

Martial Unity 1361

Chapter 1361: Ideas

Area Crina was an area at the center of the Shadow Isles and as well as the name of an intelligence organization in that area established by the Crina Foundation. An organization set up by a wealthy businesswoman who had made it her life's goal to find the Silent Shadow. She set up a cooperative and charitable intelligence agency that cooperated and partnered with Martial Artists who also sought the Silent Shadow.

Apparently, most assassins that came to the Shadow Isles partnered with Area Crina to find the Silent Shadow.

No one why Chairwoman Crina cared so much to find the Martial Master, but she in a sense led the collective effort in the Shadow Isles to find the Silent Shadow.

Rui found this to be incredibly strange. Nonetheless, it was the truth. She was probably the reason that so many Martial Artists veered towards hunting for the Silent Shadow.

It took him quite a lot of time, but he finally reached the end of the totality of the investigative report and meta-analysis provided by the Beggar's Sect.

It gave him a good idea of what not to do.

In fact, he had come up with several rules.

First, he needed to forget about finding the Silent Shadow. It was hopeless. He was not arrogant enough to think that his individual efforts were enough to outmatch countless assassins, the Beggar's Sect, and Area Crina.

Second, he needed to get a good understanding of what it was that the Silent Shadow sought from her pupils. He was certain that she had some criteria, and it most likely wasn't just a matter of being a powerful assassin.

According to the Beggar's Sect, many particularly powerful assassins of even the Senior Realm had arrived at the Silent Isles nearly a decade ago and had yet to find the Martial Master.

If it was simply a matter of being powerful, then one would expect the top assassins in the Shadow Isles to be skimmed off as pupils regularly, but no such thing occurred.

He highly doubted it was a matter of age, experience, or any other specific performance parameter based on the data that he had just gone through.

There were many excellent Martial Seniors, Squires, and Apprentices across the Shadow Isles who had spent a long time searching for the Silent Shadow.

Yet not even the best of them that had spent a long time had been accepted.

That indicated a fundamental disconnect to Rui. According to his evaluation, the probability was not low that, as opposed to them being inadequate, there was a fundamental criterion that they had failed to satisfy.

Something that all of these elite assassins were failing to get right. At least, as far as the Silent Shadow was concerned.

His mind went back to his earlier hypothesis.

Assassins assassinated. They were specialists who were entirely dedicated to eliminating their targets.

Perhaps, true assassins ought to resort to their craft to solve their problems. Perhaps a true assassin ought to eliminate all the hurdles that impeded their path, rather than take a different path. Perhaps true assassins ought to accomplish their goals by eliminating those whose elimination would allow for their goals to be fulfilled.

"Professor, what was the Silent Shadow like when she was an active assassin?" Rui asked.

"That's going to charge you."

"Just put it on the tab."

"She was insane." The professor casually remarked without looking up from his work. "It was as though she was a thoughtless killing machine that could do nothing but kill. That did nothing but kill. That would always kill no matter what, who, when, where, or why."

He paused for a moment, recollecting. "There was once where she had caused a client some problems by killing too much, causing the client to suffer hostility from many powerful parties. Do you know how the Silent Shadow compensated for this problem?"

"...Did she kill everybody who had a problem with her overstepping?"

"Indeed. She even once tried to kill a Martial Sage who tried to pressure her into refraining from killing." The professor replied.

"I'm surprised she's still alive," Rui remarked.

"What is an even greater mystery is why she retired after two centuries acting as an assassin." The professor noted. "It doesn't make sense based on our profile on the Martial Master."

Rui narrowed his eyes. Regardless of why she retired, the professor's words about her modus operandi while she was active lent credence to his theory. An assassin who solved every single problem through assassinations probably would not approve of assassins not using their crafts to solve every problem.

However, the issue was that even if he did stumble onto something resembling the truth, how was it useful to him?

How could he possibly use assassinations to get closer to being accepted as a pupil by Master Reina Cara?

He highly doubted mass indiscriminate assassinations were effective. Based on what he heard, the Silent Shadow didn't kill if she didn't need to. That meant every killing needed to be purposeful.

In this case, full of the purpose of increasing the probability that he would be selected as a pupil.

Otherwise, the many assassins accepting commissions from the Derschek Region would all be worthy. But they weren't, those assassinations simply gave them the funds they needed for basic purposes.

They were not directly tied to being accepted by the Silent Shadow.

If his hypothesis was right, he needed to assassinate them with the direct purpose of finding the Silent Shadow or being accepted by her as a consequence of the assassinations.

'Maybe I should just assassinate all the assassins who seek to be her pupil.' Rui mused.

This way, there would only be one candidate for her to accept as her pupil. If she wanted to accept pupils, and she clearly did, then he would be guaranteed a spot.

'No, even better.' Rui smiled as an amusing thought entered his mind. 'Maybe I should kill everybody in the Shadow Isles. The last person standing will be the only person in the Shadow Isles I cannot kill; the Silent Shadow.'

Chapter 1362: Considerations

It was an insane thought. Yet it was one that he considered nonetheless.

"How many innocent civilians are there in the Shadow Isles?" Rui asked.

"Hah," The professor snorted. "None. The Shadow Isles has become an infestation for assassins and all activities related to assassinations. There are managers, agents, representatives, bureaucrats, and others who specifically ensure that the commissions for assassinations all reach the assassins quickly and smoothly."

"Hmm..." Rui considered that. He would have been very hesitant if the man had said that there were plenty of peaceful villages and settlements across the entire archipelago. But Rui's moral consideration tended to plummet if the people who would become victims to his plans were not good people.

He wasn't sure if he would go ahead with the plan nonetheless, it was maybe too extreme.

Still, eliminating his competition was definitely the best way to use assassination to fulfill the objective of being accepted by the Silent Shadow as a student. Furthermore, doing this would also simultaneously fulfill his commission payment to the Beggar's Sect.

Thus it was a course of action that had double the benefits.

If he did choose to go that path, however, he would need to ensure that he was up to the task of successfully completing it. Because assassinating and eliminating an entire archipelago worth of assassins was most certainly an extremely difficult task. He didn't think he would be able to fulfill it that easily.

For one, the biggest issue was the Martial Senior assassins of the Shadow Isles. Getting rid of them was going to be the hardest. The moment he got rid of them, he would be able to get rid of all the other Martial Artists with ease.

"How many Martial Senior assassins are there in the Shadow Isles?" Rui asked.

"About thirty-seven." The professor replied.

That was not a small number for the total number of Martial Seniors. It was actually quite dangerous for Rui to try and kill every single one of them, especially given that he was quite new to the Senior Realm. There were probably several who would be able to crush Rui in a fight just due to how much greater their accumulation was.

Thankfully, assassinations were not fair fights. The goal was to kill, not to win. He could use preparation, exploit vulnerabilities, and aim for moments and places where their guards were lowered. Rui especially

was extremely good at exploiting preparation to output performances that were far superior to his natural capabilities.

The issue was the means of killing. While Sonic Bullets were quite overpowered in the Squire Realm due to an absolute inability to sense them, he had already seen that that wasn't entirely the case in the Senior Realm. Senior Minneson had been able to briefly sense them with his Martial Heart.

Given that Martial Seniors could reflexively and automatically activate the Martial Hearts in emergencies, it meant that he couldn't leisurely snipe them from a great distance away with a powerful attack.

At the very least, at full power, it was no longer something that could be hidden too very well. It was no longer something he could rely upon to kill his targets without them ever seeing it coming.

Unless he found a way to overcome this hurdle, of course. He was not willing to abandon this assassination tool. It was just too useful. The Pathfinder technique was a grade-ten Martial Squire technique that could snipe its targets from great distances away. It had allowed him to replicate Senior-level feats as a Martial Squire.

Now that he was a Martial Senior, he would be able to strike Martial Artists from an even longer distance away.

"Say professor, would the Beggar's Sect aid me with free intelligence if I were to help the sect dismantle the assassination industry in the Derschek Region by killing assassins?" Rui asked. "Or would I have to pay for that intelligence as well?"

"We are not impractical." The professor replied briefly. "Rest assured, we will help you help us free of charge."

Rui smirked. That meant that he could rely on the Beggar's Sect to gather intelligence on all his targets free of cost, while he prepared predictive models on them. This greatly simplified his task.

The issue of finding a foolproof method of killing them or upgrading the Mighty Roar Flash Blast technique still remained.

His mind scoured through the physics of the technique, revisiting classical wave theory and harmonics as he looked for ways to upgrade the technique in regard to its capabilities as a tool for assassination.

"Can the Beggar's Sect get me one of those musical training sets that musicians use to train their pitch?" Rui abruptly asked out of the blue.

The professor frowned. "We are not a delivery service. Why would you need such a thing from us in the first place?"

"It's relevant to the operations you want me to do for getting rid of the assassination sector," Rui replied.

"That's absurd."

"I'm serious." Rui heaved a resigned sigh. "I'd find it myself, but that could take quite some time. You can put it on the tab along with some considerable interest."

"We charge a high markup for our services. Do not complain if you find out that you have an unpayable debt due to how liberally you borrow from us. Do not think of defaulting on us, either. We will find you and we will kill you."

The professor's tone was uncaring and unforgiving despite the fact that he was a normal human and Rui was a Martial Senior. This was the power that came with being an official of a foreign affairs department of a powerful continental force.

"Rest assured, I don't have any intentions of doing that. In fact..." Rui smirked. "By the time I'm done here, it will be Christmas for the Beggar's Sect."

"What is that?"

"Don't worry, you will. For now, I would appreciate if you could help me with that, and in turn, help yourselves."

"..." The professor stared at Rui with sharp eyes. "...We will oblige. However, the more you rely on us, the greater we expect you to perform. Do not forget that, Senior Falken."

Chapter 1363: Inspection

Thankfully, it wasn't long before Rui got his hands on what he needed. The Beggar's Sect did not inquire into how he intended to use them, but he did not forget the stare from the professor as he left the Libraries of Gehu before heading to an uninhabited location where he could train without being spied on, a location he got from the Beggar's Sect as well.

Deep within a cave network in a mountain range in the Derschek Region, Rui sat down as he worked with the new toys that he got from the Beggar's Sect.

There were many parameters and phenomena related to sound that he had yet to explore. Techniques like Transverse Resonance make use of constructive resonance and superposition between two sound waves to overlap two sound waves into a single stronger sound wave.

However, there were other phenomena that could be used as the basis of new techniques.

Rui activated his Martial Heart, never once taking his Mind Mask off, before firing off a Mighty Roar Flash Blast.

THWOOM!

BOOM!!

The attack annihilated half a large hill in the distance, leaving a cleaved structure standing with its other half missing.

However, it wasn't the destructive power he was paying attention.

"Tsk," Rui tutted. "Too attention-drawing."

His senses and sensory techniques, when passively empowered by the Martial Heart were able to detect the sound wave.

This was without the Riemannian Echo technique, too.

Furthermore, this was with a younger and weaker Martial Heart.

Senior Sarak had already informed him that Martial Seniors could tap into the Martial Heart with techniques to empower those techniques. This meant that Martial Seniors with passive sensory techniques could not be truly caught off-guard since those sensory techniques could always be active, and thus were always tapped into the power of the Martial Heart passively.

He himself had the same ability with Primordial Instinct. No Martial Squire assassin could catch him off-guard because Primordial Instinct was always passively active, and passively empowered with the Martial Heart.

It was one of the reasons he had easily been able to foil a well-hidden assassination attempt with ease despite the stealth techniques that the Martial Squire assassin had employed.

Unfortunately, it worked against him when he wanted to assassinate Martial Seniors. By the Senior Realm, he was certain that pretty much every Martial Artist had at least one sensory technique. Even if they didn't before, when they realized how dependent they were on the Martial Heart, they would master at least one sensory technique that could passively be empowered by the Martial Heart to ensure that they would be able to better sense incoming ambushes and activate the Martial Heart in time.

This meant that Rui's previous thoughts were right. The Mighty Roar Flash Blast technique was no longer an effective covert assassination tool against Martial Seniors. Unless there was a foolish Martial Senior out there who had yet to master a single passive sensory technique, Rui could forget about relying on it to easily assassinate his targets.

A Senior-level attack was too powerful to hide from them.

However, as Rui had come to realize, that only applied to Senior-level attacks. Weaker attacks were harder to notice since they had less energy.

Rui carefully adjusted the power of the attack to half, before firing again.

THWOOM

'Still too easy to sense.'

Thwoom

'Better, but still far too attention-drawing.'

He continued significantly reducing the power of the Mighty Roar Flash Blast technique before finally reaching a stage where he couldn't sense the attack after it moved further than ten meters away.

There was one predicted problem, however.

'These attacks possess less than three percent of their original power.' Rui sighed.

This was the price of making it undetectable; making it incredibly weak, so much so that it had entered the Squire Realm. Martial Seniors were easily quasi-Senior level even without the Martial Heart, such attacks were not a threat to them even if they were too weak to be detected.

This was the predicament in which Rui found himself.

If he made sound attacks strong enough to kill Martial Seniors without their Martial Hearts, they would become too strong to be undetected.

If he made the sound attacks too weak to be detected, then they were also too weak to kill Martial Seniors.

He highly doubted that he was the only Martial Senior to stumble into this predicament. Sound was not too rare as a form of offense at his level. There was a reason that Martial Seniors were not assassinated left and right all the time, there were many practical constraints that prevented Martial Seniors from assassinating their peers too easily.

However, Rui was not content with abiding by this restriction. He needed the power to assassinate his peers with unerring success. Unlike his peers, perhaps unlike anybody in this world, his theoretical understanding of the nature of reality was better than any of his peers.

On a theoretical level, he understood sound much better than even Xanarn. He recalled how shocked and dumbfounded Senior Ceeran was when the man first learned about the Pathfinder technique and its complex mechanics. It had taken him eighteen months and much handholding from Rui to master the most elementary version of the grade-ten technique.

Rui had had much evidence in his time on Gaia to know that his scientific background gave him huge advantages over his peers.

Impossible hurdles that impeded his peers were not so hard to overcome for him. It would not be the first or the last time since he accomplished such a feat.

One of the reasons that he had begun focusing on pitch training was to test a hypothesis. A potential means by which he could overcome this hurdle. As he continued training his ability to identify and replicate pitch, his mind flashed back to a memory in his mind a long time ago back on Earth.

A teacher had put two tuning forks on a table at a distance from each other, before banging a metal rod against one, causing it to vibrate significantly. Magically, the other tuning fork also began vibrating energetically all of a sudden.

Chapter 1364: Sympathy

"This is an example of sympathetic resonance." The professor had instructed back then with a mundane tone. "Measure the distance, frequency, and amplitude and note them down in a table in your lab journals."

If anybody had told young John that he would one day be using this principle to create a fighting technique to kill other Martial Artists, he would have looked at them with a strange expression before moving away.

But it came to be.

Rui's idea was simple. The principle of sympathetic resonance allowed for one to pass on vibrations to a target through sound as long as the frequency of the vibrations matched the innate vibrating frequency of the target. Every object had an innate vibrating frequency, it was possible to vibrate an object and even cause it to generate force as long as said was exposed to sound of the same frequency.

In fact, this was the same principle that was used in MRIs, lasers, and even electrical circuits.

'And also, in Martial Art techniques. Hopefully.' Rui mused.

It was one of the reasons he was trying to improve his pitch control in the same way that musicians trained their pitch.

His goal was simple. If making sound attacks too weak to be detected also made them too weak to hurt Martial Seniors, then he could bypass the latter using sympathetic resonance.

Every object, including Martial Bodies, had an innate vibration frequency. If he could launch sound attacks with the same pitch as the innate vibration frequency of his opponent, then he could completely bypass their defenses by causing their bodies to vibrate, inside and out.

Their durability or defenses would be helpless since the innate vibration frequency could serve as a clear chink in their armor, allowing Rui to propel his sound attack right past their defenses with no problem.

Once the sound attack traveled past their exterior, he could use it to attack particularly vulnerable places like their heart or brain. If he could do that, then...

'It would mean instant death, most likely.'

Through this way, he could make Squire-level attacks bypass quasi-Senior level defenses, and bypass passive baseline Senior-level senses.

The principle of this technique was similar to that of Reverberating Lance. However, there was a crucial distinction. Reverberating Lance produced vibrations, not sound.

Not all vibrations were sound, and sympathetic resonance only occurred through sound.

In reality, it was extremely difficult to use Reverberating Lance to generate sound in the air. Even for the Martial Body, moving his fist back and forth so rapidly that it was indistinguishable from intense sound, passing onto the atmosphere as sound, was impossible.

'Though I haven't tried doing that with the Martial Heart yet.' Rui noted.

He immediately put it on his to-do list.

A lot of technique ideas that were perhaps impossible to accomplish in the Squire Realm were now potentially possible with the power of the Senior Realm. It was perhaps possible to upgrade other techniques in such a manner.

For now, however, Rui was content with developing a technique that could allow him to assassinate Martial Seniors with ease. The issue was that it was not going to be easy, and certainly not going to be without its own constraints.

One big impediment even if he did succeed in developing such a technique was the fact that he needed to not only know what the innate vibration frequency of his opponent was but also needed to master the ability to be able to generate that same frequency with his Mighty Roar Flash Blast.

Those two conditions required him to gain a deep understanding of pitch. Which was why he had immediately begun mastering pitch. Once he gained perfect pitch, then he could focus on identifying and mastering the right frequency for each target.

'Still, this is not very practical in combat. It is exclusively an assassination technique.' Rui mused.

Finding out a person's innate vibration frequency in the middle of combat was an extremely difficult task unless he created a sensory technique specifically to detect such a thing, it would take a long time.

Thankfully, he didn't need to worry about that. His goals were assassinations, not fights, thus the technique project was fine for his current needs as it was.

'I need to come up with a project name for this new technique.' Rui gave it some thought before settling on a name. 'Project Death's Sympathy.'

It sounded a bit cheesy to his ears, but it was fine. Unlike some Martial Artists, he didn't scream out the name of his techniques when using them, so no one would ever find out.

He intended to master the technique as soon as possible. In his estimation, it would serve as an incredibly powerful killing tool that could kill Martial Seniors as long as they didn't use their Martial Heart. It was limited to quasi-senior level targets, like Martial Seniors without their Martial Hearts.

That, in combination with the Void Pathfinder, would ensure that nobody would be able to directly detect or see him or his attack coming. The two techniques were extremely powerful in their own right, when combined, their synergy would produce an extraordinary result that very Martial Seniors would likely be able to replicate, if any at all.

Given that Project Death's Sympathy was a technique that was shaping up to be grade ten, he couldn't wait to master the technique. The excited feeling of anticipation and enthuse was something that he hadn't felt in a while, he realized belatedly.

The last technique that he had created was the Nemean Blossom, which felt like forever ago.

Part of the reason was that he focused on quality instead of quantity. If Rui wanted, he could easily create numerous mid-grade or even high-grade techniques. But he would rather create one powerful grade-ten technique, or at least grade-nine technique, than many inferior techniques.

It meant that each project took time and effort, not to mention inspiration. It also took powerful circumstances.

Powerful circumstances like trying to eliminate all assassins in the Shadow Isles.

Chapter 1365: Training

He was sure that the difficulty of the circumstances would push him to develop a powerful technique, and it appeared that he was right. He still hadn't found a solution to all of the problems, but he knew he was thinking in the right direction.

If things went right, he was bound to be one of the most remarkable sniper Martial Seniors out there.

As Rui worked on the technique across days and weeks. He had to admit that part of the reason why it felt like he hadn't created a technique in a long time was partly because it had been a while since he purely felt the joy of developing his Martial Path.

The power was great, but expanding his Martial Art's capabilities was something that he truly enjoyed, especially when he got in the groove and started building momentum up. Regardless of whether this technique would be enough to take out all of the assassins that he was targeting or not, he looked forward to the result regardless.

However, he did hope that it would be enough for his purposes.

Several weeks of pitch training eventually allowed him to master identifying frequencies and generating them himself. The world of Gaia had developed its own music scale based on different systems and mechanics as the octave scale of Earth. However, it didn't really bother him since he had never had a music background back on Earth.

The pitch training was the easy part, unfortunately. The hardest part was identifying the innate resonance frequency of his targets. However, it was more complicated than that.

Human and Martial Bodies were not uniformly made up of a single substance. They were constituted of a myriad of compounds and substances in different layers of the body. Even if he focused on the head alone as a target in typical sniping fashion, there were still three different layers of matter before one reached the brain.

Flesh, bone, and cerebrospinal fluid. Each of these layers had a different innate resonance frequency. Thus a single frequency was not enough for all three layers.

'I'll have to master using Transverse Resonance to stuff three different frequencies in layers within a single attack.' Rui tutted.

This made his task more complicated, but still quite viable all things considered. That was the reason that he was still quite confident.

All he needed to do was get the layer that wrapped around the brain to vibrate hard. Vibrating objects generated force on other objects touching them. As long as he could get the cerebrospinal fluid to vibrate, it would naturally crush the brain with Squire-level force.

That was game over even for Martial Seniors.

'So not only do I need a way to detect the multiple innate resonance frequencies of my target, but I also need to generate all those frequencies simultaneously.' Rui narrowed his eyes, deep in thought.

Furthermore, Martial Bodies surely had unique frequencies. The reason for this was that there was much greater anatomical and physiological variance amongst Martial Bodies than amongst normal human bodies.

Detecting frequencies did not have to be as difficult a task as he needed it to be. He could scout his target ahead of time to generate sounds of all frequencies near his target and notice which one his opponent's skull responded to.

Or he could do the same thing from a distance using an extremely soft attack from a long range away, both solutions were viable to his plans. He was not too concerned about the fact that the two of them required preparation ahead of time.

Assassination as a practice generally involved immense preparation, so this was par for the course. The most difficult targets probably required more preparation than Rui imagined. He was getting off easy by relying on powerful techniques.

Still, he had his own target that was going to be quite difficult to cleanly eliminate, so he was sure he would experience firsthand just how difficult it was.

'Regardless, I'm reaching the difficult part of the technique.' Rui mused. 'I need to immediately get to mastering stuffing an attack with three frequencies in layers.'

And he did.

It was more difficult than he had hoped. The biggest issue was rapidly ensuring constructive resonance between three sound pulses while also making sure they had the right frequencies, while also ensuring that the aim through the ODA system was perfectly fine.

The ODA System was a burden in and of itself, although he had gotten smoother and increasingly proficient at it over the years, it still did not reduce the difficulty of the task. Transverse Resonance was also mentally burdensome, ensuring that multiple sound attacks were just timed right and each fast enough to constructively superimpose on each other to form a single wave was not easy.

Now, the issue of getting the frequencies right was yet another burden, and it was perhaps leaning towards being too much. At the very least, he would need a lot of practice before he got it right.

THWOOM

"Tsk," Rui tutted. "Aim and constructive resonance were fine, but the frequencies were wrong."

THWOOM

"Damn, the frequencies did not overlap well."

THWOOM

"Got it tight, but it's taking too long. I won't have such a luxurious timeframe all the time."

The fact of the matter was that there was an additional burden which was the moving target. Which meant he also needed the VOID algorithm to create a predictive model of his opponent.

All in all, he had several months of work ahead of him before he reached a stage where he could execute it properly. Rui wasn't particularly concerned about spending a lot of time on the training. He wasn't under a harsh due date where he needed to begin paying his debts immediately.

He had six years and then some, which meant he could take his time in developing tools that would also be useful against Chairman Deacon.

He wasn't too concerned about his commission payment to the Beggar's Sect. By the time he mastered this technique, he would be quite a capable assassin.

Chapter 1366: Ready

The progress Rui made was unsteady, but it was definitely there. He made remarkably quick progress at certain stages while stalling for longer than he would have liked at other stages.

However, he definitely made progress, he was sure that.

While he was mastering his technique, he came up with his modus operandi for how he was going to take down his target. The most important part of the execution of the assassinations was ensuring that no one ever caught on to the cause of death.

The medical technology of Gaia was quite impressive, however, that was largely due to the fact that they had magical substances that could accomplish magical feats with relatively little ingenuity and rigorous science from the people who used them.

Based on everything he had seen, he was not only certain that they did not possess the ability to determine the cause and the time of death but also that there were no magical substances that could help them out this time.

Esoteric substances could not analyze and process information and spit out the answer, as magical as they were. Neither could the medical community of humanity.

Thus as long as he took them out at discreet moments, they would essentially never find out how he died. As long as Rui did not go overboard and turn the brain to mush, he just needed to cause enough damage inside it, which was enough to do the trick.

The worst-case scenario was that they might detect that the cause of death had something to do with the brain. However, that still wouldn't give them insight into what actually killed them.

He refined his modus operandi as he came close to perfecting Project Death's Sympathy over the span of several months. Because of how little the tolerable margin of error was, he could not allow for any mistakes or imperfections.

It required him to spend extra time refining every motion until he had truly achieved an initial level of mastery over it.

By then, half a year had already passed.

THWOOM THWOOM THWOOM

Rui fired three Mighty Roar Flash Blasts in rapid succession. They flew across the fly at extraordinary speeds, crossing more than a dozen kilometers in a split second as they merged into a single multi-layered attack.

BAM!

It struck a large spherical target.

Yet the target didn't crack despite being hit with a Squire-level attack, it simply shuddered, vibrating at incredible speeds, blurring in the eyes of anybody who beheld it.

Rui activated his Martial Heart as he crossed the distance in a single step, arriving at the target, before splitting the sphere open with a single swing of his arm, before smiling. At the center of the sphere was a crumbled rock, one that should have been perfectly intact.

"Nice." Rui grinned as he picked up the sphere, inspecting the multiple layers to it. This was a simple construct that he had requested from the Beggar's Sect to practice his technique.

The sphere's layers were perfectly intact and fine, just as they were supposed to be.

He glanced at the fifty other cracked spheres that lay in a neat line to the side, nodding.

"I think I'm done."

He heaved a sigh before leaving the barren region and heading towards the Derschek Region once more.

He had left the Derschek Region once his training began intensifying. He did not want any chance of being spied on so he actually went quite a way, even using the Martial Heart discreetly to throw any potential trackers off his tail.

However, it was time to return and get on with his job. He was actually looking forward to wiping out all of the assassins in the Shadow Isles.

The issue was that it was possible could get into trouble with the Panamic Martial Federation if he wiped out Martial Squires or Martial Apprentices. Although Senior Sarak did say that it wasn't prohibited, it was frowned upon.

Rui did not want to get into trouble with the organization.

'Oh well, I could just get them to leave and never come back.' Rui shrugged. 'Or the Beggar's Sect will intervene with the lower Realm Martial Artists.'

Regardless, he didn't care to bully Martial Squires or Apprentices. Not only was it meaningless to him as experience, but it wouldn't even count as very heavy as a commission payment.

Besides, he did agree with the principle. He was glad that he never had to fight a Martial Senior as a Martial Squire beyond a single strike.

It wasn't long before he found himself back in the Libraries of Gehu, scouring through random books in the educational section that was closest to the corridor leading to the professor's office.

[The Case of the Missing Stars]

[The Gaia Theory]

[The Diablo Trench]

"Sir." A voice drew Rui's attention as he randomly scanned through the various books. "The professor is ready to speak with you."

Rui nodded, following her to the familiar office among many. "Professor."

"Ah, come in." The man remarked, not taking his eyes off his work.

It was only after the doors shut and Rui felt the oppressive subjugation of his senses that the two of them got to business.

"What will it be this time? Another hundred sets of those multi-layered spheres?" The professor sarcastically remarked.

Rui smiled, having come to grow familiar with the strange professor over the months. Unlike Sian, the man wasn't unshakable professional in their interactions, which made Rui suspect that he wasn't a part of the sect for a large portion of his life or for too long, or that being of the Beggar's Sect was central to his identity.

Still, he appreciated it more than Sian's courteous facade.

"I don't need any of those this time." Rui shook his head. "I'm ready to begin."

Professor Carl raised an eyebrow. "Is that so? Then we'll get you started off immediately if that's the case."

"No problem. I need a list of potential targets in the Senior Realm with relevant information. I'll choose after I go through all of them."

Chapter 1367: Join

The Beggar's Sect was clearly eager to get him to work because he got the information that he sought immediately. Rui narrowed his eyes as he scanned through the various Martial Seniors present in the Shadow Isles.

The number had gone up in the time that he had been training, increasing the difficulty of wiping them all out.

"Can you get access to their assassination commissions?" Rui wondered.

"Of course." The professor snorted. "That's trivial."

That was good news. It meant that he could target them while they were outside the Shadow Isles. He had been concerned about trying to assassinate Martial Seniors in a place infested with Martial Artists, it seemed extremely difficult to actually accomplish.

But, if he knew what their assassination commissions were in the Derschek Region, then he could target them while they were operating in the Derschek region which was much larger and less densely packed with fellow assassins.

That was part of the decisions he made while considering exactly how he was going to execute the mission.

Another good thing about the intelligence that the Beggar's Sect provided him was that it detailed many relevant matters, including their stealth capabilities and their sensory ability.

The latter was especially important to him. He had pretty good sensory capabilities; he highly doubted that there were many Martial Seniors with better senses, to the point where they could potentially sense the attack. However, he couldn't afford to be careless.

"I'll take him first." Rui tossed a sheet on the table, drawing the professor's attention.

[Sam Sevia]

The man was a low-level Martial Senior who hadn't been in the Senior Realm for too long. His senses weren't the best according to the information provided by the Beggar's Sect. That meant that he was the ideal target for Rui to begin taking down.

As long as he took him down, he could proceed to take down stronger targets. If something did go awry, then the consequences would be minimal in such circumstances.

Thankfully, there were no high-grade Martial Seniors in the Shadow Isles. It made sense because high-grade Martial Seniors were most likely not that attracted to the tutelage of a Martial Artist of the higher Realm.

He wasn't sure if he would be able to kill a high-grade Martial Senior. That seemed like an incredibly daunting task considering how wide the Senior Realm was.

"I'll begin immediately." Rui nodded. "I need his current location."

"Our agents in the Shadow Isles can supply you with that." The professor remarked.

Rui nodded. He was going to have to spend quite some time stalking the man while building a predictive model on him. He was also going to have to determine the man's innate resonance frequencies.

Rui immediately began heading to the Shadow Isles. Funnily enough, it was his first time heading there. He exchanged away his Martial attire for something less attention-drawing, though he highly doubted it mattered.

The Shadow Isles were for assassins.

He even avoided sky-walking to the Shadow Isles to avoid drawing attention, going out of his way to take a ferry ride over to the archipelago.

The Shadow Isles were a collection of dozens of numbered islands in remarkably close proximity to each other. The islands were connected with large sturdy bridges to allow for smooth travel back and forth between them.

It wasn't long before arrived at Island One, before tipping the ferry rider and making his way through the town.

Instantly, one could feel the darkness. Metaphorical darkness, given that it was in the middle of the day.

Yet not even the Sun was able to hide the sombre edge of the entire town. It gave an eerie sensation that one was not entirely able to place their finger on.

The infrastructure of the island was really good, it was not a rundown place, which made sense to Rui, given how much assassins earned from their various commissions. There were lavish buildings that blatantly announced their purpose.

[Aramin Assassination Association]

[DAP Assassin's Guild]

Organizations formed with Martial Artist assassins that catered to clientele and served as brokers between clientele and assassins openly did business in broad daylight on the island.

There was not shortage of people who walked into those buildings, either. Yet Rui recognized that nobody who had the wealth to go to the Shadow Isles and commission a Martial Artist did it in person.

All the people he saw walking in and out of these establishments were most likely not the actual clients, but rather people that served as representatives for the true clients. The actual clients did not want to be caught on the island, probably because they had enough wealth to the point where their image mattered.

Yet Rui highly doubted that it was anything less than an open secret. It was the norm in the Derschek Region and had been the norm for quite some time, ever since the Silent Shadow had arrived at the Gana Archipelago, turning it into the Shadow Isles as a result.

He bet that if he revealed his identity as a Martial Senior, he would immediately be scouted by various organizations to sign a contract with them and become a member of their organization.

He knew that he probably was already being scouted the moment he entered the island. The fact that he didn't have any aura was meaningless, hiding their attention-drawing aura as Martial Artists was a basic ability for assassins, it was the bare minimum.

It would actually be better if Rui pretended to be a Martial Squire than a normal person, the former more believable for people residing in the Shadow Isles.

Furthermore, he didn't want to draw any attention by being too suspicious either, thus perhaps it wasn't a bad idea to join an organization like the average assassin that came to the Shadow Isles did. He wouldn't stand out if stuck with the herd.

The issue was that he would need to use a different style of assassination than the one that he intended to kill Martial Seniors with if he did do that. He had some difficult choices ahead of him to make.

Chapter 1368: Tracking

Rui made his way through the island with his badge pinned to his chest, making it clear to the Beggar's Sect that he was looking for them.

A child walked up to him, handing him a slip of paper. "I believe you wanted this, mister."

Rui sighed, accepting the slip before watching the child scamper away melancholically.

On the slip of paper were numbers, one corresponding to the island number, and the other corresponding to the area code of the island. He also got more specific street coordinates, ensuring that he could pinpoint the man's location.

'Island Fourteen, and area twenty-nine.' Rui noted, before immediately heading in the direction of the area.

He had memorized a map of the entirety of the Shadow Isles, thus he was perfectly comfortable walking through the archipelago. The deeper he went into the archipelago, the denser the activity got. Despite it being a collection of islands, he didn't see a single fishing boat or line from people along the coasts.

It appeared that they had been scared off by the various assassins that increasingly began dominating the archipelago. He also couldn't feel any degree of political control from the Derschek Region. He suspected that that hadn't always been the case.

Prior to the arrival of the Silent Shadow, the region would have undoubtedly been a strategic location that could serve as a powerful outpost location for maritime trading and seafare.

Yet the claim of a notoriously powerful Martial Master assassin made the entire archipelago immediately lose all its allure. No one in the Derschek Region had the capital to make an enemy of out of a Martial Master.

As Rui made his way through, he came across endless groups of assassins offering assassination commissions. Yet he couldn't feel any of the spirit of exploration that he had expected from a group of people searching for the Silent Shadow.

It appeared that the entire area had been turned into an open assassination industry.

He could see why assassins would be content with this alone. It was very rare that something like an assassination industry could be fostered out in the open. They were outright illegal in most parts of human civilization and thus needed to operate in the shadows.

The same way that they did in the Kandrian Empire, forming the underworld of the empire.

However, here in the Derschek Region, they could set up shop and even hand out flyers. Perhaps many assassins had come to grow more attached to that than he had thought. Perhaps most of them were here because of that rather than finding the Silent Shadow.

If so, Rui felt pity for the Silent Shadow. She had gone through all this effort simply for it to fall flat.

It wasn't long before he arrived at the specified location, before spreading Riemannian Echo across the entire place. There were plenty of anti-espionage measures taken, but they didn't stop him.

Eventually, he found a man who resembled the image that Rui had seen of him.

His target; Sam Sevian.

The man was currently inside a residential building, lying down on a bed. Rui felt like quite the stalker, but he doubled down, taking a seat inside a simple bar while observing the man.

What he was doing was getting a gauge for his Martial Body and paying attention to how it responded to sound. Although he himself couldn't produce sound of different frequencies and measure how his opponent was going to respond to it, he could rely on existing sound and noise to, at the very least, rule out what it wasn't.

It was a thankless and tedious process, but it couldn't be helped. Until he found out what the man's innate resonance frequencies were, he wouldn't be able to assassinate him.

What followed were long periods of supervision over the man, ruling out frequency by frequency as he paid attention to the acoustic dynamics within the room. It was especially difficult because Riemannian Echo had great range and penetrative ability, but it was not good with detail.

Thus he had some difficulty making do with it until the man came out, much to Rui's relief, before heading off somewhere sky-walking.

'Tsk.' Rui tutted as he followed him on foot. He was far too unwilling to reveal his status in front of his target. Thankfully, now that the man had exited, Rui could also use Tempestuous Feel to get a much better understanding of how his body responded to various sounds.

However, when the man finally stopped sky-walking to enter a large establishment. Rui paused as he read the name of the establishment.

[Area Crina]

Rui narrowed his eyes with suspicion as he read that name carefully. Regardless, it appeared that the man was part of the collective hunt for the Silent Shadow. Or the alleged hunt for the Silent Shadow.

Regardless, the organization was not his target this time. He focused on Sam Sevia, keeping tabs on the man throughout the day as he tracked his various movements.

It wasn't half a day later until the man finally left the Shadow Isles, before heading towards the Derschek Region with a suppressed aura and simply disguise.

He had received a commission.

Unfortunately, it was too risky for Rui to follow him this time. On the Shadow Isles, he could blend in much better, but that changed the moment he started following the man to places outside of the archipelago.

He would need to wait for the man to return.

He followed this routine for the next few days, always making sure to keep a huge distance between himself and his target. He didn't want to get caught. His life was not at risk, being a Martial Senior himself, but he did not want to lose his anonymity or cover.

It would be extremely difficult to start over if he did.

'Maybe I should hire a musician to play some music near his place.' Rui wondered.

That way, he could accelerate his understanding of the man's innate resonance frequencies.

Chapter 1369: Assassination

Senior Sam Sevian had been on a roll lately. From commissions to assassinating important individuals in Senior-level nations in the Derschek Region to eliminating one of the powerhouses of a kingdom.

He had been getting a lot of good money, which he funneled into the Crina Foundation and Area Crina.

His goal was to gain the tutelage of the Silent Shadow and become a Martial Master himself. He didn't know what the conditions of the Master Realm were, but he hoped to learn that in addition to gaining the wisdom of a powerful Martial Master.

The search for the Silent Shadow had been making steady but slow progress. The fact that even the Crina Foundation was having such a difficult time tracking her down in such a small place showed just how capable the Silent Shadow.

From what he had heard, even the legendary Beggar's Sect had failed in tracking down the vaunted Martial Master, which was a testament to the assassin's remarkable capabilities.

He left his residence, before taking a moment to glance at the recent eyesore.

A traveling musician had come all the way to the Shadow Isles to play music for donations.

Why a poor musician would want to come all the way to an assassin's den to play music, he didn't know. The man may as well have been trying to earn the ire of the assassins given how chaotic his music was. It was as though he was trying to hit every note there was all within a single piece.

Sam heaved a sigh before shaking his head and sky-walking to the Crina Foundation. He quickly checked his inbox, looking for any personal commissions towards him in particular.

[Assassination target: King Verkens]

Sam widened his eyes in surprise at that name. King Verkens was one of the most powerful and influential figures in the Derchek Region. Assassinating him would be a worthy challenge.

He quickly accepted the commission, before immediately accessing the intelligence of the Crina Foundation on his target's security measures, locations, and other relevant information.

Such an assassination could not be completely planned in a single day, it would take days, if not weeks of planning for him to cleanly nail the assassination in order to avoid being caught by the Martial Seniors of the kingdom.

He spent several days looking deeper into and memorizing the basic information as he created a plan to try and take King Verkens out.

He was a poison specialist, thus all he had to do was slip into the Royal Kitchen and poison the man's food. It was a lot simpler and less risky than trying to kill the king directly.

He quickly made plans based on the information he had access to, he even went on scouting operations to get a better understanding of the layout and the various challenges that he would face.

Not too long later, it was finally time to put the assassination into play. He left the Shadow Isles, before heading to the kingdom. It wasn't long before he had arrived at his little makeshift base, putting on his worker disguise while preparing his fake permit into the Royal Palace.

Yet before he could even leave his base.

THWOOM

He never even felt an impact. The world simply went dark as his corpse hit the ground. The brain damage had been instantaneous, and instantaneously brutal. There was nothing anybody there could have done to save him, even if they did find him immediately.

And they did find him and even identified him correctly as the notorious Toxinist. They also found the falsified Royal permit and the disguise that he intended to wear.

Immediately, a minor uproar arose in the Derschek Region. An uproar arose only because it was the king himself who was clearly the target, and it was minor because assassinations were too commonplace in the Derschek Region.

What truly shocked everyone was not the fact that the Martial Senior was targeting the king.

No.

Being a powerful figure in the Derschek Region meant that attempts on your life were part of the daily routine. The king hadn't even so much twitched or displayed a hint of tension when he was informed of the once-imminent assassination attempt.

However, what did evoke great surprise was when he was informed that the Martial Senior passed away before he could execute the plan.

Something or someone had gotten to him first, killing him before the man could kill the king.

"Is it possible that he could have died of a natural disease?" The king murmured. "Perhaps a heart attack?"

"We are not seeing any obvious signs of any particular cause of death, Your Majesty." The Royal healer explained. "We can rule out some possibilities, of course. He certainly was not killed in a fight, the condition of his body is far too pristine for that. We can also rule out the possibility that he succumbed to poison. We have not detected the presence of any substances that his body wasn't clearly resistant to. There are no overt signs of any health conditions whatsoever that would clue. We see no signs of struggle whatsoever. It's as though his body just died on the spot."

It was inexplicable.

A Martial Senior just collapsed over, dying instantly seemingly out of nowhere, to nothing.

It was a shocking event because Martial Seniors had an air of invincibility to them. They were walking calamities capable of leaving immense destruction in their wake. They were merely one step away from ascending to a higher state of life.

They were not beings who simply died, falling over. The ripples of this event spread beyond just the kingdom, as the entire Derschek Region came to hear of the surprising incident.

Yet the place where the news made the most waves was in the Shadow Isles. The Martial Artist assassins could not believe what they were hearing.

Literally, they did not believe it. They initially thought it was fake news. However, eventually, reality proved them to be wrong.

Yet none of them imagined that this was merely a prelude of what was to come.

Chapter 1370: Prelude

The air was tense. Rui heaved a deep sigh as he narrowed his eyes, focusing. He was on a rooftop in the Verkens Kingdom, about sixteen kilometers away from his target; Sam Sevian.

It had taken some time and a member of the Beggar's Sect, feigning as a street musician, but he had grown certain of the man's innate resonance frequencies, while also having developed a predictive model of the man over time.

He had everything he needed.

Now, all he needed was the earliest opportunity when Senior Sam left the Shadow Isles and headed towards the Derschek Region to complete the latest commission that he had undertaken from a relative of King Verkens.

As time passed, Rui grew increasingly sharp.

It wasn't long before the moment had arrived. Rui heaved a deep sigh before activating his Martial Heart.

BADUMP!

Instantly, all of his senses peaked to the maximum as they received active empowerment from the Martial Heart. Streaks of glowing red lines emerged from his head spreading across his flesh as he resembled a mountain laden with streams of lava, ready to erupt at any moment.

He focused his senses on his target as he activated the Void Pathfinder technique

THWOOM THWOOM THWOOM

Rui fired three Mighty Roar Flash Blasts of three different frequencies and speeds that flashed across the air, crossing the distance in less than two seconds.

It was nigh instantaneous, yet from his perspective, it took forever. He waited incredibly long to watch his attacks cross a huge distance. He didn't want to deactivate his Martial Heart since he needed it to make a quick getaway if he did get caught.

Thankfully, he didn't need it after all. The attack hit true and center, smoothly passing through his skull before his eyes rolled backward and his body went limp, falling over.

THUD

The corpse of the Martial Senior collapsed.

Rui grinned with jubilation as he witnessed his first successful assassination with Death's Sympathy. As much as he wanted to celebrate, he knew that he needed to get out of here without being identified.

Thankfully, the man's body was only discovered after Rui left the kingdom, eventually reaching the Beggar's Sect before proudly declaring the first operation complete.

Yet it appeared that the professor was already aware of his success.

"Remarkable." The man murmured, dumbfounded. "If it's this easy for you to kill a Martial Senior then..."

What truly surprised Rui was how big of a deal it became in the following days. According to the reports from the Beggar's Sect, the assassination community at large was shell-shocked at the abrupt death of a Martial Senior.

Although Senior Sam Sevia was not the strongest Martial Senior, he was still a full-fledged Martial Senior.

He was not someone who could be killed by anything less than a Martial Senior. No one bought the idea that a Martial Squire could have done him off before his Martial Heart activated. All the Martial Seniors knew that his Martial Heart would have long kicked in reflexively, preventing him from dying due to a lack of it.

None of them bought the idea that he had succumbed to some health condition. The Martial Body was extremely hard to kill through disease or compromised health. Furthermore, Senior Sam was not known to have such conditions.

There was only one conclusion that the assassination community at large came to.

He had been assassinated.

Not killed, but assassinated. The fact that he was taken out when he was about to begin working on a commission showed that he was specifically being targeted.

That immediately ruled out the forces of the Derschek Region, since there were almost no native Senior-level assassins. Most of the Martial Senior assassins that operated in this region resided in the Shadow Isles, and all of them were people who migrated to the Shadow Isles looking for the Silent Shadow.

Thus, whoever assassinated Senior Sam, was most likely a Martial Senior assassin of the Shadow Isles.

None of the Martial Seniors complained. They were not friends and were competitors, in fact. Yet the sheer inexplicability of his death was something that many of them found unnerving.

Every assassin had a signature. A manner of killing that was largely unique to them.

Poison, decapitation, strangulation, suffocation.

Although their identities as assassins were inscrutable to many, they were a small community and kept an eye on their peers.

The fact that the cause of Sam's death had not been identified was surprising. The fact that there were no signs of struggle, no signs of resistance, no signs of conflict was especially unnerving.

It meant that whoever took Sam out was so far superior to him that they could get it done instantly without any flaws or imperfections.

The ideal assassination.

Had one asked any of the Martial Seniors whether they were capable of killing Senior Sam that perfectly and cleanly, none of them would have been able to say yes if they were being perfectly honest.

Assassinating a fellow peer was possible, but it was almost always a messy operation that almost always resulted in a battle.

"Yet, according to the many reports that we have gathered, such a thing did not occur even in the slightest." A man reported. "Not even the windows or tiles were cracked. It is inconceivable that any conflict ensued."

The man paused, before glancing to his right. "What do you think, lady Crina?"

Many had gathered in a meeting around a table.

Many waited as they gazed at the elderly woman at the table.

She opened her eyes.

Eyes that hid an unfathomable depth to them.

A single word escaped her mouth.

"Interesting."

Many people in the Derschek Region and the Shadow Isles had many questions regarding the incident. Yet there were no answers to be provided. They could only move on and eventually forget about the incident.

At the end of the day, although the assassination was extremely strange and bizarre, an assassination was an assassination. It was far too commonplace in the Derschek Region. Once people got over the novelties of this particularly mysterious case, it was destined to be buried.

Unless, of course, it was merely a prelude to what was to come.