

Martial Unity 1441

Chapter 1441: Harem

He had known that the cloud hornets altered cloud composition to make them more solid, but he didn't know that they were solid enough to serve as the bedrock and foundation for extensive civil engineering atop them.

"You have a village atop a cloud?" Rui asked in disbelief.

"Hoho... Impressive, isn't it?" The man smirked. "The infrastructure is also constituted of cloud bricks and cloud cement. Amazing isn't it?"

Rui had to admit that he was impressed. It was actually quite amazing to see such a fantastical sight right before him.

"Wait a minute," Rui frowned. "So you're telling me that in order to find you, one would literally need to search the clouds? Searching the forest is futile?"

"That's right, haha," The man laughed.

"..." Rui stared at him with a dubious expression.

"I don't accept just about anybody who reaches the center of the forest. Only those that pique my interest, like you did. And that worked out well, didn't it?"

"Right..." Rui sighed before stepping on the cloud himself with an expression of curiosity.

It had an unusual sensation to it. Firm and solid at its core, but very soft at the very exterior. Almost as if someone had covered steel with a thick layer of cotton.

Suddenly, Rui's attention was drawn as he felt two figures approaching them. Two women walked up to them in unison, facing Master Zeamer.

"Welcome back, master," They bowed their heads.

"Hohoho..." The master's attitude shifted as he grew more bashful and soft, much to Rui's shock. "It's good to be back, listening to your soft and sweet voices soothes this old man's weary heart."

"Would you like a massage?"

"Would you like a bath?"

"Or perhaps would like..."

"Hohoho..." The man's smile grew more. "How about all of the above?"

Rui's mouth subconsciously curled with a hint of disgust as he watched the lecherous Master's smile grow more obscene as his demeanor grew more lustful. 'This is a Martial Master?'

He would be lying if he said he wasn't disappointed. One thing that he had long learned was that Martial Artists were far from principled and pure like those from fictional media back on Earth. They were crude and materialistic mercenaries rather than principled saints or ascetics.

Still, he had hoped that the Upper Realms would be different. Master Reina had a strange and quirky personality, but she had not done anything that Rui considered depraved.

'Then again, she was an assassin for hire. The best.' He sighed, shaking his head.

"...hohoho..." The Martial Master paused, turning towards Rui with a less enthused expression. "...Also make sure to guide our new guest to his new living quarters and show him around."

"We aren't training?" Rui frowned.

"I'm a little busy with, ahem, some 'important' matters of vital importance," The Master flashed a lecherous grin as he pulled the adoring women to his side, fondling their bodies as he walked away.

"Hah, are you that desperate to get your rocks off, pervert?"

"Shut up!" The man barked. "I'm a Martial Master you know?! Show some respect!"

Rui simply stared at him with an expression of disdain as the man walked off laughing alongside the cooing girls, and another set of girls walked over to him, bowing to him.

"Please come follow us, sir. We will guide you to your personal quarters," The women informed him.

Rui nodded. "Thanks."

While they led him around, he had to admit, he couldn't help but admire the architecture. He had no idea how Master Zeamer had come to build such an admittedly remarkable place on top of a cloud and out of a cloud, but it was worthy of his admiration.

He did see a lot of people, but they were all women and had the same attire as the two women from earlier.

'That horny geezer.' Rui facepalmed. 'He created a harem!'

It was actually astonishing how far this old man went to satisfy his lust. Rui had thought that Martial Masters transcended ordinary human psychology, but this one Martial Master had singlehandedly overturned that impression.

"How many women work here?" Rui asked.

"More than a thousand," One of them replied.

"Do you get paid?"

"Not at all. We do however get food and comfortable living quarters free of cost, among other things." The other smiled at him.

"Hmm..." Rui considered their circumstances with a hint of skepticism. 'Not the worst deal in the world, I suppose, especially in this world.'

This world had much greater food and shelter insecurities, not to mention the many risks and dangers associated with living in a fantasy martial arts world, being protected by the Martial Art equivalent of an entire nuclear arsenal was a pretty good deal.

"How did all of you come to work for Master Zeamer?" Rui asked, raising his eyes.

"He made us an offer," One of them replied. "He would free us from the forces that tormented and shackled us in our lives, and bring us to a heavenly place where we would be fed, sheltered, and protected in exchange for servicing him in any way that he desired, within our capabilities."

"Interesting..." Rui considered the matter. 'Honestly, I thought he abducted them, but maybe I'm slandering him too much.'

Then again, he was a master of hypnosis, so Rui wasn't sure. Yet his eyes narrowed when he spotted underaged pre-pubescent boys and girls playing in the gardens of the palace.

"Don't tell me they also..." Rui gestured to them.

"They are his daughters," One of them informed him. "They've spent their entire lives in Cloudia."

"Oh," Rui glanced back at the children. To the Hypnomaster's credit, they seemed to be happy and content as they played around with each other boisterously in the gardens. 'It's not just a harem, it's a clan or a dynasty.'

It was an interesting way of setting one up, probably the most unique clan or dynasty that ever existed, but it worked. It was quite insular, considering that not even the Beggar's Sect knew about this establishment.

Chapter 1442: Revelation

Rui couldn't hide his curiosity as they continued walking across the cloud that spanned the area of a town. It was quite interesting to witness how a small little village of sorts had begun forming atop the clouds.

"Martial Artists?" Rui murmured with intrigue. "I thought he didn't accept any pupils aside from one eight years ago."

There were several Martial Apprentices sparring with each other on a sparring ring, overseen by a Martial Squire

"They are also children of Master Zeamer that have a talent for Martial Art," The women informed him. "Thus Master Zeamer trained them as well as the Martial Squires that serve as their guides and mentors."

"Impressive that he has managed to provide them with such a support system," Rui murmured.

"He has ensured that they don't depend on him too much, allowing them to train at all times even when he cannot train them himself," The women spoke.

"Interesting..." Rui figured. "Seems like he has plenty to keep himself busy with."

It was a good way to give himself purpose and responsibility on a day-to-day basis. Otherwise, he would have literally nothing to do while he waited for a rare talent to find him before finally training them.

Even Master Reina kept herself busy with her little guise. With that consideration, Rui could sympathize with why the man has so many women migrating to his little cloud clan.

'He's definitely also a pervert though.' Rui snorted inwardly, unwilling to give him too much credit.

"We have arrived." They stopped before a small but cozy-looking little house. "We hope that it suits your needs."

Generally, Rui was accustomed to harsher conditions when he trained.

'However, this is nice.' Rui murmured.

"These quarters are already staffed with maids that will cater to your every need," They informed him as they led him inside, giving him a simple tour before leaving.

'I feel like I'm in a resort rather than training grounds. It takes away the tension.' He heaved a sigh of relief as he relaxed on the comfortable bed. He hadn't slept in a comfortable place in quite some time, having to dig holes into rocks and boulders to create small cavities where he was safe enough to rest.

His body jumped at the opportunity to gain some quality rest as a wave of drowsiness washed over him. The fatigue of having fought golems and dragons while being drained of mental energy from the entire forest caught up to him as he slowly drifted to sleep.

That night, he slept like a rock. So much so that it took him a while to even remember where he was when he got up the next day. The bags underneath his eyes had entirely disappeared as his entire body relaxed.

Yet he was extraordinarily famished.

The Hypnomaster had denied him of his meal when he defeated the dragon, thus he had yet to replenish the energy that he had spent in that long and tiring fight against the stubborn Illusionary Dragon.

"His Honour wishes to speak with you," One of the maids in his personal quarters informed him. "Please follow us."

It wasn't long before he found himself in a training facility.

"You look better," The Hypnomaster remarked blankly. "What do you think of this place that I built? Remarkable isn't it?"

"...It is quite special," Rui admitted. "So, why did you call for me? Are we going to begin training? I'm starving, so can we do that after I eat something?"

"Hm, Martial Artists hunt their own food," The man remarked with a rare hint of seriousness. "If you don't subject yourself to that much danger on a regular basis as a Martial Artist, your instincts will rust, especially in a place as wonderful as Cloudia, hoho."

Rui furrowed his eyebrows as the Master shamelessly praised his own work.

"But that's now why I called you here," The man remarked. "I want you to meet my other mentee."

"Sure, but we'd meet anyway. No need to call me or personally introduce me." Rui raised an eyebrow.

"Heh," A mischievous smirk emerged on his face.

Rui could even sense a hint of anticipation and excitement.

"What are you up to?" Rui knitted his eyebrows with dubiousness.

"Hehehe," The man chuckled. "Not much. However, I think something interesting might happen, that is why I'm personally here to witness it."

They arrived at a training chamber that the Hypnomaster promptly opened. Rui peered at the single figure that sat inside, meditating.

"...!" Rui's eyes widened with shock as his jaw dropped.

"Tokugawa," The Master called out. "Meet your fellow pupil that I was telling you about."

A flash of displeasure could be seen across his face. The man shifted his long pitch black hair away from his eyes, before opening them, revealing black eyes.

Pitch-black eyes.

Eyes that seemed to reflect the very fabric of the world around them.

"I believe I informed you not to disturb me with frivolous matters," Senior Ieyasu glared at the Master, before turning towards Rui.

A small jolt flashed through his body as his eyes narrowed with recognition.

His expression grew grave.

An air of tension brewed as the atmosphere chilled.

"...Why are you here, Rui Quarrier?"

"Tokugawa Ieyasu..." Rui murmured still half-dazed at how such a coincidence could possibly come to unfold. "So when you said you were going to return to your Master to gain guidance for the Master Realm, you were talking about the Hypnomaster?"

"Hahaha!" Master Zeamer guffawed boisterously, breaking the tension. "I had a feeling that this would happen. I'm so glad I trusted my instinct."

An expression amusement flashed on his face as he glanced between Rui and Ieyasu back and forth. "When I compared my observations of you yesterday with what this brooding pupil of mine told me about his breakthrough two years ago when he returned as a Martial Senior, I made the connection. The

fact that both of you had been a Martial Senior for the same amount of time was also a clue. Hahaha! It sure is a small world sometimes."

He paused. "So the two of you broke through to the Senior Realm at the same time, hm? I wonder who will break through to the Master Realm first then."

Both of them narrowed their eyes at those words. A surge of competitive drive boiled from deep within his body as every hint of relaxation and comfort he experienced prior was instantly dispelled.

Neither of them was willing to lose to the other.

Chapter 1443: Provocation

The two simply stared at each other. No words were exchanged, yet the silence was louder than anything they could say.

"Hoho..." The Martial Master grinned with amusement and excitement. "This seems like it will be quite entertaining. I shall call it the Master Races! And I, Martial Master Zeamer Ger-Vil shall serve as the referee!"

The two of them turned their eyes, glaring at him.

"Oh my, scary~" The man exaggeratedly shook his hands as he put on a show of cowering.

"Quit treating your students as entertainment," Rui grumbled, earning Ieyasu's silent agreement.

"Ahhhh, but that's the best part about having students you see? HAHAHA!" The man guffawed. "Seeing you two adorable brats get all heated up over this cute rivalry is heartwarming this old man. Ah but please continue, by all means, you can pretend I'm not here."

His hands stretched out as he began poking the two of them on their cheeks with an obnoxious expression, Rui directly, and Ieyasu through the air.

"...What are you doing?" Rui frowned as he tried shifting away in vain.

"It's an expression of affection, you see. I use it with my little daughters."

"I'll break that finger off," Ieyasu threatened.

POKE POKE POKE

"..."

POKE POKE POKE

"..."

PO-BOOM!

"My~" The Martial Master disappeared as a powerful Senior-level attack from Ieyasu crashed into the ground where he was standing there. "Goodness gracious, I sure have some rambunctious pupils."

Yet he didn't cease the poking gesture as his mischievous smile grew increasingly obnoxious. "You're going to have to do better than that."

Rui and Ieyasu exchanged glances before turning back to him. Neither of them was stupid. It was pretty obvious what he was trying to get them to do. Ieyasu got up, facing the man.

"Your efforts at provoking are unsophisticated," Rui informed him. "I could do better when I was a child."

"Hah, but it worked, didn't it?" The man shrugged.

"If you want a group sparring session, you can just say so, you know," Rui sighed as the two of them took their stances.

"But that would be boring wouldn't it?" The man laughed. "But I suppose you have a point. Let us set some stakes, then. Whoever loses gets to do anything to the loser."

"That's a scam,"

"Of course, I won't use my Martial Heart, so rest assured."

Rui narrowed his eyes. Not using the Martial Heart was the same as not using the Martial Mind, for the most part. Something that was meant to be powered by the Martial Heart would surely be very deficient without it, like a phone in ultra-battery-saving mode.

"Do you really think you can defeat us by reducing yourself to such a degree?" Rui tilted his head.

"Hahaha, that remains to be seen," The man remarked.

Rui got the feeling that he was more confident than he let on, but he also felt like they were being underestimated.

"Alright then," Rui activated his Martial Heart after inhaling some physical rejuvenation potions.

"Come," The man remarked.

The two of them activated their Martial Heart as they lashed out at him in unison.

It turned out that Rui was right.

He was confident, and he had reason to be.

WHOOSH!

He evaded their blows with a simple step back, much to Rui's and Ieyasu's surprise. The speed of his maneuver was quite slow, it didn't even breach the Senior Realm, yet they somehow were unable to get him.

The two of them lashed out against him once more, looking to land some solid offensive on the man.

WHOOSH WHOOSH WHOOSH

Rui resorted to sweeping bod blows while Ieyasu used a striking Martial Art with shorter and crisp blows. The two managed to avoid getting in each other's way, remarkably, while smoothly targeting the Hypnomaster.

And yet,

WHOOSH!

"Hahaha, is that the best you've got?" The man laughed. "Show me your best, young men!"

Rui and Ieyasu increased their intensity as the two of them threw out enormous barrages of attacks that miraculously managed to avoid clashing as they sought to reach the Hypnomaster.

And yet;

WHOOSH!

Not even they could reach the Hypnomaster.

The Hypnomaster evaded their attacks with grace as he managed to ensure that not a single attack the boys threw harmed a hair on his body.

Rui frowned. 'Something's wrong. This isn't just a matter of timing and it certainly isn't speed. Every time I think I have him, I'm just inexplicably wrong.'

He calmly analyzed as he continued to gather more data attacking the Martial Master. 'He's not the physical brawler type in the first place, it doesn't make sense for this to be a physical technique. In that case...'

It was definitely a mental technique. Rui briefly created a list of possible principles the technique was possibly relying on. There was one at the top of it that drew his attention.

'Is he sabotaging my sense of spatial awareness?'

He couldn't dismiss that possibility. If the Martial master sabotaged Rui's sense of spatial awareness, then he could get Rui to miss by simply making them gauge his exact distance inaccurately. This would cause them to either time the attack too early or too late, both of which would make it trivially easy for someone as skilled as Master Zeamer to avoid them.

'I can't believe he can sabotage my spatial awareness when I literally have the ability to sense space,' Rui narrowed his eyes.

What he particularly was quite impressed by was that this wasn't even Master Zeamer fighting back, this was him merely evading their attacks to flex on them. And yet, it appeared that Rui had spoken too soon.

POW POW!

The two of them block simple jabs from him, and yet.

"Rgh!" They grimaced as a tremendous wave of pain spread through body as if they had broken bones and torn flesh.

'Not this again,' Rui groaned.

He was messing with their sense of pain, causing them to feel lots of it when they hadn't even taken any meaningful damage.

"Hohoho..." The man smirked. "This might hurt more than you would have expected."

Chapter 1444: Plan

The two of them ignored the pain as they recentered themselves, staring at their opponent.

'Ieyasu, listen to me, I have a plan,' Rui glanced at him.

The man glanced back at him silently.

'Unless you know of a way of breaking out of the spell of that technique, we need to find a way to compensate for it.' Rui explained. 'We can do that with long-range wide-area attacks, but if we spread it too then, it loses too much potency. The good part is that he's not sabotaging our spatial awareness by a large margin, probably because this is his limit without the Martial Heart and Mind. This means that possible actual distances between himself and us won't have too much of a variance. If we work well together, we can cover that entire area, and it won't matter whether he's sabotaging our spatial awareness or not.'

The basic idea of the plan was to use teamwork to account for sabotage to their spatial awareness and location-tracking senses. As long as they seamlessly timed and spaced their attacks together, they would be able to make sure that it didn't matter whether he marginally sabotaged their estimation of his location.

Regardless of whether he was slightly closer or further away than what they estimated, as long as they covered all possibilities together, it wouldn't matter

However, their teamwork needed to be beyond perfect to make sure that they covered all of the potential locations in their perception of where the Hypnomaster could actually be instead.

Their movements would need to be perfect fits with each other. Like pieces of a puzzle fitting together just perfectly well without any gaps between them to form a perfect image and shape.

Ordinarily, such teamwork only came with many years and decades of practice and experience together. It was not something that two Martial Seniors would have been able to develop on the spot.

'However, you can read my mind. And I can predict all of your Martial Art.' Rui conveyed to him. 'With the insights that we have into each other, we can develop an absolutely perfect synergy between us.'

Ieyasu simply stared at him.

'Er, take an offensive stance if you agree. A maneuvering stance if you're not against trying it out once. A defensive stance if you are against it.' Rui conveyed.

Ieyasu shifted his stance, hopping lightly as his arms loosened, bouncing.

'Good to hear, but we're going to need close to medium-range offense for this idea. We'll also need to approach him in the opposite directions, as well.'

"Are you done with your little strategizing session?" The man yawned.

Rui didn't respond as he circled around the man, activating the Greater Phantomind Void, distracting him in the direction of Ieyasu.

"Hooo...?" The man raised an eyebrow. "That particular style of misdirection reminds me of Reina. You must have developed that technique under her guidance and training principles."

Rui didn't like how easily he saw through it.

"But you have evolved it to an entirely different level of power," The man turned towards, Rui, pointedly ignoring leyasyu, as he grew fascinated with what he saw. "Incredible..."

Rui felt a chill crawl up his spine as the Martial Master's fixation on Rui grew more intense. He recognized the glint that flashed in the man's eyes. It was the same look that every Martial Master had given him thus far.

It evoked bad memories.

The power of the technique increased even more suddenly.

Master Zeamer's fascination increased even more.

His fixation on Rui followed suit.

"What an absurdly powerful misdirection force. I almost want to look away myself. And yet, you use it like an assassin. What a waste. Tsk, I should have never let her get her hands on you." The man grew serious as he focused more on Rui despite all of his misdirection.

It was at that point that Rui's self-control failed him.

A smirk emerged on his face.

"Heh," Rui smiled.

The Master frowned in confusion for a moment. The next moment, his eyes widened in shock as he immediately turned around, leaping away.

BOOM!

CRACK

The Martial Master widened his eyes in shock as Ieyasu's fist crashed into the elder man's guard. A look of pure astonishment flashed across his face as he felt pain for the first time in decades.

Ieyasu had successfully landed a blow on the Martial Master.

"I told you I would break that finger," Ieyasu coldly remarked.

Master Zeamer glanced at the index finger of his left hand. It was warped and crumpled, turning an ugly shade of purple. "..."

For once he seemed entirely speechless and at a loss for words. Rui and Ieyasu exchanged a brief glance as confidence flashed in their eyes.

"...The two of you remember the bet?" The Master asked.

His tone was solemn.

"...Well, if I win, then both of you must promise to never reveal that just happened..." Master Zeamer's expression crumbled into embarrassment as his old demeanor immediately seemed to return. "It's a tough world out there. Can't have people think I've gone soft...especially when the two of you proved I have."

He glanced towards Rui. "You knew you would fail in misdirecting me... and that was why you succeeded."

Rui had a good understanding of just how overpowered his Greater Phantomind Void was. He also understood that it wouldn't work on Martial Masters. He also understood just how confident Masters were.

"You used my confidence and fascination against me," The man concluded with a hint of true appreciation. "You understand the depths of the very concept of misdirection better than any Martial Artist in the Lower Realms. And yet, that alone was not enough..."

He turned towards Ieyasu with a sense of wariness. "You... copied his technique, didn't you? In just a moment, you copied a lesser version of his technique and stacked it on top of his own, making it more powerful, increasing my fascination and attention towards him."

Ieyasu simply stared at him silently.

Yet he could not hide his smugness.

"Haha..." For a moment, Master Zeamer was at a loss of words.

The very next, a profound aura of power emerged from within him, possessing a depth that escaped what Rui and Ieyasu could fathom.

"Let us begin round two, then," The Master grinned with all his teeth. "Even this shameless old man has some pride to protect, you know?"

Chapter 1445: Switcheroo

Rui and Ieyasu didn't need any encouragement. The two of them had already had a plan. They lashed out at Master Zeamer with their full power, hoping to be able to pressure him so that he couldn't avoid them nearly as easily.

WHOOSH

Master Zeamer cleanly shifted away from both their attacks. The first attempt failed, yet neither of them was discouraged. They immediately followed suit, refusing to give him even a moment to breathe. Their raw speed actually exceeded his, catching up in just a brief moment.

'Oho...' Master Zeamer watched with interest as their steps synced, their attacks converged on with blazing speed, filling in the gaps of each other's attacks.

WHOOSH!

Master Zeamer avoided a diagonal kick from Ieyasu and a double strike from Rui.

Or so he thought,

FLICK

Rui's knuckle trimmed a bit of his long flowing beard with sheer friction, narrowly missing his head. They failed in actually landing a strike on the Martial Master, yet both of them only grew more driven as they pushed forward with greater vigor.

They watched each other more carefully, Ieyasu kept track of Rui's movement decisions from his mind while Rui predicted every movement that Ieyasu made. With this insight, they began adjusting better and better each time.

With each attack, their transitions and follow-ups grew smoother. The gap between each combo grew shorter and shorter.

Their steps, the moments of the inception of their attacks and maneuvers all grew increasingly aligned as they grew more and more accustomed to working with each other against a common opponent.

'Oho...' Master Zeamer's eyes widened as their timing and placement grew to reach a critical threshold.

BAM BAM!

Master Zeamer blocked their attacks for the first time, unable to casually evade them as he did before.

And yet, that did not mean that they were close to victory.

POW POW POW!

Rui grimaced in shock as extraordinarily fast blows crashed into his gut, finding him away. The pain hypnotic technique had not been dispelled, thus each technique felt excruciating.

Yet, he knew that was an illusion. Not just the pain, but the sheer speed of the man's attacks as well.

'His raw speed and power are well below both Ieyasu and myself. His Martial Body is vastly more powerful than ours, but with a Martial Heart, we significantly exceed it.' Rui narrowed his eyes. 'So why the hell couldn't I react to any of his blow?'

It appeared that he was not the only one.

BAM BAM BAM BAM BAM!

The Hypnomaster launched five consecutive blows across Ieyasu's body before the man could defend even a single time. Yet Rui's eyes widened with shock.

'His attacks were so slow. Why didn't Ieyasu react in time?'

From Rui's perspective, those blows were incredibly slow, yet Ieyasu's reactions seemed extremely dull and dragged. Ieyasu's expression grew grave with pain as he leaped back, grouping with Rui.

Rui's eyes widened as a realization struck him. 'Could it be...?'

"He's slowing down our perception of time," Ieyasu calmly clarified. "I peeked into your mind when he struck you with those blows, your thoughts became slow and dragged out."

'I figured as much.' Rui tutted.

He recalled what the Master had told him yesterday.

Not unless I wiped out its memories of the past day while I froze time.

'If he can freeze time with his Martial Heart and Mind, then it stands to reason he can speed up our perception of time, making his attacks seem much faster than they actually are.'

'Can you copy his techniques?' Rui glanced at Ieyasu.

The man simply shook his head.

"What's the matter?" Master Zeamer suddenly accelerated before them. "We're just getting started."

BAM BAM BAM!

He began pummeling them with incredibly swift and excruciating blows. Each blow was almost invisibly fast while their impacts seemed to strike like meteorites. Rui felt as though his flesh was burning while his muscles tore and his bones broke.

He almost activated Weaving Blood out of sheer instinct.

'Stop. This is just phantom pain. He's getting us to subconscious recoil due to our mind's subconscious tendency to avoid pain.'

It was a more sophisticated application of the Illusionary Dragon's abilities. It blindly applied pain across the entire body without associating it with a perceived cause, making it easier for Rui to ignore it.

In this case, although the pain was lesser, it was harder to ignore, requiring a much stronger will.

Yet they were the youngest Martial Seniors in history for a reason.

"Hyah!" Rui surged forward with a solid blow as Ieyasu launched a maneuver that covered all the holes in his attack in the opposite direction.

THWACK!

Master Zeamer's eyes widened with surprise as he blocked their heavy attacks, incurring a lot of damage to his arms. "Hoho...Admirable drive."

He warped their perception of time, swiftly scurrying around them in a blurring flash. Rui and Ieyasu stood back-to-back, waiting for him to arrive.

And he did.

STEP

The two of them immediately turned to the right, facing the Master.

Ieyasu's eyes sharpened as he launched a flurry of blows at the Martial Master. Much to his surprise, the Martial Master chose to block all the attacks head-on as Rui and himself pummeled him with blows.

He didn't try any tricks like his perception of time or space manipulation, or anything else. He simply gritted his teeth as the two Martial Seniors blasted the elderly Martial Master with countless blows from the opposite direction.

Ieyasu's shock only grew when the elder Martial Master fell to the ground on one knee, before the other knee also followed suit.

It was almost too easy. The two Martial Seniors pummeled down the Martial Master with ease until he was flat on the ground, completely bruised and cut. He glanced up towards Rui with a puzzled expression.

And yet, he was unable to read his mind, much to his shock. Furthermore, Rui's expression was quite strange, an obnoxiously wide crude grin very much unlike him.

He glanced back down at the Martial Master, only to be greeted with an even greater shock.

The one on the ground was not Master Zeamer, it was actually Rui Quarrier!

Rui groaned in pain, bruised and cut, flat on the ground as he glared at Ieyasu.

Ieyasu glanced back up at the person standing opposite to him in confusion, only to find Master Zeamer standing where Rui had been standing a moment ago.

The two had magically switched places!

"Should we continue beating him up or should we give him a break?" Master Zeamer asked with an innocent expression.

Chapter 1446: Spiral

THWACK!

A powerful swift blow crashed into Ieyasu's jaw out of nowhere before he could even respond, making him feel dizzy.

Rui got up in that time, leaping away, panting as he caught his breath. "You're nasty, old man."

"You have no idea," The man smiled before walking towards Rui. "Still, the two of you performed better than I had ever expected. I didn't expect you would be able to hurt me to such an extent. I can say that hardly any Martial Senior today is capable of what you two accomplished with your incredible teamwork."

"Hmph, such compliments after such an outcome is hardly pleasing," Ieyasu snorted.

"You would not be pleased even if you won, my frosty little pupil," The Martial Master laughed.

"How are you able to keep up with us in combat at all?" Rui narrowed his eyes. "Without the Martial Heart, you can't use the Martial Mind in its entirety. That means you only have your Martial Body to rely on. Surely you cannot fight against the Martial Heart with just your Martial Body."

Especially not against the likes of Rui and Ieyasu who had Martial Art of extraordinary calibers.

"Hmmm..." The man stroked his white beard as he considered Rui's question as he walked over to an adjacent wall.

His aged hand stretched out, tapping the wall with his finger in an incredibly slow and gentle motion. A soft and tender maneuver that would hurt nary a fly. One that did not even exceed the human realm of power.

And yet;

CRACK!

A gigantic crater formed in the wall.

Rui and Ieyasu widened their eyes in surprise.

"Even the feeblest of elders, even the frailest of babies may split heaven and earth asunder should their bodies, minds, and souls harmonize with the flow of the universe." The man recited what may very well have been verses of a poem. "That was what a friend of mine told me once."

Rui and Ieyasu exchanged a dubious glance.

"Nonsensical," Ieyasu declared. "Incomprehensible metaphorical philosophical garbage."

That was harsh, but Rui wouldn't have been much more generous, it was too detached from the practical realities of Martial Art.

"Hahaha!" The man laughed at Ieyasu's evaluation. "I'm inclined to agree. Still, that friend of mine... is a Martial Transcendent. Perhaps I should call her here and have you say that to her face."

Ieyasu looked like he was trying to swallow a frog. "...You set me up."

Rui smirked, happy he didn't say anything, while Master Zeamer had a good laugh at Ieyasu's expense.

"Alright, this has been fun. But time to put it to an end." The Master declared.

The two of them got up, on guard against any attack. Yet suddenly, time seemed to slow down to a crawl, their eyes widened as they witnessed an incredible sight.

Within the depths of their mind, Master Zeamer's very existence seemed to transform from a human figure to something else, something that seemed to ascend humanity.

He became a rotating dichromatic hypnotic spiral of black and white. Every moment they beheld him, his existence seemed to erode the energy of their mind. Metaphorical waves of hypnotic force emerged from the hypnotic spiral, crashing into their consciousness.

Until it eventually overcame it.

THUD

They collapsed to the ground, unconscious. Master Zeamer heaved a sigh as he studied the two unconscious young men, before glancing at his healing broken finger, before glancing back at them.

His demeanor grew solemn as all signs of his usual temperament and character were all but gone.

Master Zeamer was immensely impressed by their performance, it was clear to him that they were the driving forces of the new generation. They were forces that would push the boundaries of what was possible.

He had been quite astonished when Ieyasu had returned more than two years ago as a Martial Senior, having shattered the record by a large extent. Furthermore, he couldn't have helped but grow even more curious when he was informed that Ieyasu's record had already been broken by a similar margin.

Senior Realm by twenty-four and thirty.

'How absurd.' He sighed.

It made fossils like him, who had broken through to the Senior Realm at the age of one hundred and twenty, feel antiquated. It was part of a cycle, each generation of Martial Artists was superior to the previous one.

Each generation empowered each Realm by a higher notch. Yet such a thing did not happen naturally. Or at least, it did not happen this smoothly naturally. There was a force in the Martial World that ensured that each generation of Martial Artists was bestowed with the inheritance of all those before them.

'I should probably send a report to the Panamic Martial Federation about this one.' He glanced at Rui, recalling his precarious circumstances. 'On second thoughts, let's avoid that. I should inform Reina to avoid that as well.'

He knew that the Panamic Martial Federation already was aware of both of them. While the organization avoided meddling with mere Martial Seniors, that didn't apply to the special ones. he had already used his influence to repel them from meddling with Ieyasu, he would have to do the same with Rui.

In Rui's case, there were special circumstances. Master Zeamer recalled the Greater Phantomind Void technique that Rui had used. An incredibly power misdirection technique for a young Martial Senior, one that had truly shocked him. Yet, it wasn't the power that he was focusing on.

It was the image, or video rather, he used to misdirect Master Zeamer. Ordinarily, the target wouldn't actually be able to see the image so much as feel the danger that the image conveyed. But Master Zeamer was able to perceive the entirety of the high-definition three-dimensional video that Rui had created for the technique.

'Who was that Martial Master...?' Master Zeamer narrowed his eyes as he recalled the female Martial Master that was attacking him in the video of the Phantomind Void technique. 'It seems far too unlikely that she's a figment of her imagination. But I don't think I've ever met her before. Hm...'

Chapter 1447: Considerations

He closed his eyes as he activated his Martial Heart, empowering the majority of his dormant Martial Mind to life as he effortlessly recreated Rui's full video from scratch based on pure memory, studying it.

He walked over to the clip of Master Uma in his mind, taking on the form that she had taken against Master Deivon. 'Hmm, her Martial Embodiment is a blade of wind, eh? It is congruent with the vibes that her Martial Art gives off. It doesn't matter how brilliant he is. There is no way that a Martial Senior can create a such flawlessly congruent image of a Martial Master.'

Which meant that she was undoubtedly real. However, he didn't recognize her appearance, not that that surprised him. He didn't know all Martial Masters that existed. Although the Master Realm was quite small, there were far too many too widespread for him to know all of them.

He doubted Rui would tell him either, considering that he had abstained from doing so before. Still, he had enough to work with. He studied her attire, pausing when he reached the crest on her chest.

'That symbol... Virodhabhasa Faith?' Master Zeamer frowned. 'Looks like he got entangled with some nasty religious business. But if he really made an enemy of the entire religion, he would be dead right now. Which means...'

It was most likely limited to this Martial Master. He narrowed his eyes, he didn't appreciate his peers messing with his pupil. Even though it was in the past, he had felt Rui's fear when he activated the technique, it was part of what made the technique so powerful.

'Of course, I could just find her and kill her.' Finding her with the information he had was trivially easy. Each Master had a unique Martial Embodiment, meaning he could easily find her if he used his authority and influence within the Panamic Martial Federation.

He was confident about the killing part, as well. Unless Rui completely botched up her threat level, which seemed quite unlikely, he was far stronger than her considering he didn't feel even the slightest hint of danger from the wind of blades that Rui had conjured in the technique.

'Probably wouldn't take more than a few days. Unless she's in the Theocracy protected by Cardinal Sage Sariawar.' Master Zeamer. 'Maybe I should get Reina to help me given that this is her specialty. She seems to have developed affection for the boy so she would definitely be willing. Besides...it will be a good opportunity.'

A lewd smile sprung up on his face for a moment. "Hehehe... Then again, will that be the best course of action?"

Had Rui been a lesser Martial Senior, then getting rid of her would be best for him. The threat of a Martial Master was too much for more ordinary Martial Seniors to try and overcome.

However, the same could not be said for Rui.

'She is part of his drive.' He realized. 'However, he is not running away from her psychologically. He is fully prepared to grow stronger and then take her down when he has obtained the power he needs to accomplish that. Not only that, he has the confidence that he will succeed. Just like with that Deacon fellow he was telling me about.'

It was quite impressive that Rui was able to turn hostile forces far beyond his power into sources of motivation and drive. Considering that Rui was freely traveling, it most likely meant that he was not under active pursuit from the Martial Master. In that case, she was not an acute threat.

'Then, it's better to let her live. If only so that she can serve as the fuel to propel him greater heights. I shall not interfere.' Master Zeamer made up his mind. 'I just hope my judgement is not wrong.'

If Rui failed, or if she found him before he could succeed, then he would die. Master Zeamer was taking a gamble by letting her live. A gamble with Rui's life at stake.

'I definitely do need to suppress information about him within the Panamic Martial Federation.' He thought. 'Otherwise this Martial Master will be able to learn about him through the intelligence collected by the organization with her Master-level security clearance.'

Master Zeamer paused for a second. 'Ah there's also the Beggar's Sect. Those pesky roaches infesting every corner of humanity are also problematic, though Rui himself has probably handled matters relating to them.'

He could still help out in his own ways in that regard.

'Goodness gracious, what a problematic pupil.' He heaved a troubled sigh. 'On the other hand, look at me. I'm such a good Master. Truly exemplary.'

He nodded to himself, self-satisfied, before glancing at Ieyasu. 'If having a Master become your enemy is good for Rui's growth, then the same must be true for him considering how similar they are. In that case, maybe I should pretend to become his enemy until he reaches the Master Realm. Or better yet, maybe I should find a weak Martial Master, hypnotize them to become his enemy.'

His eyes sparkled with excitement. 'Ohhhh! I have an even better idea. I should not only hypnotize a weak Martial Master to pursue them, but I should fake my death at their hands so that he would be driven to avenge me, his kind wise good-hearted Martial Master that he is so indebted to. yes, that's perfect!'

"Father, you called?"

While he was brainstorming brilliant ideas, a voice called out to him.

"Hm?" The man turned to find four young Martial Artists. "Ah, right. I need to you to carry these two back to their personal quarters. Also send a couple of night attendants to their rooms. I want them to wake up to heaven. Hahaha!"

The man guffawed as his children heaved a resigned sigh before carrying the two unconscious young Martial Seniors away. Naturally, neither of them were particularly pleased to find hoardes of naked women in their bed when they woke up.

Chapter 1448: Drive

"What? You're telling me you didn't play around with the attendants I sent to you?" Master Zeamer asked, shell-shocked.

"I did tell you refrain from such measures." Ieyasu coldly remarked.

"I'm not really someone who enjoys that either. Besides, I'm somewhat committed." Rui mentioned.

The three of them were eating a simple meal atop a hill on one of the many cloud islands surrounding Cloudia. Rui had been quite fascinated to see that there was an entire ecosystem of life atop the cloud islands. Trees that sucked in nutrients and the abundant water from clouds and fauna that had adapted to living atop clouds.

"Oho, you have a committed partner, hm?" Master Zeamer asked, curious.

"I wouldn't call her a committed partner just yet, unfortunately," Rui murmured. As much as he enjoyed spending time with Xanarn, their worlds were starting diverge increasingly more. Rui required an active life with tribulations, self-inflicted or natural, to overcome as he forged on about his path fulfilling Project Water. It was almost necessary that he be exposed to the entire world if he wanted to be able to adapt to the entire world.

On the other hand, Senior Xanarn preferred a stable and passive lifestyle where she committed herself to one thing and place. immersing hersef in a unfirm lifestyle protecting Ajanta Island, or protecting the the Orphanage.

Rui didn't have any real romantic experience, which was he didn't realize how big of an issue this was. The type that prevented relationships from working. Affection, love, trust, physical and emotional intimacy alone were not enough. There was a bare minimum level of lifestyle compatibility required.

It was depressing to think about, but he knew he could not compromise his lifestyle for her, and he knew that she wouldn't either, or at the very least she would be miserable even if she tried.

Eventually, the conflict between him and Chairman Deacon would be resolved, either he would die or Deacon would, regardless, the threat to the orphanage would end.

After that, assuming he would be the alive one, there was hardly a bond that would keep them together.

"Relationships sure are tough." Master Zeamer laughed. "I too tried to have a relationship with a woman who once tried to kill me-"

"I don't care," Ieyasu coldly snorted, interrupting him. "I came here to spar and get revenge for yesterday, not gossip about love."

"Honestly, this is why you haven't experienced love. We're sharing a special meal between Master and students. Of course we should open up and grow more intimate with each other." Master Zeamer declared.

"I'm only eating here because you threatened canceling sparring session otherwise," Ieyasu glared at the Master with frosty eyes. "

"If I didn't do that you wouldn't come!" The Master protested. "Tsk, not even wanting to have food with men let alone women, this why you're still a virgin!"

Rui raised an eyebrow, glancing at the man.

"I cannot be bothered to engage in frivolities," Ieyasu tone chilled.

"Hah, frivolities, he says," Master Zeamer turned towards Rui with an incredulous look, looking for validation.

"That reminds me," Rui smirked. "He was confessed to by the most beautiful girl I had ever seen. But not only did he reject her, but he exploited her love for him to make her slave away as a mere scout all to find a simple thing he was looking for."

Rui took the liberty of rephrasing the story of Mira and Ieyasu

"Hooo?" The man turned towards Ieyasu with a perilous expression.

If looks could hurt, then Rui would have been frozen into a popsicle by Ieyasu's cold eyes fixed on him. "That's an incredibly misleading recounting of what happened."

"Tsk tsk, cursed is a man who is unable to enjoy feminine charm," The man sighed, shaking his head. "It was the whole reason I became a Martial Master in the first place."

The two of them raised an eyebrow at that statement.

"Oh, I didn't tell you?" The man smirked. "The reason I became a Martial Artist was... to get as many women as possible! Hahaha! When you're a Martial master, women flock to you like moths to light, you see? Hohoho!"

The man laughed triumphantly as Rui stared at him and his mouth began to curl with disdain before he turned towards Ieyasu slowly.

"...Why are you giving me that look?"

"..."

"I didn't choose him as my Master, he chose me," Ieyasu snorted, resigned.

Rui turned back to the Martial Master, giving up. "You became a powerful Martial Master renowned within the Martial World... all because you wanted to be popular with women?"

"Of course," The Master nodded, proud. "And popular, I am. However, I'm sure I can get even more if I become a Martial Sage. Maybe I can even get the thirteen Celestial Beauties to become part of my harem when I become a Martial Sage."

Rui stared at him with a lost expression. He knew that different Martial Artists had different Martial drives that could get them to grow stronger as long as the drives were both large in their scope and great in their intensity, but he didn't think he would genuinely run into a Martial Master who grew stronger to get more women.

In the first place, one did not need to be a Martial Master if one wanted to attract women. That was overkill. Being a Martial Artist of any Realm alone was enough to satisfy this goal. This meant that his lust was so strong that not even being Martial Senior could satisfy it.

'How can one man be so horny?' Rui frowned as he gained a clinical interest in the Martial Master. 'There must be something wrong with his endocrinological system that it makes him so horny.'

Rui understood full well what it took to activate the Martial Heart. An intense drive that fueled one's Martial journey.

"So you still want to grow stronger to get more women?" Rui asked.

"Of course," The Master nodded. " Hehehe, if I'm a Martial Sage, I bet I can get Martial Masters as well. Then I can finally bag Reina and some others that I have been eying for centuries."

"You're incorrigible." Ieyasu snorted.

Rui was inclined to agree.

"Alright, now that we've eaten lightly, we can get started," The Martial Master began after a while.

"This time, we're definitely going much further than we did last time," Rui mused, earning Ieyasu's silent agreement.

"Now now, relax for a second. That's not what's going to be happening today," Master Zeamer informed them. "You came here to train mental techniques, not get sparring training."

"I already have mastered the foundations in all sub-fields of mental techniques," Ieyasu remarked.

"And yet you returned nonetheless," The Martial Master smirked. "You don't need mental techniques, you need mind, don't you?"

Ieyasu didn't reply, not denying the Master's words. Rui knew he was referring to the Martial Mind. Ieyasu had told him more than two years ago that he was returning to his Master's side to learn more about the breakthrough to the Master Realm.

It seemed that he did not have his work cut out for him the way Rui did. Although Rui certainly did not have an easy time ahead due to the vastness of his mind that not even the VOID algorithm as it was was enough to fill, he was confident of treading the path forward.

He knew what he had to do, and how he had to do it. He knew that he was very much capable of doing it.

This was not the case with other Martial Seniors, they didn't possess the comfort and familiarity, not to mention the sheer capability, of creating systems of thought.

"That is why we're going to split up," The Master announced. "Ieyasu, go back to what you were doing. Rui, my boy, we will embark on your training."

"Why does he get the first pick?" Ieyasu narrowed his eyes.

"He didn't. You've been here for two years. He hasn't even been here for two days," The man snorted. "Besides, we've already gone over the challenges and impediments in your way, and what you can do to overcome them. You were fully invested in those until this one came along."

Ieyasu considered those words before nodding, giving the Master a short bow, before leaving.

"Honestly, he's more needy than you'd ever imagine by looking at him despite all the talent and power he has at his disposal." The Master snorted. "In comparison, self-sufficient students like you are more to my speed. In fact, the rate at which you develop your Martial Art individualistically without any aid is rather unnerving. It's not something that talent for Martial Art can yield."

He threw Rui a curious glance. "In fact, talent usually gets in the way. The ease of mastering pre-existing techniques usually makes it more difficult to create their own techniques that actually fit their Body and Martial Art. So..."

The light-heartedness dropped from his tone. "...why is it that you're able to create techniques that harness reality so well, hm?"

He stared at Rui as if trying to pry the truth with his eyes alone.

As a Master of hypnosis, Rui had no doubt that he could forcefully do so if he really wanted. He was glad that the Master did not cross any lines.

"I have an understanding of reality that far exceeds the contemporary scientific insights of human civilization as it is. I frequently apply them to create unprecedented techniques." Rui explained. "I cannot divulge why and how I came to possess that knowledge, nor do I think I can get away with lying to you, so I'll have to request you to be satisfied with that much."

"Hoho...that's quite direct," The man's eyes glinted with amusement. "Very well then. I'll just have to wait until you're a Master and strong enough to protect yourself. By then you'll gain the power and the confidence worthy of the heavy truths you hide."

Actually, Rui wasn't even sure if being a Martial Master was enough to divulge that he was from another world out there. The Virodhabhasa had Martial Sages, and he was certain that no matter how he started in the Master Realm thanks to his powerful mind, it would not be enough to fend off Martial Sages.

"Regardless, let us begin, it is the whole reason you're here, after all," The Master stated. "Now then, what is the reason you're here again?"

Rui stared at him, heaving a sigh of resignation. "Mental techniques."

"Ah, yes, of course. I was already aware, I was just making sure you knew," The Master coughed. "Now then, what do you want to learn field of mental techniques? It isn't a monolithic field, contrary to people's expectations. It is actually just as diverse as any of the foundational fields. After all, the mind is diverse. So why wouldn't techniques that use or affect the mind also be diverse?"

For all of his affinity for mental techniques, he didn't nearly as much about the field as he'd liked.

"Hmm..." Rui considered the question. "You're right. Could you help me by giving me an insight into the field of mental techniques? I think I could benefit from a broader overview."

"Hmmm," The man scratched his head. "Well, there's techniques that that affect the some parts of the mind and some techniques affect other parts of the mind, and others affect other parts of the mind, if you get what I mean."

Rui stared at him with an expression of what was almost disgust.

"What's with that expression?"

"That is the most incompetent explanation I have ever heard in my entire life," Rui spat. "Are you actually a master of hypnosis?"

"Guh!" The Master lurched over, grasping his chest as if Rui had just struck him very hard. "T-That is a powerful offensive mental technique."

"I did not use an offensive mental technique," Rui insisted, glaring at him. "I just insulted your embarrassingly pathetic framework of mental techniques that could only have been uttered by an imbecile."

"Argh!" The man staggered, gripping his chest. "F-Formidable."

Rui heaved a sigh as he shook his head. "Why do you not sound like an expert?"

"Ouch..."

"Enough of that."

Chapter 1450: Inscrutable

"Well, I can't help it, you know?" The man grumbled. "I'm no scientist. I just feel my way through these things."

"Master Reina had a very broad and thorough framework for her field that distilled her understanding of assassinations," Rui insisted. "Why don't you have one for mental techniques."

"Hah, assassinations are super simple and easy. Don't compare them to the most complex and inscrutable existence in this universe." The man snorted.

"Which is...?"

"The mind, young man, the mind." He got up, tapping the side of his head. "We know very little to nothing about how it works. Most mental masters rely on the fact that they too have minds to get past a lack of theoretical understanding and gain a more instinctual understanding or an understanding through lots of trial and error. But as for the core theory..."

He shrugged. "Perhaps only Martial Sages and Martial Transcendents understand more about it."

"You're telling me you have trouble understanding the mind despite having a Martial Mind and a Martial Path centered around minds?" Rui scoffed with skepticism.

"Hah, yes. I can tell you that there are mental techniques that affect the subconscious mind, the senses, and the conscious mind and they can be trained. But the core of it all is a mystery as far as everybody is concerned. What is the physical nature of the mind is something we have absolutely no clue about." The man remarked. "As far as we can tell, it may be some kind of fog of energy in the brain that leaks out of the head and can be detected and used to gauge more information about the mind. That is what the one and only individualistic technique that Ieyasu ever created is centered around."

"Hmmm," Rui considered the man's words. Science back on Earth had gone a lot farther in decrypting the mind, and while an absolute understanding was still far away, the fundamental nature of the mind was rather transparent.

It was the summation of a massive number of electrical impulses firing between neurons in the brain. Neuron plasticity ensured the development of patterns of electrical impulses across specific pathways that unfolded in response to other incoming neuron impulses, allowing for information to be stored and processed.

Understanding the structure and functionality of the brain was crucial for gaining a framework of the mind, which in turn was necessary to develop a comprehensive and ground-up framework of mental techniques.

"Still, you're just being lazy," Rui snorted. "Put some effort, I didn't come all the way here for something that even a child could come up with. There are things of the mind that can be learned just through introspection and observation, and I know Martial Masters are extremely good at both."

"Harsh, I suppose the wool can't be pulled over your eyes." The man remarked, before sighing. "Well. The mind is divided between the conscious and unconscious mind. I think we can all agree on that, right? The senses are sort of connected to the subconscious mind, which in turn processes it and sends the information to the conscious mind where it is evaluated and acted upon. Something like that. So mental techniques can be divided into techniques that affect consciousness and subconsciousness. However, you could also divide techniques by the effect they manifest, such as altering specific emotions or altering specific bodily functions, which are partially conscious and subconscious. After all, breathing is both conscious and subconscious, right? So a technique that affects the mind's control over breathing does not fall into either category cleanly. Then there are non-offensive mental techniques that work on one's self, like getting rid of pain or regulating emotions, these too have the same issue. Also also, there are mental techniques that seem to negatively impact the target, but we have no idea what

the actual mechanism is, so those are just flying around. There are also techniques that can affect memory which are also arguably falling into both categories. Also-

"-Enough," Rui raised his hand.

"It's a pain in the ass, right?" The man laughed. "It's hard to create a comprehensive framework around these things, so we just muddle around with techniques we have."

"Surely you can divide techniques into offensive, supplementary, and informative. You can at least divide the techniques that you do know into conscious, subconscious, hybrid, or unknown. Also, the effect it has on battle is also a useful way of categorizing it."

"We know, and we do. The issue is that too many of them cross too many lines or are unknown, so their utility becomes low," He shrugged, sighing. "We're going to have to wait for someone who is both great at mental techniques and also possesses an intimate understanding of the fundamental nature of mind. Perhaps they will figure things out."

Rui remained silent. He actually had the ability to organize and categorize mental techniques in a broader framework that was consistent, accurate, and reliable. But that was for another time.

It was not too much of an acute problem, just made his life more inconvenient.

"The only mental techniques I have are supplementary and one misdirection technique," Rui explained. "I want to learn the most effective principles for various kinds of mental techniques spanning across offensive and supplementary fields. I have a powerful mind, thus I'm not content learning just one or two mental techniques."

"Hm, I'm glad that you feel that way," The Master grew more serious. "Because that misdirection technique of yours irritates me."

Rui frowned. That was not what he expected to hear. "Why? I thought it was a remarkably powerful technique that would impress you."

"It is precisely because it is such a powerful technique that it pisses me off!" The man barked. "You are capable of such powerful misdirection, and what do you use it for?"

His expression crinkled with disdain. "To make people ignore you? That's it? You can do so much more! I'm glad you came here. That idiot assassin would have buried your talent for mental techniques!"