clan would be unable to do much. The Hui clan is pretty much entirely gone, so they will be the easiest to take over." Jingming Shang spoke.

"About the Hui clan... it would be better to dismantle their businesses and free the bound laborers." Lin Mu spoke in a straight tone.

Jingming Shang immediately settled down and nodded his head.

"I'll free them and liquidate their assets. The public opinion about this is bad anyway and will bring misfortune to the business." Jingming Shang replied quickly.

Lin Mu nodded his head and spoke, "you can do what you want with the rest. Oh, and also use some of the assets gained from these clans to clear out the debt of Mu clan."

"That's actually not a problem, senior as there is barely any debt left for the Mu clan, with the demise of the three clans.

About seventy percent of their debt was from the three clans, while the rest thirty percent is split among other lenders spread around the empire. We can just forget about the seventy percent debt and pay the remaining thirty." Jingming Shang replied.

"Oh? Is that so... well, it just makes it easier for us then." Lin Mu nodded his head.

Lin Mu had not expected to get another pleasant surprise out of killing the three clans.

"What happened with joining the council in their task? Did you get that part sorted?" Lin Mu questioned, remembering the task Jingming Shang was given.

"Ah, yes. That went without a hitch. I just told Shantung that I did a little thinking and decided that this may be profitable in the long term. He accepted it right away and didn't really doubt me." Jingming Shang answered.

"Good... and what about Miss Fen?" Lin Mu questioned further.

"Hmm... Miss Fen has left the city for the time being and has gone to her clan. The Fen clan is located about a hundred kilometers to the south west." Jingming Shang answered.

"Hmm, so there is a chance that she may come back after hearing what happened in the city?" Lin Mu questioned.

"I doubt it. If anything, there is a greater chance she may instead get her clan to seal up, till things settle down in the city. She will probably have the same conclusion that what happened to the Mu clan was repeating and that Gu Yao is making an example of the three clans." Jingming Shang speculated.

Lin Mu thought to himself for a bit before speaking.

"Keep tabs on her and inform me if anything happens. We may need to visit the Fen clan ourselves later... but that will come after we get the records that they need, sorted out." Lin Mu stated.

"Okay, senior. But does this mean you were able to get the Mu clan's inheritance?" Jingming Shang questioned feline curious.

"Yes, we did. All that's left is to sort through it and find the right record. Once that is done, we'll go meet the Fen clan." Lin Mu replied.

"And what do you want me to act like right now? Is there anything specific you want?" Jingming Shang questioned.

"Umm... just act as you were before I came here. We don't want the other merchant council members to think that you have any idea about what truly happened. Let them think that it was Gu Yao that did it and sow doubts." Lin Mu answered.

"I'll do as you say, senior. But I'm sure Shantung will be suspicious about this all and investigate all that happened till now. With his resources, there is a chance he might be able to find some clues." Jingming Shang spoke.

"He actually did something today... sent a few people to attack the Mu clan." Lin Mu replied.

"Huh? He did already? Didn't think he would be this impatient." Jingming Shang replied.

"Hmm... we now know that he's probably being pressured by Gu Yao, or whoever is assigned to him right now. Gu Yao himself won't be the one giving orders and it should be someone below him." Lin Mu stated.

Jingming Shang nodded his head before speaking, "I'll get started then. Since the city is still in a panic, it's the right time to fish in the muddied waters."

"Do what you feel is the best. Inform me if something comes up. I'll be at the Mu clan in the meantime, Jing Luo is there as well." Lin Mu informed before disappearing.

Once Lin Mu was gone, Jingming Shang smiled to himself and laughed to himself.

"Never expected, I'll get to see the fall of the merchant council like this." Jingming Shang said while laughing.

Lin Mu did another scan of the city while observing to see what was happening. The guards were still running around trying to control the situation, while the commoners had mixed reactions.

Most of them were now hiding within their houses even if they were happy about the situations as the guards would arrest them for 'spreading rumors'. It was night time anyway and thus most of the workers were getting off work now.

Only a few that worked on the night boats were still out at the port. The night boats would go out for the fish that came out only at night. Plus, there were some trade ships that would come to the port at night and stay there to unload their goods.

But it was obvious tonight they were not going to get much work done.

Having observed enough, Lin Mu went to the building of the merchant council and found it to be empty as well. No servants could be seen there, either.

"Hmm... seems like this is enough to keep them in fear for a while. Our work starts now..."

Chapter 659 - Breakdown Of The Council

It had been about a week since the three clans, Hui, Shu and Fei had been exterminated from the Jiao Long city.

Tensions were rising and falling every day and most commoners were certainly more happy than before, even if their daily life had become a bit more difficult due to the strict checks by the guards.

Because the murders of the three clans had gone completely unnoticed, a significant part of it was blamed on the guards as well, and thus they were under pressure to perform. Hence, they ended up targeting the commoners and were convinced that the commoners knew something but were not revealing it.

Plus, it didn't help that the commoners were in the favor of the three clans being exterminated either. The remaining clans of the merchant council had gone into hiding, with only Shantung and Jingming Shang staying in the opening.

After the massacre, just as Lin Mu had guessed, the blame had fallen upon none other than Gu Yao who was the supposed backer of Shantung. The other members, including Jingming Shang, were worried and asked Shantung to ask their backer if they had done this.

Shantung had assured them that he would get to the bottom of it and that it would not be his backer that did this. On the surface, he appeared to be confident, but when Lin Mu and Jing Luo spied on him, they realize he was no less nervous than the others.

The thing that troubled Shantung the most was the fact that his supposed backer had broken off all contact with him. He was not responding to his messages, no matter what channels they used.

Plus, since they were mostly in the shadows since the start, Shantung could not openly ask for them either. Thus to preserve his face and authority, he made the other members believe that the backer was still there and that he was just waiting for their response.

As two, three, and four days passed, Shantung got more and more unsure about his backer's intentions and now that an entire week had passed even he started doubting if it really was his backer who had done all this.

It also didn't help that the assassins he had sent to the Mu clan never reached there. He had even sent some scouts to keep an eye on the Mu clan, but the only news he got was that the Mu clan had sealed themselves up like the other clans as well.

Plus, the day his assassins had disappeared and the massacre of the three clans had happened was on the same day. It left him no proper timeline to estimate who could be behind it.

With Lin Mu and Jing Luo's planning, it had made it so that now no one in the merchant council trusted each other. They doubted if it was any one of them that killed the three clans, but then they also knew the fact that none of the three clans had power like this.

After all, even a Nascent Soul realm cultivator would end up causing quite a bit of commotion before being able to kill so many people. Plus, when the survivors of the three clans were questioned about how did they not see anything, they all said the same thing — it happened in an instant.

With the effects of the severing heart sutra, the survivors saw everything normally one second, and in the next second; they were surrounded by dead bodies of their clansmen. It was like a terrifying nightmare that just wouldn't end for them.

"Here are the documents for the remaining businesses," Jingming Shang said, prompting Lin Mu to open his eyes.

He had been sitting in the Mu clan and contemplating the events of the past week.

Lin Mu took the documents and quickly read through them before handing them to Mu Tao who was sitting next to him. The young man took the documents with trembling hands and read through them before his eyes reddened.

"Thank you senior Lin Mu, brother Jingming Shang." Mu Tao said with gratitude.

"No need for that. This is just my end of the bargain. We still have a few more steps to go. How are the other clansmen doing?" Lin Mu replied.

Mu Tao quickly rubbed his eyes and calmed himself.

"With the businesses added from the Shu and Fei clan, we won't really have a problem in supplies and our range of informants has greatly expanded. Also, with the resources senior Lin Mu provided along with the formation array made by Senior Jing Luo, the clansmen are progressing in their cultivation steadily.

Three of them have already broken through to the Core condensation realm too and two more are at the peak of the Qi refining realm as of now. Uncle Mu Niu is also busy cultivating at this moment and has managed to break through to the Late stage of the core condensation realm." Mu Tao answered.

"Mmm... I see." Lin Mu muttered.

Gaining four Core condensation realm experts in a week was an astounding figure that even the top sects may not have always. In the Mu clan, half of the total people which was five, were at the core condensation realm now, leaving five more to catch up.

"With the formation array, it shouldn't be that difficult for everyone to enter the core condensation realm at the very least. But only after you get a Nascent Soul realm cultivator would the foundation of the clan stabilize." Lin Mu advised.

"I'll keep that in mind, senior." Mu Tao replied hurriedly.

Lin Mu then turned to Jingming Shang before speaking.

"What's the status on the Fen clan, have you been able to establish contact?" Lin Mu questioned.

"The Fen clan is still under lockdown and is not responding to any messages. Or rather, they simply can't get through. I felt suspicious and went to check there myself, only to find out that they have activated an isolating barrier that also hides their clan itself.

I didn't expect them to have something as high level as that." Jingming Shang answered.

Chapter 660 - Heading To The Fen Clan

Lin Mu raised his brows upon hearing the information that Jingming Shang had just shared. He knew exactly the kind of formation that Jinxing Shang was talking about and wondered if it really was that one.

"Senior, could it be the same as the bewildering formation we saw that dead Nascent Soul cultivator set up?" Lin Mu questioned.

"Hmm, we won't know until we go and check it out ourselves. But if it really is that one, or even something on the same level, then we will have confirmation that the Fen clan truly has some ancient links." Xukong answered.

"I see... I guess it's time to go meet with the Fen clan myself." Lin Mu replied before focusing back on the real world.

"Get the records we found for the Fen clan... we will be going to meet them ourselves." Lin Mu ordered.

"At once, senior!" Mu Tao said before leaving for the vault.

"Do we need to do anything else before that?" Jingming Shang questioned.

"We have most things sorted out and ready. We can leave as soon as Mu Tao comes." Lin Mu replied.

"Alright." Jingming Shang nodded his head.

Lin Mu also took out the jade slip and informed Jing Luo of what he was going to do.

"You can go on ahead, I'll continue my work here. If you need help with the formation, I can get there quickly, anyway; it's not that far." Jing Luo replied.

"Okay," Lin Mu said before putting the jade slip away.

The Fen clan was about a hundred kilometers away from the Jiao Long city. While this distance would take around half a day for commoners to reach, for Qi refining realm cultivators, it would take a mere hour.

As for Lin Mu and other Nascent Soul realm cultivators, a mere five minutes would be enough to get there.

"Here's the records, senior Lin Mu." Mu Tao finally returned with what was a pack of long scrolls.

There were fifteen scrolls that were tied together into one pack, and each of them was a meter long while being three inches thick. One could tell from this that the records were rather vast.

"Hopefully, the Fen clan can make use of this and join us in the alliance." Lin Mu muttered to himself.

Lin Mu exited the room with Mu Tao and Jingming Shang before looking in the direction of the Fen clan.

"It's in the west from here, right?" Lin Mu questioned.

"Yes senior." Mu Tao replied.

"Alright, let's fly there then." Lin Mu said before taking out two spirit swords from his ring.

The spirit swords came to float in front of Jingming Shang and Mu Tao.

"Senior, what's this?" Mu Tao questioned and Jingming Shang looked on in confusion as well.

"Climb on them. It'll be faster if I fly there and take you two along on the spirit swords." Lin Mu explained.

Even if the two men were in the core condensation realm, Lin Mu's cultivation was way above them and he would be much faster than them.

Mu Tao and Jingming Shang nodded their heads and jumped onto the spirit swords.

~shua~

Lin Mu shot up into the sky along with the other two straight up before going in the western direction. Jing Luo had upgraded the formation arrays around the clan and thus, no one could see the three of them fly up from the clan.

This was also the reason why the scouts sent by Shantung were unable to see anything, despite the hustle-bustle of the Mu clan. Even the Servants of the Mu clan had greatly benefited from the increased spirit Qi and now nearly all of them were in the Qi refining realm with only the younger children left in the body tempering realm.

It was evident that with a little more time, the servants would reach the core condensation realm as well. Plus, all this had only increased the loyalty of the servants to the Mu clan and they were willing to devote even more to the clan.

But this was just the start of the Mu clan. Lin Mu had instructed Mu Tao to pull in more people along with the new businesses that they had obtained. The other members of the Merchant councils had no idea that it was actually the Mu clan that owned the three massacred clan's businesses now.

They only knew that Jingming Shang had taken advantage of the massacre and taken over the businesses. While they were displeased due to this, they couldn't really complain, since they were intending to do the same if it ever happened.

Though Jingming Shang dismantling the Hui clan and freeing off the bonded labor was beyond their expectations. The other members also didn't know that the Mu clan was now debt free and richer than ever before.

"There it is!" Jingming Shang pointed at a small patch of forest.

Lin Mu looked in the direction and found it to be only trees.

"Just from the initial observation, the formation array seems to be of a good quality... let's see how it holds up against spirit sense..." Lin Mu said before extending his spirit sense.

~shua~

He actually felt a little resistance when his spirit sense got closer to the barrier, but after a little push, it easily bypassed whatever thing was restricting it.

"Huh... they have a spirit Qi muddling formation added to the array as well." Lin Mu muttered.

He continued ahead and the three of them were now at the very edge of the formation. Lin Mu touched with his hand and felt it easily pass through.

"Yup, it's a bewildering formation. And one that is even better than the one in Northern forest." Lin Mu said to Xukong.

"That might be more due to the fact that the one in Northern forest was running out of spirit Qi and was made with few resources," Xukong replied.

"Ah, yes. That might be it." Lin Mu said before looking at the formation array. "Let's see how this goes.."