

Walker 951

[Chapter 951 - Two Teams To Support](#)

Lin Mu's words both, confused and scared the elders. One on hand, they could mean that the disciples were dead, and that there was no use in helping them, and on the other hand, it meant that Lin Mu had already killed all the Gu Legion members.

'It can't be, can't it?' Liu Cai thought to himself and spread his spirit sense.

Even if his spirit sense was not as strong and far reaching as Lin Mu, it was still enough to reach a few of the areas nearby where the disciples were fighting. His spirit sense quickly picked up on the scene and he was relieved.

~pew~

"The Gu Legion members... they are all dead as senior Lin Mu said." Elder Liu Cai confirmed.

The other elders checked it on their own as well, just to be sure and all took breaths of relief. To ones who had already prepared to die here today, this was an unexpected outcome that relieved them more than they had ever felt like.

Plus, Lin Mu's presence here meant that a lot of things would change.

"I can't even begin to tell you how grateful we are because of your arrival, senior Lin Mu." The Long cloud elders all spoke.

"Spare me the pleasantries... I do not deserve them. I was still far too late. A many are dead because I was not present." Lin Mu said in self-deprecating tone.

"No senior!" Liu Cai said sternly.

The female elder could see the pain in Lin Mu's eyes and quickly grasped the arm of Elder Liu Cai. She could tell that his mind was not in the right place and that Lin Mu needed to be placated.

"It is not your fault, Senior Lin Mu. This was something that was bound to happen one day. Besides, it is the Gu Legion that is at fault here. They ambushed us somehow and found our location.

Not only that, but they even sent a Dao Shell realm cultivator to end us all. It meant that they were very serious about it all." The female elder explained.

Lin Mu listened to it all, as a few questions popped up in his mind.

"How long was the battle going for?" Lin Mu questioned.

"Over a day now... more and more of the Gu Legion members arrived with time and the situation only got tougher." One of the other elders answered.

Lin Mu thought over it and knew that he couldn't wait here any longer. From the information that he had received from Hua Wu, it wasn't just these Long Cloud disciples and elders that were being attacked.

There were many more places that the entire alliance was being targeted.

"I need to leave now and look for the others. Can you point me to the next closest battle ground?" Lin Mu questioned.

The elders could see that Lin Mu wasn't really in any mood to talk.

'Though it is understandable. We need all the help we can get and there is no time to waste.' The female elder thought.

"I know two of them. From the updates we got during the battle, an elder from the Black Dune sect is leading a group of their disciples to defend a merchant outpost of our alliance three hundred kilometers to the north west.

Then there is also the team from the Fenlong kingdom fighting six hundred kilometers to the east." Elder Liu Cai quickly spoke.

Lin Mu thought over the two options and wondered which side should he help once. He truly wished that he could split into two so that he could help both sides at once, but it was not a reality.

"How many people does the Fenlong kingdom's team have and how is their situation?" Lin Mu questioned.

"We do not know. But since they are rather close to the kingdom's borders, they do have a steady support. As for the Black Dune sect's elder and disciples... they are in a rather distant area and any support from the sects will take a while to arrive.

Their battle though, hasn't been going on for that long. The first report we got about them was twelve hours ago." The female elder answered.

"Very well... I'll go to support the Black Dune sect first then." Lin Mu said and bent his knees.

~Crack~

~BOOM!~

With just a single step, Lin Mu made a crater in the ground and shot up like a cannonball. The elders were forced to retreat a few meters and had to stabilize their spirit qi that was sent in a tizzy again.

"How has he become like this?" The elders couldn't help but wonder.

They looked at the crater and were surprised by the deep imprint on it.

"Just how much spirit qi is he even using to create such craters? It wasn't even an attack..." The female elder questioned.

Though in response to this Elder Liu Cai furrowed his brows as he thought of something.

"I don't think that was spirit Qi at all... I didn't feel any spike in spirit Qi fluctuations when he took off..." Elder Liu Cai said, confusing the other elders.

But then a few seconds later, they had a moment of realization.

"You don't mean to say..." The female elder muttered in disbelief.

"He didn't use spirit Qi at all... that was all raw physical power..." Elder Liu Cai said.

~gulp~

The other elders that heard it were taken aback as they knew just how much power it would need. With spirit Qi, they too had a confidence in doing something like this, but without it they might only leave a shallow depression in the ground.

Lin Mu's mysteries only grew deeper for them, and they couldn't help but wonder how much more would be revealed in the future.

~rustle~

The sound of bushes could be suddenly heard as the elders were startled and they looked towards it.

"Who goes there!" The elders said.

"I-It's me! Elders it's me!" A rather young looking disciple appeared from the bushes.

He was injured and seemed to be out of breath.

"You won't believe it! All the Gu Legion members died out of nothing!"

[Chapter 952 - A Mistaken Obstacle](#)

Lin Mu was rapidly making his way to the Black Dune elder's location.

"If I recall correctly, his name is Elder Xuzhou..." Lin Mu recalled.

He had met several of the elders of the three sects and had picked up on their names back then. He knew of this elder Xuzhou and had exchanged a few sentences with him. Lin Mu remembered that elder Xuzhou was an Adult Soul stage Nascent soul realm cultivator and was from the combat pavilion of his sect.

They were the people that mostly took care of the missions outside the sect and were also the department that had the highest manpower along with general strength.

His current location was about six hundred and ninety kilometer north of the Long Cloud sect. It was actually rather surprising to him that the Gu Legion would attack people of the alliance this close to the Long Cloud sect.

'No... from the information Hua Wu told me earlier, the Gu Legion has now gone on an all out offense. Not only are they fighting in the open now, they've gotten the Zither wind alliance to hold the three sects back in their own frontiers.' Lin Mu thought.

It was due to the Zither Wind alliance attacking the three sect's areas that the Gu Legion had been able to ambush the other teams due to them being occupied. If not for this assurance, they might not have gone out this quickly.

Though this also made Lin Mu wonder about the stance of the top three sects. While he wanted to know more from Hua Wu, he also knew that he needed to leave as soon as possible to help the others.

"At least I know why they cannot be reached on the communication jade slips... the Northern tribes have used jamming formation arrays to prevent communication jade slips from working in many places..." Lin Mu muttered to himself as a hint of anger flashed on his face again.

Apparently, the Gu Legion and the Northern Tribes had gotten very suspicious about the fast growth and movement of the Long Cloud alliance. And since they were making a lot of possess all of a sudden as well, they decided to pull this trump card.

It was in a way double edged blade, as the jamming formation arrays could stop their own means of communication too. Not to mention that it will also hinder the other people that might have to use the areas.

This would apply to the top sects as well, especially since they were within the range of these jamming formation arrays as well... or so they thought.

'Until we get a direct confirmation from the different locations, it will be hard to tell just how far it is.' Lin Wu thought to himself.

He didn't know where Jing Luo and little Shrubby were either.

'At least for Little Shrubby, I can vaguely tell that he is somewhere in the north... very far up in the north, almost at the border of the northern lands.' Lin Mu thought to himself.

All this only made him more anxious and urged him to speed up.

~WHOOSH~

Another gush of spirit Qi rushed out of his body as he sped up another level. Lin Mu's breakthrough in his body cultivation had essentially put him at the peak of Dao Shell realm's power.

That combined with his own spirit Qi cultivation, meant that his speed was not less than that of a Dao Treading realm cultivator. Though it also made him miss Little Shrubby that much.

'Even with my increased speed, it is still not comparable to him.' Lin Mu thought to himself, as a hint of longing could be seen in his eyes.

While thinking all this and traveling at a high speed, Lin Mu didn't even realize the areas that he was passing over. He had already passed over multiple towns and villages, shocking the people of those settlements.

There was no lack of people that had been knocked on their butts just from the bursts of winds Lin Mu made while flying; this applied to both commoners and cultivators alike. The commoners were kind of used to this, but the cultivators were utterly stunned, for they knew that the person that passed over their heads was no normal expert.

So far, Lin Mu had been uninterrupted, but now he was nearing a rather sensitive location. Normally, he would not have missed such critical information, but the current urgency made him skip out on a lot of these things.

A few minutes later, the scenery in front of Lin Mu changed, and instead of a forest a vast and sprawling city appeared. But just as Lin Mu saw it, a dome of light appeared around it as well.

~shua~

~whoosh~ whoosh~ whoosh~

Then one by one, streams of light appeared on top of the light dome, exuding spirit Qi. Lin Mu's gaze went to them and he realized that they were all cultivators.

But that was not all as the lineup was nothing weak either.

"HALT! YOU HAVE VIOLATED THE RULES OF IRON BULL CITY!" The cultivators floating in the sky shouted.

But seeing that Lin Mu didn't slow down at all, they increased their power.

~HONG~

All of them seemed to be synchronized as they made several handseals at once.

~shua~

Hundred and hundreds of runes appeared in the air before arranging themselves into a long chain. The chain curved around the area in front of the cultivators, as if acting like a barrier.

Not wanting to deal with them, Lin Mu simply increased the height at which he was flying.

~Boom~

He stepped mid air, creating a gust of wind that tore through the air all the way to the ground, creating a gully there. This changed his height to at least a hundred meters higher.

But this seemed to have enraged the cultivators instead.

"YOU DARE!? You dare try to run away after breaking our rules! This is the land of the Empire! Not even the sects shall dare act like this!" They yelled.

[Chapter 953 - Suspicious Actions](#)

Lin Mu looked at the cultivators blocking him and was a bit surprised. His own cultivation base was on full display as a way to make them aware that this might not be a fight they would like to pick, but they were certainly bent on doing it.

~shua~

Lin Mu's spirit sense spread like a tide and quickly enveloped every person within a ten kilometer radius. The barrier blocked his spirit sense, but Lin Mu could already feel some of the formation nodes that were present on the barrier's array.

If he wanted to, Lin Mu realized he could dismantle the barrier, but that was not his goal anyway. His goal was to get to the Black Dune sect's team as soon as possible.

"Do not block me." Lin Mu said to all.

They could feel his voice clearly, and yet they seemed to not listen.

"How dare you try to leave after being warned!" The cultivator at the front said before making a hand seal.

~Clang~

The chain that was floating in the air moved like a snake and headed towards Lin Mu. Its speed was fast, as if a whip had been cracked!

"Restrain him! Mayor Tie Niu will judge him," The cultivators said.

"You are making a mistake. I'll give you one last warning. Do not block my way and no one will get hurt." Lin Mu replied.

"Humph! Even if you are a sect elder, you will have to listen to our commands! How can you even think of coming within ten-kilometer of Iron Bull city while flying?" The leading cultivator scoffed.

Lin Mu knew right there that there was no use in talking to them. They would not listen and only stop him, regardless. Besides, his spirit sense had picked up some suspicious things in the city below.

'No normal cultivator will offend another Dao Shell cultivator. Even if the rules are broken, at most a certain level of fine would have to be paid as long as no crime was committed.

The way they are acting is strange... what gives them the confidence?' Lin Mu thought to himself.

And while thinking all this, the chain kept on flying towards him and Lin Mu dodged it every time. With blink there was no way the chain would ever be able to catch him.

"You dare struggle even now!? Give up and come with us quietly! You will have to serve a proper punishment!" The cultivators said.

But while they were talking, Lin Mu sensed a different aura for a moment there.

'No wonder...' Lin Mu realized.

His eyes gazed at the city below and spatial perception was activated. The buildings and houses in the city below disappeared and the flow of spirit Qi could be seen by Lin Mu. It was faint, but Lin Mu could see the strangeness in it.

There was a strange kind of aura mixed in with the spirit Qi that swirled in the city below. He turned to look at the cultivators blocking his way and realized that a similar aura was present on them as well.

"It can actually hide from spirit sense?" Lin Mu was surprised.

"No, it's not hiding. More like it appears as normal spirit Qi to your spirit sense." Xukong suddenly spoke.

"Hmm... must be some kind of a spirit tool or a talisman." Lin Mu replied as he dodged the chain once more.

~WHOOSH~

The chain streaked by the top of his head, merely being an inch away.

"Enough!" Lin Mu said, as he didn't dodge this time.

~CLANG~

The chain hit him and Lin Mu simply caught it in his hands. Surprisingly, a few cracks could actually be seen on the armor of the mortal strengthening scripture. Though the armor had already started to repair itself instantly.

"He caught it?" The cultivators controlling the chain were surprised.

"How is this possible? Even a Peak Dao Shell cultivator will take damage from the Bull Whip Chain Formation." Another cultivator said.

Lin Mu could feel the chain's energy stirring. It was trying to break free from his grasp, but there was no way he was going to allow that. The runes that made up the chain were all flickering as more spirit Qi started being poured into it.

'Its spirit Qi consumption is certainly quite high. No wonder it needs these many people to control it.' Lin Mu understood.

This piqued his curiosity, as he knew that a offensive formation like this was not easy to make and neither was it easy to maintain on top of the other barrier formation that was protecting the city.

Lin Mu tried to remember information about the city below and realized that he was at the very edge of the main territory of the empire. Just like how the kingdoms were all divided and yet were under the empire, the same way the Great Zhou Empire had its own private territory as well.

This private territory was nothing but the old Zhou Kingdom that had been expanded. And the city that Lin Mu was near right now, the Iron Bull city, was located at the very northern tip of the Empire's territory.

But that was not all that made it special, it was also a city that was a military base and had a lot of strong cultivators guarding it.

~Sigh~

"Perhaps I should have taken a different route... but at the same time, this place is not normal either." Lin Mu muttered as he dragged the chain.

At first Lin Mu had suspicion that these people were under the influence of the Human Controlling Blood Curse too, but Lin Mu couldn't sense its aura. Rather than that, he could feel a different aura here.

It was unknown to him, and he didn't know what it actually did. But seeing the actions of the cultivators, he could tell that there was more than met the eyes here.

'It might have been an area we would have needed to investigate later anyway..' Lin Mu thought as his eyes narrowed.

[Chapter 954 - Retaliation And Question](#)

The cultivators who were controlling the Bull Whip Chain formation were currently whispering amongst themselves.

"We can't let him go. The mayor will not be pleased with it." One of them spoke.

"Of course we can't. Haven't you seen his strength? He'll be the perfect candidate for the mayor to use." Another cultivator said.

The leading cultivator felt the communication jade slip on his waists hum and he checked it for a message.

"What is it?" the others asked.

"It's the mayor. He informed the lord and they definitely want him." The leader replied.

"Do they know who he is though?"

"No... but that doesn't matter. The conflicts are ongoing and it is the right time. We shall fish in the muddied waters while the others are busy. Once it is all over, none will be the wiser." The leader stated.

Hearing this, the cultivators nodded, and a serious expression appeared on their faces.

"Let's do it then." They said before making a wide hand seal.

A glowing streak of light was released from the city below as it rose up into the sky. The streak of light merged with the formations of the Bull Whip Chain Formation and made it transform.

~HONG~

The chain trembled in Lin Mu's hands as he felt something different from it.

~WOONG~

The chain suddenly turned into runes and slipped out of Lin Mu's hands, as if grains of sands slipping past his fingers. They reformed back into the chain some distance away and then split apart even more.

~shing~

~shing~

~shing~

Now, instead of one chain, three of them appeared and let off a humming sound. The ends of the chain started to morph as well and transformed into a sharp spike.

"The amplification will only last a short while before we'll lose control. We need to finish it before that." The leading cultivator said to his companions.

~CLANG~

The chains shot towards Lin Mu like a dangerous viper and attacked him. He dodged around with Blink but realized that the speed of the chains was many times more than before.

"The spirit Qi powering it has multiplied? What was that thing which merged into it?" Lin Mu questioned as his brows furrowed.

One of the chains made a circle around Lin Mu's back and attacked from below, to which Lin Mu kicked it.

~DENG~

As if a bell had been hit, the chain recoiled and bent back. A look of surprise appeared in the eyes of the cultivators controlling it.

Taking this opportunity, Lin Mu blinked and grasped the chain that had gotten out of their control temporarily and held it tightly in one hand.

"PULL IT BACK!" The leading cultivator shouted.

"No, so fast..." Lin Mu said as he raised his fist up high.

Spirit Qi swirled around his hand as a massive power gathered within it.

Lin Mu brought down his fist where the two links of the chain met and struck it hard.

~DENG~

The runes flickered haphazardly as the force of the attack spread through them.

~DENG~

But Lin Mu didn't stop there and slammed his fist onto it again.

"Don't let him continue!" The leader said and controlled the other chains to attack Lin Mu while he was busy with his attacks.

~CLANG~ CLANG ~CLANG~

The Two free Bull Whip Chains slapped across Lin Mu's back but dealt him no damage.

~Crack~

"Look! His armor is breaking! Just a little more," The cultivators controlling the chain noticed.

They increased the speed of the attacks, and Lin Mu did the same. Three seconds later, it finally happened.

~KACHA~

~KACHA~

"His armor broke!" the cultivators rejoiced, but their joy was short lived.

~SHATTER~

The chain Lin Mu was attacking broke apart as well, and the runes scattered into the air.

~COUGH~ COUGH ~COUGH~

The cultivators controlling it felt the impact, and some of the weaker ones directly coughed out blood. Rage could be seen on their faces as they continued to attack Lin Mu.

~shua~?

Taking opportunity of the fact that Lin Mu was a bit vulnerable after breaking one of the chains, the cultivators quickly wrapped one of the free Bull Whip Chains around Lin Mu's body.

Lin Mu was like a Rabbit caught by a boa and was tightly coiled. But to this Lin Mu had a surprising response. He simply stopped flying and let gravity do the work.

~CLANG~

As a surprise to the cultivators controlling the Bull Whip chain, the weight on the chain multiplied all of a sudden.

"What is happening? Is he pulling it down?" The leader was confused.

But what was even more surprising was the fact that they couldn't feel any spirit Qi being used or a Qi skill being executed.

"What kind of an ability is this?" The cultivators were confused.

~CREAK~

The chain creaked under the sheer weight of Lin Mu and was forcibly bent downwards.

"Hold it!" The leader said as he gestured.

~WEENG~

But that was of no use, as a gap was created between the links of the chain. That was all Lin Mu needed and he simply punched out.

"Boulder Collapsing Fist: First Form - Impact!"

~BOOM~

A heavy force struck the chain, forcing it to unravel. It was like a coiled spring being released and whipped back, hitting the other free chain in the process as well.

Blink!

Lin Mu disappeared at that moment and grasped onto another chain before hammering it with his fists, shattering it apart.

~KACHA~

Not giving the cultivators any time to rest, Lin Mu did the same with the other chain too, while the cultivators struggled to control the formation under the strong attacks and the backlash they were suffering.

~KACHA~

With the last chain shattered, Lin Mu was no longer being stopped.

~cough~ cough~

The cultivators spat out more blood as their faces turned pale.

"Where did he go?" One of them noticed that Lin Mu had disappeared right in front of them.

~Bam~

His question was answered with a blow to the back, which sent him flying while several of his bones broke in the process.

~Crack~ Crack~ Crack~

"Now that the chain is gone... let's talk..." Lin Mu stated in a cold tone.

[Chapter 955 - A Short Interrogation](#)

The cultivators gazed at Lin Mu with a combination of fear and anger in their eyes.

They couldn't believe that the Bull Whip Chain formation that had been able to defeat many Dao Shell cultivators till now had failed to stop another one that was actually only at the Shell Genesis stage.

This was what they perceived from Lin Mu's spirit Qi fluctuations.

Of course, this was all their assumption since they couldn't actually tell that Lin Mu body cultivated either. Additionally, Lin Mu's body didn't let off the same clues as before either, making it even harder to tell.

The gold in Lin Mu's body had turned him into a metal vessel, making it hard for others to perceive anything easily. Even Lin Mu himself didn't know much about it yet and hadn't had the time to check up on it.

But to him, testing things out in practice was fine as well.

'I'll take things as they come, but...' Lin Mu thought and gazed deep into the eyes of the cultivators finding something stirring there.

"You all... what is your relationship with Gu Yao." Lin Mu questioned.

"Y-You dare do all this? The city mayor will not spare you!" One of the more courageous ones retorted.

Lin Mu didn't even look at the man, but the man seemed to have fallen on the ground somehow. At the same time, his hands seemed to be bent at awkward angles and his legs were now backwards.

"ARGGHHHHHHH!!!! MYYYYY LEGSSSS! MY ARMLESS!" The man finally felt the pain and the change in his body.

'How...?' all the cultivators had the question in their mind.

"Anyone else want to dodge the question?" Lin Mu asked.

"You cannot do this! Do you know what you are doing?"

"You are challenging the authority of the Mayor of Iron Bull city!"

"If this reaches the capital, you will have to answer to the emperor himself!"

The men tried to scare Lin Mu, but he did not care about it. Lin Mu's perception was clearly telling him that these men were not right.

"Hmm... I see... so if you think I am challenging the authority of the mayor... why is he not appearing? Or even better, why don't you bring me to him?" Lin Mu replied calmly.

"You think just because you say, you will get to meet the mayor?!" The leader of the cultivators shouted.

"Oh?" In that moment, Lin Mu could feel a flareup of a strange aura from the man.

'I see...' a thought appeared in Lin Mu's mind.

"Alright then... if you don't bring me to the Mayor, I'll force you to—" Then before the men could even respond, they felt pain all over their bodies.

Lin Mu had disappeared right in front of their eyes and suddenly it seemed like there were tens of him all around them. They attacked them at a speed hard for them to perceive and soon they were reduced to the same state as the other two that were injured.

~thud~thud~thud~

"ARGH!!!"

"NOOO!"

A mix of cries and grunts were heard as the bodies of all cultivators fell to the ground uncontrollably. A few that were a bit unfortunate were directly knocked out from the pain. It didn't matter that they were nascent soul realm cultivators, but they were still the same.

This was another thing Lin Mu was surprised by when he saw them. All of them were nascent soul cultivators, which was a large number, even for a major city of the empire. Rather than being part of the empire, these men could easily make many sects of their own, gaining a lot of fortune that way.

But they didn't, which felt both suspiciously loyal and usual when there were so many of them. Additionally, Lin Mu had heard the words and whispers of a few men, knowing that this might not be the first time they had done this.

~grab~

Lin Mu picked up one of the more 'less' injured of the cultivators by his neck and started into his eyes. The cultivator trembled like a chicken grabbed by their neck and couldn't even struggle.

"Show me the way," Lin Mu ordered.

"... N... N-no..." The man still said.

"I see... need a little more push." Lin Mu said as he noted the aura once again.

He closed his eyes and a faint chant came out of Lin Mu's mouth. The chant was the hum of a sword that had been sharpened and polished for hundreds of years, making one's hair stand on its ends.

The man that Lin Mu was holding felt his vision turning cloudy and soon his expression was that of a daze. He felt as if there was nothing left in the world for him and everything he did was useless.

Five seconds later, Lin Mu stopped upon feeling the weakening of the aura.

"Now then... will you show me the way?" Lin Mu asked.

The man's gazed expression cleared up and a lot more fear appeared on it. Instead of the mix of anger and fear, now there was just pure terror left.

"D... D-don't kill me! I'll show you! I'll show you! Please don't kill me!" the man frantically spoke.

"Good, now then... where do we go from here?" Lin Mu asked.

"D-down there." The man pointed with his eyes.

Since his hands and legs were broken, he was unless in that manner. Of course, Lin Mu didn't care for it and could understand it enough.

'So that big building huh... guess the mayors never change their preference, no matter the kind of a city.' Lin Mu thought and started to move.

"Wait! You need to remove the barrier first. If you pass through it forcefully, it will kill both of us from the recoil!" the man horribly spoke.

But Lin Mu paid no attention to it. He simply touched the surface of the barrier and under the stunned eyes of the crippled man, the barrier automatically opened up for him.

"H-how?!" the man was utterly stunned now, knowing opening the formation was only possible from the inside.

[Chapter 956 - Surprise Attack And Entering The Residence](#)

Lin Mu continued onwards into the city from there and saw the scene.

'The number of people is actually high? No, wait... there are a lot of infants here?' Lin Mu was surprised.

His spirit sense could pick up that there seemed to be a lot of newborn infants in the city. All of them were less than a year old and all of them seemed to have been born around the same time.

Originally, Lin Mu had thought that the number of people in the city would be less, but it was evidently not so.

"Why are there so few cultivators here in the city?" Lin Mu questioned, noticing another point.

This was extremely strange since the Iron bull city was supposed to be a military base. If anything, there should have been lot more cultivators living here, all part of the army. While Lin Mu was currently walking through the streets of the residential district, it was still easy for him to sense the situation in the rest of the city.

Though there was one place that was preventing his spirit sense from entering, this being none other than the Mayor's residence.

"The others... they're gone..." the man answered while trembling.

"Gone? Gone where?" Lin Mu asked more.

"I don't know... the mayor sent them off on some mission like the others, and they never came back."
The man replied.

Hearing this, Lin Mu was quite sure what might have happened.

'Though being able to keep all this hidden from the eyes of the empire... Gu Yao has certainly expanded his network greatly in this time.' Lin Mu thought to himself.

He looked back at the crippled man and probed him with his spirit sense once again. This time, trying to see what was different about him. His search gave him some interesting pointers.

'His spirit Qi is not stable... as if it is not his own. Something else is powering it,' Lin Mu noted.

Even the nascent soul of the man seemed to be strangely colored, being a shade of red and blue that was mixed together heterogeneously. It looked like pain splotches had been sprayed upon the normal white nascent soul.

"You... you didn't cultivate normally to reach the nascent soul realm, did you?" Lin Mu questioned.

Upon hearing this, goosebumps appeared on the man's skin. His eyes trembled while his teeth chattered.

"-h-how... who told you that?" the man asked, feeling scared.

"That doesn't matter. Just tell me if it's true or not." Lin Mu said in a cold tone.

"Eek!" the man felt terrified and found it hard to breathe by the second.

Only after Lin Mu looked away from his eyes did he feel any respite.

"He... the... the mayor... he gave us the pills... they allowed us all to breakthrough." The man answered hesitantly.

Hearing this, Lin Mu raised his brows.

"What kind of pills?" Lin Mu questioned.

"I don't know. We were simply told to use them if we wanted to get stronger." The man answered.

Hearing this, Lin Mu knew that it was useless asking this man anymore. There were probably a lot of things that the man did not know, or there was something restraining him from knowing them.

'Best to get them from the source directly...' Lin Mu thought and sped up.

The streets were empty, while the windows and doors of the houses were all tightly shut. It was evident that the activation of the barrier had scared all the citizens. Lin Mu's spirit sense could observe them hiding within their houses.

The shops were the same, with some of them even leaving behind their wares carelessly in open.

'So they are truly terrified of the barrier appearing.' Lin Mu noted.

Finally, after a couple of minutes, Lin Mu reached the residence of the mayor.

It was similar to many other opulent residences he had seen by now and didn't care for much, other than the invisible barrier that was surrounding it.

~SHING~

But the moment he got close, weapons appeared out of thin air and attacked him.

Lin Mu easily dodged them all, but the crippled man in his hands was not so fortunate.

~thud~

He couldn't even let out a cry before his head was skewered by a lance. The lance poked out from the back of his head and was barely a few centimeters away from Lin Mu's own neck.

Lin Mu felt danger all around him and directly used phase to disappear underground.

~THUD~ THUD~ THUD~

More weapons struck the place where he was at last and disappeared after a few seconds. It was evident that they were not material.

"An offensive formation array?" Lin Mu raised his brow.

He didn't feel any spirit Qi fluctuation in that moment that seemed to belong to that of a formation, making him confused.

"No, a Qi skill. It's got to be..." Lin Mu guessed.

The speed of the weapons was very fast, and they papered just a meter or two away from Lin Mu's body, making it a very close call to dodge without blink. Of course, when Lin Mu was holding the crippled man, thus he dodged simply using his body as blinking with the man was not possible.

But even then, the man had ended up dying. While Lin Mu didn't care for the man's life, he did care for the fact that the speed of the attack made it hard to react to.

'The security of this city is certainly high in terms of formation array, even with this attack included. I doubt many Dao Shell realm cultivators would even be able to resist for more than a few minutes.' Lin Mu thought as he continued moving through the ground.

He quickly reached the mayor's residence and found a suitable formation node that could be used to open up a small crack in the formation.

~shua~

The invisible barrier materialized and an opening appeared right in the middle of the residence, looking a bit eye catching.

~step~step~

Lin Mu landed on the ground, slightly cracking the tiles, and spread his spirit sense around.

"Found you..."

[Chapter 957 - Confronting Tie Niu](#)

Within Lin Mu's perception, appeared a man who was clearly controlling the formation arrays of the entire city right now. He was sitting in the center of a large room with several statues that were channeling spirit Qi into the arrays.

There were runes inscribed on the floor of the ground directly while different ribbons hung from the walls, all carrying various formations on them, acting as additional complements of the entire array.

Just from all this, Lin Mu could tell that it was a rather complex array and one that would be very expensive to set up.

'It's on the same level as that of the sects... perhaps even the top sects might not have such formation arrays depending on the place.' Lin Mu thought.

But that was not all that caught Lin Mu's attention. He could also feel a steady stream of spirit Qi flowing into the man that was sitting in the center of the formations. The man was at the Dao Shell realm too.

"The same aura as the others... rather it's even more concentrated in him." Lin Mu muttered.

But just as he appeared in the hall, the man opened his eyes.

"How did you enter my residence?" the man said in a calm voice.

It seemed as if he was not worried about Lin Mu at all and deemed him of to be of no worth.

"I walked through the doors." Lin Mu causally said.

"Lies... though I must say it is brave of you to come right up to my doorstep. Others would have chosen to run away." The man said before thinking a bit more. "But this might just be the foolish decision you have made too."

~SHUA~

The moment he finished speaking, the formations shone on the walls and weapons started materializing around Lin Mu.

"Hmm... so I wasn't entirely wrong. It isn't just a Qi skill, rather it's a combination of a Qi skill and a formation." Lin Mu muttered as he blinked away to dodge the weapons that had shot towards him.

The dodging window was rather narrow since the weapons materialized within a meter or less from Lin Mu. For any normal cultivator, even those in the Dao Shell realm, they probably won't be able to dodge it entirely and would have to defend instead.

Blocking might give them the chance to get out of the encirclement.

And this was what the man controlling the formations had thought, but it turned out to be a new surprise for him.

"You're fast. No... that's not just speed..." the man said, as his eyes narrowed.

~Shing~

Lin Mu didn't just keep on dodging and threw out the short sword to counterattack. The short sword swirled around the man before attacking him from the back. But before it could even get within two meters of the man, it was blocked by a shield that had automatically materialized.

"That's a rather nice formation array for you to control alone. I wonder how you got something like this... I doubt even the empire would have something like this. And even if they did, they won't give it to just any city mayor, would they? Tie Niu?" Lin Mu replied.

Tie Niu's eyes narrowed, and he brought his fingers together in a sword gesture.

"SLASH!" he said before a long sword materialized above his head.

The long sword was rather large, being five meters long and ten centimeters wide. It seemed to be made out of spirit Qi that had been hardened with the effects of the formations.

~SHING~

The attack was faster than the previous attacks, so much so that even Lin Mu was unable to use Blink before that.

His pupils constricted as he saw the sword slashing at his head.

~CLANG~

But then an astounding thing happened. Tie Niu felt his world view change as the attack was blocked.

"Impossible! A full powered attack from the Hundred Slaughter Grand Formation can even injure a Dao Treading realm expert? How can someone like you even block it?!" the man was stunned.

"Oh? So you were having confidence all this time due to this one move?" Lin Mu said as a smile appeared on his face.

He had to admit that even he was a bit anxious in taking an attack like this. If this was the Lin Mu of past, he would have certainly been injured, if not lost a limb. The mortal strengthening scripture's armor had already been broken by the force of the attack.

Even though the part that was broken was just on his hand, it was still a testimony to the fact that it could break the entire armor on his body if it hit some place else.

But this time, Lin Mu had an additional thing in his arsenal.

~CLINK~

Lin Mu's fingers gripped harder as the surface of the long sword rubbed against his skin. The sound of a blade being ground was heard as Lin Mu kept on increasing his force.

'The True Gold Body Forging Arts truly live up to its name.' Lin Mu said to himself.

~shing~

"W-who... no... W-what are you?" Tie Niu questioned, seeing the golden glow that had started to come off Lin Mu's body.

In the rather dim hall, it was very easy to perceive, and the sheen was like that of the highest polished gold.

'An armor? No... it is directly his skin that seems to be blocking it. A skill? What is it?' Tie Niu had a lot of question that he was unable to get answers for.

Alas, even if he wanted them, he would not be lucky enough to get them; for his fate was about to change very soon.

~CRACK~

Tie Niu's eyes went wide as he saw the cracks forming on the long sword's blade.

~hiss~

Spirit Qi started leaking out of the cracks, as the runes forming the long sword dimmed down.

"Time to end it. Thanks for giving me a way to test myself." Lin Mu said as he fully exerted his force.

~KACHA~

~SHATTER~

[Chapter 958 - Beating Tie Niu Into Submission](#)

Tie Niu watched as the long sword shattered apart in Lin Mu's hand as if it were made of glass. The long sword turned into a mess of runes that scattered away into nothingness. The man felt the backlash coming from the action, but held on with the help of the array's support.

"DAMN YOU!" Tie Niu shouted, feeling the drain on his cultivation base.

A part of his cultivation base had just been cut off due to the backlash. While the array had manage to block most of it, losing one's cultivation base was always painful and frustrating.

He raised his hands as if he held a sledgehammer in it.

~WHOOSH~

Spirit Qi swirled in the air as more runes materialized. And along with this, the other weapons still kept on being formed and attacked Lin Mu non-stop.

~DENG~DENG~DENG~DENG~

The weapons struck Lin Mu's body, but to no avail. Having learned that his defenses were overwhelming against such an attack, Lin Mu didn't even dodge them anymore.

"Time to end this. I don't want to waste anymore time." Lin Mu muttered.

"What do you—?" But before Tie Niu could finish speaking or even completing his attack, his eyes went wide.

~KACHA~

"AAAHHHHHHHHH!!!!" Tie Niu shouted in pain as he was forced to kneel.

His knee was now folded backwards, due to the virtue of Lin Mu kicking him on his knee. The attack looked simple, but the might contained in it was nothing to scoff at. One must know that Lin Mu's body was now several tens of tons heavy.

Even a single leg of his was at least ten tons heavy and when he kicked with it, the force generated would be many times more than that. Breaking someone's knee, even if they were at the Dao Shell realm was as easy as snapping a toothpick.

"Let's make you a bit more balanced." Lin Mu said before raising his leg again.

~KACHA~

~SPLAT~

"Oops, I miscalculated." Lin Mu said as he saw his handiwork.

Instead of just bending the knee backwards, Tie Niu's left leg was directly reduced to mush.

The man continued to scream as snot and tears streamed down his face. Lin Mu placed his hand on his head and simply lowered the upward force he constantly applied to his body.

'What in the... how is his hand so heavy?...' Tie Niu couldn't even speak at this point, as he felt the crushing weight of Lin Mu's hand.

~Crack~

The floor below Tie Niu and Lin Mu directly cracked, and an indent appeared in it. Tie Niu's neck was being forced inwards and the weight would snap his neck if it increased anymore.

"Stop... I... I'll... I'll die!" The man cried out.

Lin Mu stared into his eyes as he used his spirit sense to probe the man's body, finding out all his secrets. Tie Niu could feel a surging spirit Qi piercing through his body's defenses as if they were paper.

Even if he was physically injured, his body's natural spirit Qi defenses should have held up. But it looked like they were nothing under the strength of Lin Mu's highly refined spirit sense.

Once Lin Mu's spirit sense entered his body, Lin Mu discovered several things.

'His vitality has been mixed with that strange aura as well. It is present everywhere in his body.' Lin Mu noted.

The spirit sense tendril continued onwards and soon reached the man's Dantian. Here, as a surprise to Lin Mu, he actually met some resistance.

~hiss~

A strange aura exuded from the Dantian and blocked Lin Mu's spirit sense from entering it. But Lin Mu simply increased the power slightly and it pierced right through it once more.

"Ugh!"

~COUGH~

Tie Niu coughed out another mouthful of blood and felt the spirit Qi in his body going haywire. Even his vitality was in a chaos and he felt as if his blood would start to flow backwards.

Once inside his Dantian, Lin Mu could see what looked like a muddy sea.

'This... what happened to it?' Lin Mu was confused.

Within Tie Niu's Dantian, the reservoir of spirit Qi looked like a dirty swamp instead of a clear lake. Spirit Qi was supposed to be clear as long as it was attribute-less. Even Earth elemental spirit Qi that was brown colored didn't look like the spirit Qi here.

"Seems like it has been contaminated greatly... by some strange energy nonetheless." Xukong spoke.

Lin Mu's spirit sense moved around and quickly found Tie Niu's Nascent soul floating in the center of the muddy swamp. Its color was similar to the man he had seen before and had splotches of red and blue all over its body looking strange.

Then there was the Dao Shell of the man. Tie Niu was actually in the Shell Genesis stage, but had only entered it recently. His Dao Shell was the common sphere shape and about forty percent of it seemed to have been materialized.

The color of this Dao Shell was the same as that of the spirit Qi in the Dantian. It looked more like a clay bowl instead of a Dao Shell right now. Plus, its size was exactly the size of a bowl as well.

"The Dao Shell is also rather small... isn't it?" Lin Mu realized.

"It does seem to be smaller than the average Dao Shell." Xukong agreed.

The starting size of one's Dao Shell could differ depending on several factors. The three main ones being the cultivation technique used, the talent of a cultivator, and then the foundation of the cultivator.

In case of Lin Mu, his Dao Shell was already about two meters wide at its maximum. This was a size that many cultivators took centuries to reach. They would keep on expanding their Dao Shell in the Shell expansion stage and take a lot of time.

And yet, this was the starting point for Lin Mu; which was another reason why it made sense to him that he didn't really need to practice the Shell expansion stage. Instead, he could directly prepare for the Dao Treading Realm!

[Chapter 959 - Hypocrisy And A Hunger For Power](#)

Seeing the state of Tie Niu's cultivation base, Lin Mu knew that the way he cultivated must not have been normal.

"If you don't want to die, speak." Lin Mu said in a cold tone.

"W-what do you want to know?" Tie Niu asked while stuttering.

The pain was still making him tremble, and thinking straight was hard for him as well. He couldn't remember when was the last time he had ever felt such pain. He had been the mayor of the iron bull city for over a hundred years now, and his family had owned the city for even longer.

Since they had contributed a lot in the past wars, they were directly given this city by the then emperor of the Great Zhou Empire. Their military might was considered to be great such that they were even said to have Dao Treading realm experts among their clan.

But that was all in the past. Now, Tie Niu's clan still existed but wasn't as strong as before. The strongest person in their clan was just a peak adult soul stage nascent soul realm cultivator and he didn't know how long he would live either.

With this on his mind, Tie Niu knew that the reign of his clan in the Iron Bull city might end after his generation. His children were not any good either, and none of them seemed to have enough talent to reach the Nascent soul realm, which was the bare minimum one would need to have to own the city.

While a couple of his younger children managed to join the sects, they were just mid grade sects and couldn't reach any great status. Plus, since they had become the disciples of the sects, even if they reached Nascent soul realm in the future, they would still be disqualified from becoming the mayor.

Tie Niu was sure that he would have no hope for the future until he finally got an opportunity he had never thought he would see.

And while Tie Niu felt his memories flash by, he heard Lin Mu's voice again. Lin Mu stared into the man's eyes, making them tremble as tears continued to streak down.

"Tell me everything... each and every detail as to what happened in this city, how you gained power, the others that reached the nascent soul realm using the strange method and why the population of the city is so skewed towards commoners." Lin Mu answered. "Don't miss even a single word... or the next thing you'll miss is your head." He warned.

Terror flowed through Tie Niu's heart as if a dam had broken and he only felt despair. He had thought that after reaching the Dao Shell realm, he would be strong and be able to do whatever he wanted, but that reality was broken apart like a mirror.

Even with the support of strong formation arrays, he was unable to defeat Lin Mu who wasn't even at the Dao Treading realm.

"I'll give you thirty seconds, think deeply." Lin Mu said, giving the man a chance to revise his memories.

~huu~

~huu~

~huu~

Tie Niu felt his heart beating faster and faster with each passing second, and his body felt cold. He wanted to run away, but couldn't. He wanted to be saved, but there was no one to save him.

'Today was supposed to be a good day. How did it end up like this?' Tie Niu thought as he finally gave up.

"I... I'll speak..." Tie Niu muttered in a lost tone.

Lin Mu looked at the man, feeling the change in his emotions. This was very perceptible to Lin Mu, since the strange aura within the man's body had weakened as well.

"It all started a year ago... my fifth son is an inner sect disciple of the Blue Ribbon sect. He came to visit me and told me about a great opportunity. An opportunity that would allow me to breakthrough my bottleneck and reach the Dao Shell realm.

You must understand... my clan was in danger of being removed from our position soon. I don't know how long I would have been able to hold on. Especially after the sickness of the Emperor, the schemes of the Imperial court have only gotten more dangerous.

The ministers and the emperors concubines all want a share of the pie and are vying for supremacy. The Iron Bull city has always been one of the more important cities of the Empire's main land and they one who controls it would have a great source of revenue along with a large part of the army to be controlled.

The military base here houses over a hundred thousand soldiers, a majority of whom are cultivators.

I could not let that happen. My clan sacrificed a lot in the past wars to reach its current position..." Tie Niu said and took a deep breath.

It was evident that saying all this was difficult for him, but Lin Mu could feel the hypocrisy in his words.

'How many times have I heard such words before?' Lin Mu thought to himself.

All people that were in power wanted to stay in power. Once they had a taste of it, it was hard to let go and they would do whatever it was possible to stay in that position and keep their power.

"What was this opportunity your son spoke about?" Lin Mu questioned, urging the man.

"He... he told me that one of the elders in his sect had chosen him as his disciple and that he would get a reward for that. The reward in question was a bottle of pills... he consumed just one of them and reached the nascent soul realm as if it was nothing.

But he was told that it was just the initial effect of the pills. If one continued to eat them, their power would only increase more. And thus, he brought a few pills to me.. That was the opportunity..." Tie Niu answered, feeling the chill in his heart deepen.

[Chapter 960 - Interrogating Tie Niu](#)

Hearing that it was actually pills that managed to make Tie Niu and others breakthrough their bottle necks, Lin Mu narrowed his eyes.

'Those kinds of pills are not easy to obtain and are very expensive to make. Even one of the pills that can allow one to reach the nascent soul realm from the core condensation realm would be priced for tens of thousands of spirit stones.

Not to mention, one's that can allow one to breakthrough to the Dao Shell realm. Those kinds of pills might not even be available for sale...' Lin Mu thought.

He looked at Tie Niu and asked further, "So you simply ate those pills without checking?"

"Of course, what else could I do? I had no reason to suspect it since my son was the best proof they worked. I knew very well that he did not have the talent to reach the Nascent soul realm. His road was supposed to end at the Core condensation realm.

And yet... he proved me wrong. How could I not grab the opportunity when it had served itself on a silver platter?!" Tie Niu said in an agitated tone.

Yet a single glare from Lin Mu, shut his mouth and made him calm down forcibly.

~gulp~

The man swallowed his saliva and took a deep breath before continuing.

"I ate one pill and could instantly feel the new power flowing in my veins. My Dantian that had long since reached a bottleneck started to stir and even my Nascent soul started to absorb spirit Qi once again.

With just that single pill, I reached the very peak of the Adult Soul stage of the Nascent soul realm.

Feeling the impressive effects of the pill, I couldn't stop. One by one, I ate more pills until I had finished all four pills... after that... I finally broke through. But after the breakthrough, I realized something.

My cultivation base... it didn't seem to be fully in my control. My Dao Shell seemed to be a small and even my Nascent soul had changed in its color and form.

I inquired my son, but he just told me that this is the price of using the pills. They can help someone that has reached the end of their road breakthrough once more. Even I knew I couldn't breakthrough to the Dao Shell realm so I didn't mind it after thinking for while." Tie Niu explained.

"And so you destroyed your foundation and your effort," Lin Mu added.

Tie Niu felt his heart hurt at those words but knew that he could not deny those words.

"You don't know how it feels... the feeling... the feeling that you have nothing to reach, nothing to achieve. That no matter what you do, your current state is the highest you would reach.

Being at the peak of one's life, when it is so mediocre, is cruel!" Tie Niu exclaimed.

"HUMPH! You say a life of being the mayor of one of the major cities of the empire is cruel and mediocre?!" Lin Mu scowled.

~SLAP~

A tight slap hit the man's face, breaking away half of his teeth.

~splat~

If it were not for the fact that Lin Mu needed more information from Tie Niu, he would not have held back. Otherwise... it wouldn't have just been the teeth that had been broken.

"ARGH!" Tie Niu cried in pain, feeling the loss of his teeth.

The pain was still something he could not ignore, even if he would be able to heal the teeth with just a few pills in the future. It was the added fear of Lin Mu standing in front of him, that made it that much worse.

He was like the sword of Damocles hanging over his head, ready to chop it off at any moment.

"What about the others? How did they get pills?" Lin Mu questioned the man and prodded him on to speak more.

"After tasting the effect of the pills, I wanted more. I had just reached the Shell initiation stage of the Dao Shell realm and wanted more. There were many elders in the sects that were at the Dao Shell realm and they would be stronger than me.

But I wanted to be stronger than all of them. I wanted to be strong enough that the imperial court would not be able to take away my rightful property.

And to my surprise, I didn't even need to ask my son for it. It was as if he knew what it thought and had the next option ready. He told me that the elder of his sect would be willing to sponsor us with more pills if we did some of the things he wanted.

If we did as he told, not only would he give us enough pills to cultivate even further, he would even give a surplus such that others under me would be able to grow stronger too." Tie Niu replied.

"I doubt you would be willing to give up those pills to others, though," Lin Mu said in a low voice.

"Of course, I didn't want to give the pills to others, I wanted them all for myself. But then... when I heard what the elder wanted of us, I knew it was not something I would be able to do on my own.

I would need more people that would support me through it. And they needed to be strong too...

The cost of it all though... was too high... the work that the elder asked of us was for me to send cultivators to a place they specified. They didn't tell us much at once, just that they would be taken care of and no one would ask any questions.

But this also meant that the people I would send have to be the very ones I would need to do all that. This was not something I could do openly. If I tried that, the empire would have my neck the very next day!" Tie Niu explained.

"And thus you willingly sent them, like lambs to be slaughtered.." Lin Mu said as his eyes flickered in a cold light.