

## **Martial Unity 321**

Chapter 321: Shocking

"And in our first fight, we have the current defending champion; Lord Graham's representative fighter Apprentice Fernan Melver versus Lady Farnu's representative fighter Apprentice Jivia" The head butler took over as he announced the first fight.

Rui watched as the two fighters entered the arena, stopping at a distance from each other.

"Take your stances." The arbiter instructed.

Apprentice Jivia took a generic defensive stance. While Fernan Melver simply stood. What Rui found strange was that he was cloaked quite heavily. That was a black cloak that covered his entire body, with only his neck and head exposed.

Rui felt a primal sense of danger with Primordial Instinct, as if he was looking at somebody that wasn't entirely human.

Then, Fernan shed the cloak.

What Rui saw shocked him to his core.

No Martial Art had ever shaken him as much he was beholding at that very moment.

A pair of wings unfolded from Fernan's back!

There were an extra set of arms above his normal arms!

Rui's eyes widened in shock.

He blinked, hard, wondering if he had overused potions recently.

('I need to be careful, I can't believe I'm seeing hallucinations.')

When he opened his eyes, the wings and the extra arms were still there!

He turned towards Nartha. "Did you put something in that tea you gave me earlier?"

One of her companions burst out laughing. "It seems you're unfamiliar with symbiotic Martial Art despite being a Martial Artist. Understandable, they are so rare and there are so few Martial Artists with such techniques."

"Symbiotic Martial Art?" he turned towards Fernan, extremely confused. "What the fuck is that?"

"Martial Art techniques that involve the implantation and cooperation with a living symbiote for combat for extra utility. The extra arms and wings come from implanted larva of certain special species of symbiotes that integrate into the host's body and growing larger until they turn into those." She gestured at Fernan's extra limbs and wings.

Rui's eyes widened as his jaw dropped with shock. "How do you know that?" Doubting her information.

"He's my fighter, silly." Lady Farnu chuckled. "I know everything about him. Symbiotic Martial Art techniques involve putting symbiotes with special utility that the human body cannot ordinarily possess." She turned towards him. "I was very excited when Nartha here told me you were returning. We have a bet on which one of our fighters will win."

"No pressure, of course." Nartha smiled at him with a smile that didn't reach her eyes.

Rui didn't care. He was too stunned by the revelation of symbiotic Martial Art.

How did it work? How was something like this even possible in the first place???

Symbiotes didn't have super special powers!

('No, wait.') He corrected himself. ('That's true only for Earth's symbiotes. Gaia is a whole different beast. If fauna and flora can be fantastically absurd, then is it impossible that to apply to symbiotic life-forms?')

Given the wonders he had already witnessed in this world, it did not seem impossible for symbiotes to be capable of incredible things.

Giving its host extra utility in combat would theoretically viable.

In fact, Rui was reminded of several creatures from Earth that in reality weren't too different in principle from what the symbiotic Martial Art he was witnessing. *Cymothoa exigua* was an underwater tongue-eating louse from Earth that consumed the tongue of its host and latched itself onto the blood vessels and the muscles of the newly severed tongue, and then became the new tongue of the fish!

This creature aided in the digestion of the food of the fish in exchange for sustaining itself on the host fish's blood.

What Rui was witnessing was essentially an infinitely more complex and fantastical version of the same principle.

('But still...') Rui gaped. ('This is absurd!')

It also seemed absurdly overpowered. Rui couldn't believe that Fernan possessed an extra pair of arms and a pair of wings!

How was a normal human supposed to defeat something like that?

('There have to be drawbacks.') Rui said, almost trying to convince himself. ('There is no way it's that easy.')

He could readily think of several.

Symbiotes were organisms that existed in a mutually beneficial relationship with host bodies. If the symbiotes gave the host such wondrous abilities, then surely, they benefitted from being bonded to their host. The first thing Rui thought of instantly was the huge nutritional and energy needs that the additional biological systems that the symbiote brought about. Maintaining their body must be extremely difficult and demanding.

Furthermore, there was the matter of getting used to new limbs. Rui couldn't even begin to imagine how difficult it was to build brand new muscle memory for brand new limbs, it must have abysmally torturous and intensive.

And then what about the wings? At the very least, Fernan had some familiarity with arms, but no human had any experience of using wings. How difficult must it have been to not only learn to use the wings, but also achieve such high mastery of them that they could become a Martial Art? How difficult must it have been for Fernan to go through the Martial Foundation Stage essentially all over again to achieve high proficiency with them by Martial Art standards?

And after all that, he still probably needed to master Apprentice-level techniques with them.

After considering all these disadvantages, Rui reconsidered his evaluation of the allure of symbiotic Martial Art techniques.

A surge of respect and admiration for Fernan grew within Rui.

The only emotion that surpassed that was his excitement and desire to fight Fernan. He wondered how the VOID algorithm would fare against the man. He would eventually find out, of course. He had no intention of leaving the place until he fought Fernan, no matter what happened. Thankfully, it seemed like a done deal based on lady Farnu's words.

Rui intended to observe Fernan as carefully as he could. Collecting as much data as he could on the man to begin creating the predictive model for him. Rui strongly suspected that he would need to improvise the adaptive evolution model, since it would certainly be quite inaccurate against someone like Fernan, without a doubt.

## Chapter 322: Exotic

Fernan had a beautiful face aesthetically, many would say. His soft features were calming and pleasant.

This was in sharp contrast to the rest of the body. Two extra arms stuck from an opening on a bump on his shoulder while a huge black-feathered pair of wings grew from his mid-back section.

One pair of arms folded into closed defensive guards while the remaining two took an aggressive stance.

Rui nodded, this made sense. With four arms, he could maintain the perfect offense and defense at all times!

His wings lifted into the air, stretching back as much as they could.

His intentions were clear. He intended to get into flight the moment the match began.

"Begin." The arbiter began the match.

WHOOSH

A huge gust of wind was released as Fernan took the air immediately. Apprentice Jivia had tried to intercept him before he could reach the air, but the distance was too great and Fernan was not slow.

Rui was amazed at how stable Fernan's flight was, his trajectories were smooth and uniform, he didn't wobble or stumble midair or do anything of the sort.

He was even able to hover midair in a stable manner, which truly impressed Rui. Most birds weren't able to hover stationarily. There were only a handful of birds that could that, like the hummingbird. It flapped its wings with high frequency to generate a constant thrust upwards that canceled its weight.

Fernan was doing a similar thing with his pair of wings. He simply hovered as he looked down at his opponent. The initiative of the battle was thoroughly in his hands.

Finally, he made a move.

BOOM!!

He flapped his wings with incredible swiftness.

A tremendous wind blast emerged from his wings. The sheer force and speed of the wind attack greatly surpassed Rui's Tempestuous Ripple! Objectively, his power was not particularly above Rui's own power since Tempestuous Ripple's power was much below his normal power and lethality. However, it shocked Rui that he could output from such a distance. Not even Ana's Martial Art allowed her to output such levels of power from a distance.

Just this one symbiote had resulted in wings that basically allowed him to surpass Ana's Martial Art.

BAM!

Apprentice Jivia grimaced as she failed to evade the swift wind blast. Its powerful impact inflicted some amount of damage on her abdomen.

She leaped into the air, launching herself at him.

Rui shook his head, sighing.

BOOM!!

A powerful wind blast drove her into ground with such force that it broke her ribs.

"Argh!" She grimaced as she coughed blood. She tried getting up one last time.

BOOM!!

The third wind attack crushed her to the ground and put her in a critical state.

"The match ends there!" The arbiter declared the match over as Jivia had lost consciousness and was bleeding profusely. "Winner; Apprentice Fernan Melver."

Rui smiled.

Fernan was strong. He would have swept everybody in the Martial Contest with ease besides from maybe Fiona, who would have put up a fearsome fight. Rui wondered how that matchup would go.

Fighter after fighter arrived, yet none of them could put so much as even a scratch on him. Several Martial Artists with long-range techniques were able to attack him but he managed to beat them soundly with much greater physical parameters.

Rui completely understood why he was the reigning champion. He was truly worthy of the position.

"Up next, we have Lady Freier's Apprentice Falken." The butler announced.

Instantly, a wave of excitement fluttered through the crowd of guests. Two defending champions facing off against each other. And the two most exciting ones as well.

"Good luck." Nartha cheered.

"Thanks."

Rui made his way to the arena, stopping at the starting position.

"Take your stances." The arbiter instructed.

Fernan took the same stance that he normally did.

Yet his eyes suddenly narrowed as a wave of pressure washed over him.

"Fuuuuh..." Rui exhaled deeply as he finished preparing himself mentally as he hopped lightly between his feet, his hands loosely held at chest level.

It was a stance that prioritized maneuvering.

The weight his concentration mounted onto Fernan's mind escalated by the second as the very air itself was wrung by the powerful Martial Apprentices.

"Begin!" The arbiter commenced the fight.

WHOOSH!

Fernan instantly took to the air swiftly, gaining altitude swiftly. Rui didn't bother moving from his spot or trying to stop Fernan from taking flight with a Tempestuous Ripple, the probability of success was too low.

BOOM!

Fernan launched a powerful wind blast at Rui.

BAM!

The attack missed Rui narrowly as it struck the ground next to him.



Rui merely stepped aside.

People frowned. Wasn't this the same attack that everyone else had failed to dodge for any extended time? Why did it suddenly look so easy.

BOOM!

STEP

Rui hopped out of the way once more.

Fernan frowned.

Something was wrong, but he couldn't quite put his finger on it.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

as he launched more attacks, yet Rui dodged them all with casual ease.

('He's not extraordinarily fast...') Fernan frowned. He could see Rui's movements quite clearly. Speed wasn't the issue here.

Fernan narrowed his eyes as he launched another attack, yet Rui moved a beat before his attack even launched.

Fernan's eyes widened as realization dawned him. ('He's not reacting or moving fast, he's reacting and moving earlier.')

Fernan simply didn't understand. His wings were incredibly swift agile and smooth, how on Earth was Rui able to time his movements so well? He was already halfway out of the way of Fernan's attacks by the time the attack was launched. Even if his movements were slower, he needed to move a very small

distance to get out of the way while Fernan's attack needed to travel a large distance before it could reach and hurt Rui.

Rui could sense his confusion. ('It doesn't matter if I can't reach you very well. As long as you can't reach me, I'll eventually win.')

### Chapter 323: Clash

Where others saw invincibility, Rui saw shortcomings.

First, while it was true that Fernan was able to output a huge amount of power from a huge distance away, the way he applied that power was highly inflexible.

The trajectory of the attack was linear. Linear attacks were easier to predict than attacks with a curving trajectory, this was a universal fact. The fact that Rui could effortlessly predict the trajectory of the attack well ahead of time meant that as long as he tweaked his predictive model just a little bit to Fernan's unique situation, it was almost comically easy to predict Fernan to the T

Specifically, Rui looked at his altitude rather than the wings itself. Whenever Fernan prepared an attack, he would stop the rapid flapping of his wings to maintain altitude and stretch them back to launch a powerful wind attack. This caused his altitude to drop just a bit since he wasn't flapping them to maintain his altitude. That was what Rui paid attention to.

The mistake his previous opponents made were trying to keep with his speedy flapping in order to react to his attacks. However, Rui merely kept an eye on his altitude and timed his movements with respect to fluctuations in that.

Because his predictions were pristine, he was able to spend a very little amount of energy for evasion. The guests were mesmerized as Rui danced away from Fernan's attacks with ease.

This was another flaw in Fernan's long-range strategy. Generating wind blasts cost a lot of energy, Rui knew this for a fact with his own Tempestuous Ripple technique. Neither side was hurting the other side, yet Fernan was expending far more energy than Rui was. Astronomically more.

Rui merely needed to exert himself mildly while Fernan need to execute one of those mighty swings each time he wanted to launch his attack.

This was the elementary adapted fighting style that Rui had created to counter Fernan's long-range style.

Not every adapted style was flashy. Not every adapted style needed to be flashy. Sometimes the most effective path to victory was the quietest and the most passive.

Besides, Rui didn't think he was quite on the path to victory yet. He absolutely confident that Fernan was capable of much more than just being a static flying air canon.

('Those arms aren't just for decoration, are they?') Rui mused.

"Tsk." Fernan tutted. He had given up on trying to harm Rui from a distance.

Still, he wasn't particularly pessimistic.

What nobody asides from his clientele knew was that Fernan was actually strongest at mid-to-close range quarters.

WHOOSH

Rui widened as Fernan dashed towards him with blinding speed.

BAM BAM!!

Rui guarded as two powerful impacts landed on him. Fernan hit him with two straight right attacks at the same time!

WHOOSH!

Rui avoided the next duo of strikes carefully as he got accustomed to the abrupt change.

WHOOSH WHOOSH WHOOSH

He evaded Fernan's strikes pristinely as the speed and maneuvering techniques as well as Primordial Instinct and Phantom Step had made him an absolute menace to even try and touch.

Yet, Fernan had a gigantic mobility advantage as he rapidly shifted around with unbelievable speed and agility. Furthermore, he could freely maneuver across all three dimensions while Rui was constricted to two.

Rui had great combat speed, but Fernan's travelling and maneuvering speed were something else entirely, only Kane could match it, and even Kane couldn't move in three dimensions.

Even if Rui's arms moved faster because he was more nimble and agile, Fernan had four of them, this more than made up for the gap in speed.

And yet.

WHOOSH

Fernan frowned.

Rui evaded him yet again.

A barrage of swift blows landed on Rui as Fernan used all four of his arms to hurt Rui.

Yet to his greatest amazement, not a single one of the landed cleanly!

Rui grinned like a madman under his mask.

('Having extra limbs may allow you to launch more attacks, but they also reduce the freedom of each limb!')

There was a limited amount of space around a person. Twice the number of arms drastically reduced the area of mobility that each arm had access to. If their mobility was constrained due to the presence of arms, then Rui could use that to predict which way the arms wouldn't move because they couldn't!

This stacked on top of the predictive model that Rui had begun developing for Fernan compensated for the increased number of attacks he had.

Everybody watched on, absolutely enamored as Rui cleanly dealt with every single attack Fernan threw at him. It didn't seem to matter which way and where Fernan twisted and turned, Rui mitigated the entirety of his offense immediately.

Rui, however, wasn't entirely pleased with the outcome. The adaptive evolution model was only forty percent effective against Fernan. Fernan fundamentally differed from a human too much. Currently Rui was merely relying on it in conjugation with the Primordial Instinct to try and mitigate its shortcomings, but there was a limit to what it could do.

"RAH!" Fernan snarled as he swung both his left arms at Rui, frustrated at his inability to cleanly hurt Rui despite his advantages. It was as though Rui was somehow moved in exactly the right way at the right time to mitigate all of his advantages.

His feet hit the ground, a sight at which Rui's eyes widened. ('Wind blast incoming!')

Rui dove to the side desperately he narrowly managed to dodged Fernan's attack despite being at point-blank range.

Fernan felt more frustration against Rui than he had felt in his entire career. Dodging a point-blank wind blast from his wings should have been absolutely impossible, yet this annoying weasel of a Martial Artist kept managing to avoid his clutches by jus the slightest margin. Watching him get away every single time was starting to piss Fernan off.

He dashed through the air, lashing out towards Rui, when suddenly.

BLINK

Rui appeared in front of his face.

Chapter 324: Outcome

PEW!

Rui punctured a hole in his left wing.

"Argh!" Fernan grimaced.

Rui's eyes widened at that sight. ('The symbiote sends pain signals to his brain in response to painful stimuli.')

This was another disadvantage that Rui hadn't predicted.

Fernan's flight destabilized as he struggled to gain a bearing in the air. Rui had punctured a muscle, making it difficult for him to flap his wings equally. Furthermore, Rui exacerbated the issue with Tempestuous Ripple.

POW POW POW!

He landed three Tempestuous Ripples on Fernan's injured wing. The attacks did hurt Fernan as evident by the grimace on his face, yet the main reason Rui launched those attacks was not to hurt him but to destabilize him. Launching the gusts of at only one wing and not the other caused his trajectory to be even more unstable.

THUD

He landed on the ground, stumbling. He tried to regain his bearings, but Rui had no intention of allowing him to.

BAM!!!

A powerful Flowing Canon amplified by eight techniques crashed onto his guard. Fernan gritted his teeth as he tried to mitigate the damage, yet even the combined defenses of four arms weren't enough to stop Rui's overwhelming strike.

BOOM!

Fernan was launched across the arena as he crashed into the walls of the arena

He turned around in fear.

BAM!

A powerful blow crashed onto his face. He tried fighting, back, returning a powerful strike right back at Rui, when;

CLASP

Rui caught on to his strike and flipped him upside down with Flow Flux.

('Your extra apendages have destabilized your balance, all it takes is the slightest push at the right time and place.

BAM!!

A tremendous kick landed on Fernan's jaw even as he was upside down.

It was the second impact to the head.

The threshold had been crossed.

THUD

He hit the ground, unmoving.

Fernan lost consciousness as his brain was overwhelmed by the blunt force trauma.

"Winner; Apprentice Falken!"

Rui ignored the applause he received as he studied Fernan's body. There several bumps on his body where his wings and extra arms came from.

('So the symbiote even generates hard bone in his body before generating a limb.') Rui scrutinized Fernan with interest. ('Furthermore, the features of the extra set of arms are the same as his original arms. This means that Symbiote used his DNA to create the arms.')

Rui's mind furiously analyzed the situation even as he found the entire notion thoroughly amazing. ('Lady Farun said that the symbiote is implanted into their body as larva, the symbiote likely extracts the DNA of the host to recreate whatever parts that particular species of symbiote recreates.')

His eyes turned to Fernan's wings. ('But that doesn't explain the wings.')

Human DNA didn't have any information on wings, so how did the Symbiote acquire those?



('They must have used another animal, a bird with a wingspan that suited humans.') Rui concluded. ('I wonder if Symbiotic Martial Art can do other things.')

He was sure that there were other species of symbiotes that operated differently.

('If the symbiotes are connected to the brain, then there probably is a constraint of mental capacity.') Rui mused.

The subconscious human brain was not meant to accommodate more limbs and organs. More organs meant more information the subconscious brain had to process and act on.

Suddenly, his eyes widened as the realization of an incredible possibility dawned on his mind. ('If mental capacity is a constraint on symbiotic Martial Art... Then what if someone with superhuman mental capacity tried mastering a symbiotic Martial Art?')

Rui's body was well within human constraints that applied even to Martial Apprentices. However, his brain and specifically mind had undergone growth to a degree beyond human parameters. His subconscious mind had a much greater mental capacity than ordinary humans.

Greed crept into Rui's eyes.

It was entirely possible that Rui was extremely compatible with symbiotic Martial Art techniques. If that was the case, Rui would be a fool to not, at the very least, look into the matter.

Rui added symbiotic techniques into the long list of things he wanted to look into for his next training stage. Yet as much as the very idea of gaining additional biological utility appealed to him.

Was it truly worth it?

Rui glanced back at Fernan who was being carried away before shaking his head. Sure, Fernan was incredible. His Martial Art had shocked Rui unlike anything. But he was not without glaring flaws.

('In pursuit of superhuman power, he neglected human power.') Rui mused.

Humans were strong. Humans had their own bottomless potential. Fernan had abandoned human power and potential when he gave himself extra arms and wings. Not realizing that he hadn't even explored the full power and potential of his existing limbs.

Now, did this mean that symbiotic Martial Art was inherently bad or weak or sub-optimal?

No, Rui was not naïve enough to think that either. Fernan was absolutely proof that it was not a sub-optimal field. Before Rui, he had crushed all opposition with all kinds of Martial Art with a fraction of his full power.

At the end of the day, results spoke the loudest. And Fernan's results were deafeningly loud.

('The key is balance.') Rui realized. ('Obtaining extra-human power like symbiotic Martial Art must not come at the cost of abandoning human power.')

Rui came to believe the key was finding that very thin but sharp line where the symbiotic power added to the human body did not dampen human power or potential. But perhaps even enhanced it and cooperated with it.

If Rui's suspicions about his compatibility with symbiotic Martial Art was true, then Rui would like to try and think about aiming to achieve where he added just enough symbiotic techniques to his Martial Art where it didn't dampen his potential. He wondered if he could achieve the best of both worlds. He was firmly of the belief that someone like Fernan was of neither world. He had no intention of adding extra limbs or giving himself wings.

But perhaps symbiotic Martial Art possessed a solution for the many problems he was plagued with. Perhaps a single symbiotic technique could become the key.

Anything was possible.

## Chapter 325: Clash

The Martial Games soon proceeded as Fernan was carried away. Rui was the new defending champion of the Martial Games and he sent challenger after challenger.

Yet, none of them prevailed.

One after the other, Rui overwhelmingly crushed them all with adapted styles that wrecked them in combat. The rest of the participating representative fighters weren't quite as deviant as Fernan was. The adaptive-evolution model was far more effective against them than it was against Fernan. His victories against them were smooth, clean and elegant unlike his messy battle against Fernan.

However, Rui had begun to notice something strange.

Every once in a while, some of his opponents would simply give up even when the fight wasn't quite over. Their bodies went limp as their eyes lost life as if someone had drained them of it. And he would win easily once they stopped resisting. They would collapse as if they no longer cared for anything.

Rui didn't understand what was happening. He only found it a little strange because he experienced something similar with Vranil. But he simply shrugged, maybe they just knew when to stop?

There were Martial Artists that fought bitterly to the very end and gave Rui one hell of a run till the very end. Their eyes burned with determination and perseverance even as Rui knocked them out.

At the end of the day. He was still the defending champion and had defeated every single fighter who had participated.

All of the guests were shocked as they witnessed Rui upending the Martial Games!

"Winner; Apprentice Falken. He is the current undefeated reigning champion!" The butler announced. "There are no more challengers!"

The guests applauded loudly at Rui's performance. Suddenly, a voice boomed from the crowd.

"No, not quite."

Charles DiVilier smiled as he drew everybody's attention to him. "Normally, I don't participate as one of major hosts of the Martial Games. But today is a special day, an old champion has come back to reclaim his rightful title and has done so undefeated. It would be interesting if he was met with a challenger qualified to fight him."

Rui's eyebrow rose at those words.

"My representative fight will be participating today." He said.

Suddenly a wave of silence overtook the guests, before they erupted in enthusiasm. They seemed familiar with the fighter.

Soon, Rui sensed a heavy presence entering the ring.

The man was tall, his body was chiseled like he had been sculpted by hand. What surprised Rui was that the man was also masked, just like himself.

He paused at a distance from Rui, at the starting position.

"Take your stances." The arbiter said.

The masked man took a neutral stance, and Rui followed suit.

There was an air of anticipation unlike any of his previous matches.

"Begin." The arbiter commenced the match.

Rui widened his eyes as the man appeared in front of him in an instant.

BOOM!

A powerful blow crashed into Rui as he hastily threw together a guard in time. The sheer impact of the blow sent him skidding away. He was shocked. The masked man was stronger than Kyrie was when she had held back, limiting herself.

An avalanche of pressure crashed onto Rui as the man had already appeared in front of him.

WHOOSH

Rui managed to evade his strike narrowly as he furiously started building the predictive model for this man.

('Who the fuck is this guy?') Rui gritted his teeth. ('Is he a Squire pretending to be a Martial Apprentice??')

The biggest problem with the pattern recognition systems of the VOID algorithm was that it required data, unlike the other systems in the VOID algorithm. Which meant it required time, which meant that he could not use it right off the bat. Which meant he was not at as strong as his peak.

POW POW POW!

Rui through a combo of strikes, but the masked man casually blocked them as he threw another strike at Rui.

BAM!

Rui skidded away.

What ensued was a dominant display of power. Just when the crowd thought Rui was a goner.

WHOOSH

BAM!

Rui cleanly evaded a strike, while he landed a powerful Flowing Canon on the man's gut, pushing him back.

Yet he didn't relent. He lashed after Rui once more, yet to his surprise, Rui calmly dealt with his attack rather well.

The two exchanged blow furiously as Rui began gaining perfect parity with the masked man. The crowd's eyes lit up in elation as they realized that Rui's fighting style had changed once more.

Rui had managed to perfect the prediction model just in time. Confidence filled every cell in his body as he went all-out trying to defeat his opponent. His opponent had superior parameters, but Rui's prediction and adaptive evolution allowed him to mitigate the advantage to a large degree.

However, his opponent was extremely efficient. He was also a tricky and tactical fighter that impressed Rui. He didn't fight head-on like a brute but instead fought cleverly, making the best of what he had.

POW!

Rui grimaced as he stepped back. ('He can extend his range!')

WHOOSH

Rui stepped back as he avoided another extended strike that stopped at a certain distance, failing to reach Rui. ('But there's a limit to his range extension.')

Yet when Rui stepped out of his range, trying to launch attacks from a distance with Tempestuous Ripple.

POW!

A powerful strike landed on him, despite the range, throwing him off-balance.

WHOOSH

The man instantly crossed the distance, launching a barrage of attacks on Rui, exploiting the opening created.

('He tricked me') Rui gritted his teeth. ('He fought with a shorter range because he knew I would make the wrong inference. He must have watched me fight all this time!')

BAM!

Rui leapt away from a strike as he opened up the distance between them, before winding up a strike. They both charged at each other, racing to land a strike first.

BAM!!!

Their attacks landed on the other's head.

THUD

They knocked each other away turning to face each other, only to realize that they had broken each other's masks.

## Chapter 326: Revelation

The masks that Martial Artists wore were not meant to protect their face or head, it was meant to protect their identity. Of course, Martial Apprentices got hit in the face and the head regularly thus the masks that Martial Apprentices wore were designed to survive the rigor of Apprentice-Realm combat. Of course, most masks needed heavy maintenance after rigorous extended combat.

Ordinary substances that couldn't withstand the rigors of Apprentice-Realm combat while the esoteric resources with the tensile strength to be able to completely endure Apprentice-Realm combat were strategic resources that also too scarce to be wasted on masks.

Thus, as well as masks were designed to survive and at the very least stay intact, when faced power and onslaught at effectively the pinnacle of the Apprentice Realm, they simply couldn't stay intact.

Rui hadn't even realized that his mask had fallen off until he felt the warm air make contact with his face.

Yet before he could even process his situation, his eyes fell on his opponent, who was in the same predicament.

Golden hair and golden eyes. Perfect, beautiful features.

The man looked like a prince.

Yet it wasn't his aesthetics that shocked Rui.

"You...!" He murmured in shock. Rui's mind flashed back nearly two years ago, back to his bodyguard mission in the Basara Mountains. He had fought a bandit group that was routinely ambushing and plundering supply convoys for high-grade esoteric resources.

The leader of the bandit group back then who had managed to escape was the very man before him.

Rui quickly contained his shock as much as he could, pretending it was his own mask slip he was shocked about. He didn't want the golden man to figure out he recognized his identity.



Meanwhile the crowd had grown extremely excited. The identity of not just one, but two of the strongest Martial Artists of the Martial Games had been revealed in one go.

Rui's features had instantly given him away. The crowd immediately his identity to the finalist of the Martial Contest.

"Hey, that black hair and eyes. That's that Apprentice Rui Quarrier fellow!"

"Wait, Lady Freier managed to rope in the finalist of the Martial Contest??"

Rui sighed. There was nothing he could do at this point. He had done his reasonable best hiding his identity.

At the very least, he wasn't nearly as concerned as he was when he first accepted the representative fighter commission from Nartha. Since then, his goodwill with the members of the Martial Games community had risen, if he was in bad blood with all of them, he would have been extremely concerned.

Furthermore, in the two months he had spent initially in the Martial Games, he had come to realize that basically nothing happened to the fighters commissioned for the Martial Games. Part of this was because no Martial Artist would ever participate in it if there was serious adverse risk to participating in the Martial Games.

Part of the reason was Charles DiVilier. Everyone knew the man loved Martial Art, he went out of his way to ensure that there were no disincentives and incentives. Nobody wanted to make any enemy of a man with the wealth, power and influence that he had.

So why was it this man's representative fighter was a bandit?

This raised huge red flags in Rui's mind. But for now, he kept things under a lid. He was enjoying the fight prior, but not he just felt wary. He glanced at Charles and saw the man was staring at him with a knowing smile. He didn't seem surprised at Rui's identity.

Both fighters immediately got their feet as they immediately took their stances against each other.

"It's very unfortunate that the fighters' masks have broken." Charles' voice boomed. "It would be unfair to expect them to continue when they were unable to conceal their identities the way they originally wanted to." He continued. "Here at the Martial Games we accommodate Martial Artists when and where we can. This match will be called off for today."

A wave of disappointment washed over the guests, but none of them dared raise an objection to his words.

Rui's eyebrows knitted at those words. His identity was already revealed, the mask or not, it didn't matter. Yet the fact that Charles insisted likely meant that the reason he wanted had nothing to do with Rui's identity.

Rui turned back to the blond man, scrutinizing him in suspicion.

Did Charles know who he was? Is that why he was stopping the match? He didn't want even the slightest chance of it being leaked that his representative was a prolific bandit that disrupted economy of the town of Hajin and no doubted affected several of the guests and members of the Martial Games?

Rui didn't know for sure. He turned back to the blond man, who was turning around to leave.

"Hey." Rui called out.

The man paused. Meeting Rui's gaze from the edge of the field of his vision.

"I'm Rui Quarrier." Rui told him. "May I have the honour of knowing your name?"

He stared at Rui for a few seconds before turning around wordlessly and leaving.

('So he won't bite.') Rui mused.

He sighed. There wasn't anything he could do about it frankly. And at the end of the day, he wasn't sure he wanted to do anything about it.

He was quite shocked to see the man here, and he was wary and suspicious of Charles. But that was it. The culture of the Martial Games had become a lot more transparent to Rui and this event didn't really matter all that much.

He would still participate in the Martial Contest every time he wanted to test his prowess against a diverse set of Martial Artists in a serious competitive match.

Soon the matches had ended since there weren't any fighters left challenge Rui. And the guests mingled with each other freely.

Rui had been bombarded with praises and admiration from many of the guests who had personally taken an interest in the Martial Contest. The reputation that Apprentice Falken had built from scratch in the Martial Games community overlapped with the fame that Rui had acquired in the Martial Contest. His image rose in their minds as many of the guests cozied up to him, trying to get him retain them as clientele.

Rui sighed.

Chapter 327: Disadvantages

"Apprentice Quarrier." Charles DiVillier addressed him at one point.

"Lord Divilier." Rui bowed, expressing goodwill.

"It is truly unfortunate that your identity was revealed in the manner that it was." Charles DiVillier sighed, shaking his head. "Unfortunately, these things happen. Though I daresay this hasn't yielded any negative consequences."

"It seems that way." Rui replied perfunctorily.

"By the way." Charles smiled. "I recall commissioning you for your unique Martial Art, in vain unfortunately. However, after witnessing your remarkable growth since the Martial Contest, I wish to extend my offer to you. Join the DiVillier Family." He said. "You will find it to be worth your time"

The guests who were listening to the conversation widened their eyes at his words.

However, Rui shook his head at those words. "I already have a family. I'm afraid I will have to decline your offer."

"It's a pity I cannot acquire you." Charles DiVilier sighed, almost speaking of Rui as an object. "However, if you ever do reconsider, I'll always be more than willing to accommodate a Martial Artist of your calibre."

"Thank you." Rui replied, ending their conversation. He didn't want to interact with Charles, especially after he learnt of the identity of his fighter.

The guests interacted and socialized with themselves, while the fighters interacted with each other. Rui walked over to the Martial Apprentices present in the room after he managed to pry himself from the guest members. He wasn't particularly interested in befriending them or anything of the matter. It was just that Martial Artists were more interesting to interact with.

Furthermore, he was only really interested in interacting with a single Martial Artist at the moment.

"Hey." Rui said to Fernan, having approached him. "Hope you're doing fine."

"Potions healed me up just fine." Fernan didn't seem to mind talking to him despite having lost his position as defending champion to Rui just a few hours prior.

"Your Martial Art is really interesting, I wanted to learn more about it." Rui admitted. "What is the name of your Martial Art?"

"I call it the Bestial Rage Style." Fernan replied.

"Interesting..." Rui eyes lit up with interest. ('So it has enough individuality to be named.')

"Your Martial Art is fascinating to me." Rui told him. "I'd never heard or even seen of symbiotic Martial Art techniques before, they're truly powerful. Can you tell me more about them?"

Fernan seemed to appreciate the interest in his Martial Art. "Most people are disgusted by them, not to mention afraid."

Rui shrugged. "Anything that can help me walk down my Martial Path by strengthening my Martial Art as it is, is worth my interest. Aesthetics or other sensibilities don't matter."

Ferna's eyes lit up at that response. "That's the right attitude to have. I commend you for being this mature despite your youth."

"Thank you."

"As for Symbiotic Martial Art techniques..." he began. "They're quite the niche field. However, it is my Martial Path. When I first learnt of these techniques in the Exploration Stage and tested my affinity with them. I just knew I had to master them, that was when I discovered my Martial Path."

"How did you test your affinity with them?"

"That can be measured with how well you're able to engage in symbiosis." Fernan replied. "The implantation of the symbiotes are not the techniques themselves. The Martial Art techniques one performs with symbiosis with an implanted symbiote are what're known as Symbiosis Martial Art techniques."

"I see..." Rui grew engrossed.

"Are you interested in learning symbiosis techniques?" Fernan asked hopefully.

Rui nodded. "I suspect I may have a decent amount of compatibility with them, to the point where it would be foolish of me to ignore them. Thus, I wanted to learn more about them. What kinds of Symbiosis techniques exist?"

"Oh, all kinds." Fernan said. "There are different species of symbiotes capable of doing different things. They're generally categorized by whether the utility they provide is extrinsic or intrinsic. Extrinsic symbiotes usually manifest something on the body, much like these arms and wings of mine. While intrinsic symbiotes manifest inside the body. They usually boost existing metabolic function or provide for metabolic functions that the user didn't have prior."

"Symbiosis techniques come after implanting a symbiote." He continued. "The quality of your techniques depends on the symbiotes available. Higher-grade symbiotes will generally have more powerful techniques for the same amount of difficulty."

"Wait." Rui frowned. "Symbiotes have grades?"

"Of course, they do." Fernan replied. "My dark eagle symbiote is a grade eight Symbiote, my arm-raiser symbiote is a grade-seven symbiote. I even have a few lower-grade intrinsic symbiotes."

Rui's eyes lit up in interest. He was much more interested in intrinsic symbiotes than he was extrinsic symbiotes. He didn't want any physiological growth of appendages on his body like extra arms or wings. He wanted something complimented his current power and potential, not something that aimed to usurp it.

"What are the shortcomings and drawbacks of symbiotic Martial Art?" Rui asked. He had already figured a lot of the answer but he wanted to confirm it with an actual expert.

"There's risks, conditions and constraints." He sighed. "That's one of the reasons symbiosis Martial Art techniques haven't taken off, there's so many disadvantages that other fields of Martial Art simply do not have. The risks include possibility of brain damage if you overburden your mental capacity since most symbiotes used in Symbiosis Martial Art techniques form neural links with the brain, weakness due to overburdening your stamina. Furthermore, each symbiote has their own additional risks specific to them that need to be accounted for. The difficulty of mastery is also greater because you need to develop basic proficiency and coordination with symbiotes."

Rui nodded. With all these disadvantages along with the instinctive fear disgust of putting a strange disgusting creature inside your body and connected with your mind was likely the reason that symbiosis Martial Art had not taken off.

"What are the advantages of symbiosis techniques?"

Fernan smirked. "I'm glad you asked."

Chapter 328: Martial Commission

"There are solid advantages to symbiotic Martial Art." Fernan explained. "For one, it's easier to master powerful techniques once you obtain basic mastery of the symbiote."

Rui raised an eyebrow at those words, waiting for him to continue.

"There are symbiotic techniques with grade-ten potency but only grade-nine or sometimes even grade-eight difficulty!" He said, grinning smugly.

Rui's eyes widened at those words. Grade-ten potency techniques like God Speed, Void Step, All-Seeing Eye and Heart Permeation were all extraordinarily potent techniques with extraordinary difficulty. They could not be mastered without extreme talent, high affinity and immense amount effort. All of the grade-ten potency techniques that Rui had come across in the Apprentice library also had grade-ten difficulty. All grade-ten techniques were grade-ten in both power and difficulty

However, Fernan just told him that it was possible to obtain grade-ten potency techniques with lower difficult grades in symbiosis Martial Art!

Meaning it was possible to obtain that absurd power with significantly lower difficulty.

"That's... impressive." Rui admitted.

"Indeed." Fernan replied. "There're also other advantages like a greater diversity of utility. Surpassing your biological limits gives you options to do things that would be unfathomable otherwise."

Rui nodded. Flying with wings was one of them. He wondered how fast Fernan would become if he ever became a Squire, Martial Squires had all reached a level where they could propel themselves by simply stepping on air. Surely someone with wings would be able to do far more.

These two advantages alone were worth looking into symbiosis Martial Art when he had the time.

('Next training session for sure.') He noted, excited.

He didn't know what kind of symbiotic Martial Art technique he would pick, if he would even end up choosing one in the first place.

The two chatted for some time more until the event finally ended and guests and their representative fighters dispersed and returned.

Rui returned the Martial Academy that day, deep in thought. He had many things to consider. His most immediate goal was fulfilling the conditions of Squire candidacy. Missions helped him stabilize his growth so that he could bolster the new techniques he learnt with real combat experience rather than mediocre sparring experience he would have if cooped himself in the Martial Academy. It was also one of the reasons the Martial Academy had the learner's license provision.

It was so that Martial Apprentices could go out in the real world and understand where their true combat prowess and competence laid.

Rui could feel that he had grown just a bit stronger in the span of a week since he came out of training. Purely because he had grown more and more comfortable and familiar with his own strength. He wouldn't mind continuing missions until he felt himself stagnating.

However, he had an instinctive feeling that he was close to achieving Squire candidacy, just one last step away. When he had come out of training, he wasn't sure whether his Martial Art had achieved maturity or not. He was told he would be certain of it one day, but after the recent bit of experience he had



accumulated, he could feel his Flowing Void Style only needed a bit more of growth before it reached maturity.

('Probably just one last training stage.') Rui mused to himself.

That was why he needed to have serious considerations about the notion of mastering symbiosis techniques in his next training stage. It would be quite crucial. Was it wise to try and delve into an exotic field like symbiotic Martial Art?

Rui wasn't sure.

Thankfully, he still had some time. He wanted to enrich his experience and ensure his master over his current power had peaked. Not just in a sparring scenario, but in real combat as well.

When he returned, he had wanted immediately to jump into another mission, when he suddenly found Kane running up to him.

"Hey Rui, where you've been?" He asked hurriedly.

"Just came back from a mission, about pick another, why?"

"Well, you don't need to pick another." Kane shook his head. "It's been picked for you.

Rui's eyebrow lifted. "A mandatory mission from the Royal Kandrian government?"

Kane shook his head. "Not the government, the Martial Union itself."

"How do you know of this?" Rui frowned.

"Because you're not the only one who was picked." Kane replied.

"You too?"

"And Fae, Nel and Hever."

Rui frowned. "A mission involving the top five Martial Apprentices of the Martial Academy? What kind of mission is it?"

"Don't know yet." Kane sighed. "The mission breakdown will apparently occur at the Martial Union headquarters by an official Martial commissioner."

Rui's eyes widened at those words. The fact that the mission was being personally delivered at the Martial Union by a Martial commissioner meant that it was likely quite a lot more important to the Kandrian Martial Union than just standard mission. That also reflected in the Martial Artists that were chosen to undertake the mission.

"Well, let's go then." Rui urged.

The two boys immediately met up with the other five and they all dispersed for the Martial Union Hajin branch headquarters.

"What do you think the mission is about?" Fae wondered.

"Hard to say." Hever replied. "I've never been commissioned by the Martial Union itself."

"It's definitely a mission that affects the interests of the Martial Union itself." Rui murmured thoughtfully. "However, they commissioned Martial Apprentices. Even if it's distinguished Martial Apprentices like us, it means that the difficulty of the mission does not exceed the Apprentice-Realm, that's for sure."

He paused before continuing. "The fact they're hiring Martial Artists at all means that there's a conflict of interests that is affecting the interests of the Martial Union. That actually limits the possibilities by a lot. For starters, it's not a hunting mission, those are commissioned by the Ministry of Environment and

Ecology. It's not primarily a covert mission, only Kane here is suited for high-grade shadow-class missions. That leaves offense-class and defense-class missions, maybe some weird miscellaneous mission. As well."

"So basically, we're going to be protecting somebody or attacking somebody." Kane concluded.

### Chapter 329: Commissioned

The Martial Academy gave an impression of wealth and prestige, it was quite ostentatious and large. Yet it stood in sharp to the Martial Union headquarters. The Martial Union headquarters had a no-nonsense militaristic approach to its structure. Rui could feel that it was designed for absolutely efficiency without even the slightest care for aesthetics.

All major and semi-major towns had a branch of the Martial Union in them, and the town of Hajin was no different. It wasn't even all too far from the Martial Academy, thankfully.

They'd soon arrived and immediately headed inside towards the commission department of the Martial Union.

"Please wait in office Three-twelve." The staff member said. "Commissioner Frelmaunt will join you and begin the briefing as soon as possible."

The briefing room was a lot more earthlike than Rui had more expected, then again there were only so many ways to make a briefing room.

"Booooring!" Nel sunk in a chair. "This is boring! I'm going back."

"That's a bad idea." Kane told him. "The royalty contract we signed specified an agreement to mandatorily accepting at a certain frequency annually."

"Screw that!" Nel spat, standing up. "I'm going back to the Academy and fighting strong Apprentices."

"There are no Martial Apprentices left that are strong enough to fight you either." Rui pointed out. "The only ones from the Academy who can are all sitting in this room. Do you want to fight weak Martial Apprentice you already beat?"

"Tsk!" He tutted as he slumped back into his chair. "UuuUurrgh! Hurry up already."

"Be patient you child." Kane glared at him.

Fae through him an amused look as she scoffed.

Kane turned towards her. "What?"

"My, nothing at all." She shrugged.

Kane knitted his eyebrows. "That didn't feel like nothing at all."

"You're overthinking."

"Am I?"

"You are."

Rui sighed, exasperated as the exchange continued. Fae's and Kane's ability to bicker over literally nothing was truly something to marvel at.

('We're so far away from anything resembling a team.') Rui sighed inwardly. ('Let's hope this mission isn't too demanding on coordination and cooperation.')

Finally, the door opened.

A man in a suit-like garb with the emblem of the Martial Union walked in.

"Sorry for the delay." He said as he walked into the room with a box files. "Apprentices Rui Quarrier, Fae Dullahan, Kane Arrancar, Nel, and Hever Mendelieve?"

"Yes sir." They all affirmed.

He nodded, taking the files and distributing them to each of the Martial Union.

"The mission that you're all going to be commissioned to complete is an offense-class mission." He told them "Naturally, this means it's an international mission. The target of the mission is a research facility in the Commonwealth Duchy of Vinfarna. One of the smallest sovereign states that orbits the Kandrian Empire. Your goal is to kill all of the researchers of the research facility and extract all the research data that of the research facility and bring it back to the Kandrian Empire."

Rui frowned. He didn't expect a research facility in a foreign nation to be the target of the mission.

"The research facility's existence is classified information of the Commonwealth Duchy of Vinfarna. It's built and located far and away from the populace and even underground in order to conceal its existence." Commissioner Frelmaunt told them. "The intelligence provided by the Martial Union covers rather extensive data on the research facility. Our spies have managed to acquire general intel on its structure, security measures as well as the location of the desired target. After carefully evaluating all this information, the difficulty of this mission has been evaluated as among the highest even in the grade-ten range, requiring atleast one grade-ten Martial Apprentice and four other Martial Apprentices above grade-eight."

He paused before continuing. "Of those four, we have evaluated the need of atleast one Martial Apprentice with high offensive power and one Martial Apprentice with high stealth capabilities. The sensory prowess of the team cannot dip below a certain threshold as well."

"To reiterate, your mission has two objectives. The first objective is to ensure the deaths of all researchers of the underground facility. All of them. Not a single one may leave. This is of absolute paramount importance. Failure to complete this objective will be considered a complete failure for the mission. The second objective is to acquire all the research data of the facility. The means of which is detailed in the mission bill." He spoke. "The mission commences immediately, once you're done being

briefed, you'll immediately head to the dispatch facility where you'll immediately travel to Vinfarna on foot. The successful remuneration is a six hundred gold in total."

Rui's eyes widened. That was twenty times his remuneration from his Ruyloken Gang mission. The sheer amount of money the Martial Union was willing to fork over for this one mission was astounding.

"That covers the most significant parts of the mission. The less significant but important details are all thoroughly detailed in the mission bill. Be sure to memorize it." The man told them.

"Ah." He suddenly remembered something. "The native language and script of the Commonwealth Duchy of Vinfrana is Vinfranese. The mission includes a length list of Vinfranese words and phrases that need to be memorized."

"Ideally, all of you ought to memorize it." He told them. "But at the very least, one of you needs to memorize it."

Rui skimmed through the mission bill as he quickly inputted and stored them in his mind palace.

"Ah, one more thing." He said, turning to Rui. "You, Apprentice Quarrier, will lead the mission, clear?"

None of them were surprised by that. Rui was more or less the strongest, and he was absolutely the smartest.

Rui nodded in response. "Yes sir."

"Good. Memorize the mission bill inside out and once you're done, proceed with the necessary protocols and head out. If you need any further clarification, you may consult me in the commissioner department."

"Excuse me." Rui interrupted his departure. "Is it possible to know why the mission is being commissioned?"

The man stared at Rui thoughtfully. "Well, if you have to know, it's because the research facility has engaged in gross violation of human rights. The Martial Union cannot tolerate it, simple as that."

He said, leaving.

### Chapter 330: Speculation

Rui's eyes narrowed at those words. ('Does he think we're idiots? That's absolute nonsense and everyone knows it.')

The part of the human rights violation was actually true. It was even detailed in the mission bill. The research facility was mass experimenting on human beings relentlessly. The Commonwealth Duchy of Vinfarna used prisoners as test subjects for research and development and the mission detailed how hundreds of bodies were disposed by the research facility every month.

Still, Rui wasn't a fool.

The Martial Union was not a humanitarian or a philanthropic organization. It was an organization that thrived and flourished on human conflict and suffering.

Would such an organization give even the slightest bit of a fuck of human rights violations in another sovereign nation? That too a small nation with no bargaining power with the Kandrian Empire?

('The answer is obvious not.')

Rui mused.

The true goal of the mission likely was the research data. Rui had figured this out the very instant Frelmaunt had laid out the objectives of the mission.

What Rui didn't understand was why Frelmaunt stressed on the first objective of eliminating all inhabitants of the Martial Union instead of research data acquisition.

In fact, wasn't eliminating all researchers a bad idea?

If the Martial union secretly stole all the data and allowed the research to continue, wouldn't it gain even more research data in the future that it could steal once more.

Wasn't that ultimately more productive?

('If they had decided to send someone like Kane once a year to use Void Step to secretly infiltrate the research facility, steal all the data, then they would end up with much more research data in the long run.') Rui noted. ('Why not go for something like that?')

There was only one conclusion.

The Martial Union strongly wanted the research to not continue.

('Which means the disincentives and detriments of letting the research continue surpass the benefits of letting it continue.') Rui concluded. ('But why would that be?')

Information by itself did not hurt anybody.

('It's not the information, it's who has it.') Rui realized.

The Martial Union did not want the Commonwealth Duchy of Vinfarna to possess the data obtained from the research projects being conducted in the research facility.

This was understandable, of course. Research and development were the cornerstones of civilization and could singlehandedly benefit a country enormously. It was understandable for the Martial Union to want to prevent other nations on getting their hands on a lot of it.

('The fact that the Martial Union is involved means that it's related to Martial Art and not conventional technology.') Rui mused.



The Martial Union did not engage in research of conventional esoteric technology, as far as he knew. If the Vinfarna research facility was engaging in normal esoteric technology research, the Martial Union would likely not bother. The Royal Family would be the one to interfere if that was the case.

This was also supported by the fact that they were experimenting on humans.

('It's quite likely that this research is something that threatens the overwhelming power dynamic advantage that the Kandrian Empire possess over the Commonwealth Duchy of Vinfrana.') Rui mused.

However, he couldn't understand what that could be. It was unlikely that this research wasn't something that the Martial Union had already possessed. Rui was aware of how much the Martial Union invested in the research of Martial Art. The research budgets were large enough for the entire organization to form Martial factions on how the gigantic research budget ought to be allocated.

Rui highly doubted that the Commonwealth Duchy of Vinfrana could match the Martial Union's frightening Martial Art research.

('If the Martial Union already possesses the research data that the Vinfrana research facility has, then it means that the research data is important enough that the Martial Union simply cannot tolerate the state of Vinfrana gaining access it.') Rui deduced.

That made the chances that the research was based on techniques alone to be quite low. A handful of techniques alone would not matter to the Martial Union. All nations developed Martial Art techniques, the cost it took to prevent that was not worth the benefits gained.

If it wasn't techniques that were being researched, then what was it?

Rui was quite curious. Unfortunately, the mission bill did not specify the research that was actually being conducted in the research facility. Which likely meant that Martial Apprentices like themselves had too low of a clearance level to have access to information of this sort.

Still Rui had several of his own suspicions that he put aside for now. The mission was more important. He began scrolling through the data on the research facility provided by the mission bill.

The research facility wasn't small, it was circular and had a diameter of more than a kilometer. The general area of the secret entrances was known; however, the exact locations weren't deduced. Rui immediately realized that this was one of the reasons he was picked for this mission. With Seismic Mapping, he had the ability to detect underground anomalies within a certain depth limit. Unless he was way too far, he should be able to detect one of the entrances of the research facility.

Funnily enough, the mission bill had intel on the general structure of the research facility but not on the location of the entrances.

Thankfully, the security measures weren't beyond their ability. It wasn't that the research facility wasn't important enough to be given higher security, it's just that the Vinfranan government couldn't afford to provide it more security.

Among all the smaller nations, the Commonwealth Duchy of the Vinfrana was most deprived of Martial Artists due to the larger nations. It had had a weaker Martial Art foundation than even a state for its size, and Kandrian Empire had ruthlessly stripped away all of its Martial Artists by attracting them over with the rich and immense learning and growth resources that it had to offer.

It was to the point that the Commonwealth Duchy of Vinfrana was left with nothing but Martial Apprentices!