

Martial Unity 1141

Chapter 1141: Begun

The Floating Sect had a remarkable amount of shelters that were meant to protect the civilian members of the sect from such calamities. In many ways, the civilian workforce of the Floating Sect was just as important as the guardians. They were the backbone of the sect, doing all the invisible non-flashy background work that was absolutely vital to maintaining the Floating Sect.

Furthermore, unlike how it used to be with the guardians, there was no constant supply of skilled labor to the Floating Sect.

The Floating Sect was not concerned too much about the guardians because there was an influx of highly qualified Martial Squires into the Floating Sect every day. There were different filters that ensured that only qualified elites entered the ranks of the Floating Sect out of the surplus influx of Martial Squires.

However, there was no surplus of an influx of skilled labor into the Floating Sect. It was actually quite difficult for the Floating Sect to acquire skilled labor and get them to join the sect.

For one, they required members to permanently become a part of the Floating Sect and commit everything to the sect. This alone was a difficult condition that would turn ninety percent of the workforce away. Yet it wasn't only the deep commitment that was expected of any member, but also the fact that once they joined the sect and entered the island, they could essentially forget ever leaving the island.

Due to the fact that the island was so isolated from human civilization, the same would naturally come to be the case for its members. It was simply too expensive to be able to facilitate frequent trips back and forth for its non-Martial Artist members who could not sky-walk.

Furthermore, the human members of the sect would be expected to reside and work in an extremely hazardous environment for the human body. Direct exposure would lead to instantaneous death on the spot.

Although there were many precautions, safe areas, and fail-safes, the sheer stress of being in an environment that would kill you in less than a heartbeat was something that ordinary people could not handle.

These conditions filtered out an overwhelming majority of the workforce in the Kaddar Region to even consider applying to the Floating Sect. The sect had actually gone through a lot of difficulties and had to bleed a lot to be able to obtain the skilled labor that they needed to build a fully functioning and self-sufficient sect from scratch.

Thus the workforce that they had at the moment was extremely precious, thus the Floating Sect had not skimmed out when it came to the shelters that were designed to protect them in exactly these circumstances.

Rui extended his senses as he watched the hordes of people migrating downwards into corridors that would lead to heavily reinforced bunkers.

The guardians, on the other hand, did not evacuate. Unlike the civilians or even the Martial Apprentices, they were not frail enough to die just by being in the presence of a Senior-level battle. In fact, they would be on a cautionary standby. Although most of them were not strong enough to fight against a Martial Senior even when their Martial Hearts were exhausted, they could not afford to be treated as frail glass vases that needed to be protected.

They were called guardians for a reason, they were expected to step up to protect when the time came, even if their resistance was futile.

This was not pleasant, however, he did not see the kind of resistance he was expecting. Then again, the Martial Squires of the sect were cut from a different cloth, no one who was that averse to stepping up even if it meant death could make it past the challenger trial to become a member in the first place.

Pussies were filtered around even before they entered the sect. Even snakes like Serokin were not that cowardly.

A brief amount of time passed as the two of them prepared for the incoming attack. Having adorned their Martial attire, they quickly ensured that they were at their peaks, having consumed rejuvenation potions and extremely nutrition-dense food pills.

"When we get back to the Kandrian Empire, we have stories to tell alright," Kane murmured as he stretched a bit, loosening his body up.

"True," Rui mused with an indulgent smirk. "You can impress Fae when you tell her how you hunted down a Martial Senior as a Martial Squire."

Kane glared at him.

"Kidding," Rui chuckled, he was about to make another joke at Kane's expense, yet suddenly, something changed.

The two of them froze as their Primordial Instincts felt a faint wave of peril.

The world grew icier as a profoundly deep field of pressure began to wring the very air around them.

The fauna and flora on the island shivered as all sentient beings could sense a tremendous amount of unadulterated power.

Rui used Tempestuous Feel to extend his senses extremely deep across the entirety of the island trying to gauge what was happening.

Even if he knew.

The pressure was unmistakable. It was overwhelming. Domineering.

It also reminded him of the sheer magnitude of what he was undertaking by agreeing to fight them. They were monsters from his perspective, and feeling the bloodlust that he was feeling reminded him that it was not a joke.

He could very easily die in the blink of an eye. Just the sheer sensation made the confidence that he had gained from forcing Senior Xanarn to use her Martial Art deflate a bit. He didn't feel hopeless, far from it, but it certainly tempered his assessment of the risks associated with fighting Martial Seniors.

The two of them quickly scrambled in the direction of the pressure as Rui expanded his senses to be able to perceive the battle to the best of his abilities.

RUMBLE

Tremor rippled through the entire island as the very bedrock of the island began shaking!

"They've begun," Rui murmured as his eyes narrowed.

Chapter 1142: Paltry

The Kaddar Treaty Organization was busy.

It was not easy gathering the top strategic assets from the many important things that consumed their day-to-day lives. Just being the most important assets of the nations of the Kaddar Region meant that these distinguished Martial Artists were always preoccupied with the most important matters to themselves or to the nation.

Many were deep in training or in other personal pursuits. Exercising their power to obtain the things that they had pursued Martial Art to obtain.

Many were entrusted with important duties and objectives for the betterment of their nation. Just patrolling the border of a hostile nation was an important job, even if a bit mundane.

Deterring enemies from attacking was an important job, after all.

Many of the Martial Artists of the Kaddar nations possessed political power, and often exercised it regularly, and were often preoccupied with their responsibilities.

That was why it took a bit of time to gather the nine Martial Seniors who were going to assault the Floating Sect.

In a secret location in the Erionel Kingdom, the nine of them had finally gathered.

They contained the pressure that they naturally radiated as Martial Seniors as much as they could to avoid drawing attention as much as possible.

The nation that they were in was the location above which the Floating Sect was hovering far above in the sky at the moment.

"I trust each of you is prepared." A tall dark-skinned woman remarked, addressing her fellow Martial Seniors.

Her Martial attire was far from ordinary. It was flashy, woven from a golden silk that shined ostentatiously. An intricate emblem of golden, white, and blue of the Erionel Kingdom prominently shined on the chest.

"Everyone had long been prepared for quite some time, Duchess Lioma." Another man in a grim militaristic Martial attire snorted.

"General Derftar is correct, we have all been waiting for this day for a long time." An old man with a long flowing white beard spoke. "Not just us, but many citizens of the Kaddar Region have waited for this day for a long time."

His words reminded all nine of them of the significance of the operation that they were about to undertake. This operation was so important that even various Martial Seniors occupying various posts and statuses in rival and even enemy nations were firmly united on this matter. This operation was a manifestation of the sheer grudge that the Kaddar nations bore against the Floating Sect.

That was why nine Martial Seniors had been deployed just to fight three Martial Seniors. It was a little embarrassing to them that they needed such an overwhelming numerical advantage to be confident of victory, but alas, such were the circumstances they were in. The three Martial Seniors had already been documented to be far more powerful on, or even near the environment of the Floating Sect due to their Martial Paths being extremely compatible with the environment.

Furthermore, many years of having occupied Ajanta Island had almost certainly led them to develop extraordinary techniques that could only function in the environment of the island. They simply could not defeat in a one-on-one match, and that was a pill that they had to swallow.

"It's time." Duchess Lioma declared the hidden facility, that they were to be dispatched from, opened up.

The nine of them immediately took to the air, sky-walking at a fast and uniform pace as they soared towards Ajanta Island. The sheer speed at which they shot upwards was enough to cross the distance in merely a minute!

They knew that the Martial Seniors of the Floating Sect had almost certainly noticed their presence by now. They didn't even bother hiding it, there was no point.

Yet they didn't activate their Martial hearts to shoot up to the island in merely a fraction of the time. They did not want to waste their precious Martial Hearts on something as unimportant as travel.

Every second of the Martial Heart active was precious and ought not to be wasted. They did not want to waste their fuel on anything other than taking down the Floating Sect.

The closer they got, the deeper the sense of pressure they felt. The deeper the pressure they radiated. The atmosphere was wrung back and forth between the two groups of Martial Seniors.

They could sense each other before they saw each other.

And then they saw each other.

The nine Martial Seniors immediately ran into the three Martial Seniors standing at the edge of the island and nine of them rose up to approach.

For a moment, nothing happened.

None of them initiated aggression.

They simply stared at each other, except Senior Xanarn, whose eyes remained closed.

Duchess Lioma took the initiative to initiate dialogue. "The Kaddar Treaty Organization offers the Floating Sect an opportunity to unconditionally surrender."

Senior Leonil snorted with contempt.

Senior Xanarn smirked.

Senior Sarak met her sharp gaze calmly.

"The Floating Sect refuses to surrender."

"I was hoping you would say that." She muttered under her breath as the profoundly deep sense of peril radiated from her.

The very next moment, her blood vessels began glowing visibly from beneath her dark skin. She resembled a mountain with cracks of lava across its body, ready to explode.

She crouched midair, as her muscles quivered with tremendous power.

BOOM!!!

She launched herself forward with abysmally powerful momentum!

A titanic sonic boom the size of an entire town radiated outwards from her starting position. The sheer amount of friction that her momentum generated was so great that a great inferno enveloped her body.

She shot herself towards the three Martial Seniors of the Floating Sect like a living meteorite!

And yet...

BOOM!!!

An enormous shockwave rippled across the entire island!

When the dust settled, Duchess Lioma's eyes widened as she realized she had been stopped in her tracks.

She felt a large hand on her head, holding her in place.

Her bullrush had been halted by a simple gesture!

"Your paltry power cannot overcome my defenses," Senior Sarak declared coldly, his Martial Heart blazing across his body.

Chapter 1143: Counter

All hell broke loose after the first shots had been fired.

The remaining ten Martial Seniors instantly activated their Martial Heart.

A maelstrom of pressure unlike anything before washed over the Floating Sect, dousing everything and everybody in the glory of their might.

The combined bloodlust of twelve Martial Seniors was a sight to behold.

Every sentient lifeform below the Squire Realm quivered in fear.

It was as though the very island itself had held its breath.

Duchess Lioma leaped back with an incredulous expression. She truly knew that the Martial Seniors of the Floating Sect were beyond strong due to their environment, yet it was an entirely different thing to feel that strength, especially for the first time.

She had used a powerful technique, yet Senior Sarak had stopped her attack with a single hand, furthermore, he didn't even leverage his body's power in a better position. He was standing upright and normally.

The gap between them was painfully clear.

However, there were nine of them for that very reason.

Senior Sarak narrowed his eyes as two more shot forward appearing at his side, and launching powerful attacks at him. One of them appeared to be a rare heat-oriented Martial Artist, completely enveloped in flames while the other Martial Artist wielded an axe.

And yet...

BOOM!

A shockwave emanated from his body rippling through the atmosphere, pushing both of them away from him.

The two of them leaped back, shocked.

He had just casually withstood the attacks of two Martial Seniors with seemingly no damage whatsoever!

"Not a single scratch..." Duchess Lioma gritted her teeth as she activated another technique.

He simply brought his hands together in a praying gesture, glaring at them with sharp eyes. "You are not qualified to harm me."

It could have been dismissed as an empty boast...

Yet they weren't able to.

The three of them gritted their teeth as they began coordinating their attacks, looking to pierce his seemingly invulnerable defense.

"Together!"

The three of them blasted forward, tearing through the very air as they shot towards their target.

BOOM!!

"Urgh!" The three of them were blasted away with a titanicly powerful shockwave that his body released.

The sheer power of the shockwave shook the very island to its core!

"He didn't even move!"

"He's too tough!"

('What is happening?') Duchess Lioma paused for a moment, glaring at him. ('Not only do our attacks not do any damage, but every time we strike him, his body releases that annoyingly powerful shockwave even though he didn't actually make any motions to activate it.')

It was absurd that he was able to handle three attacks so well with seemingly such little effort.

Furthermore, he did it in that ridiculous stance with a praying gesture.

('If his muscles aren't moving... then that means that power is coming from somewhere else... but wh-') Her eyes widened as she realized the truth. "He is absorbing power and turning it into fuel for his own attack!"

Senior Sarak did not respond, but inwardly he was not pleased that they discovered the principle of his technique that easily.

His Abyssal Mirror Style was a counter-offensive style that was highly monolithic and centered around absorbing his opponent's power even before they reached him, through the dense air of Ajanta Island, before absorbing it and radiating it back in the form of a shockwave through the air.

He applied a breathing technique to make the density of air around him grow progressively higher, making it function as a form of a cushion that allowed him to absorb the impact better. His Martial Body had evolved in a way that could permeate power from one end to the other remarkably well, allowing him to release a shockwave with the power that he absorbed.

In an environment like Ajanta Island, both the absorption part of the technique as well as the release of the shockwave were greatly empowered by the dense atmosphere.

On top of that, after having grown deeply familiar with the environment, he had been able to increase the power of the technique to far higher heights by optimizing the technique to his surroundings.

It meant that just the task of hurting Senior Sarak was absurdly difficult, even for powerful Martial Seniors.

"He can absorb impacts...?"

"If so, it's going to be extremely difficult to get him."

"It's three Martial Hearts versus one. Aim for his vitals." Duchess Lioma growled. "Pound at him till he bleeds."

The three of them threw themselves at him with fierce determination. They were determined to take him down before their time was up. They did not want to end up in a situation where they would have been unable to even harm him by the end of the battle!

Fortunately for them, not everything was negative. The fact that the man seemingly had no active offensive prowess was definitely a positive to them, it meant that they did not need to be very worried about active attacks from him. In fights between Martial Artists, both sides needed to be very wary about the active offensive prowess of their opponents, and thus needed to dedicate attention, and power to making sure they were ready to defend at all times. They also couldn't abandon defense to rush into an aggressive offensive lash-out without any backlash from the involved parties at the very least.

However, in this case, they could to a much greater degree. Just knowing that any offense he had was counter-offensive and would come in the form of a shockwave even the timing of which was known meant that they could do a lot more.

Senior Sarak silently gritted his teeth as he prepared himself for a beatdown of his life. He had no intention of winning, he just needed to stall long enough.

He wasn't suited to eliminating his opponents, that was a job that he had already appointed to others who were not on the battlefield at the moment.

('Those three better make good use of this battle.')

Chapter 1144: Banshee

In the meantime, Senior Xanarn took another approach as she engaged with her opponents in another fashion.

She maneuvered through the air with graceful movements. Every step she took produced a note of sound, her maneuvering weaved the notes together into a symphony that reverberated across the entire island.

Her opponents chased after her.

"You're not the only one who can wield the atmosphere." General Derftar declared as he breathed in a certain pattern, exhaling powerfully as he swung his arms together, clapping with great force.

An incredibly powerful gust of wind roared towards her. Yet she merely opened her mouth.

VMMMM!!!

A painful pulse of sound escaped her lips, reverberating through the atmosphere, the moment it made contact with the gust of wind that his opponent had released, they both simply disappeared.

"She canceled it out using as little power as possible," General Derftar tutted. ('She's focusing on reducing her power consumption... That makes sense, she wants to make sure that her Martial Heart does not give out before ours.')

All three of them could tell that Senior Xanarn was adopting a very conservative fighting style.

She also strayed away from the infrastructure of the island, taking the battle to less populated areas of the island.

The three of them rounded around her, looking to pick at her and tear her down as soon as possible.

Suddenly one of them rushed in with an incredible degree of swiftness. She instantly knew that he was an offensive maneuverer.

She was unable to avoid him as she threw a flurry of sharp jabs at her vitals.

VMMMM!!!

A devastatingly loud blast emerged the moment his attack came anywhere near her body, a strange cacophony of notes reverberated through the air.

"A sound shield huh?" The man muttered.

She didn't even have time to respond.

SWING!

She pirouetted through the air, dodging a swift blade that swung right at her. She heard the crinkling noise of metal even as she evaded the attack.

The third Martial Senior caught his chain axe with a grin. "Not bad not bad."

Senior Xanarn had managed to deal with their attacks thus far, but they were only getting started.

('My defensive prowess isn't nearly as high as Sarak's') She mused. ('I can't afford to be as passive as he is. One advantage we have is that they are not accustomed to the environment on top of not being able to make the best of it or having techniques that aren't suited.')

Martial Artists that first stepped onto the island were not entirely accustomed to fighting in such an environment. Of course, the more experienced and skilled a Martial Artist was, the less time it took to adjust, still, that was undoubtedly an advantage that worked in favor of the Senior guardians of the Floating Sect.

However, that advantage would disappear as the fight went on and their movements became more refined.

That was why Senior Xanarn decided to exploit that advantage as much as she could while it lasted.

Her eyebrows furrowed as she opened her eyes, taking a deep breath in.

The three Martial Seniors of the Kaddar Region immediately felt a deep sense of peril as they leaped back immediately.

She opened her mouth, and what followed was a sound that was so potent, it was nothing short of pure force.

She unleashed a scream that was so incredibly loud that it affected the very light that the sound passed through, causing the world to appear shaky!

A wave of pure destruction large enough to swallow an entire town crashed into the Martial Seniors.

"Argh!"

The three of them were shocked that a single Martial Senior could release such power.

"Now wonder they deployed nine!"

The Kaddar Region was a relatively young Senior-level region. It did not have many Martial Seniors and thus did not have any high-grade Martial Seniors.

The Martial Seniors of the Floating Sect were not truly high-grade either. Yet, because of their environment, they were able to effectively wield the power of a high-grade Martial Senior.

The three Martial Seniors that had attacked Senior Xanarn realized that they needed to be careful.

Especially the offensive maneuverer, he needed to be careful about when he chose to close the distance between himself and Senior Xanarn.

If he mistimed it or dragged it a bit too much, she would unleash that powerful scream attack and crush him with sound.

"Keep our distance for now," The chain-axe-wielding Martial Senior told them with a solemn expression. "Feril and I will attack her from range. Dennis, you maneuver around and attack the moment you gain an opening to exploit."

"Will do," Dennis nodded as he began circling around Senior Xanarn.

The remaining two split up as well.

('They're avoiding grouping up so that I won't be able to use my Banshee Whisper against them.') She tutted inwardly.

That attack took too much, it was very difficult to maintain any defense when launching an attack that powerful.

Furthermore, by splitting up in different directions, she could not afford to focus so much power in a single direction, if she did, the other two would quickly jump in and exploit that opening against her.

While she was defending against the two of the mid and long-range attackers, she was most concerned about the offensive maneuverer. Her defense was active in nature, and her passive defense was lackluster.

What that meant was that if she was ever caught off-guard by him, then he would probably be able to hurt her even if he did not specialize in offense. Her body's constitution was not enough for her to be able to withstand attacks without active techniques covering it up.

She could tell that he was circling, doing his best to hide his presence with a combination of reducing his perceptibility, while also relying on minor misdirection to make his presence fleeting.

She needed to focus, otherwise, he would slip her mind while the other two did their best to draw her attention away.

Chapter 1145: Choice

While Senior Sarak and Xanarn fought against their respective foes, Senior Leonil had gotten entangled with several Martial Seniors himself.

His Martial Heart blazed with power as he inhaled deeply.

What followed shocked the three Kaddar Martial Seniors.

His lungs turned into a black hole of air as he inhaled deeply. The air above and even beyond the island shook as he seemingly consumed the atmosphere voraciously.

A single breathing technique disrupted the weather patterns across the entirety of the Kaddar Region.

The sheer amount of air that he consumed caused low-pressure regions to develop above the Erionel Kingdom.

Yet that wasn't all.

The low-pressure zones above the Erionel Kingdom accelerated the formation of cumulonimbus clouds.

The sky's composition changed as a result.

Senior Leonil's Martial Art was so powerful that its after-effects would bring about a rainstorm in the middle of the driest parts of summer for the Erionel Kingdom. He lashed forward attacking them with the might he gained from the breathing technique.

"Incredible," Rui murmured as he observed all three fights between the two sides from a safe distance with the help of Tempestuous Feel and Seismic Mapping.

The three Martial Seniors of the Floating Sect were even more impressive than he had given them credit for. The sheer combat prowess that they were displaying at the moment was on par with what he witnessed from Senior Ceeran on Vilun Island against the two Martial Seniors from the K'ulnen Tribe.

Senior Sarak was an immovable pillar, he reminded Rui of Hever, someone who dedicated themselves to a single technique and a narrow field. Like Hever, this man was a counter-offensive specialist. However, his Martial Art had a greater emphasis on a passive defensive element while Hever's Martial Art was a bit more active and offensive.

Rui was rather impressed with how the man literally never moved from his place and fought despite being stationary and unmoving in a prayer position. It was a novel way of fighting and one that he did not see everywhere.

Senior Leonil's Martial Art was quite astonishingly powerful and yet had fallen within Rui's expectations. His deduction was correct, his Martial Art was centered around breathing. He was quite similar to Ian Nepomniachtchi. Rui was not very fond of him, but he did have to admit that his breathing techniques were quite powerful.

Senior Xanarn's true prowess was one among the three that had fallen the most within his Martial Art. Partially because he had the best understanding of her Martial Art. Although she had used nowhere near her full power when she sparred against Rui, it was also true that she had exploited her Martial Art to the very best barring her Martial Heart. His predictive model was still decently effective despite it. He needed to strain his Tempestuous Feel and Seismic mapping to the limit to sense her despite that.

Thankfully, the former was especially empowered on Ajanta Island. It allowed him to get a good view of the battle, especially of techniques centered around the air through which he was sensing the battle.

However, even then, he truly had difficulty sensing the initial parts of the battle. He needed to focus every ounce of his attention on their movements to properly register them. Furthermore, it definitely helped that he was perceiving them from a distance. It was always easier to perceive motion from a distance due to the fact that moving objects shifted less in one's field of perception.

It was one of the reasons that humans could perceive rocket take-offs or the revolving moon that all moved at speeds that were far above what the mind could perceive and process under normal circumstances.

That was the reason he was able to keep up with their movements despite their blindingly high speed.

He did his best to keep track of all battles but soon realized that it was almost impossible for him at this stage.

After all, he wasn't just keeping track of them, he was also analyzing them, rooting out their patterns, and building predictive models.

However, even for Rui, building nine predictive models, that too that of Martial Seniors who were each quite challenging and consuming to keep track of, was too much.

Furthermore, because the fights were happening in locations separated from each other, it was best for Rui to focus on one set of Martial Seniors at a time. He didn't fault them for doing that, it made sense to split up considering that their Martial Art all relied on the environment of Ajanta Island, they could not make the best use of the environment if all three of them were doing so in extreme vicinity of each other.

They would only get in each other's way.

Regardless, he decided to pick one of the three to observe at this point in time.

('Senior Xanarn it is.')

He didn't pick her just because he liked her, but also because he already had a predictive model on her, which made it easier for him to keep up with the fight. The better he could keep up with the fight, the quicker he would be able to form a predictive model on her opponents.

It was objectively the best option at hand. Unless the Kaddar Treaty Organization randomly subbed out those exact three Martial Seniors next time, it would pay really well.

Rui analyzed her opponents deeply. This was the first time he had come across a chain-axe user, so he paid special attention to him. The other two possessed more mundane Martial Paths, and he wasn't too concerned about being caught off-guard there.

The fight progressed, and it became easier and easier for Rui to form predictive models on the three of them as their Martial Hearts burned their energy throughout the fight, causing them to lose the explosiveness that they possessed at the beginning of the fight.

As it became easier and easier, he did his best to strengthen the foundation of the predictive models before the fight ended.

Chapter 1146: Retreat

Given that he knew that he had the element of surprise in their next battle, he was especially on the prowl for patterns that could help with launching an ambush.

Specifically, he paid attention to the patterns in their attention distribution, which was something he didn't always do since he would not have the element of surprise in a head-to-head battle.

However, he wanted to tailor his predictive model to be the most useful in making the most of the element of surprise when it came to taking down a Martial Senior or two. After all, that was his task.

His job became easier after an hour when the Martial Hearts truly began wearing off and he was able to perceive all of them with ease. That was the one thing that he knew was going to do well.

BAM!!!

Senior Sarak skidded back, coughing blood, and panting heavily.

His opponents were not doing too much better. Their bruises were heavy, and several of their bones had been broken.

Duchess Lioma was about to rush forward to continue their assault when suddenly she felt a special device vibrating on her belt.

"Tsk, stop!"

The two of them heeded, they too had been issued the same device.

It was a signal indicating that the gravitational stabilizer was going to deactivate soon, having reached its limit. They were given a forewarning five minutes ahead of time, enough time for the Martial Sneiors to extricate themselves from their circumstances and retreat.

A murderous glower crawled onto her face as she glared at Senior Sarak with unrestrained fury.

Senior Sarak smiled despite the blood trickling from his mouth.

"Smile while you can. I'll have your head next time!" She snarled as she and her comrades drew back, exiting the island as they headed back to the Erionel Kingdom.

Senior Sarak sighed in relief as he witnessed the other groups of Kaddar Martial Seniors leaving the island as well, taking a moment to sit down and lie down flat to rest

It wasn't long before the other two Martial Seniors joined him.

"Glad you two are alive," Senior Sarak remarked.

"Hmph," Senior Leonil lightly snorted. "As if you couldn't sense us."

"Glad you two are doing just fine," Senior Xanarn smiled as she sat down beside Senior Sarak. "Though I see you lost a hand Leonil."

"He got a lucky hit in." Senior Leonil complained.

"Keep making excuses like that and you'll never set foot in the Master Realm, Leonil." Senior Sarak remarked.

Senior Leonil glared at Senior Sarak wordlessly.

"It's ok, Leonil, A for effort." She cajoled him, patting his head.

"Don't patronize me," He growled, smacking her hand away.

"Did you get shy with big sister Xanarn patting your head, how cute."

"You wanna go a round?" He growled.

"You'd probably lose even if you a hand." Senior Sarak remarked, amused.

"He's right, what was our score again?" Senior Xanarn put her finger on her chin in an exaggerated motion.

"Who even remembers stuff like tha-

"-I believe it was three-hundred to eighty-seven?"

"It's two hundred and ninety-three to ninety-two!" He barked at her.

"Ahaha~ so you do remember."

Three more individuals approached the Martial Seniors while the two of them bickered.

"I hope you got everything you needed." Senior Sarak said as he got up, facing Rui, Kane, and Ieyasu. "As you can see, nine is close to our limits. However, the Kaddar Treaty Organization possesses more Martial Seniors. If they do decide to send even one more next time then..."

He met their eyes individually. "You're our only hope."

His words weighed heavily on the three of them.

Rui's eyes narrowed. He understood the predicament quite well.

The Floating Sect was screwed. It was actually quite the miracle that the three Martial Seniors pushed back nine Martial Seniors.

However, this was their limit. Even a single extra Martial Senior would be game over for the Floating Sect.

One of the Senior guardians of the Floating Sect would fall in battle.

Even if the other two were able to push back their opponents, it was still a lost war. The next time that they returned, the two of them would not be able to survive being taken on by five Martial Seniors each.

Rui found it quite admirable that the three of them hadn't so much as faltered despite knowing this. As expected, the psyches of Martial Seniors were different. As people who had discovered their Martial Heart, their drive was necessarily of a high caliber. This was a quality he did not see very often in the Squire Realm.

('And that's one reason why so few Martial Seniors emerge from the Martial Squires.')

"I will not let you down," Squire Ieyasu replied with a calm and composed voice.

Yet it was reassuring.

The three of them knew what he was capable of as a Martial Artist. He was not someone to be underestimated. He was as strong if not a little stronger than them without their Martial Hearts.

His confidence meant a lot to them.

Yet, what Rui said went even further.

"I hope to win us this war."

The three Martial Seniors raised eyebrows at those words.

Those were bold words. A Martial Squire could not win a war that involved Martial Seniors, that was common sense. The three of them had allowed Ieyasu, Rui, and Kane to partake in the battle because they were special, but it was understood that their impact could not exceed that of a Martial Senior.

The three of them were puzzled why Rui would make such an arrogant statement but refrained from commenting. It appeared that he was serious about contributing to the war, thus they simply accepted his words.

"There's plenty of work that needs to be done, you're dismissed." Senior Sarak to the air as he headed back to the Floating Sect main office. As one of the three leaders of the Floating Sect, he had many duties to fulfill even if he just fought a war.

Chapter 1147: Concern

All of them dispersed, they each had things that they were preoccupied with various things.

The Martial Seniors had to unfreeze the Floating Sect and commence the workings of the sect.

Meanwhile, Rui returned to his chamber as he considered his gameplan

The reconnaissance phase was up, he had gotten everything that he needed, and now he needed to make the most of it.

('Most likely the Martial Seniors of the Kaddar Region will not change the pairings.')

Based on what he saw, it was clear that the Kaddar Treaty Organization was aware of the Martial Art of the three Senior guardians of the Floating Sect. The pairings were decently effective against the Senior guardians.

The reason they weren't able to create pairings that were perfectly suited to counter their opponents was that they didn't have a large pool of Martial Seniors to select from. This was due to a lack of options, and many of the existing options being preoccupied with other important matters.

This meant that Rui could most likely proceed with the assumption that Senior Xanarn would be facing the same opponents next time.

He accounted for the fact that the Kaddar Treaty Organization would likely be deploying one or perhaps two more Martial Seniors next time.

The probability of them sending three more was low, if they could muster up three more, they would not have sent as few as they did, there was no point in using only seventy-five percent of their available Martial Seniors on such an important war.

Rui estimated that they would probably take no chances and deploy more than eighty-five percent of the Martial Seniors that they could deploy.

Thus one more Martial Senior was guaranteed, two more just to be safe.

That meant that two of the three Senior guardians would have to face an extra Martial Senior.

Regardless, Rui had only prepared to face off against the three Martial Seniors that Senior Xanarn fought, he could not do anything if they targeted one of the other two.

For now, he was just focused on things surrounding Senior Xanarn.

Ideally, he hoped she wouldn't be the one to get hit with an extra Martial Senior, but he needed to be prepared if the unfortunate outcome did occur.

Especially since it was likely to occur. The probability that she would be hit with an extra Martial Senior was two in three. Actually, by Rui's estimation, it was most likely higher since the extra Martial Seniors were likely to be deployed against the two weaker ones, as opposed to the strongest one, since that was where the greatest impact of an extra Martial Senior.

Senior Sarak was so tough, that perhaps not even four Martial Seniors could fall him before the time limit of the gravitational stabilizer timed out.

However, the same could not be said for Senior Xanarn, and especially Senior Leonil. Those two were not surviving an assault from four Martial Seniors. That was why the Kaddar Treaty Organization was likely to toss the number advantage against those two, hoping to kill them off, leaving only one Martial Senior defending the sect.

The war would be as good as over.

Thus he immediately began planning for his strategies in both scenarios, but especially in the scenario with four Martial Seniors.

In the event that she was hit with four Martial Seniors, she would probably abandon offense and dedicate all Martial resources toward defense. Rui analyzed the information as his mind raced through the predictive models that he had on Seniro Xanarn and the three Martial Seniors she fought. With those, he was able to extrapolate dozens of potential broad outcomes based on the Martial Path of the extra Martial Senior, and how it would impact the fight.

In all of those models that he extrapolated, she died.

She held on for quite some time, but she most certainly ended up dead, and she also failed to take a single Martial Senior down with her.

It couldn't be helped, it was four-on-one.

This was bleak, however, his calculations were not entirely negative. By his calculations, she survived all the way until all of their Martial Hearts were drained. Of course, she was brought close to death at that stage in his model of the fight, severely wounded while her opponents were essentially unharmed.

However, the fact that she survived the deactivation of the Martial Heart was highly optimistic news. Because once the Martial Hearts were out of the picture, Rui could intervene.

However, she needed to survive at that time. He couldn't do anything if she died before. Before any further planning, he needed to make sure that she understood that.

That was why he paid her personal quarters a visit that night.

"I didn't expect you to come," She murmured when she saw him at her doorstep.

Rui paused for a moment. Her light home attire threw him off since he normally saw her in her Martial attire.

"I wanted to talk to you about the next fight," Rui replied.

She considered his words for a moment, before nodding.

"Come in."

Her personal quarters were modestly decorated yet homely, she didn't seem to care too much about furnishing it.

"Would you like something to drink?" She pulled out a large bottle of alcohol. "A single drop would kill any human, it was made specifically to intoxicate the Martial Body."

"Er, no thanks," Rui refused. "I wanted to discuss your approach to combat tomorrow."

"Hm, what about it?" She asked with a curious expression.

"Please do everything in your power to survive," Rui replied.

She chuckled. "As opposed to what?"

"As opposed to trying to protect the sect's infrastructure or any other considerations," Rui replied. "Your Martial Art works best medium and long ranges, however, those ranges make the sect susceptible to suffering damage, that is why you reduced your range today, correct? You cannot afford to do that. You need to make it past the Martial Heart stage no matter what happens to the sect. You must live. No matter what"

She felt her heart skip a beat as he could not hide the depth of his concern from her.

Chapter 1148: Drive

As someone whose primary sense was hearing, she was able to read sound to a far greater degree than normal Martial Artists. She could peer into the depths of voice to a much greater degree than anybody else could.

She could see that this wasn't merely a request to help fulfill his task, he truly wanted her to survive.

Yet, while his concern touched her, that did not mean she would just go with what he said.

"I am a guardian of the Floating Sect, I fight to protect the Floating Sect." She replied with a more serious tone. "I cannot, I will not abandon my duties."

Rui furrowed his eyebrows. "What do you mean? I'm not asking you to abandon them."

"I will need to if I prioritize my own life over the safety of the sect."

Rui raised an eyebrow. "That's a rather heavy interpretation of being a guardian. I do not hold myself to that standard, nor do the other Squire-level guardians."

"That is because you are not the ultimate protectors of the Floating Sect," She replied. "You are subjects that we protect."

Rui stared at her. "Does the Floating Sect really mean that much to you? Do you have family here or something?"

She shook her head. "The Floating Sect is a place that I have committed myself to protecting. Thus I will protect it, simple as that."

Rui realized that he was listening to what was probably her Martial drive. This was the desire that drove her forward to become stronger, perhaps what drove her forward to becoming a Martial Senior.

He didn't know. He didn't know her well enough, and he didn't want to try and pry open her heart forcefully. He felt a little awkward.

Their relationship wasn't platonic. However, Rui did not have a good idea of how to build relationships with women non-platonically. He was lacking in experience even in his first life, and he didn't even have much of a reference point because the media he used to consume was centered around Martial Art.

"I appreciate your concern," She smiled, walking closer to him.

She stood on her toes, kissing him softly on his cheek.

It was the softest of gestures, yet it made him feel warm inside.

"You don't have any objection to fulfilling your duties as a guardian and surviving, I presume?" Rui asked lightheartedly.

"Of course not, silly." She giggled softly.

Rui enjoyed making her smile.

For a brief moment, Rui considered spending the night with her. He could tell that if he made the move at the moment, she would not refuse him.

He wanted to.

Badly.

Yet he exhaled deeply, reigning himself in. Tomorrow was an important day, he could not afford to get distracted and lose his focus, nor could she.

She was waiting for him to make a choice in her silence.

"Well..." Rui sighed. "It's getting late, I should get going. Tomorrow is going to decide the fate of the Floating Sect, after all."

She smiled ruefully. "Of course. Get some rest, you're going to need it."

Even after he left, his thoughts lingered on her.

Her voice.

Her scent.

Her skin.

('I need to focus,') Rui narrowed his eyes.

He hadn't forgotten the sheer difficulty of the task that he was responsible for tomorrow.

He felt a strange sense of protectiveness over Senior Xanarn. This was weird because she was a whole Realm of power above him.

Yet he felt the drive to protect her from things he wasn't even qualified to fight against.

Regardless, it worked in his favor as he was more driven to ensure that he succeeded.

He spent quite some time fleshing out his plans, he created multiple plans for multiple different circumstances based on various possibilities on whether or not Senior Xanarn would be forced to face an extra Martial Senior and the kind of Martial Path that an extra Martial Senior would have.

It took an immense amount of mental and psychological preparation before he was confident about fulfilling his role tomorrow.

However, it wasn't just enough for him to create good plans and be done with it. A lot of his plans involved Kane, and he needed to bring the man into them in order to make sure that they were on the same page.

Thankfully, Rui had the most developed predictive model on Kane that he ever had, and it meant that his plans were highly tailored to include Kane seamlessly. He did not need to spend any time on what he was or wasn't capable of.

In fact, he knew better than Kane what he was most apt at!

Rui didn't even sleep that night, relying on mental rejuvenation potions to keep his brain fresh. Thankfully, he had slept the night prior, so he didn't have to worry about not being at his peak due to too much potion abuse.

"Finally," Kane collapsed into a chair. "Are you satisfied with your preparations?"

Rui nodded. "They're definitely not bad."

Kane stared at him with an incredulous expression. "You're kidding, right?"

"What makes you say that?"

"You just spent half a day working on those and optimizing them!"

"Like I said," Rui replied seriously. "Not bad."

Kane just stared at him with furrowed eyebrows even as Rui delved into his own world about the upcoming fight.

He was serious when he said that he intended to win the war.

And he actually had a very concrete plan that would allow him to trigger a chain of events that would result in that.

There were some tricky elements and hurdles that he needed to get past, but once he did, it was actually smooth sailing after that. There were several key elements that he needed to focus on in that regard.

And luck. He did need a bit of luck to pull it off, unfortunately. But such was life. There were always going to be things that were out of his control, the best he could do was his best.

Chapter 1149: Predicted

By the time the next day arrived, the Floating Sect's alarms had already begun ringing across the entirety of the sect as the news of yet another assault from the Kaddar Treaty Organization was discovered.

Many people realized that this was not viable in the long run. They could not afford to keep evacuating the civilians day in and day out. It was too disruptive to the regular functioning of the Floating Sect.

Something needed to change, otherwise the sect was doomed in the long run.

Thankfully, this time the evacuation measures were executed smoother than last time, and the Floating Sect members were tucked safe and sound by the time the Martial Seniors of the Kaddar nation were deployed.

The civilians were far more calm and collected than they could have been. However, the fact that the Floating Sect had been in a state of war for nearly a year meant that they had gotten used to the sense of war that had overtaken the sect.

They did not know the sheer impact that the battle would have at the moment

Those in the know of the dire circumstances of the Floating Sect were tense.

The Martial Seniors of the Kaddar Region were coming, they were soon going to find out how right or wrong they were.

Rui and Kane were already in hiding, close enough for Rui to observe everything and move in when he felt it was appropriate.

Of course, that wouldn't be any time soon.

Suddenly, he felt profoundly deep pressure.

"They're coming," He narrowed his eyes, as his body tensed.

Suddenly, many figures rose into his sensory field.

Specifically, eleven of them.

('Shit,') Rui cursed. ('This is going to be rough.')

Rui had predicted that the Kaddar Region could potentially have two more Martial Seniors that they could squeeze out and deploy, and unfortunately, it seemed that his estimation was on point.

It meant that two of the three Senior guardians of the Floating Sect were going to have to face a whopping four Martial Seniors at once.

He had also predicted which ones would. The addition of an extra Martial Senior would be most effective against the weakest two Martial Seniors of the sect.

"Damn..." Rui murmured.

None were more pressured than the three themselves as they stood before the three guardians of the Floating Sect.

"I told you, didn't I?" Duchess Lioma said as she glared daggers at Senior Sarak. "That your head would be mine."

Senior Sarak did not even bother quipping back. Their circumstances were too dire.

He could only hope that they would survive the Martial Heart phase of the battle, and he could only hope that Ieyasu and Rui could make enough of an impact to salvage their situation.

For some odd reason, Rui's bold declaration of ending the war popped up into his mind.

The atmosphere fluctuated. As if the mere presence of so many Martial Artists at the peak of the lower Realms could affect the world around them.

It could.

If one listened closely, one could almost hear tremors across the island.

As if it was shivering.

Shivering in fear of the carnage that was about to ensue.

BADUMP

Fourteen Martial Hearts blazed into power as glowing lines ebbed across their bodies.

BOOM

Instantly, they split into three groups as the three Senior guardians immediately leaped back and away, guiding the chasing Kaddar Martial Artists.

Splitting up was not only a desire of the Kaddar Martial Artists so they didn't interfere with each other's exploitation of the atmosphere, but it was also in the interests of the Kaddar Martial Seniors to split up. All for the simple fact that there were eleven of them versus three, it was far likelier that the Kaddar Martial Seniors would suffer friendly fire as opposed to their opponents.

As both sides readily and willingly split into three groups, Rui's attention immediately turned towards Senior Xanarn as he had planned to do so from the very get-go. The first thing he needed to do was assess the new variable that had been introduced to the equation of the fight.

Rui studied the new Martial Senior.

Her body was wrapped up in a lot of individual fabrics of cloth, and only her face and hands were visible.

This already gave Rui a bad feeling.

('Neutral Martial Body, yet low physical parameters compared to her peers,') Rui grew more tense. ('Don't tell me...')

FSSSS!

She exhaled a green gas at Senior Xanarn!

('Damn!') Rui cursed. ('A poison-oriented Martial Artist!')

Rui couldn't help but feel deep dread crawling into him.

Poison Martial Artists broke a lot of paradigms that normal and more orthodox Martial Art did not. Conventional active and passive durability were usually useless against the offense of these Martial Artists.

It meant that Senior Xanarn couldn't pull off the passive defense leading to a stalemate that she did last time.

Yet even as Rui was tense, he could not help but feel curious as well.

How did the Martial Heart benefit poison Martial Art?

After all, poison Martial Artists were not centered around speed, power, or durability. They relied on the toxicity of the substances that they introduced into their bodies to inflict damage on the bodies of others.

Yet a Martial Heart could not empower poison because the poison was not organic tissue that was part of the body. It was non-living substances that did not have blood passing through them, obviously.

So how did the Martial Heart empower their Martial Art?

('The very nature of a poison-oriented Martial Body is very different from ordinary Martial Bodies.')

Rui was certain that poison-oriented Martial Bodies dedicated their evolution not to speed, power, or durability.

No.

They dedicated the evolutionary resources to the ability to produce, sustain, and inflict poison. That was what their Martial Bodies focused on, in the same way that a speedster's Martial Body was focused on speed.

It also meant that the latent untapped potential hiding within their Martial Body was also centered not around power, speed, or durability.

It was centered around poison.

"Argh!" Senior Xanarn coughed blood as she began bleeding from her eyes inexplicably.

Chapter 1150: Bypass

It didn't take Rui more than a few moments to deduce the impact of the Martial Heart on a poison Martial Artist's power. It most likely empowered their ability to survive their own poisons and deploy greater concentrations and amounts of it, it also most likely empowered their ability to handle higher degrees of potency and toxicity. It allowed them to deploy these poisons against their opponents with greater ease.

Rui could see firsthand how effective the Martial Heart was in this regard.

It hadn't even been a minute, and the poison user had already wounded Senior Xanarn without any help from her comrades.

('She was caught off-guard.') Rui gritted his teeth. ('Not just that, but her defense isn't as effective against poison.')

The reason for that was simple. It had to do with the mechanics of airborne poisons.

They were basically gases.

Senior Xanarn's sound was certainly tremendously powerful, however, her sound traveled through gases.

The keyword was 'through'.

In this case, her sound barriers seamlessly traveled through the poisonous gas the same way that it traveled through normal air.

That was why she had been unable to defend against the poisonous attack whatsoever.

It meant that she had basically withstood a Senior-level attack on her Martial Body without any defense whatsoever.

Rui clenched his fist as he observed the ongoing fight.

She had immediately switched up strategies wisely, she focused half of her power blasting the poison-oriented Martial Senior with concentrated sound attacks to keep her at bay.

Thankfully, it was effective enough.

The fact that the Martial Body of a poison-oriented Martial Artist was not centered around speed or durability meant that she could not handle being bombarded with Senior Xanarn's offense very well.

However, it also meant that she needed to handle her original three opponents with just half her full power.

That was not good.

Because originally, those same Martial Seniors were able to force her to a stalemate with her full power.

Half her power could accomplish that.

BOOM!

Senior Xanarn gritted her teeth as she did her best to guard against an attack that she was unable to defend against entirely with her sound shield.

She reduced the amount of power she dedicated against the poison user but made sure that it never went below one-third. She needed to find the exact most optimal distribution of power. She needed to use the bare minimum needed to ensure that the poison user was kept at bay while diverting the rest towards maintaining a pure defense against the other three.

One good thing was that this time her only focus was survival, while last time she had dedicated some amount of power towards dishing back with her Banshee Whisper as much as the damage they inflicted on her.

This time, however, she didn't give a damn about putting so much as a scratch on her opponents. She only cared about surviving.

Specifically, surviving past at least the Martial Heart phase.

She knew that she could not survive if the fight proceeded uninterrupted. Four Martial Seniors, that too one that could bypass her sound as if she was created to counter her, was far too much for her to survive against, even if it was in the environment of Ajanta Island.

Her only hope of survival was...

Her thoughts briefly drifted towards Rui.

She felt less tense when she remembered that she was not alone.

Rui, on the other hand, only grew more tense.

('Damn, she should especially be focusing on opening up the range as much as possible, but she's too worried about the poison potentially affecting the civilians or the Squire guardians of the sect.') Rui could instantly notice the shifts in patterns and infer the psychological reason behind all of them.

This was actually something that Rui was not too afraid of. The gas poison that the Martial Senior employed was one that did not appear to linger at all after deployment, it seemed to disintegrate into the air harmlessly given how the green-colored gas did not seem to mix into the air, merely disappear in a strange and unexplained fashion.

It made sense that she had adopted poisons with such a trait among others because otherwise she was too much of a liability to be around, and was prone to causing more damage to her allies than her enemies if her Martial Art ended up passively killing everybody around her. Even if she was a Martial Senior, nobody would accept such a person as an ally. Regardless, it didn't matter here because it appeared that she had quite the amount of control over her Martial Art, and Senior Xanarn simply couldn't apply the best solution to dealing with her.

She was too committed in her drive to protect the people that she had made a commitment to protect.

Thankfully, it appeared that she had kept in mind what Rui had told her. She made sure that she did not waste her Martial heart for anything other than surviving and making them burn their Martial Hearts.

The quicker that she could force all of them to burn the stamina of their Martial Heart, the better it would work out for her in the end.

Rui too approved of this. He had been refining his predictive models on the three original Kaddar Martial Artists with the new data that he had access too while building a predictive model from scratch from the poison Martial Senior.

The refinements in his predictive model made him less uncertain about the plan that he had come up with. It made him more confident in executing it as time passed.

Yet it was hard for him to watch Senior Xanarn suffering. Ultimately, she simply could not contain the rush of attacks from four Martial Seniors entirely. Over the course of the battle, she had been wounded many times, so much so that even her healing factor simply couldn't keep up with the amount of damage that she took, they kept piling wound after wound on her body.