

Abandoning a guard and haphazardly dashing for a takedown mid-strike was a very dangerous thing to. He could have easily been knocked out, or he could have completely avoided the strike if he was skilled and experienced, the only reason the strike didn't knock him out was because Fae had been caught off-guard, thus her reaction time was a little greater than normal, she wasn't able to adjust the trajectory to strike him in time.

('Yes! Now I can grapple her. This way her body conditioning won't really be too much of a deal, furthermore the mechanism by which her strikes were so powerful also cannot be applied to wrestling. I could potentially beat h-')

BAM

Rui spat out blood and immediately fell unconscious at her feet.

"Fuuu... To think he managed to almost get me. If it wasn't for One-Inch Palm I might have had some difficulty." Fae mumbled, her palm facing upside down at waist level.

Fae's One-Inch Palm was an attack that allowed her to strike with maximum power in extremely close ranges. This was abnormal because it was difficult to leverage the power of the core and legs in such a position, usually, greater power required greater space. However, what Fae used was a principle that was known simply known as Outer Convergence. Outer Convergence allowed the user to use their full raw power in any position by stacking, summing and converging the torque generated by all primary muscle groups to increase the power of a strike.

There was a popular analogy used to understand what this meant, in the Martial Academy. A child throwing ball at an adult would likely not hurt the adult. But what if the child was sitting on a horse that was running at top-

speed? Then the ball would possess the speed generated by the child and the horse, it would be moving very fast and would hurt an adult.

But what if the horse was running on top of a giant dragon that itself was moving at ten times the speed of the horse? Then the ball thrown would possess the sum of the speeds given to it by the child, the horse as well as the dragon stacked together, the thrown ball would be extremely powerful. This was because the power generated by three sources had been constructively accumulated and stacked together into one attack.

This was exactly what the principle Outer Convergence was about. The different muscle groups in the body were like the dragon, the horse and the child. The fist, or palm in this case was like the ball being thrown. Outer Convergence allowed the user to transfer the power to the strike in exactly this manner, accumulating and summing torque and force from all across the body additively and converging it into the strike. It was theoretically possible to do so in any position, but Fae had not mastered Outer Convergence to that degree yet. Still, being able to use Flow Accumulation at all in the form of the One-Inch Palm was what allowed her to crush Rui's gamble instantly.

Rui had failed, miserably. He chose wrong.

"Still, if it had been 99.9% of the applicants here, they would have probably lost..." Fae mused.

"Rui Quarrier, how interesting. I hope you pass the exam. You do seem worthy of being a Martial Artist." She bade him, before leaving.

His badge was stolen the moment she walked away.

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Rui opened eyes in a daze, unsure where he was.

('An unfamiliar ceiling')

Only then did his memories kick in.

('Wait what happened to the third-round? I remember I was fighting Fae-')

"Ah applicant Rui Quarrier, you're awake." A voice called out to him.

"You're currently in the medical wing of the Martial Academy, you fell unconscious during the third-round of the Entrance Exam. Your wounds have been completely treated, so you may leave after gathering your belongings."

('A nurse of the Academy...?') He noted her medical uniform.magic

('Damn, so it's over? Fae must have done something to me, I can't really recall what happened after I dashed for a takedown.') He cursed.

"What about the results of the exam?"

"You will be notified by the Martial Academy of the results of your Exam within a few days."

Rui sharpened his eyes.

('A few days...? It shouldn't take that long since the criteria for passing or failing was simple. I probably had zero points by the time the round ended and zero is most certainly below the average number of points')

"Is there a badge among my belongings?" Rui asked nervously, just to verify.

The nurse turned to face him.

"No, there was no badge on your person when the third-round ended."

"...I see."

Deep grief and frustration assailed his mind. He'd spent practically his entire life preparing for this exam, he'd given the exam his everything. All for a complete failure.

"How long has it been since I was knocked out?"

"Around five hours."

Rui jerked his head towards her.

('Damn, I need to get back home soon or everyone will be worried.') He changed back into his clothes from the medical garb he woke up wearing, before bidding the nurse gratitude and leaving.

On the way back home he had a lot to think about.

('Fae... She was at a Martial Apprentice level too probably, just like Kane.')

She was the reason he failed. She attacked him on a whim and beat the living shit out of him for amusement. Yet, Rui felt no resentment towards her.

Instead he felt a tinge of excitement and anticipation building up.

"When will I become that strong? I can't wait."

He would have been much more excited on any other day, but he found it hard to get excited right after failing the exam.

Twelve years. That's how long he'd invested. He'd spent those years doing his absolute best. It was not an exaggeration to say that Rui had done absolutely everything humanly possible to pass the exam. If it was anybody else, they would have likely not accomplished as much as he did with what he had, this was because of the sheer expertise, knowledge and experience surrounding martial arts and combat sport. There were very few people with as much unadulterated raw love for martial arts and combat sports as much as Rui had.

But it wasn't enough.