

Rui spent the rest of the day pestering each and every single adult about what he had just seen, after eight hours of incessant interrogation. He tucked himself into his bed for the night, yet he was far too excited to ever fall asleep. It had taken him a while to understand enough to just barely satisfy his foremost layer of burning curiosity, after all, his vocabulary was still quite imperfect.

He pestered the adults until he was able to comprehend their nuanced answers, it was quite tiring, but he managed to obtain answers for his most burning questions. After the rigorous interrogation, he'd spent time assimilating and organizing everything he'd learnt.

Martial arts, or Martial Art as they called it, was real. It was not only real, but it was extremely powerful too. Martial Artists were extremely powerful, capable of extremely superhuman feats, like the one he had witnessed. Across the country, and perhaps even the continent, Martial Artists were divided into six Realms, which were basically ranks:

Martial Apprentice, Martial Squire, Martial Senior, Martial Master, Martial Sage and finally; Martial Transcendent. Each realm was far more powerful than the last, but none of the adults knew anything more specific than that.

('If a Martial Squire, who was only the second strongest of six realms was this strong, then how much stronger were the higher ranks?') He wondered with giddy excitement. This revelation was truly by far the most soul staggering experience he had ever made. Even the shock of being reborn was tame and rather boring in comparison. He quickly dismissed these thoughts before revising the rest of what he learnt.

Martial Art could apparently be traced to a little over five hundred years ago. Martial Artists grew stronger and stronger in every country, furthermore their numbers increased as time passed, until the Martial Artist population grew large enough for associations known as Martial Unions formed in every country. Martial Unions were basically liaisons between customers of Martial Art services and the Martial Artists themselves.

It served as a connection between the demand in the consumer market for services like bodyguarding, assaults, manual labor as well as more covert operations like sabotage, infiltration, espionage, surveillance, assassinations etc. Even niche occupations like tutelage were within the purview of the Union according to Kenta who once was an aspiring Martial Artist.

The Martial Union was an organization with a vested interest in the propagation of Martial Artists, so it had taken measures to ensure there would be a healthy influx of fresh blood martial artists, such as the Martial Academy. The Martial Academies apparently were meritocratic institutions founded, managed and staffed by the Martial Union, not to mention these institutions trained aspiring Martial Artist till the Martial Squire stage primarily.

Furthermore, according to Depp, the Academies had a hefty yearly tuition fee, after all, tutelage from Martial Seniors was a privilege to aspiring Martial Artists that would otherwise be difficult to obtain. Yet the high tuition fees were not a barrier, thankfully the Martial Union was cognizant enough to recognize that a large majority of talents would simply be buried due to their low economic class.

Thus, the Martial Academies offered a scholarship program that allowed aspiring Martial Candidates to incur the fees as debt and repay the debt after they graduate from the Academy. The scholarship program was essentially an investment with no guaranteed returns, after all if a scholarship student failed to graduate, then the debt would never be repaid.

But ultimately this policy allowed the Martial Academies and by extension the Martial Union to maximize the number of Martial Artists, their highest interest and goal, the financial losses were rather trivial in comparison to the economic might of an international Union, furthermore the scholarships were given based on merit, so the losses were minimized.

The moment Rui learned about the Martial Academies he had already made up his mind about his future, his motivation for it was extremely high, he couldn't wait. He would get into an Academy, one way or another, scholarship or not. He had already formulated potential solutions, but he lacked far too much information to flesh them out.

"What are you thinking about?" A child's voice called out to him. Rui glanced in the direction it came from.

"Not much, Farion." Rui responded. Farion was one of the boys at the orphanage.

"Hehe, Rui is thinking about Martial Art, isn't he?" A girl beside himself smirked mischievously. "He spent the whole day asking all the adults about Martial Art."

This was Nina, one of the older girls at the orphanage. In the past 10 months, Rui had familiarized himself with all the children in the orphanage, although due to the age gap, both mental and physical, he had a harder time bonding with them as much as he would have liked to, but he did spend time with them nonetheless.

Children like Farion and Nina would take more time to spend time with Rui and babysit him whenever the adults were busy to make their lives easier.
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"Do you want become a Martial Artist, Rui?" A thirteen-year-old boy reading a book asked him.

Rui's eyes sparkled.

"I'm going to become the best!" Rui declared.

"Then you'll have trained hard." The boy smiled, closing his book. "Martial Artists train very hard to get their hands on superhuman power. Are you willing to do what it takes?"

"I was born for it, Julian" Rui replied, without a shadow of doubt or hesitation. It wasn't literal though, for he had no idea why or even how he was reborn, but he suspected that there was some reason. If there was a reason, what other reason could there be?

"Then we'll support you to the best of our ability, Rui." Julian walked over and lifted Rui into a hug.

"Mmmm, thanks." Rui replied. Julian was a bright child, although he wasn't freakishly prodigious like Rui, he was a quiet and intelligent child who spent his time absorbed in books of all sorts, anything he could get his hands on. Rui was impressed by his maturity despite his age, among other things.

The children chatted more until Depp told them all to put out the lights and go to sleep. To Rui's surprise he fell asleep quickly, he was quite exhausted after a whole day of excitement.