

Martial Unity 1171

Chapter 1171: Reign

"Please do," Rui nodded while simultaneously opening up the information guides that she had provided him.

"Very well," She nodded with a pleasant smile. "The Martial Festival of the Virodhabhasa Faith is held once every two years, it is a continent-wide festival where we celebrate the blessings of Lord Virodhabhasa in the form of a festival. After all, it is only thanks to Lord Virodhabhasa that Martial Artists even exist in the place, he is the one who decides which Martial Path shall continue, and which ones shall be destroyed..."

Rui sighed inwardly as he already began ignoring her. He should have known that these religious devotees would make everything about their lord and savior.

He instead quickly speed-read through the booklets provided.

The Virodhabhasa Martial Festival was celebrated with Martial Art. After all, what other forms of celebrations were necessary?

It did not deign to celebrate it the way other festivals across the entire continent were celebrated, not through special decorations across the entire town, nor through song and dance, or special ethnic cuisine, or ethnic attire.

No.

Only through Martial Art, or Martial-centric fields.

That was far more extreme than the Kandrian Martial Art festival which allowed for such forms of celebration.

However, the more he read, the more he grew engrossed in what he read, making several realizations.

('The Kandrian Martial Union copied the Virodhabhasa Faith,') Rui couldn't believe his eyes.

He came across something extremely nostalgic and familiar.

The Virodhabhasa Faith had been hosting Martial Contests since its very inception!

This far preceded the first Martial Contest held by the Martial Union.

It meant that what the Virodhabhasa Faith was doing was so viral that even the Martial Union did not feel any shame in copying it.

It was so similar to the point that even the structures were similar.

There were several contests divided by Realm.

A preliminary contest occurred at every Church town across the continent electing a single delegate who would then go on to become the representative of their particular Church town, they would then go on to compete across the entire continent with other representatives before a final winner was chosen as the Virodha Martial Champion.

Given the sheer magnitude of the contest, the Martial Champion could be declared as nothing short of the strongest Martial Squire across the entire continent!

Rui could only imagine the kind of monsters that would be competing in the Martial Contest. With the sheer number of Martial Squires competing, he highly doubted whether even being a grade-ten Martial Squire was enough to have a real chance of becoming the Martial Champion.

Most likely the Martial Squire that would become the Martial Contest would be an abnormal freak the likes of which were unlike anything the world had ever seen before.

Rui could see someone like Tokugawa Ieyasu becoming a Martial Champion, unfortunately, it seemed as though the man would most likely not be participating in the Martial Contest this year. He seemed all but content training on Ajanta Island as he grew stronger, taking a step to the Senior Realm.

That was rather curious.

Why didn't he partake in the Martial Contest and challenge himself with the strongest Martial Squires in the land?

He said that he had been waiting for someone like Rui to appear. But wouldn't the best place to look for the strongest Martial Squires be in a Martial Contest like this one as opposed to the Floating Sect which, while powerful, only had one thousand Martial Squires?

He wasn't sure but put aside the matter of Tokugawa Ieyasu for the moment, that man wasn't relevant until Rui returned back to the sect.

There were great incentives for the Virodha Martial Contest, winners at every level of the contest were rewarded with incredible benefits of their choice.

They could opt to cash out and earn a huge sum of money.

They could opt to procure powerful exclusive training and growth resources and facilities that would allow them to travel further down their Martial Path and develop their Martial Art in ways that no one could.

They could even opt to convert into more abstract rewards such as political capital. The Virodhabhasa Faith would back any political venture that a Martial Artist made. One could even begin the ruler of a nation with the backing of the Virodhabhasa Faith, within limits, of course. Trying to take over powerhouse Sage-level nations was impossible, but taking over nations limited to the lower Realms was quite easy for the Virodhabhasa Faith.

That was a tremendous amount of power that the religion possessed in all domains and fields meant that Martial Champion could do anything they wanted and would obtain incredible results.

A thought flashed through Rui's mind.

('Maybe I could...') He narrowed his eyes.

If he partook in the Virodha Martial Contest, then it was possible that he would be able to obtain what he needed for Senior Xanarn's treatment. He did not think that the Virodhabhasa Faith would be incapable of healing her condition. If they could not heal her condition then no one could, probably.

('Wait, I'm getting ahead of myself.') He shook his head. ('If I can acquire the medical services or products to heal her without such extra measures, then I don't have to go to such lengths.'))

Although his soul quivered in excitement for a continent-wide Martial Contest, he did not lose rationality. His circumstances were not the most optimal for such endeavors.

Firstly, he was in hiding, running away from Chairman Deacon. Secondly, he was here to fulfill Project Metabody, and thirdly he was here to find a solution for Senior Xanarn's condition.

Jumping into a Martial Contest such as this would make more sense if he didn't have more than one of those constraints, though ideally zero.

As he was right now, he could not afford to lose focus on what was important. His primary goal at the moment was to verify whether the Virodhabhasa Faith could help him with Project Metabody and Senior Xanarn's condition, and if so, what it took to obtain those services and commodities.

Chapter 1172: Difficulty

Regardless, he didn't necessarily resist learning more about the Martial Contest.

The contest was limited to the Lower Realms. The difficulty of holding a contest grew astronomically with each Realm.

Martial Apprentices were by far the easiest to hold a contest surrounding due to how grounded and shackled by conventional human limits they were. This meant that important aspects of the planning such as infrastructural constraints, observation viability, spectator safety, battlefield volume, etc., were all much easier to handle. You could have a large number of spectators fit in within a reasonable amount of area that was reasonably close to the battle arena, and they would be able to follow the fight to just barely enough of a degree where they would be entertained. It was possible to shield even a large audience from the Apprentice-level techniques and ensure their safety with ease.

With Martial Squires, that was increasingly more difficult to achieve. Martial Squires fought over increasingly larger ranges, and over larger areas. An ordinary battle arena was not enough for them.

That was why even the battle arenas of the Floating Sect were more than a kilometer in diameter to be able to accommodate all ranges of Martial Squires. Normal humans couldn't even perceive the entirety of such a battle arena at once with their senses. Furthermore, spectator safety was much costlier.

It meant that the number of spectators who could even afford to witness the battle between Martial Squires was limited to wealthier and upper-class connoisseurs of Martial Art.

If the Apprentice-level contest was treated as an event for commoners and middle-class folks, then the Squire-level was for the wealthy.

The Senior-level contest for even more so. It was for the top one percent of society.

The Virodhabhasa Faith did not even bother with Martial contests for the upper Realms. It simply became far too unviable to be able to actually execute in practice. Rui couldn't even imagine trying to set up a Martial Contest for Martial Masters.

He had no idea what Martial Masters were actually capable of, but if the previous gap between Realms was capable of an indication of anything, then they were bound to possess a level of strength that Rui ought to find impossible to even wrap around his head.

Regardless, he was most interested in the Squire-level contest out of all three. According to the information provided by the guides that the staff member had supplied him, there were one thousand Virodhabhasa Church towns, just like this one across the entire continent!

That was a staggering number, one that made Rui double-take in shock.

That would mean the Virodhabhasa Faith had infested the entire continent from end to end.

('No wonder Guildmaster Bradt did not list all Virodhabhasa Church towns, that would be a redundantly long list.') Rui mused. He was grateful that the man had referred him to only one Church town.

Regardless, that meant that there going to be a huge number of representatives at the actual contest. This was unexpected as when Rui had partaken in the Kandrian Martial Contest, he had only had to face fifteen other representatives from the different Martial Academies spread throughout the Kandrian Empire.

It turned out that while the Martial Union copied the Virodhabhasa Faith but to a much lesser degree.

('This is going to be far harder than the Kandrian Martial Contest was,') Rui mused.

The sheer pool of Martial Squires from which the champion would emerge meant that whoever the champion was would have the capital to be the strongest Martial Squire. It was a task of extraordinary difficulty.

Yet the results and rewards from the victory were bound to be absolutely phenomenal. No force would want to yield a Martial Squire that powerful to anybody else. After all, power as a Martial Squire correlated with synergy between technique, Martial Body, and Martial Path, which came with creating or customizing techniques for one's self, or individuality, which was necessary for the higher Realms.

Thus the strongest Martial Squire was also the likeliest Martial Senior in the future, especially in a setting like this. It wasn't guaranteed, of course, there were other variables that affected whether a Martial Squire would become a Martial Senior.

Still, aiming for the high-probability crop was the best way to get one's Martial Seniors. Rui learned that much of the audience of the Squire-level contest were scouts or third parties that were interested in buying the most promising Martial Squires.

The majority of the Martial Artists that wandered into a Virodhabhasa Church Town were generally traveling nomadic Martial Artists who did not have fixed inclinations, and thus could potentially be swayed by interested employers and patrons.

That was one of the reasons the Virodhabhasa Faith received a flood of spectators every time it held a Martial Contest during its Martial Festival at the Squire and Senior levels.

"When is it being held?" Rui asked out of the blue, interrupting her long religious spiel.

"It will be held a little over a year from now," She explained, smiling reverentially.

"And there are stands advertising it already?" Rui frowned.

"We wish to spread the message to as many Martial Artists as possible so that they learn of the contest and choose to partake," She explained with a well-meaning smile.

That was quite some dedication to the event, it meant that they were extremely interested in ensuring that all the Martial Squires in all of the church towns partake in the Martial Contest.

Rui shook his head. "I see, I appreciate the information but I shall take my leave for now."

He left the stand as he headed towards the main church that half functioned as a place of worship but also served as an official place to house the management of the town. After all, no amount of faith was going to run a town and manage the many things that needed to be managed.

Regardless, he was there to actually evaluate what it would take to achieve what he wanted to achieve.

Chapter 1173: Cost

"How may we help you?" One of the staff members catering to inquiring Martial Artists asked Rui when he approached the counter inside.

"I wish to procure medical services and commodities of the Virodhabhasa Faith," Rui replied.

"Then you have come to the right place," She gave him a reverential smile that he had come to see on the faces of literally any native that he spoke to. "The Virodhabhasa Faith possesses developed medical capabilities capable of healing the wounds and conditions that Martial Artists are afflicted with, and help them survive and also get back to into form!"

Rui smiled, he had expected this.

He highly doubted that a Martial religion that was centered around Martial Art would not have such measures. It appeared that he was right to give this religion a shot.

"What kind of medical service would you like?" The staff member asked courteously. "We have services that we offer free by virtue of you being a Martial Artist."

This was thanks to the reverence that members of this religion had for Marital Artists. It meant that Rui could probably get all regular wounds and minor conditions fixed for free, but unfortunately, what he was dealing with was far beyond that.

"I have medical records of the condition that I would like a treatment and a cure for," Rui replied, placing the document on the counter.

"We understand," She nodded. "We will send this information to the medical department where it will be processed and the prospects of a cure and treatment will be evaluated, as well as the price of the treatment."

Rui nodded. "By when can I expect a response?"

"It will most likely get fully processed within a day," She replied. "Please fill out this form, and you will be issued an application number and a token."

Rui quickly filled out all the relevant details that were most centered around means to contact him, more than anything.

Rui quickly filled in all the relevant details before submitting the application and receiving a registration token.

Now all he could do was wait. He had already submitted a copy of the medical details of Senior Xanarn's condition with her personal details redacted to the medical department, having made sure that there was absolutely no way whatsoever that her identity could be traced from the medical details that he had submitted.

He was about to leave when he recalled that this wasn't the only business he had with the Virodhabhasa Church. After all, the main reason that he had sought to leave the Floating Sect was because he would not be able to fulfill Project Metabody if he remained there.

"I also wish to consult relevant experts surrounding the topic of the Herenal's Disease, and its effects on the Martial Body," Rui requested.

"Please give me a moment, I will look into that request," She replied graciously before fiddling with her terminal. "...Currently we have three experts tagged with having expertise in the fields that cover the topic you specified, fortunately, consultancies with non-inner members of the faith are free of charge to Martial Artists, thus you will not be charged with a fee."

Rui raised an eyebrow, smiling. He disliked religion as a concept, but he had to admit, that the Virodhabhasa Faith was good at buttering up Martial Artists.

Still, he was keenly aware that this was a manipulation tactic to make his impression of the religion positive. Although it was ineffective against him, he could definitely see the average Martial Artist allowing himself to develop a good impression based purely on the deference that the religion showed Martial Artists. Not aware that the deference that they showed in circumstances such as this was actually worth less than the goodwill that they built in Martial Artists.

He could easily imagine that there were Martial Artists who would grow fiercely attached to the faith of the brainwashed members which genuinely treated them with devotion and reverence. It was probably a plot cooked up by people higher up.

If they could earn the loyalty of a Martial Senior through these seemingly over-the-top deferences to Martial Artists, especially powerful Martial Artists, then it was worth all the trouble and hassle.

"Your appointments have been scheduled in five hours," She told him, handing him some cards that specified the time and location of the appointments, as well as the individuals whom he would be consulting.

Rui left the main church with everything that he needed. ('That went decently well, they really are good at sucking up to Martial Artists.')

He shook his head.

If they thought that this would increase the probability that Rui would remain in the town or become attached to the faith, then they were sorely mistaken. Rui was leaving the second that he got what he wanted.

However, there were some things that he needed to consider. For example, Senior Xanarn's treatment and cure were almost certainly not something that he could get away with for free. He would certainly be charged something, the question was what he ought to do then. He did not have much wealth at the moment, he had some gold coins that were the remnants of the massive revenue that Esosale Suppliers had generated in the Shionel Confederation, but they would surely not be enough to afford the treatment of cure that he would have to cart off to Senior Xanarn.

('Missions it is...') He sighed.

The Virodhabhasa Church also offered brokerage services to Martial Artists and the market. Meaning the Virodhabhasa Faith could connect Rui to those that wanted to commission him for his Martial Art services and use those earnings to pay the fee, while also working on Project Metabody.

If the cost was too prohibitive, he might have to work extra long, but other than that, his plan was set and everything was actually proceeding surprisingly smoothly. He spent the five hours before his appointment wandering around the large town and taking in all of the things that it had to offer.

Chapter 1174: Myostatin

Soon enough, it was time for his appointment.

[Doctor Greniluo

Virologist

31st main road, 42nd crossroad, L-342]

Rui quickly found the location of the office of the doctor that he had an appointment with. He had arrived before a humble but sizable professional building.

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"Who's there?"

"I am Squire Falken, I believe I booked an appointment with you through the Church," Rui said.

The door suddenly opened and a short bald man stood before Rui. "Ah, Squire Falken, welcome! It is an honor to be consulted by a Martial Artist."

He uttered something that was typical of the religion Rui's experience, but Rui also was able to judge that this individual was not sincere in his expressed deference to Rui, which suggested that he truly wasn't committed to the faith, but played along for whatever reason.

('Probably to avoid getting into trouble,') Rui mused. ('As one of an intellectual field, he must have a hard time dealing with all of this nonsense.')

"Now then," The man began. "What is it that you wished to consult me about, Squire Falken?"

Rui paused for a moment, before starting. "I wanted to consult you regarding Herenal's Disease, and its effects on Martial Squires like myself, how detrimental is the disease to the effective physical prowess of the Martial Artists infected with the virus?"

"Interesting question," The man furrowed his eyebrows. "Herenal's Disease is a disease that causes hyper muscle hypertrophy very rapidly, increasing muscle volume and density, subsequently increasing energy consumption to such a degree that it causes death to the organism. Death by exhaustion. The exact mechanism by which the virus functions is not known, but we suspect that it affects a gene that is related to the regulation of muscle mass. However, there has been no empirical data proving this."

('Not bad, that's actually close to the mark.') Rui applauded him mentally.

Later on after his initial education back on Earth, he had increasingly familiarized himself with human anatomy and physiology which became increasingly more relevant when he created the VOID algorithm. This gave him a pretty decent background in biology, one that had been rejuvenated when his mind's ability to recall grew significantly in his second life.

('The Herenal's Disease almost certainly is one that messes with the MSTN gene that is centered around the production of myostatin, a protein that halts the growth of muscles.') Rui mused.

One of the breakthroughs that he had made as a researcher was discovering the optimal weight class, in the UFC, of an MMA fighter based on their myostatin count which told him how much muscle they would be able to build easily.

Someone with too much myostatin production was not suited to bulking for the heavyweight division. Conversely, someone with too little myostatin production was not suited to the lightweight division.

There was even a condition known as Myostatin-related muscle hypertrophy that gave someone twice as much muscle mass as they would normally have.

Here in this fantasy world, it appeared that there were even fewer limits as to how far this could go in this world. After all, patients with Herenal's Disease rapidly came to resemble a certain green rage monster whose name he could not utter due to copyright.

('And with the Martial Body whose limits far surpass that of the normal human body, I cannot imagine how much power I can gain from it,') Rui narrowed his eyes. ('I just need to make sure that it is safe.')

"I see," Rui replied. "I believe that one of the treatments for the Herenal's Disease is a constant supply of nutrition sustenance to the body."

"Correct," He nodded. "We insert tubes into the bloodstream and supply large amounts of all the necessary nutrients and compounds to sustain the massively increased energy consumption rate."

"However, I believe during this time, the patient retains the increased muscular output, correct?" Rui asked.

"That is correct, yes," The man nodded, furrowing his eyebrows.

He was no doubt quite confused as to why a Martial Squire randomly booked an appointment to consult with him, only to ask him questions about a rare disease.

"I wish to gain your input on a hypothetical," Rui continued. "Let us say a patient infected with the disease possesses an excess of the compounds and nutrients that are normally needed by the human body. Let us say by a factor of ten, how would you project the rate of deterioration of the condition of the human patient in these circumstances? Will the timeframe leading to death also be increased by a factor of ten?"

The doctor frowned as he considered Rui's words. "It's hard to say in such a hypothetical, but it is quite likely that the timeframe leading to death would substantially increase in such circumstances, as for whether it would increase by a factor of ten, that's a bit hard to say. Frankly, it depends on many variables, but generally the greater the amount of time the patient is alive, the greater the hypertrophy of muscles. Thus the consumption also increases as time passes, though the rate at which it increases would also decrease."

"Presumably due to the elastic limits of fascia holding the muscle together," Rui remarked. "It would serve as a powerful counter-balance to the muscle hypertrophy caused by the Herenal Virus."

"Indeed, the research on the matter is-" The doctor suddenly, paused doing a double take, glancing at Rui with confusion. "I'm sorry, you are a Martial Artist, correct?"

"Very much so," Rui replied, deep in thought.

The doctor stared at Rui with confusion. For a moment, he felt as though he had been discussing with a peer of his as opposed to a Martial Artist, who was probably illiterate to a certain degree as they usually were in his experience. But Rui so seamlessly kept up with him even when he was talking about his field of expertise that it threw him off for a moment, he forgot who he was talking to.

Chapter 1175: Refine

The virologist sized Rui multiple times, frowning his eyes in confusion. How was a Martial Squire so adept on the hypothetical symptoms of Herevan's Disease under the hypothetical that he had provided?

For a second he considered whether Rui lied about being a Martial Squire, however, his passive aura as a Martial Squire denied any possibility of Rui not being a Martial Squire.

"You mentioned that the timeframe before death would be greatly extended," Rui continued. "Would that not mean that within that timeframe, the patient would come to possess muscular output that is far greater than their baseline?"

The doctor hesitated. "Theoretically, yes, but the fact of the matter is unless the body receives continuous Myostatin treatment."

"However, Martial Squires will be able to maintain their combat prowess, correct?" Rui asked. "Martial Squires retain much more power even at low white blood cell counts, correct?"

The doctor could see where this was going. He wasn't stupid, Rui's questions all pointed in one direction.

And the direction is pointed in was pure madness.

The doctor had never heard of a Martial Art technique that involved diseasing one's own body.

"You're not wrong," The doctor carefully mentioned. "However, that will be very momentary. Once this brief period of power passes, the patient will pass away. Or at best, they will be terminally ill and will spend the rest of their life bed-ridden and in need of constant myostatin treatment."

One way to counter the myostatin-inhibiting virus was to continuously supply the body with myostatin protein to make sure that the body could stay normal. However, that meant hooking the body to tubes connected to instruments that would continuously supply myostatin to the bloodstream of the patient.

That would severely restrict the patient for the rest of their life.

"What if that same patient was afflicted with a condition where they naturally produced a surplus of myostatin?" Rui asked. "Would it not be the case that the patient would be free from shackles and would be able to live life normally?"

The doctor frowned. "That is true, however, in that case, that would be no different from being perfectly healthy in the first place, rather than having a condition counter a virus."

"What if the patient was able to control the myostatin, turning it off when needed so as to tap into the powerful muscles granted by the Herenal virus?" Rui asked with a smile.

"..." The doctor stared at Rui with an incredulous expression. "I've never heard of such a condition in my entire life."

"It does not naturally exist, no," Rui shook his head. "However, the Martial Body is far less shackled than the human body. A condition that causes a surplus of myostatin... is hardly the craziest thing a Martial Body has done, am I wrong?"

"No," the doctor sighed. "However, it would be better to go for a Martial Body that is centered around strength in the first place."

"What if you want a Martial Body centered around strength only sometimes?" Rui shrugged. "Regardless, I do wish to thoroughly discuss the details of this hypothetical..."

He spent the next few hours grilling the hapless doctor, going into the nitty gritty details about his supposed 'hypothetical'.

By the time the session had ended, the doctor looked equally excited and resigned.

"Why are you planning on subjecting your Martial Body to this?"

"I never mentioned subjecting myself to this," Rui smiled.

"..."

"Thank you for your consultance, doctor," Rui got up. "This has been most illuminating."

He did mean those words. The doctor pointed out certain minor problematic elements that Rui hadn't considered due to the lack of depth of knowledge and experience.

He wasn't upset that he missed those. It was arrogant, even for someone of his caliber, to think he could match specialists, that had dedicated the entirety of their lives to their field, in their field. He had gotten exactly what he needed, and was actually happy that the doctor had pointed out issues in the plan for the strength Metabody that Rui had cooked up.

If the doctor had been unable to discern even a single issue, then Rui would have doubted his qualifications since the probability that Rui could nail the intricacies of a field in that he had a shaky foundation at best was low.

He took his leave, gathering his thoughts on the way back. This consultancy had helped him refine the plan for the offensive Martial Body quite well. He had already developed the core of the idea of the Floating Sect but unfortunately was unable to verify or proof check the details.

Furthermore, he had confirmed with the doctor that the Seonmun Church town did in fact possess samples of the Herenal virus in containment. This meant that he could obtain it, potentially for free, but certainly for some services.

However, he had completed the theoretical framework of the strength-oriented Martial Body fully.

('It needs a name...') Rui mused. ('Hm, how about... Hypertrophic Surge...')

Rui had already exhausted all his creativity in creating a great technique, it appeared he had too little for a great name.

('Not to mention, I still need to create one more technique,') He sighed.

He hadn't forgotten that he had yet to create a defensive Martial Body technique. He had saved it for the last because he felt as though that was the hardest technique without a doubt, out of all the Martial Bodies. He had yet to figure out an idea as to how he would make the constitution of his body stronger, and it was definitely something that was going to take a lot of thought and creativity.

Regardless, it meant that he was that much closer to successfully completing Project Metabody. All he needed to do now was to find the appropriate training resources and then immediately begin training, going all out.

Rui visited the other two experts on Herenal's Disease, consulting them as well to make sure that he didn't leave a single stone unturned when it came to his new ambition technique.

Chapter 1176: Diagnosis

The other two experts were also equally bewildered by what Rui told them, and he couldn't blame them for it.

Rui was probably the very first Martial Artist in the world who was about to embark on training a technique that involved purposefully diseasing the body with a virus.

The prospect of this moved the three experts that he consulted once they managed to realize his intentions. It wasn't every day for them that entirely new grounds were being breached when it came to the already vast and deep field of Martial Art.

It wasn't every day for Rui either, no. It did happen once a season, however.

Rui was entirely accustomed to creating techniques the likes of which simply did not exist prior. He had done it so many times that it had frankly begun to grow normal and mundane. If he did create a revolutionarily groundbreaking and unprecedented, he would shrug and move on. But if he didn't create a technique that was not of such a caliber, then he would be somewhat disappointed.

Of course, any other Martial Squire would be overjoyed even with the lesser techniques that Rui created. Rui himself, however, merely treated them as nothing worthy of much note. His standards for himself had reached so high that only with grade-ten techniques like Void Forestep, Weaving Blood, Hungry Pain, and now Hypertrophic Surge could he truly feel moved. And only with projects like Project Water could he possibly feel genuine and unabashed excitement. Project Metabody as a broad overarching Martial Art technique was so powerful that it far surpassed any grade-ten technique that he had ever seen in his life.

It was going to be his magnum opus, in the Squire Realm. He highly doubted that he would produce anything that surpassed during his remaining time as a Martial Squire. Of course, he didn't say anything about the higher Realms. From what he could tell, the higher Realms probably required different kinds of techniques with different focuses, which was why it was possible for him to surpass Project Metabody later on.

Regardless, an entire day passed, and he was notified of the results of the medical services and commodities that he wanted to purchase.

The Virodhabhasa main church summoned him for an appointment with a member of the medical department who would go over what medical services he would need to purchase in order to treat and cure the condition of the patient that he had shown them. They would probably make numerous prescriptions for various potential outcomes, and Rui would have to make an informed decision on which treatment to go forward with.

However, he was happy that a meeting was arranged in the first place. If the church designed to go that far, then that meant that probably was enough of a report to be made that was worth having a professional explain it all to Rui.

If it turned out to be the case that Senior Xanarn's condition was just impossible to heal, then they would have straightforwardly revealed that without any wasted time.

The fact that they had called him meant that there definitely was a solution that he could afford!

"Nice!" Rui grinned.

This was turning out easier than he had expected. He had expected that the search for a solution would be much harder and longer, but thankfully, it merely took some travel and the very first destination had a solution at hand.

('The Floating Sect made it sound so impossible,') He snorted as he headed into the meeting.

"Ah, Squire Falken," A man smiled at him when he entered the room. "Please come in, we have much to talk about, have a seat. I am Doctor Derol, and I am here to provide you with the possible medical treatments and cures for the patient and the data of whom you provided us."

"Pleasure to meet you, doctor," Rui courteously greeted them in exchange.

"Not at all, the honor is mine," The doctor bowed deeply and reverentially to Rui, which Rui had now come to recognize as the telltale sign of Virodhabhasa Indoctrination.

"Allow me to begin by informing you that we have found several possible solutions to the poisoned condition of your patient," the doctor smiled. "However, before we go into those and their pricing, allow me to begin by elucidating the condition that she truly is in at the moment, for the report that you provided us actually undersold the severity of her condition."

Rui's eyes narrowed. The man's words implied that the Floating Sect actually failed to comprehend how dire her condition was.

That was not good.

Rui had been under the impression that while recovery was difficult, at the very least her condition had halted in its deterioration and was stable. He had assumed that she wasn't in a position where she could pass away at any moment.

"The poison has taken root in all of the blood capillaries and vessels in her brain and has also infected her cerebral fluid to a minor degree. We have identified the poison as Cereneon Nectar, an airborne poison that dissolves in fluids to an extreme degree. Every time her heart beats, pumping blood to her brain a minute portion of the Cereneon Nectar, a high-grade Senior-level poison, is extracted from the blood, increasing the amount of poison in her brain, and increasing the probability of abrupt brain death or organ failure."

Rui's eyes widened in shock as he gritted his teeth. "That means she could potentially die any second!"

"Correct," The man nodded. "Normally, poisons do not affect the brain all that much because the brain cannot be conditioned physically as much as the rest of the body, which means that any poison employed by a Martial Artist cannot affect the brain too much because they themselves need to be able to withstand it without ill-effects, which cannot be trained due to the inability to condition the brain."

Rui nodded. "That means that poison Martial Artists cannot host poisons that target the brain if they do not want their own brains to succumb."

Chapter 1177: Solution

"Indeed," The man nodded. "Thus, poisons employed by Martial Artists are carefully curated for their viability in regard to this condition. The conditions under which poisons employed by Martial Artists actually end up harming the brain of their opponent are scarce."

He turned to a copy of the details that Rui had given them for evaluation.

"Unfortunately, it appears that this particular patient has suffered those circumstances."

Rui felt a sharp weight on his heart, tugging at his optimism, festering anxiety.

He took a deep breath, inhaling and exhaling.

"It appears that this patient had suffered brain injuries, most likely due to blunt force trauma to the skull, while simultaneously being poisoned with the Cereneon Nectar," He continued with a matter-of-

factly tone. "This has allowed the poison to severely affect the brain when it would not do so under normal circumstances."

Rui narrowed his eyes as he grimaced, recalling the fight that she had had with the four Kaddar Martial Seniors.

She had indeed suffered many head injuries and had bled profusely from her head despite her healing factor due to how many injuries that she had suffered there.

Those injuries were bad enough by themselves, but now it appeared that the presence of poison in those circumstances was far worse. It had crippled her brain, forcing her into a coma that she would not be able to wake up from under natural circumstances.

"From the data that you have presented, it appears that she consumed multiple healing potions as early as she could, yet it was too late. Poison has already occupied several lobes and sections of the brain. It is unclear what functions of the brain have been affected just by looking at the parts of the brain where the poison occupies, I'm afraid."

Rui recalled that this world had not made as many deep breakthroughs into the structures, systems, and divisions of the brain.

He looked at some of the images that the doctor provided him. He could already tell that it affected many parts of her cerebrum and cerebellum, parts that corresponded with the conscious mind, as well as mental faculties and cognition surrounding combat.

"With that brief summary of her condition and why it is the way it is, let us begin talking about the solutions," the doctor continued.

Rui's attention perked up as he began paying more attention to what the doctor had to say. What followed would greatly impact whether he would see Senior Xanarn alive ever again.

"As I mentioned at the start, there are solutions," He smiled. "The first solution is simple and straightforward blood replacement therapy. This is a special form of treatment where we take a sample of blood and produce identical blood to it before passing it through the patient's body. The intoxicated

blood from any given patient is extracted out in exchange for the fresh blood that the patient will be flooded with, allowing it to extract toxins from across the body and flush them out."

Rui stared at him silently, waiting for him to issue his judgment on the matter.

"This solution is sub-optimal," the doctor immediately began. "However, it is the cheapest out of all three. It will most likely wake her up from her coma within ten hours."

Rui cocked his head back in surprise.

The actual evaluation of her condition sounded extremely dire. Yet the solution was remarkably effective if it was able to wake her up within ten hours of the administration of the treatment!

"Huh..." Rui tilted his head.

Something felt off.

"The restoration of consciousness will occur within half a day, and the rehabilitation of her body won't take too long either, given that she has a Martial Body."

Rui's face lit up in a smile.

This was extremely optimistic, and it meant that there was a good chance Rui would be able to ensure that she woke up.

"The only thing you'll have to take care of is the post-traumatic stress disorder once the truth behind her condition sets in," The man replied.

Rui's eyes narrowed. "What condition would that be?"

The doctor turned towards Rui with a resigned sigh. "The condition of being a cripple instead of a Martial Artist."

Rui's eyes widened in shock. "You're telling me she will lose the ability to practice Martial Art in her current condition?!"

The man nodded. "That's right, this treatment cannot extract all the poison in her brain. The greater the heart rate she experiences in such a condition, the greater the damage the nested poison inside her brain will do to her. A high heart rate will stress the blood vessels and neurons of the brain, allowing the poison to harm the stressed tissue, causing outcomes such as the shutting down her consciousness once more. A second time will be more fatal and hard to overcome."

"So you're saying that she can not only never utilize her Martial Heart if she is healed through this method, but she will also be unable to ever do anything that is physically strenuous?"

"Indeed," The doctor nodded simply, giving Rui time to process what he had just heard.

"That..." Rui murmured.

He couldn't even imagine how hellish and horrific it would be for a Martial Artist, a Martial Senior, to never again be able to practice their Martial Art or even fight at all despite an intact Martial Path and Martial Art.

It would drive him absolutely insane. He would lose his sanity very quickly if that ever happened, he did not trust himself to be able to endure such a horrific punishment for a Martial Artist.

He knew Senior Xanarn well enough to know that her identity as a Martial Artist and a Martial Senior, in particular, was central to who she was today. If she ever woke up with those two elements gone from her, she would very well begin unraveling.

She might even hate Rui for waking her up to such a terrible hell as opposed to letting her fall asleep and eventually die.

Chapter 1178: Expensive

Rui quickly ruled out this solution in a heartbeat.

Treating Senior Xanarn only to bring her back as a cripple was something that Rui was absolutely certain she would hate from the bottom of her heart. He did not want to hurt his favorite Martial Senior in such a way.

Nothing less than a perfect solution was acceptable.

"Let us move on to the other solution," Rui impatiently told the doctor.

"Understood," The doctor nodded. "Then let us move on to the next treatment option. In addition to blood replenisher, we will also treat her with a high-grade esoteric detoxifying agent that will extract the poison riddling her brain to a much greater degree. She will practice Martial Art once more and even engage in combat again with some constraints and restrictions."

"What constraints and restrictions?" Rui raised an eyebrow, refusing to get excited too early.

"She may never employ her Martial Heart ever again," The doctor informed him.

Rui's eyes widened. "That..."

"The remnant poison will be little enough to allow her heart rate to reach ordinary peaks, but activating the Martial Heart will be lethal due to the minute poison deteriorating the constitution of the blood capillaries of her brain. She will suffer a cerebral aneurysm if she activates her Martial Heart even for a second, even with the healing factor of a Martial Senior, she will perish."

Rui's expression grew more severe. Waking up Senior Xanarn while preserving her ability to practice Martial Art was definitely better than turning her into a cripple who could not exert herself. However, being deprived of the ability to activate her Martial Heart was still too much. Being woken up only to be told that she was effectively demoted to the Squire Realm was something that would crush her spirit.

Rui did not want that to happen either.

He shook his head. "Please present the next solution."

The doctor threw a deep look at Rui, before nodding. "The third solution is simple, instead of a mid-grade esoteric, we can treat her with a particularly high-grade esoteric detoxifying agent that will completely extract every trace of poison within her system, allowing her to completely recover from her condition.

Rui's eyes lit up in interest. "This solution sounds perfect. How much would this particular medical treatment and service cost?"

"It will cost you about seven million eight hundred and fifty thousand virodhanas," The man replied.

Virodhana was the currency used by the Virodhabhasa Faith. The fact that the religion had become so large and powerful that they had their own currency was a testament to their size and power. Furthermore, the currency had its own weight as well, while it wasn't as heavy as the Shionel gold currency, it was still quite respectable on the international stage.

That was why seven million virodhanas was not a small amount.

Rui cocked his head back in surprise. "That's more than just a bit expensive!"

The doctor smiled wryly. "The raw esoteric substances and materials needed to prepare the detoxifying agent were procured by the Martial Masters from dangerous zones deep within the Beast Domain."

"Oh..." Rui murmured.

He quickly shut up. The price was actually reasonable when the difficulty of obtaining the necessary ingredients was considered.

For the first time, he regretted not having the wealth that he earned from Esosale Suppliers. It had made him the effective equivalent of a billionaire. He would have easily been able to afford the treatment with no dent in his wealth.

But alas, it was all gone.

He briefly considered going back to the Floating Sect and seeing if they had enough funds. However, he quickly realized that this was a futile exercise. The Floating Sect did not have liquid wealth. It did not have any internal currency either. That did not mean it was worthless, it still had valuable capital and assets that were worth a lot, but most of its economic capital was solid and untransferrable, making it extremely difficult to do anything about it.

It was impossible to sell any of the powerful chambers of the sect to the church, it was impossible to sell most of the assets to the church due to the nature of the assets as commodities.

Furthermore, the Floating Sect was not in a good state economically speaking. The two battles between the Martial Seniors had caused damage to infrastructure across the island. Senior Xanarn had done an admirable job minimizing the damage inflicted to the surrounding infrastructure, the same could not be said for Senior Sarak and Senior Leonil.

Senior Sarak certainly cared and tried, but the nature of his counter-offensive Martial Art was such that he couldn't protect his surroundings and environment even if he wanted to. He had to be resigned to the fact that he couldn't avoid damaging the Floating Sect.

Senior Leonil was one who could help but didn't nonetheless because he cared too much about his own life.

It wasn't as though he didn't care about the sect, he just had too strong a sense of self-preservation to let caring for the sect get in the way of not dying.

That meant that the Floating Sect had to dedicate a lot of resources to restoring the sect at the moment, it did not have room for additional expenditure.

('Especially with a new wave of Martial Squires rushing into the Floating Sect.') Rui mused.

He briefly considered bringing over one of the Martial Seniors of the sect here to do missions and earn the necessary funds, but ultimately put aside this plan as well. The Floating Sect was actually incredibly dire straits as far as its security went.

Two Martial Seniors were already not enough to defend the sect if the Kaddar Region ever resumed its assault against the sect, taking away one of the two pillars that protected the sect and upheld the organization was actually more damaging to the sect than even Senior Xanarn's condition.

('No, I'll need to solve this problem myself.') Rui's eyes sharpened.

Chapter 1179: Considerations

The issue was that seven million Virodhanas were not something a Martial Squire could earn in a short amount of time. He used to only earn the equivalent of a few thousand Virodhabhanas back when he was completing missions in the Kandrian Empire through the Martial Union.

('Tsk,') He tutted.

He was running out of options. He didn't want to spend years grinding on missions through the church, he simply wanted to make sure he got what he wanted as soon as possible.

Unfortunately, he saw very few ways to make it happen.

He briefly considered selling some of his techniques. It was possible that he could earn millions if he sold all of them.

But he instinctively decided against that. His techniques, especially his grade-ten techniques, especially his Metabody techniques were something he was too possessive of to sell to outsiders at the moment. He would need to sell his entire Martial Art if he wanted to close that gap, just selling grade-ten techniques that he was less caring towards such as the Pathfinder and the Riemannian Echo would be far from enough.

('I could probably close the gap if I offered the service of causing breakthroughs and creating Martial Apprentices with my Martial Art.') Rui mused.

But this option he instantly dismissed. Revealing this was as good as signing off his freedom for the rest of his life. The Virodhabhasa Faith would never let him go if he revealed he was capable of such a thing.

It's why he was quite wary about voluntarily divulging the depths of his Martial Art and its techniques. It was one thing if the Virodhabhasa Faith merely observed his Martial Art with no greater context, it was another thing entirely if he revealed that his Martial Path was something that easily fit the description of the Virodhabhasa. Things could end either too well or too bad depending on his luck.

It was yet another reason why he ruled out selling techniques for now. It's not that he was principally opposed to spreading his work, barring Project Metabody for now, but it was too risky and massively increased the amount of insight they would get into his Martial Art than if they just observed him. The probability that they would interpret his Martial Art as one that is connected to the Virodhabhasa was not low enough for Rui to ignore it.

It didn't help that Rui was from another world too. If they found that out with a mental sensory technique, it was game over.

He would rather do such trades with an organization that has more credibility and one that he had greater trust in, such as the Martial Union rather than a delusional, but incredibly powerful Martial religion.

He would rather engage in something that was more innocuous and one where he could be more assured that the Virodhabhasa Faith was not inclined to cross lines.

"Is there anything else you would like to ask about the patient, Squire Falken?" The doctor asked.

Rui glanced back at him.

All of these thoughts had flashed across his mind in just a moment, no time had passed from the perspective of the doctor.

"This is a bit out of the purview of your briefing, but... if I perform well in the Virodhabhasa Martial Contest, then will I gain enough favor from the Virodhabhasa Church to gain access to the treatment."

The doctor reacted with surprise. He did not expect to be asked non-medical questions. Still, he maintained his composure and graciously answered it.

"Yes," The doctor. "However, such a feat will be extremely difficult, the Martial Squires that partake, to my knowledge, are among the best of the best."

"...I see," Rui sighed.

The choice became more alluring by the second.

He had already been attracted to it from the very start, but as every second passed, he couldn't help but consider the choice increasingly seriously.

The prospect of being able to test himself against the best Martial Artists in his Realm was something that Rui couldn't resist.

He had finally reached a stage where he could fight against the very best of his peers head-on and potentially prevail nonetheless.

Had sort of experienced something like that in the Shionel Confederation, however, back then the circumstances heavily favored him over every other competitor. With the Riemannian Echo and Kane's Void Step, he was invincible in a game where the rules worked heavily in his favor and heavily against all of his competitors.

This allowed him to far surpass what he, and everybody else, was otherwise capable of.

However, this would not be the case in the Virodhabhasa Martial Contest, he would have to face all his competitors in a fair setting head-on without any advantages of any kind.

And frankly, he looked forward to such a contest.

Needing to rely on extraneous elements to dominate was the same admitting he couldn't do it on his own merit.

Perhaps he was fine with that when he was a grade six Martial Artist walking into the Shionel Confederation, but that was no longer the case.

More than three years had passed since he had first set foot in the Shionel Dungeon, and he had grown tremendously since then. He hadn't gotten officially checked, but by his own estimation, he was probably a baseline grade-ten Martial Squire.

However, once he finished Project Metabody...

He didn't think grade ten would be able to do his power justice.

As long as he finished the defense and offense Martial Bodies of Project Metabody, he would achieve a level of power that would be breaching new territory within the Squire Realm.

Rui glanced up at the doctor. "Thank you for your services, doctor."

"Not at all, Squire," the man bowed.

Rui had plenty of thinking to do now that he parted ways with him. He had much to consider and think about. His circumstances and situation had grown more complex than anything he had ever experienced before, he needed to make sure that he properly thought things through instead of just giving in to his urges.

Chapter 1180: Decision

He strongly desired to partake in the contest after all, that was how he felt. It compromised his ability to consider whether it was a good decision or not objectively and rationally. That was why he needed to put extra effort into his considerations.

The first thing he looked at was his long-term priorities of reaching the Senior Realm well before the ten-year period ended.

When that goal was considered, the Virodhabhasa Martial Contest was an absolute plus. The only thing he needed to be very careful of was the fact that he was dealing with religion that he unfortunately could be interpreted to have ties related to.

However, even that was fine as long as he did not give the Virodhabhasa Faith any reason to act against his interests. That meant that at the very least he should prevent them from getting to the core of his Martial Path, and prevent them from learning that he was a reincarnated being.

These two were manageable, Rui's Martial Path and Art were highly nuanced, especially now that he was adding another layer of complexity to it with Project Metabody. One could not simply decipher its depths just by observing it for a brief period of time. Especially if he was doing everything in his power to make sure that he didn't divulge his secrets.

As long as he made sure that the core nature of his Martial Path was inscrutable, then the Virodhabhasa Contest was filled with positives when his goal of reaching the Senior Realm

For one, it was the best way to stimulate his potential, more so than any other option he took to get his hands on the medical treatment necessary for Senior Xanarn, this was the one that would him the closest to the Senior Realm.

Another benefit was that it was the absolute best way for him to refine Project Metabody. Even if he completed the initial iteration of Project Metabody, he would not use it as smoothly and as well as he would if he subjected himself to testing against many martial Squires.

That was what was necessary for him to gain mastery over it. Experience.

However, just quantity of experience was not enough. Simply fighting a large number of Martial Squires would not help if they were low-grade and not diverse enough.

What he needed was quality of experience and diversity of experience in addition to quantity.

The best way to get the highest quantity, quality, and diversity of experience using Project Metabody was by subjecting himself to a powerful group of Martial Squires.

He could not think of a more fitting avenue for it than the Virodhabhasa Martial Contest. Literally, even if he turned back and returned to the Floating Sect, it would not serve him as well as this contest did.

('Another condition I need to be very careful of is my appearance,') Rui narrowed his eyes.

He had not forgotten that he was on the run from a man who knew what he looked like. He had changed the color of his eyes and hair, yes, but that was obviously not going to make him unrecognizable.

He needed to make sure that his appearance was masked at all costs.

However, an ordinary mask was not going to suffice. He hadn't forgotten what had happened when he relied on an ordinary mask to protect his identity back when he was a Martial Apprentice in the Kandrian Empire, and it had backfired badly, leading to the destruction of his own mask and disclosure of his identity.

That absolutely could not be allowed to occur again. Rui would kill himself if he was incompetent enough to not take the strictest of measures to ensure that this never occurred again.

('A Senior-level mask grafted onto my skin with an adhesive so tough that it will need to be surgically extracted from my face after the contest,') Rui declared.

That was the standard to which he would hold himself. Only with such a mask could he be confident that it would not break or fall off. Only with such an extreme measure would he be willing to participate in

such a high-profile event that was bound to draw a lot of attention from across the entirety of the continent.

Many considerations like that continued to fly around in his head as he thoroughly considered the pros and cons of his options in regard to the long-term and short-term goals that he had set for himself.

The ones that flashed through his head the most were his long-term goals of becoming strong enough to eliminate the threat of Chairman Deacon and protect his family. Frankly everything else, including Senior Xanarn, simply paled in comparison.

That did not mean he was forsaking her, the primary reason he was entering the contest was for her sake. As long as he performed well enough the Virodhabhasa Faith would generously waive the cost of the medical treatment. The better he performed, the more he would gain.

('It's set then,') Rui steeled his will as he made his decision. ('I shall partake in the Virodhabhasa Martial Contest.')

The decision was heavy. Just making him feel as though the air had grown heavy around him. Either that he was experiencing even more pressure.

('The contest is only one year away.')

Rui narrowed his eyes. ('I need to finish Project Metabody before it arrives.')

That was a tall order. Finishing ordinary techniques within a year was quite easy for Rui, but Project Metabody was a different beast altogether. The techniques of these projects were so challenging that even normal grade-ten techniques like Transverse Resonance and Pathfinder were easier in comparison.

However, it also made him optimistic that it would give him what he needed to achieve his many goals, from procuring the treatment that Senior Xanarn needed, to gaining the power to eliminate his enemies and protect the people that he loved.

He quickly headed back to the Virodhabhasa main church to enlist for the contest.