

## **Martial Unity 461**

### Chapter 461: Shift

Pain was all he could feel, and his sense of surroundings began disappearing, however, that wasn't all.

He didn't know how much time had passed within the apotheosis chamber. Any number of seconds, minutes hours, or even days could have passed. There was no source of light within the apotheosis chamber, after all. There was nothing that moved that could indicate the passage of time.

He had earlier relied on his own heartbeat, but now he was consumed in too much pain for him to be able to focus on his sense of hearing.

Suddenly, a change occurred.

His pain localized to his skin and flesh, the portions of his body that it was spread across had reduced, but the intensity of the pain had risen.

"AAAARRRRRRGHGHRGRHRGR!!" Rui screeched in pain as his brain and mind reeled at the sheer intensity of the influx of pain that was hitting him. The pain this procedure was inflicting on him was hitting the limits of the possible amount of pain that could be felt from a single organ.

He soon realized he had underestimated the sheer amount of agony this procedure would be subjected to.

Of course, this might have sounded stupid in hindsight. He already knew full well how the evolution process worked. It should have been obvious to him that he would feel this kind of pain. But it was difficult to understand beforehand just how much pain the process would inflict on him. It was one thing to understand theoretically that he would feel excruciating pain he had never felt before, it was another thing to be able to actually understand how much the pain was and how it would feel.

He felt like his nervous system was burning. Each of his nerves was firing an enormous amount of pain signals all the way to his brain. He felt as though they were being overburdened by the sheer amount of nervous signals that were firing back and forth.

An unknown amount of time passed, and eventually, the pain began shifting inwards.

Amidst all the pain, Rui still managed to comprehend what was happening. He knew that the evolution process did not happen to all cells all at once. Instead, the evolution process focused on one system of cells and organs within the body at a time.

From what Rui was able to piece together despite all the pain, they were definitely focusing the evolution process on his skin and outer flesh, and now they were focusing on inner organs.

"AAAARRRGHR!" He screamed in pain, as his muscles stiffened, experiencing a wave of agony. Every single muscle group felt like they were on fire. Rui struggled continuously, yet the apotheosis chamber withstood every ounce of his power without so much as budging. It was a chamber meant to contain Squire candidates after all.

His muscles burned endlessly. Rui could almost feel muscle fibers in each muscle dying as the surviving muscle fibers began reproducing and new muscle fibers took the places of the old ones.

Despite all the pain, he felt a surge of power, unlike anything he had ever felt before. His muscles were brimming with energy beyond his limits!

With every second, his muscles left human limits as they slowly and steadily ascended to the Squire Realm, step by step.

Despite the agony, he was submerged in. He could instinctively feel him stepping away from ordinary humanity as he, for the very first time, ascended to a higher level.

The pain was horrific, yet he could also feel it filtering out the weaker and sub-optimal flesh of his body. Anything that remained was among the best of the best, and it only get better and better thanks to the radiation he was being subjected to that caused mild mutations in every new generation of cells, some good and some bad.

The bad ones perished quickly while the good ones survived and reproduced.

Rui could almost feel this process happening as the waves of pain he was suffering indicated the timing of the filtration processes that were being subjected to his muscle groups that filtered out genetically superior cells. He knew that each time he felt a wave of pain, his muscle groups had grown a bit stronger.

After a long time, the pain shifted away from his muscles as they moved to his bones.

"AAAAAARRRGRGRRGRH!" He screamed in pain, as sharp and piercing pains afflicted every ounce of his bone. Although the actual calcium of the bones was not living, the many nerves that dug around in the bone made it feel like the bone itself could experience pain.

He felt as though his bones were melting away. He could feel clear alterations to their mass, abrupt reductions, and increments in their structure.

He could feel them growing denser and heavier with every wave of pain. Bones were comprised of soft bone which was quite porous and hard bone which was completely solid, his bones were gaining more of the latter.

The evolution of bones was a bit more complicated than that of cells. The cells that produced bone were undergoing evolution, however, that wasn't enough. The existing bones were formed by normal skeletal stem cells, they were too weak. Thus, the procedure involved breaking down the old bone and replacing it with bone formed from the evolved skeletal stem cells. The bone formed by the evolved skeletal stem cells was much denser and harder, allowing it to withstand a tremendous amount of stress. Without this, the power exerted by the evolved muscle groups would be too much for the bones and they would break down under the stress of his own evolved power.

With the evolved bones, he would be able to all out, as far as exertion went, without having to worry about his skeletal structure crumbling under the burden of his power.

Time passed. Just as he was finally getting used to the pain in his bones, it shifted once more, causing immense agony in another part of his body.

## Chapter 462: Final step

An eternity of agony passed on. Rui had no idea how much time had passed since the commencement of the evolution procedure. His internal clock had completely been shot thanks to all the pain, and even metabolic phenomena were no longer reliable because of how much his body was rapidly changing. Due to that, things like hunger and thirst were no longer reliable indicators of how much time had passed since he had consumed any food.

The procedure didn't have a defined time limit. This was because everybody had different physiologies and metabolisms that caused the procedure to require different amounts of time to complete successfully.

The psychological effect this had on him along with the pain was not light. It placed an immense burden on his psyche. It wasn't easy maintaining absolute mental fortitude in the face of an unknown amount of agony. This was despite his superhuman mental fortitude by virtue of his mind growing twice and him being a Martial Apprentice. He felt as though if he was an ordinary person he would have lost his mind by now, or at the very least be afflicted with severe PTSD

He gritted his teeth as the pain shifted to different parts of his body within him over long periods of time. He could even vaguely sense which parts of his body were undergoing the evolution process. After the evolution process was done with his bones, they moved on toward his abdomen.

('My digestive system?') He wondered, through the pain.

He knew that the process acted system by system. If the pain was inside his abdomen, then there were a limited number of options it could be. By narrowing down all the possibilities, by eliminating possible systems that didn't match up with the place he was experiencing pain in, he could more or less figure out which parts of his body were undergoing the evolution process at any given time.

He gasped as his throat felt like it was burning. He felt like he had gotten the worst sinus infection that could possibly afflict a human body. Every second, he was in absolute agony, struggling to breathe as he felt like he drunk a glass full of concentrated acid.

Thankfully, his lungs and trachea were perfectly functional, otherwise, he would be completely unable to breathe at all.

Time passed on and on, as he gritted his teeth, keeping track of the pain as it shifted after long periods of evolution.

From the digestive system to the circulatory system. His very veins and arteries underwent slow and delicate evolution. The process had to be deliberately slow, otherwise, the system would take too much damage and he would die. Blood supplied oxygen and the necessary nutrients to every cell, without which cells would begin dying within a minute.

The pain didn't spread across all veins and arteries at once. Instead, it focused on one section of the circulatory system at a time. This made it easier to lower the risk of death during the procedure. The circulatory system was one of the most vital systems of the human body.

The pain traveled across his body step by step. Despite being focused, the net agony he experienced wasn't less. If anything, it was even worse. The fact that it was hyper-focused merely meant that the pain was hyper intense.

He would rather have a little less intense agony spread across his body than an abysmal amount of pain coming from a singular location.

An unknown amount of time passed and the pain shifted from his circulatory system to the left side of his chest.

"AAAAAAAAAARRGGHRGRH!" He bellowed in pain as he felt his heart melting. He didn't even need to employ any amount of deductive reasoning to know exactly what part of his body was undergoing the evolution process.

His heart.

Or more accurately, his cardiovascular system.

Had Rui not been under a tremendous amount of pain, he would have wondered whether the filtration processes for the circulatory system were the same as the ones for the cardiovascular system. After all, the two systems were so intricately connected. He had no idea whether the two were even considered to be distinct in the field of biology of Gaea.

An enormous amount of time passed as the remaining systems also evolved over a long period. The renal system, the endocrine system, the lymphatic system, and the exocrine systems quickly followed suit.

One by one, they all evolved one after the other.

Until only one organ was left.

The brain.

Or in Rui's case, the brains.

Rui certainly pondered how the process of evolution would be affected by the fact that he has the Mindmirror Symbiote inside his skull. Thankfully, Squire Gunther had touched up on it. Symbiotes had an extreme amount of survivability, thus they were rarely in danger of dying due to the evolution process, which would affect the DNA of the Mindmirror Symbiote.

Thankfully, the Martial Union had made it a rule to develop the evolution process for each of the symbiotes that it offered to its Martial Apprentices, based on its DNA.

Thus, each of the symbiotes had its own customized evolution process. This included the Mindmirror Symbiote. Rui would be the first Martial Apprentice to be undergoing the procedure of the evolution of the Mindmirror Symbiote.

This had been a little scary but at the end of the day. There was nothing he could do about it. All he had to do was wait and have faith in the high competence of the researchers and doctors of the Martial Union.

However, he had counted down and kept track of all the bodily systems that had evolved, and he knew that the most difficult part of the procedure was here.

The evolution of the brain.

This part of the procedure was the reason that normal humans couldn't be evolved. Only the brain of a Squire candidate could possibly survive the procedure and ascend to a higher form of life. And he would be taking that final step now.

#### Chapter 463: Path

It came sooner than he had expected. Yet, the transition took its time.

The pain disappeared.

Rui gasped in relief. He had almost forgotten what it was like to not feel pain. Pain had been his only reality for extensive periods of time, more time than he knew. He clenched his fist as raw power coursed through his muscles. He felt invincible.

Yet, he grimaced.

('My brain... My mind... This body is too much for them as they are right now.') He winced as flashes of pain coursed through his head.

This pain was not from the evolution procedure, it was pain from his brain straining.

The human brain had limits to the amount of information it could receive an influx of from the senses. Normally, the human body did not exceed the limit, thus the brain was never strained. However, due to the evolved nervous system and the evolved sensory organs, the influx of information that his brain was receiving had risen tremendously, beyond its ordinary limits.

That was what was causing his momentary pain.

This was the reason that it was impossible for normal humans to simply avoid brain evolution. It was not possible to evolve the rest of the body without evolving the brain. The brain would quickly be overwhelmed.

In fact, Rui was certain that had he not been a Martial Apprentice or reincarnated man, his brain would have already begun suffering seizures and strokes due to the overwhelming influx of information.

Just as he tried exploring the new sensations of his new body. The world disappeared once more.

He could feel nothing.

All that was there was an infinite void.

Soon, even that void was swept away as he reached a familiar place.

('These are my memories...') He looked around as strange visions of memories of two lifetimes flashed before his eyes. He recalled going through something similar in the implantation process of the Mindmirror Symbiote.

It was peaceful and blissful, especially in comparison to what he had gone through prior.

Just as he was beginning to forget that this part of the procedure was supposed to be the hardest, he was reminded of it.

The world inside his mind shook. A strange force struck it, causing it to rumble.

Yet, it wasn't done.

He watched in horror as his memories began crumbling bit by bit. Breaking down to bits as they were destroyed by a mysterious outside force.

A wave of destruction spread through his mind world, destroying everything in sight. He watched helplessly as the countless memories and experiences he had forged across two lifetimes began crumbling to dust.



('NO!') His eyes widened as he watched his Mind Palace break down in the distance. It held strong initially, resisting the destruction. The Mind Palace was a technique that had been enhanced by the Mindmirror brain, giving it greater resilience.

Yet in the face of evolution breakthrough, it eventually crumbled as well.

Everything broke down.

Too much had broken down.

His anguish was replaced by confusion as his memories were scattered.

('Who... am I?') He wondered, uncertain. He knew nothing anymore. Nothing of who he was, where and when he was, or why and how he was.

He looked around. ('Everything... is gone.')

The wave of destruction had rippled through the entirety of his Mind world.

Suddenly, his eyes caught something in the distance. Something that was resisting destruction. It held strong. Waves of destruction crashed into it over and over again, yet it remained unfazed. It was the only thing so far that had successfully survived the assault of destruction.

('What... is that?')

It was a path.

To his shock, it was a path he was standing on.

It extended far beyond the depths of his perception. A path that elevated towards the heavens above growing in height the further it extended.

It was a path that no one else was on.

It was a calamitous path that wound through all kinds of disasters and dangers.

Ferocious beasts of various shapes and sizes.

Earthquakes

Volcanoes.

Tsunamis.

Meteorites.

It was a terrifying path.

Yet as terrifying as it was, it was even more beautiful.

It inspired fear.

Yet, it also inspired awe.

The path called out to him. Lulling him. Whispering to him.

It was a path he wanted to walk down.

The waves of destruction crashed harmlessly against the path, unable to put so much as a dent in it.

It protected Rui from the destruction, it was the sole reason that he, his consciousness, had not been annihilated by the waves of destruction.

He had lost almost all of his memories. He was beset by fear, anguish, and confusion.

Yet despite everything, an epiphany thundered in his mind.

('This... is my Martial Path...') He realized.

It was his consciousness's interpretation of it. A beautiful path that he wanted, but fraught with danger and risk.

At that moment, the wave of destruction retreated.

To his surprise, the fragmented memories pieced themselves back together, one by one. With each step the wave took back, a memory was restored.

His eyes widened as he regained the tiniest of motes of his memories every moment.

('John Falken... Rui Quarrier...') He remembered.

Recognition dawned on his every moment.

It was only after what seemed like an eternity, the wave of destruction had completely retreated. Everything had returned to how it was previously.

('No... That's not quite right.') He realized. ('It's... stronger. Greater. Larger.')

His mind had grown sturdier. Almost as if what didn't kill him only made him stronger.

('Was all of this my subconscious mind's interpretation of the evolution process to the Squire Realm?')  
He wondered.

If that were the case, then it could only mean one thing.

He opened his eyes as he regained his physical senses.

Raw energy coursed through his veins. Raw power brimmed in his muscles. An otherworldly amount of awareness and clarity consumed his mind.

He didn't even need the doctors to verify it.

He knew it from the bottom of his heart.

He had ascended to a higher Realm of power.

Chapter 464: Next

Rui suppressed the urge to break out of the apotheosis chamber with his newfound power. He wondered if the chamber was built to withstand the kind of power he would unleash when he used Outer Convergence and Flame Breathing.

Even if his current body was out of sync with the Apprentice-level bodies, the sheer amount of power he was capable of unleashing was beyond anything he had ever been capable of in the past. However, he didn't want to damage the property of the Martial Union needlessly, of course. Besides, he did not know if the procedure was medically completed.

He sat put for some time, in the darkness of the apotheosis chamber, until eventually, he heard Doctor Menun's voice through the fluid.

"Squire Quarrier." She addressed him. "I'm pleased to inform you that the procedure has been completed. Congratulations."

Suddenly, the liquid in the apotheosis began draining. His body slowly lowered as he eventually hit the base.

The breathing masks detached from his face as they retreated back into the hatch they came from.

Soon, the top of the apotheosis chamber opened. Rui squinted in pain as the light from the outside blinded him. Having spent a long time in pure darkness, the sudden exposure to light was overwhelming. Thankfully, his other senses were sharp enough to allow him to perceive his environment. He perceived the team of medical staff that had been overseeing his procedure.

"Squire Quarrier." Doctor Menun approached him. "How do you feel?"

"Amazing," Rui replied, before frowning.

His body had changed so much that even talking felt incredibly strange.

However, his words were true.

He felt like he was in paradise. Not because his condition was particularly comfortable normally. But because he was no longer in physical pain. This alone made his current physical state feel like heaven.

"The procedure has been completed successfully. An extraction team is already en route here, they will aid you in exiting the apotheosis chamber." Doctor Menun told him.

The reason he couldn't be released then and there was because his control over his body was highly impeded, one wrong move and he could unintentionally massacre all of the medical staff in the vicinity. That was why the protocols involved a separate team that was qualified to handle newly ascended Martial Squires safely.

Rui nodded. "Thank you, doctor. Thank all of you."

He offered his gratitude to the entire team of medical professionals.

"Not at all, young man." Doctor Menun replied. "We'll be extracting some blood in order to verify that there aren't any unseen anomalies."

A syringe pierced his arm, extracting blood.

The medical team soon bade him goodbye as they left the facility. Soon, two people entered, made their way toward him.

They didn't even bother hiding their Squire-level auras.

"Squire Quarrier." One of them addressed him. "I'm Squire Ferin and this is Squire Gerd. I will be aiding you to your assigned quarters. I will also be aiding you in the rehabilitation process along with my colleagues."

Rui turned towards them. The two of them were old, with black and white hair and wrinkles on their skin. They had an edge to their aura, the type that could only come with a vast amount of experience in conflict. Yet they were also very clearly retired.

Rui suspected that many retired Martial Squires were recruited to fulfill positions like these that were best occupied by Martial Squires.

He also hadn't gotten used to being addressed by the Squire title. It felt surreal, like all of this was some kind of dream. He almost expected to be woken up.

"Squire Quarrier?" Squire Ferin echoes, raising an eyebrow at the sight of Rui wordlessly staring at them.

"Ah... My bad." Rui managed to squeeze out. "I honestly still haven't quite processed everything yet."

"That's quite understandable." Squire Ferin nodded. "The breakthrough to the Squire Realm is not a light breakthrough and it isn't uncommon for such an immense internal change to negatively affect mental health if not handled appropriately. That is what we're here for."

"And what exactly are you supposed to do incidentally?" Rui asked.

"We will be aiding you to your lodgings, and we will be responsible for your acclimatization process with the power of the Squire Realm." Squire Ferin replied. "The Martial Union cannot allow a Martial Squire who hasn't yet mastered their power to return back to the public. The sheer power that Martial Squires can unleash even without the use of techniques is too much, the slightest slip can cause a lot of suffering."

"I understand." Rui nodded. This was part of the documents that he had signed in order to undergo the breakthrough process to the Squire Realm, so he had no issues with his arrangements.

"Be careful as you get up." Squire Fernin told him as he fiddled with some keys over at the terminal that controlled the chamber.

The straps restraining Rui's motions unshackled him as they retreated back into the openings that they came from.

Rui took a deep breath. He would be taking his first real movement as a Martial Squire at this moment. It was an incredible milestone.

He got up with mild exertion.

BAM!

Rui grimaced as he slammed the ceiling with much speed and power, having launched his entire body up with just the slightest bit of exertion.

THUD

He fell flat to the ground.

"You exerted yourself too much." Squire Fernin informed him blandly. "Of course, no need to get worried. This is very normal as the very first movements as a Martial Squire are the most difficult to be able to control. As you undergo your acclimatization process, this will change, of course. Once you've retained control over your body, your time in the acclimatization phase will end and you will be allowed to return to your normal daily life."

"I understand, Squire Fernin." Rui nodded.

He tried getting up again, yet instead, he launched himself up, spinning simultaneously. Squire Gerd caught him with an arm, stopping his motion.

#### Chapter 465: Habilitation

It was only after he had become a Martial Squire that he understood how nerfed Squire Caella Freelia was against him in their fight. Although they hadn't fought her the very moment after she became a Martial Squire, it was still soon enough after her breakthrough when she was still out of sync to be able to express all of the power of her new body.

Just as he tried to take another step, Squire Fernin stopped him.

"Relax, no need to move right now." He told Rui. "It's best that all of this be done once we're in a controlled environment. For now, you will be taken to the Squire habilitation facility in a wheelchair."

They gestured to one in the room, having brought it over.

Rui sighed. He was not too fond of wheelchairs; they reminded him of the worst part of his life when his health deteriorated to the point that he was unable to move around on his own. It was one of the worst parts of his life not only due to his health but also due to the continuous failures he suffered in trying to make the VOID algorithm viable.



Still, he obliged as they strolled him to the Squire habilitation facility, which was connected to the breakthrough facility, side by side for convenience.

Once they arrived at the facility, they immediately entered a particular section of the facility.

"What's this place for?" Rui asked as he looked around. It appeared to be a storage facility for a strange kind of body suit, of sorts.

"The bodysuits you see here are the core of the habilitation training stage that you will be undergoing." Squire Fernin told Rui. "These suits are highly resistive to all movement, and generally limit the power and speed of all movements by ninety-nine percent."

Rui's eyes lit up in interest as he immediately comprehended the reasoning for such a form of training. "Steady acclimatization."

"Correct." Squire Fernin nodded. "You will be wearing this suit for the entirety of your habilitation phase in this facility. We will progressively lessen the resistance the suit offers to your movements, roughly one-percent a day. After a hundred days, you will be discharged as long as your control, accuracy, and precision aren't below the bare minimum standards for you to not be a threat to civilians and Martial Apprentices around you."

This was new. Rui had never had to exhibit extreme caution to normal humans around him as a Martial Apprentice because Martial Apprentices were physically human, only their brains were superhuman.

The way Martial Apprentices generated superhuman power despite having a normal human body with normal human muscles was thanks to efficiency. It had taken Rui a while to piece this together since the science in this world had not developed why having superhuman brains enabled superhuman physical power. Of course, the principles and mechanics of each technique were well-known. But the precise neurological reason as to why exactly superhuman brains enabled Martial Apprentices to use Apprentice-level techniques was not known.

To anyone except Rui, as far as he knew, thanks to his strong scientific background.

The answer was simple; efficiency.

Research back on Earth had indicated that human beings generated several hundreds of joules of energy with every strike. Technically, this was enough energy to crack and break rocks and boulders.

Yet no human was able to crack and break rocks. Not even the mightiest of heavyweight fighters who held the world record for the most powerful punch ever thrown; Francis Xavier Ngannou, could possibly crack and break a rock.

The reason for this was simple, due to the many mechanical inefficiencies and structural inadequacies of the human body, only a small portion of that great energy were actually transferred to their striking targets.

Due to this, no human was capable of cracking and breaking rocks with a strike. Very few animals were capable of such a feat, despite generating far more than the necessary power to do so.

All of this was due to inefficiency in movements, and inadequacies in structure.

When a Martial Apprentice discovered their Martial Path, the brain evolved in battle cognition, and along with it, the potential to be superhumanly efficient with their motions in combat.

Apprentice-level techniques such as Flame Breathing, Outer Convergence, and Flowing Canon allowed Martial Apprentices to be extremely efficient with the energy that their body generated, maximizing both the energy generated and the amount of the energy generated that actually did damage to their target.

However, this was a conscious and voluntary phenomenon.

This meant that he could not hurt normal humans unless he used Apprentice-level techniques. There was never a worry of accidentally bumping into a human and killing them because he exerted too much force.

However, now that he obtained his Martial body, this was no longer the case. His natural raw power had been elevated far beyond natural human limits. He could mangle humans with just a wave of his arm if he wasn't careful.

"You're going to also need to develop a psychological awareness of the sheer damage you inflict upon humans." Squire Fernin told him. "It's not enough to just gain control, accuracy, and precision. Your psychology needs to adapt to your body as well."

"How will we be going about that?"

"Hypnotic therapy." Squire Gerd spoke up for the first time.

Rui turned towards her. "What exactly will that entail."

"We will be subjecting you to a suggestion that will, over time, along with other measures such as reflexive correction will help you develop the necessary psychological habits that will ensure that you aren't a threat to the people you know and care about." Squire Gerd explained. "It's not just humans you have to worry about, it's also Martial Apprentices. They're now to you what humans are to them. I am in charge of the psychological conditioning while Fernin will handle physical habilitation."

Rui now understood why there were two Martial Squires instead of one.

"I look forward to your guidance."

Chapter 466: Rest

The suit was easily worn, thankfully. It slipped on Rui and the assistant staff members fastened it quickly.

"Woah," Rui murmured. "It's so light, it doesn't even feel like I'm wearing a suit at all. Can this really impede my motions that much?"

"It's made up of special esoteric substances that are capable of exerting a tremendous amount of force on your movements." Squire Fernin explained. "Try getting up normally."

Rui cautiously got up in a normal fashion. He was pleased to see that he didn't over-exert and send himself flying. His motions were dulled by his suit just enough that he ended up exerting human-level force.

"Huh, this actually feels quite normal," Rui said appreciatively.

"That's to be expected." Squire Fernin said. "The biggest problem with the rehabilitation is getting used to how little force you need to apply for daily mundane tasks."

Rui nodded, this made sense. As a Martial Apprentice with a mostly normal human body, he normally applied a small, but a decent chunk of his strength when he performed mundane tasks like walking or eating. However, now he had to learn to apply the tiniest of motions for these same tasks. Consciously, this was possible to do, however, it wasn't enough for this to become a conscious measure. This needed to become part of his subconscious tendencies and traits, it needed to become as natural as breathing. Such that he could be assured it would happen even if he wasn't paying any attention to himself.

"Alright, get some rest for today in your room. You've spent three weeks in a horrifying procedure, after all." Squire Fernin casually threw that out there.

Rui turned to him in shock. "Three weeks??"

"Yes." Squire Fernin nodded. "Your procedure took a little longer than average due to the delicate nature of your brains."

"I see..." Rui pondered deeply. Thankfully, he had already informed the Orphanage that he would be leaving for some time.

"The staff members will help you with your room and other matters." He told Rui. "For now, get some rest. We'll begin tomorrow. Goodbye."

Rui bade him goodbye as he turned to the staff members for aid. Now that he had the body suit impeding his extra power immensely, he could more or less move around normally. He was quickly assigned a room in the facility.

"Ohhh mannnn..." Rui groaned in comfort as he crashed into a comfortable bed in his room. He reveled in its comfort, having been forced to deal with the torture and general discomfort of the Apotheosis chamber.

He retrieved his communicator from the bag filled with his belongings, sending a message to Julian, the only one in the Orphanage with a communicator. He also sent messages to each of his six friends, informing them of his breakthrough to the Squire Realm, before tossing his phone aside.

He was tired. Although the procedure had rejuvenated him with mental and physical rejuvenation potions, the former had long lost effectivity.

Furthermore, the exhaustion he felt was more psychological than anything else. He just wanted to rest a bit before he set out on the next phase of his Martial journey.

On the other hand, he was also excited about the fact that he was a Martial Squire. Having stepped into the Squire Realm, he had still not gotten over it. Generally, he was level-headed and calm regarding other matters, but when it came to Martial matters, he could be immature.

At this very moment, he was in a way no different from a child that had received the toy that they desired the most for Christmas.

('I wonder what the habilitation training will be like.')

He suspected that it wouldn't be too different from the physical and Martial foundations of the Martial Academy. These phases focused on the core of Martial Art. They focused on the most important and fundamental aspects of any physical conflict.

Things like accuracy, precision, timing, coordination, and balance were all aspects of his motion that would require training from scratch.

('In a way, this isn't too different from the mismatched muscle memory between my body of Earth and the new body I got in Gaea.')

He realized.

He had taken truly a long time to overcome the incompatible muscle memory that he had retained from Earth. It had taken many years despite working hard. Thankfully, the Martial Union could speed up the process thanks to hypnotic mental manipulation techniques.

What otherwise took many years to fully overcome would hopefully take much lesser time thanks to the mental manipulation.

('This is just the beginning though.') Rui noted. ('I still have the Squire-level equivalent of Apprentice-level techniques to master.')

That wasn't something he would be able to master any time soon. He had mastered thirty Apprentice-level techniques at this point, even if mastering the Squire-level equivalent took only a month per technique. That would still take two and a half years to complete in its totality.

('It's like becoming a Martial Apprentice all over again.') Rui couldn't help but think so. He was starting off with effectively no techniques whatsoever, just like he did when he became a Martial Apprentice. It was almost a fresh start in many ways.

Of course, he didn't plan on re-mastering all of his old techniques. Not all of them needed to be re-mastered, and some were simply no longer worth it.

Techniques like Stinger and Adamant Reforging were passive and did not disappear entirely due to the transition, however, techniques such as Blink were entirely obsolete at the Squire Realm. Lack of vision was a meaningless hindrance that accomplished absolutely nothing against a Martial Squire with superhuman senses that allowed them to map their environment with their remaining senses. Furthermore, most Martial Squires had at least one sensory technique.

Thus, his Martial Art was likely not going to be identical to what it was when he was a Martial Apprentice.

His attention wandered between many topics, yet eventually, exhaustion took over his excitement and he began to nod off, falling asleep.

## Chapter 467: Heights

The habilitation training began immediately the next day.

Rui was immediately thrust into training regiments that honed his accuracy and precision. Despite the suit reducing most of the power he generated so that it resembled his old body, he was still unaccustomed to his new body.

The differences between his old and new body were greater than he had expected. The relationship between how much power, speed, and durability he had had fundamentally changed. His power decreased slightly while his speed had increased slightly compared to his old body.

This was not an enormous difference, but it was enough to throw off all of his movements. What had fundamentally changed was the ratio between the power output of his muscles and the mass of his body. The raw speed of a Martial Artist depended on how much power their muscles generated with respect to how much they weighed. It was this ratio that mattered.

Someone capable of generating a vast amount of power would still be average in speed if they also weighed a lot.

Currently, his body had evolved in precisely the manner needed to ensure that there was an equal weightage between power, speed, and durability. His old body had placed a little bit more weight on power and durability compared to speed.

Due to this, he had found that his timing for all complicated maneuvers was too late. Since his movements were proportionally quicker, he was still acting on his old speed where he was slower.

This was one of the biggest errors in his muscle memory that messed up his accuracy a lot. He had to throw himself into extensive repetitive training all over again. Getting rid of the muscle memory from his previous life fully had taken a long time of extensive training. Thankfully, it wasn't the same case for his current muscle memory. Squire Gerd subjected him to a light hypnotic suggestion that allowed him to replace old muscle memory with new muscle memory quicker far quicker than was humanly possible.

"This technique 'convinces' the subconscious mind to let go of the past and accept the future." Squire Gerd explained. "Thanks to this you're able to unlearn the tendencies from your old human body and create new ones for your Martial body."

Rui nodded. Of course, from a scientific perspective, this explanation made very little sense and was inadequate. However, Rui had hypotheses on the mechanics of the technique.

('Enhanced neural plasticity is probably the answer.') Rui mused.

Memory as a neurological phenomenon was the result of a biochemical trait of neurons known as neural plasticity.

Neural plasticity was the ability of the neural networks of the brain to change through growth and reorganization. It is when the brain is rewired to function in some way that differs from how it previously functioned. These changes range from individual neuron pathways making new connections to systematic adjustments like cortical remapping.

From what Rui could see, Squire Gerd had somehow enhanced the neural plasticity of the part of his cerebellum that was responsible for muscle memory. A fascinating technique that allowed its target to unlearn past habits and gain new habits quicker as a result.

('It's also why Squire Fernin is extremely strict during training.') Rui mused.

Although this technique was a boon to Rui, it was also risky. Mistakes and flaws were costlier because he replaced old tendencies with new tendencies, all new tendencies, including the flawed ones with mistakes. If the flaws were allowed in, then he would not be able to get rid of them, not without undergoing the whole procedure all over again.

Thus, the standards he was held to were extremely high.

"Part of the reason I was chosen as a Squire habilitator was because of extraordinary vision, allowing me to assess the accuracy and precision of your movements on a microscopic level." Squire Fernin told him. "I can see every mistake, flaw, and shortcoming in every single one of your movements thanks to that and my experience and training in this matter. Currently, your maneuvers are infested with mistakes, as is to be expected. I will be correcting each and every single one of them during your habilitation phase."



Many of Rui's training sessions were consumed simply by Squire Fernin fixating on merely a handful of Rui's mistakes. Only after Rui performed with accuracy and precision that satisfied him, was he allowed to even begin the repetitive training to burn the accurate movements into his muscle memory.

One of the particularly annoying obstacles in his way was the difference in the center of gravity between his old and new body. His body was heavier, but the mass was not distributed in the exact same way as with his old body. His bones and muscles were disproportionately denser, causing a change in the center of gravity of his body as a whole.

This affected his dynamic balance; the ability to maintain balance during curvilinear motion.

He would often trip and lose balance every time he performed complicated whole-body maneuvers due to this.

In fact, in the first couple of days of his training, he wasn't even able to perfectly somersault consistently. An embarrassing thing for a Martial Artist of his caliber to accept. Yet it only fueled his motivation to grow and regain his motor capabilities.

"Calm down." Squire Fernin told him. "Your current state is frustrating, however, it is entirely normal. Your rate of growth is fascinating. Your brain and mind are soaking up your training at a speed I have never seen before."

Rui didn't even bother trying to explain it. He couldn't.

"In fact, that isn't the only oddity about you." Squire Fernin stroked his white beard. "Your raw physical parameters are greater than what should be possible. You're stronger and faster than someone who underwent the all-rounder evolution process should be. It's truly bizarre, I have never seen a Martial Squire start off from such a high starting point. You do live up to the rumors, Rui Quarrier. Who knows to what height you'll rise if this is where you begin."

Chapter 468: Consequences

Days passed.

Half his time went into physical training while the other half went into psychological training. To his surprise, the psychological training was just as hard as the physical training.

"Your reflexes must become more defensive." Squire Gerd told him. "You cannot flail around with that kind of power, it needs to be controlled and safe."

They were in a room, meditating. Rui absorbed her words, taking them in. This was one of the therapeutic training sessions that he was made to undergo. It lasted a few hours until they were done.

"Does the Martial Union go this far for non-Martial Artists?" Rui asked afterward. "Ultimately, it's an organization for Martial Artists, not everybody else, right?"

It's not that Rui didn't understand the point of the rule, it made sense, but it was also quite restrictive to Martial Artists. Although he was personally doing well with the training, he could imagine others having a hard time with the training. Was the Martial Union really the kind of organization that would hamper Martial Artists for the sake of civilians?

"Martial Artists need to integrate into society." Squire Gerd told him. "Part of that entails not being a permanent threat and risk to all people around us. We'll be detached from society if we are unable to not hurt people by mistake. That increases the probability of a civil war between the state and Martial Artists."

"Is the Martial Union that concerned with the coexistence of Martial Artists and normal human civilization?" Rui asked, probing a bit more.

"..." She pondered his question. "Those that are in power care enough, yes. Although there are those of political factions within the Martial Union that disagree."

"Factions within the Martial Union?" Rui asked, curious. "That are separate from the Martial Sects?"

"The Martial Sects are centered around a very specific matter; the budget allocation of research and development funds." She explained. "They do not concern themselves with any other matters outside of the political advocacy, campaigning, and lobbying for the research budget allocated to the research of

the techniques that each Martial Sect is centered around. The political factions concern themselves with much bigger matters."

"Matters like what?"

"Matters like the one you brought up." Squire Gerd replied. "The matter about the role and place for Martial Artists in society is not a simple matter, most certainly not something that everybody agrees upon."

"There are political factions centered around the role that Martial Artists ought to play in society?" Rui asked.

"Of course, several of them." Squire Gerda answered him. "There are Martial supremacists that believe that Martial Artists are superior beings that ought to rule humanity by virtue of our power. Of course, they aren't the majority. The majority are normal Martial Artists that believe that Martial Artists while superior in combat, ought to be part of normal human civilization in some form of coexistence."

"I presume that faction is much larger and also in power now?" Rui asked.

"You can say that." Squire Gerd nodded. "That's why a large number of the policies and conditions that the Martial Union has are conducive towards ensuring that Martial Artists are able to integrate into the Kandrian Empire as seamlessly as possible."

"Does that include the Martial Festival, as well as the fact that offense-class missions are not permitted within the boundaries of the Kandrian Empire?" Rui asked.

"Indeed, they are among the more prominent measures." Squire Gerd nodded.

The Martial Festival was a large festival that celebrated Martial Art and Martial Artists. It was a festival that attributed positive energy to Martial Art and Martial Artists. Rui had no doubt in his mind that it played an important and significant role in ensuring that Martial Artists were as well integrated into modern society as they currently were.

Festivals were a vital and core aspect of cultures, and clearly, the Martial Union knew about this, which is why they made a gigantic fussy festival every five years, in order to ensure that culture and values would always remain on the side of the Martial Artists.

The fact that offense class missions did not occur within the boundaries of the Kandrian Empire also greatly helped in this matter. If the citizens of the Kandrian Empire had to live every day worried that Martial Artists of the Martial Union would assault them or even kill them due to a simple private commission, then Martial Artists would certainly be hated.

However, because no offense-class missions were allowed in the Kandrian Empire, all the citizens of the Kandrian Empire ever saw were Martial Artists protecting normal humans in defense-class missions and hunting dangerous animals and keeping them at bay, risking their lives all the time. This greatly aided in the process of creating a positive image of Martial Artists in the mind of the citizens of the Kandrian Empire.

Furthermore, the Martial Union also tolerated odd and quirky commissions that went straight into the miscellaneous class of missions, these earned the Martial Union the reputation of being tolerant and flexible.

"What happens to Martial Squires that aren't able to achieve an adequate degree of control?" Rui asked.

"The Martial Union infringes on their freedom to a certain degree if the degree of control is too low. Low to the point that unintentional mass murder is guaranteed. If it's not a severe lack of control, then the punishments and penalties of different kinds." Squire Gerda told him straightforwardly. "This is part of the agreement that you signed before you were allowed to undergo the Squire evolution breakthrough process. Martial Squires are far too much of a threat to those around them. We can exert Apprentice-level power with just our raw physicality alone."

Rui raised an eyebrow at those words. "So if I fail the habilitation phase completely, I may be restricted from leaving and forced to continue training? Will the Martial Union actually go that far?"

"Of course." Squire Gerd. "I've seen it happen before. I, along with Squire Fernin, will be judging you by the end of your habilitation phase."

Chapter 469: Techniques

Of course, Rui was merely curious. There was basically no chance of him failing the Squire habilitation phase. Part of this was due to the fact that he was most certainly a fast learner thanks to the enhanced nature of his brain and mind.

A little over three months passed. Extensive and difficult training regimens allowed him to finally completely adapt to his new body.

By day hundred, the suit was off and his accuracy and precision were incredibly high despite using the full power of his Martial body.

BAM!!

A tremendous strike crashed against a wall. The full unshackled might of a Martial Squire crashed into the barrier.

"Fuuuu..." Rui exhaled.

"A perfect strike." Squire Fernin told him. "You've mastered your Martial body. How does it feel to finally be a full-fledged Martial Squire?"

"Incredible," Rui admitted.

He felt like a god.

Without any technique, with just the slightest exertion of his body, he was already able to output power that far exceeded most Martial Apprentices. The fact that he could defeat his previous self without a single Squire-level technique was something that boggled his mind.

"You have far exceeded the necessary level of control needed to successfully pass the Squire habilitation phase." Squire Fernin informed him. "Congratulations."

"Can I begin undertaking Squire-level missions immediately?" Rui asked out of the blue.

"Yes, but it is highly recommended against." Squire Gerd chimed in. "As you are now, you would lose handily to any Martial Squire. Undertaking any mission as you are right now is risky. It is recommended you master a few Squire-level techniques, be they Squire-level versions of techniques you mastered in the past or new Squire-level techniques that are more suited to your Martial Art."

"People do that?" Rui frowned. "Abandon old techniques for new techniques?"

"It is common." Squire Fernin told him. "Squire-level versions of Apprentice-level techniques are often not as good as techniques that were created for the Squire Realm. At the end of the day, techniques created for a purpose will generally be better than techniques that were created for another purpose originally, but are adapted for yet another purpose."

"That makes sense." Rui nodded. "At the end of the day, the only reason Apprentice-level techniques are adapted to Squire-level is to allow Martial Squires to retain the progress that they made in a lower Realm."

"Correct." Squire Fernin nodded. "Most Martial Squires find a balance between old and new. There is no shortage of techniques that can't be applied to Martial Squires."

Rui nodded, thinking of Blink. The technique was not only useless but also detrimental in Squire-level combat.

"Furthermore, each Martial body is unique due to the starting point of each body being unique. The necessity for originality and individuality in your techniques rises a lot now that you have become a Martial Squire. You will need to become truly separate your Martial Art from that anything that exists or has existed. Remember, every Martial Path is unique, and that needs to reflect in your Martial Art as well." He told Rui.

Rui nodded. He had heard this before as well. In order to walk down a Martial Path that was unique, the individuality in his Martial Art needed to reflect, otherwise, he could not ascend to a higher Realm.

Of course, this was easier said than done. There was a reason the population of Martial Artists of higher Realms was exponentially lower than those of Realms lower. Martial Apprentices accounted for an overwhelming majority of the population of Martial Artists. Part of this was because most Martial

Apprentices of previous generations simply failed to imbue their Martial Art with the necessary amount of individuality needed to elevate it to a higher Realm.

It was an incredibly difficult task to create one's own technique, after all.

"It is worth it in more ways than one, however." Squire Fernin informed him. "Techniques successfully created by Martial Artists generally have an extreme amount of compatibility with one's self than other techniques."

Rui turned towards Squire Fernin, deeper in thought.

"The physical variation among bodies of Martial Squires is far greater than the variation among Martial Apprentices. Martial Apprentices are normal humans as far as physicality goes. There is variation among normal humans, of course, but ultimately, they are within certain limits. Humans on a broad scale are quite similar to each other."

"The same cannot be said for Martial Squires, I presume?" Rui asked, understanding the point Squire Fernin was trying to make.

Squire Fernin shook his head. "At least, not to the same degree. Martial Squires deviate from humanity on a fundamental level, there is greater variation among us. This ends up affecting Squire-level techniques as well."

"I see." Rui quickly pieced it together. "Because Squire-level techniques have to cater to a wider variety of Martial bodies, it is more difficult to find techniques with satisfactory compatibility with yourself in particular."

The further away Rui was from the Martial body type that a particular technique had complete compatibility with, the lesser the compatibility he had with that technique.

"That's right." Squire Fernin nodded. "Most Squire-level techniques are created with some combination of the Martial Union and a Martial Squire. The larger pool of types of Martial bodies has caused more techniques to be too incompatible with a lot of Martial Artists."

"The best solution would be to create your technique, but that's too difficult for an overwhelming majority of Martial Artists. Perhaps it is feasible for a few techniques, but no more than that, surely?" Rui wondered.

"What matters is individuality." Squire Fernin told him. "It is very rare that a new technique is conjured from thin air. Gaining inspiration from other techniques, from the world around you, and creating techniques that borrow from already existing phenomena is the norm. Even simply modifying a technique to suit your needs involves individuality. You will find that inevitably, you will need to engage in individuality as a matter of inevitability, not just necessity."

Rui frowned at those words.

Chapter 470: Next

Once the two Squire habilitators officially declared his success at undergoing Squire habilitation, Rui no longer had anything else that needed to be done.

"Thank you for all your help." Rui shook the hands of the two Martial Squires.

"Not at all." Squire Fernin waved his hand dismissively.

"You accomplished it through your own hard work." Squire Gerd told him.

He bade them farewell, leaving the Martial Union.

"Ah, freedom." Rui inhaled deeply.

He had spent a lot of time with his freedom shackled to a certain extent in the past three months. Be it the Squire breakthrough process, or the Squire habilitation process. Both were necessary, but both certainly were suffocating.

He reveled in the sense of freedom he got from finally having left the Martial Union.



"Time to go home." He immediately began jogging in the direction of the Quarrier Orphanage.

As much as he wanted to begin obtaining some Squire-level techniques immediately, he decided to go back home and connect with his family for some time. He hadn't seen them in quite some time, after all.

He began sprinting in the direction of the Quarrier Orphanage. Each step shook the Earth, he sped through the districts at a speed that he had never moved before in his entire life. He had surpassed all limits and peaks that held him back as a Martial Apprentice.

Soon, he had arrived, opening the gate and making his way inside.

"RUIIIII!" Alice squealed when she saw him.

"How are you always the first to notice me?" Rui wondered aloud as he exchanged a hug with her.

"Hehe... I can sense when family is close by." She beamed at him.

"That's a neat trick," Rui admitted.

Soon he was greeted by the others. It had taken him quite some time to pacify their curiosity regarding his status as a Martial Squire.

He had informed all of them about the success of his breakthrough to the Squire Realm through Julian, but they still wanted to know the difference.

"Wow." Farion frowned. "Each of your steps feels like a rock dropped to the floor."

"I have put on weight due to becoming a Martial Squire," Rui admitted. "It makes things inconvenient. I'm honestly not sure if my bed can hold my weight anymore."

"Rui..." Lashara emerged into the hall where everyone had gathered.

"Mom." He walked forward, exchanging a hug with her.

"My precious baby." She addressed him, stroking his head. "You seem very different."

"Yeah well, the breakthrough to the Squire Realm has caused a lot of changes to my body you see." Rui shrugged.

"Are you okay?" Lashara asked, worried.

"Never felt better, actually." Rui smiled.

"To think that kid who was obsessed with Martial Art since forever ago went and actually became a martial Squire."

"I remember when you used to pester us to help you train, dragging us to the frozen river every winter and practicing your balance on the ice."

"We get at least half the credit for you becoming a Martial Squire. The Martial Union should give us honorary Martial licenses."

They teased him a bit, before eventually letting him settle down. He found himself sitting opposite to Julian in the study.

"So, was it as excruciatingly painful as advertised?" Julian asked.

"More than you can possibly fathom." Rui sighed. "It truly is a procedure that only Squire candidates can survive."

"The suffering was inevitable. Thankfully, there were no further health complications." Julian sighed

Rui nodded. Shortly after the doctor had extracted his blood after the procedure ended, he received word that there were no health complications with his breakthrough to the Squire Realm.

Rui was more afraid of that than anything else. The pain was no doubt the single most torturous experience of both of his lives, but at least the pain wasn't a threat to his life or health. It was the price of undergoing the breakthrough evolution to the Squire Realm, but the pain did not cause any impediments to his Martial Path.

Had the procedure failed in some way, that would be a terrible outcome. Fixing the mistake would be extremely difficult, potentially impossible, and certainly painful as all hell. This was the outcome that Rui feared the most.

"Congratulations on your successful breakthrough to the Squire Realm, Rui." Julian smiled. "You've truly come far, and you're set to go further."

"Thanks, Julian." Rui smiled back. "I'm genuinely indebted to you for helping me with the Vinfranian research, the information those files provided me helped me become stronger as a Martial Squire."

He was referring to the Mind Switch technique. That technique had allowed him to obtain physical prowess greater than what he would normally have obtained had he not learned that technique.

"Is that so?" Julian asked with a curious expression on his face. "How so?"

"I mastered a technique that increased my energy reserve in a very organic and natural way," Rui explained. "This allowed me to go for a stronger and more energy-intensive Martial body than I would have normally been able to acquire. So, I'm quite grateful to you."

"That's what brothers are for." Julian smiled. "I'm glad to hear that you benefitted from my reports of the Vinfranian research data. It certainly did benefit me."

"It's a win-win." Rui pointed out.

"Indeed. What do you plan to do from here on out?" Julian asked, curious.

"Well, I need to get my hands on Squire-level techniques." Rui sighed. "Otherwise, there is nothing else that can be done. I'm in an awkward position where I'm overqualified for Apprentice-level missions and underqualified for Squire-level missions."

He didn't plan to immediately focus on remastering all thirty of the techniques he had mastered as an Apprentice, in one go. That would take too much time. Furthermore, as Squire Fernin pointed out, compatibility was a much bigger issue for Squires than it was for Martial Apprentices. Squire-level versions of techniques he was compatible with as a Martial Apprentice may not be compatible with him in the Squire Realm.

He would need to be careful.