

Martial Unity 541

Chapter 541: From Scratch

Tempestuous Feel checked all the boxes he was looking for in an aerial sensory technique that could allow Rui to sense his targets better while also allowing him to sense the atmospheric conditions that could influence the trajectory of the sound bullet. When the technique was paired together with Seismic Mapping, it could allow Rui to sense his opponent with even greater detail and precision.

With this technique, Rui will have obtained two of the three techniques he set out to obtain. This was already a pleasant development, for him to have found what he was looking for this quickly.

Both of the techniques he had chosen to master so far were part of the Sniper Project, which was in line with Rui's suspicions that the Sniper Project was the most likely to succeed out of the three projects. It couldn't be helped, it was just far more viable than the other two projects, one of which he hadn't yet even conceptually fleshed out, and the other; he didn't even know if they were conceptually possible.

('Alright, time to get the final technique I'm looking for.') Rui noted as he headed toward the defensive-technique section.

He was looking for techniques that could potentially be modified to allow him to elastically convert the kinetic energy of incoming attacks into his own kinetic energy, and then dispel that kinetic energy rapidly before it sent him flying away.

Of course, he had considered more ambitious plans as to what to do with the kinetic energy once his body was obtained, but they were astronomically more different. He could potentially consider them if Project Bounce ended up succeeding.

He went through the many techniques in the defensive section. There were many kinds of active and passive defensive techniques across the section. Many of them catered to a broad type of Martial body, mostly the ones that were defensive in nature. If Rui chose to master them, he would not be able to utilize the technique to their full potential. He automatically disqualified those techniques in his mind. If they were specifically created with the pre-condition of having a specific kind of Martial body, then there was no point in even thinking about purchasing these techniques.

He paused as he came across an old familiar technique.

[Elastic Shift]

This technique mitigated an impact by extending the distance and time over which the impact occurred by shifting along with the attack. It was the same principle that baseball players used when they moved their hands along with the ball when catching it.

He had already considered the technique, but he didn't think it was particularly viable. This technique fundamentally differed from what he needed even though it also employed elasticity.

('Shame.') Rui shook his head as he continued scanning through all of the remaining techniques.

At the end of an hour, he found that his worst fears had come true.

('There aren't any pre-existing techniques that are close enough to what I want.') Rui sighed. The ones that did cater to a different Martial body. There unfortunately were generalized techniques that he could use as the basis for the technique he truly needed.

This meant that he would need to create his own technique from scratch, drastically increasing the difficulty of Project Bounce.

Still, he intended to give it his all. Besides, if he succeeded then that would be a signal that even developing the core technique purely from scratch for any given project was not too implausible. He didn't want to be restricted to only having to rely on the Martial Union's technique

Shortly after, he received a message on his accouter.

[Squire Quarrier, your requested testing procedures are ready. Please arrive at the allocated locations listed down below as soon as possible.]

('Alright, let's hope these tests give me better news.') Rui sighed.

Having already finished his agendas in the Squire-level library. He immediately headed over to the designated procedure rooms.

He already had an idea of what to expect thanks to have already familiarized himself with the scientific literature surrounding the topic. The way compatibility with poison was measured was by administering non-lethal dosages of various poisons into the Martial Artist's body, and observing the symptoms that the Martial Apprentices experience. Based on the symptoms and the general effect of the poison on the Martial Artist's body, the degree of compatibility of the Martial Artist with said poison could be gauged.

This system was developed after observing the effect of poisons across people of all degrees of compatibility with poison. They gathered the necessary data to know exactly how people of various degrees of compatibility reacted to said poison, such that they could easily identify the degree of compatibility of a Martial Artist with said poison, based on the symptoms he showed.

"Excuse me?" Rui peered into the room he had been told to go to. "I'm Squire Quarrier. I was informed that this was where my poison compatibility tests would occur."

"Ah yes." A doctor greeted him. "Welcome, Squire Quarrier. Please provide your license for verification."

Rui obliged as he inspected the procedure room. It was spacious with all kinds of instruments in the room. Within the room was another more isolated chamber with an operation table with restraints and cuffs at its side.

Of course, Rui understood that that was where he would be undergoing the test in. Since he would be subjected to the poison which could cause him to lash out, he needed to be restrained by what were probably Squire-grade esoteric alloys.

This was understandable. As a Martial Squire, even the shockwaves and wind gusts generated by his power could kill humans. It was simply too dangerous for these medical professionals to be in the same room as him when he was going to be subjected to poison.

"All done, we're good to go." The doctor smiled as he returned Rui's Martial license back to him. "Please take off upper garments."

Rui sighed with relief inwardly. At least it was only his upper garments, unlike his last procedure with the Martial Union.

Chapter 542: Burning

"...And that is how we'll be measuring your compatibility with each of the poisons you've applied for." The doctor explained as Rui was being prepped. "Any questions?"

"None at all," Rui replied. The doctor had just explained what he had already come to learn from his own research into poison, he didn't even need it in the first place, but the doctor was mandated to explain the procedure.

The doctor smiled wryly at his words, no questions meant that either nothing was understood, or everything was. He did not even need to wonder which of the two it was considering Rui was a Martial Artist. But it did not matter much to him, he had already done his duty.

"We will be taking blood samples and conducting brief preliminary tests to ensure that you're not particularly vulnerable to any of these poisons." The doctor explained as the nurses around him drew blood with specialized syringes that were capable of piercing even his flesh. "There are certain conditions that are benign but are such that certain poisons are extremely lethal to said Martial Artist, and even the minor dosages that we subject them to will end up causing extreme damage and potentially death."

Rui nodded, it was a good measure in place to prevent any accidents. Thankfully, he didn't need to wait long for the results of the tests to come in.

"Good news, you don't have any particular vulnerabilities towards any of the poisons you wish to test your compatibility of." The doctor informed Rui as he read through the test results. "We can proceed with the tests immediately."

Rui was taken into the chamber where he was strapped and cuffed into the bed. He had correctly guessed that the cuffs and straps could restrain even Martial Squires like himself. The nurses began attaching all kinds of instruments and devices across his body, a lot of them resembled those of Earth, and it even seemed that they were meant for the same purpose; to collect physiological and metabolic data.

After all, in order to verify the symptoms that Rui would experience due to the poisons, they would need to be able to measure them objectively. A bit of time passed as the medical team overseeing the procedure collected enough data on his normal state, which would serve as the control dataset for the evaluation of his compatibility with the various poisons.

"Alright, Squire Quarrier." The doctor's voice was projected into the chamber. "We will now begin the procedure. A remotely controlled syringe will inject the appropriate doses of the particular poisons in your blood, you may experience varying degrees of discomfort or pain, please try to remain as composed as possible."

Rui nodded. "Will do."

"Good, the poison will be administered now. We will begin with Hurndrum Nectar."

Rui glanced down at the two tubes sticking into his arms as a teaspoon of an ominous dark purple fluid passed through it into his body. Rui gritted his teeth because he knew what he was in for. The Hurndrum Nectar poison was the poison that caused an intense and lifelike sensation of burning.

"RRRGHH!" Rui gritted his teeth with a restrained scream as he felt his entire body igniting on fire instantly. It was his very first time experiencing a burning sensation to such an enormous degree. He felt as though someone had dunked him in kerosene before igniting him on fire.

He did his best to restrain his urge to lash out. Thankfully, his pain tolerance had reached a much higher level thanks to the boundless agony that was the breakthrough process of the Squire Realm, compared to that, this was a lot easier.

He closed his eyes as he focused on his breathing. The pain never ceased to go away but Rui managed to bear it much better rapidly as time passed, even his heart rate returned to normal despite the enormous pain. This poison was a high-grade poison in the Apprentice Realm but its effectivity as it passed through higher Realms decreased significantly.

('As expected, this poison will only cause surprise in my opponent at most, that too only once.') Rui sighed. Having finally experienced the Hurndrum Nectar, he was confident that it was not as useful as he had hoped it would be. While it was certainly startling and even shocking to his opponents when they

felt an inexplicable burning sensation, they would probably quickly get over it without any meaningful difference in their combat ability.

Of course, startling one's opponent could cause openings in combat that could be exploited, but that benefit was not worth learning a whole separate poison technique for, especially when there were other more suitable poisons at hand. He was pretty sure he could already shock his opponents with his Mind Mask technique in the first place, thus he didn't have any particular need for this poison even if the other poisons didn't work out.

He opened his eyes only after the pain dissipated.

"You endured that very well, Squire Quarrier." The doctor told him. "We will now be administering the next poison; Gangaer drop."

The Gangaer Drop poison was a poison that caused slow and steady necrosis; cellular death and breakdown. Such a technique would ordinarily be considered an extremely dangerous poison, however, its rate of affection was quite slow, and only in extremely long and drawn-out battles could its effectivity be maximized.

A few more instruments were remotely manipulated as made their way over to his hands, wrapping around his wrists and squeezing hard, so much so that his hands began feeling numb with the strange itchy feeling that came along with suppressed blood flow to any particular part of his flesh.

('This is probably to ensure that the necrosis is contained within a specific area rather than to have it spread across the entire body.')

Rui noted. It was much easier to deal with a localized necrotic spread rather than one that was occurring across the entire body.

A syringe was pricked into the center of his palm and a strange translucent liquid was injected into his skin.

Chapter 543: Commonality

He actually didn't feel any changes in his body for a decent amount of time after the Gangaer Drop poison was injected into his flesh, which was revealing the flaw that made it a low-grade poison.

('This is stupid.') Rui sighed. He would need to land the attack half an hour before the first signs of it affecting his opponent could be seen.

It was only after quite some time could he notice some dark purple patches on his palms. The poison had begun taking effect and had begun causing cell death on his palm. It was an alarming sensation as even the itchy feeling across his palm caused by the low blood circulation had disappeared from the affected areas, but he knew that there was no reason to worry. This was a relatively standard procedure and when it came to Martial Art-related procedures, he was quite certain that the Martial Union surpassed even the Kandrian Ministry of Martial Art.

None of the other poisons had too much of a visible impact on him, they pretty much blurred as time passed, Rui was quite thoroughly bored when the final compatibility test ended.

The restraints and cuffs came off automatically,

"All of the compatibility tests you've scheduled are completed, Squire Quarrier." The doctor informed him as Rui got up, rubbing his arms.

"How much time before the results come?" Rui asked as he put on his garments.

"Oh, it shouldn't take too long." The doctor told Rui with a smile. "Probably around a few hours depending on how much of a rush the medical analytics department is under. You don't need to wait here, of course, the data will be forwarded to you on your accouter."

"Understood." Rui nodded.

Rui thanked him before leaving the procedure room and heading for the training wing of the branch. His business with the Martial Union wasn't quite over yet. He still had the two techniques that he had purchased from the Martial Union that he needed to begin training.

"Excuse me." Rui addressed one of the staff members at the Martial support counter.

"How may I help you?" The staff member asked him with a courteous smile.

"I'd like to purchase the training resources for Tempestuous Feel and the Sonic Bullet techniques." Rui quickly told her.

"Yes sir, may I see your Martial license?" She asked, before verifying his identity as a Martial Artist and member of the Martial Union.

"Would you also like to purchase the tutoring services of a Martial Artist guide?" She asked.

"No." Rui shook his head. "Just the training resources will do for now."

He had spent a lot of money in a very short period of time, he needed to be mindful of his budget. Furthermore, he was quite confident in his comprehension and digestion of techniques. The two techniques weren't even that complicated, all things considered.

Hiring the few retired Martial Squires that served as training guides were quite expensive, he recalled from when he hired one for the Mind Switch technique. Back then, he had directly been modifying an existing technique, thus he had felt it was prudent. Furthermore, that was an Apprentice-level technique, it was much more expensive to hire Martial Squires for Squire-level techniques.

"Here are the training passes." She handed him two slips of paper that allowed Rui to make use of the necessary facilities for training in the two techniques he wanted to master.

The first technique Rui wanted to begin mastering was the Tempestuous Feel technique. It was quite important in more than one way. It not only would give him the means to sense his targets at range, boosting the Seismic Mapping technique, but it also would allow him to sense targets that were in the air more accurately. Furthermore, it also would give him the means to thoroughly sense the atmospheric factors that would end up affecting the trajectory of the sonic bullet.

It was a remarkable technique that fit his needs quite well.

Once he entered the sensory technique facility of the Martial Union with his training pass, he immediately sat down at a bench in the main lounge, pulling out the scroll of the Tempestuous Feel technique and unraveling it.

He didn't even bother trying to comprehend it as he quickly dumped all the information into his mind palace, before closing the scroll and his eyes as he was in deep thought.

"Interesting." He murmured as he finished reading through all of it soon enough.

The training for the technique relied on the premise that the body and mind possessed the capabilities to not only deeply detect atmospheric fluctuations, but to also learn to interpret them with enough continuous exposure and experience.

Thus the training regiment involved sealing off all of the senses of the Martial Artist forcefully while leaving only their sense of touch to atmospheric fluctuations unhampered. A tremendous amount of time would need to be spent by the Martial Artist in such a state in an environment with moving objects

('This is very similar to the training regiments for the Seismic Mapping and the Primordial Instinct.') Rui realized.

For those techniques, Rui had been required to seal off all senses but one so that he could focus on mastering and building the one sense that he was trying to master.

('Considering this a recurring theme across three techniques of different kinds and even different Realms, it is probably the case that this training method is a core training method for probably a majority of all sensory techniques.')

Rui wondered if they could even seal off all of his senses considering he had mastered Seismic Mapping and Primordial Instinct. The scroll insisted that the Martial Union could seal off all senses, including the techniques that one had mastered, but Rui felt an immense amount of skepticism towards that claim, he felt that such a thing should be impossible even when his rationality reminded him that the Martial Union was vastly more powerful than a measly little Martial Squire.

Chapter 544: Training begins

When he inquired about the matter to the assistant staff in the facility, they confirmed as much.

"These facilities are designed to be able to seal most kinds of sensory techniques that the Martial Union possesses." One assistant informed him. "There are other measures in place used to seal the remaining kinds."

"Good to know." Rui nodded. This meant that his Seismic Mapping and Primordial Instinct wouldn't hamper his training in a new sensory technique. "I wish to begin immediately. Make all the preparations immediately."

The assistant bowed. "Yes, Squire Quarrier."

There were several training regimes that were such that they could not be operated without third-party aid that was capable of operating the machines, instruments, and facilities that they would be training with. This aid was included in the standard training package that Rui had bought.

When the two assistants arrived, they arrived with a large black body suit, as well as an old man with an aura of power.

"Squire Quarrier, this Squire Firinun, he will be aiding you in the preparation for the training for the Tempestuous Feel technique." The assistant informed him.

"I didn't purchase the guidance of a Martial Squire though." Rui frowned.

The Martial Squire snorted at those words. "This is part of the standard aid that you've purchased, boy. There is no other way to seal your Primordial Instinct besides from a hypnotic technique that locks away your instincts. Without locking away the Primordial Instinct technique, you cannot train on your Tempestuous Feel technique since your mind can and will still rely on the former to sense your environment. I won't be offering you any aid beyond this necessity, rest assured."

"I see..." Rui nodded. ('So that's how they plan to seal the Primordial Instinct sensory technique, through hypnosis. How incredible, I have got to delve deeper into the mental manipulation field!')

Once Rui donned the black suit and entered the training chamber, the Martial Squire followed him in.

"When are we going to be-!"

BAM!

A loud noise surprised him when suddenly, the old man's voice reverberated inside his head.

('You feel your instincts dulling by the second, slowly, slowly. Every second, they grow weaker, smaller, softer....')

Rui felt a degree of alarm but realized that this was part of the hypnosis that would seal his Primordial instinct for the duration of the training period. He immersed himself in the man's voice, allowing it to influence him. Time passed as the man continued with his hypnosis. Much to his surprise, Rui's inherent mental fortitude was incredibly tough. If not for the fact that Rui was actively cooperating, he wasn't even sure if he was strong enough to hypnotize Rui!

An hour later, Rui finally snapped out of it, breathing deeply.

He turned around, meeting the stare of the Martial Squire.

"Is it done?" Rui asked.

"Yes." He snorted. "Finally."

"Will we have to do that every time I want to train?"

"No, I've planted a suggestion and a trigger in your subconscious mind." Squire Firinun informed him.

"Next time, it will be a lot simpler to get you into this state."

"I see..." Rui was quite curious about the hypnotic technique that the Martial Squire used.

He closed his eyes as he tried to employ Primordial instinct to test whether it was truly sealed or not, before opening his eyes in shock. He couldn't sense a thing!

('Wow.')

Rui was impressed. ('The technique is actually completely sealed.')

He felt a stronger desire to look into mental manipulation techniques whenever he could in the future.

"Thank you." Rui bowed, expressing respect.

The Martial Squire snorted before leaving the chamber and closed shut behind him.

"Squire Rui, we can begin whenever." The assistant told him.

"Begin immediately," Rui instructed.

"Yes sir."

Rui waited for ten seconds before suddenly everything went dark. Rui felt alarmed as he very rarely felt this blindsided. Ever since he broke through to the Squire Realm, his senses had grown immensely powerful over the years. He had become tremendously aware of his surroundings even without his sensory techniques.

Now suddenly, all of that disappeared. It was quite the jarring switch, he wasn't accustomed to this.

('There's almost no seismic radiation either.')

The chamber was clearly constructed such that no vibrations would pass through the floor, certainly none that could allow him to make much out of his environment.

The only thing he could feel was air bouncing on his skin energetically.

('This is the second function of the suit.') Rui recalled the training regiment from the scroll. In order to slowly get him accustomed to interpreting atmospheric fluctuations to map out his environment, the suit amplified atmospheric fluctuations, making it easier for him to analyze and interpret them. Once he learned to perceive his environment, the amplification would be continuously yet steadily decreased until it reached standard atmospheric conditions.

Once Rui would be able to demonstrate his combat ability in standard atmospheric conditions, he will have attained satisfactory mastery of the Tempestuous Feel sensory technique.

"Squire Quarrier, we can begin low-grade evasion training anytime." the assistant informed him.

"Alright, start at the lowest level, I haven't yet gotten accustomed to this," Rui informed. He could barely hear his voice externally due to the noise suppression, but he knew that the assistant staff managing the facilities of the chamber could hear him.

"Will do, sir."

Soon enough, Rui felt some exaggerated fluctuations on his back. He wasn't sure what that meant, but before he could even begin to understand what it meant.

POW!

He felt a light ball-like object strike him on his back.

('Is that how it works?') Rui wondered, as he quickly made some quick inferences. He felt a similar fluctuation on his front.

POW!

This time as well, a ball hit him in the chest.

This time on his arm.

POW!

Leg.

POW!

Rui simply kept observing for a while as he recorded and measured several parameters about the sensations and the projectiles that hit him later. He wasn't in a hurry to begin dodging them, he just wanted to collect more data for now.

Chapter 545: Speed

The assistant standing outside felt a bit strange. Rui had not moved at all in the past half an hour since the training began. Although he was merely trained to be able to operate the machines that could not be operated by the person using them to be trained, such as the chamber that he was operating now, he had been doing this job for years, serving alongside the head and side Squire instructors of the facility that had trained many a Martial Artist to master many sensory techniques, it had given him a degree of expertise on how Martial Artists ought to go about the training and what worked best while what didn't.

It was why he was confident that Rui was simply wasting time standing in one place instead of gaining enough experience in evading the projectiles. Rui even made bizarre requests such as adjusting the speed of the projectiles, size of the projectiles and weight of the projectiles.

('But what is the point of doing this if you're not going to even begin dodging?') He shook his head. Of course, he did not dare voice out his thoughts. Rui was a Martial Squire, someone who possessed an exalted status in not only society but especially in the Martial Union compared to a relatively low-level employee like him.

Suddenly, there was a change.

CLASP

Rui caught one of the projectiles aimed for his face.

The assistant shrugged, somewhat impressed, in his experience, it was somewhat unusual for a Martial Artist to gain the accuracy in timing and placement of movements to catch the projectiles, but considering he was still at a relatively low level, it wasn't anything crazy.

"Alright, time to put my preliminary understanding and preparations to the test. Begin increasing the difficulty of the exercise slowly as time passes." Rui instructed.

"Yes sir, will do." The assistant promptly replied, sighing inwardly.

He increased the difficulty level by a bit, increasing the speed, and frequency and diversifying the size a bit.

CLASP

Rui caught a projectile the size of a baseball aimed at his shoulder, tossing it away. Technically, this was supposed to be evasion, but catching it had greater sensory requirements, thus Rui had chosen to focus on cleanly intercepting all of them.

One by one, he caught all incoming projectiles regardless of their direction and size.

('Interesting, maybe he is particularly talented.') The assistant staff member watched with interest. ('Let's step up the difficulty a bit.')

Once again, all the parameters were increased. Yet, Rui easily kept up with all of them. The speed and power of the projectiles weren't at the Squire Realm, not at all. The lowest level of the training as Rui requested was at the human level, thus it wasn't physically difficult to catch the projectiles for a Martial Squire, not at all. The difficulty of this training exercise was the fact that Martial Squires were unable to

sense them at the beginning, thus no amount of strength or speed would allow them to catch or evade the projectile until they could.

An hour later, the assistant's demeanor had long gone from calm and composed to shocked.

CLASP

Rui caught a thin ball the size of a ping pong ball, before moving his head to evade another projectile aimed at his head, while simultaneously catching a third projectile dashing for his knee. He was dealing with multiple projectiles simultaneously quite smoothly. What was especially shocking to the assistant staff member was that the speed and momentum of the projectiles had escalated from human level to quasi-Squire level!

This was unheard of in all his time serving as an assistant helper in this facility in the Martial Union, he had never heard of someone reaching the quasi-Squire level stage in evasive combat exercises after a single hour!

Rui had made more progress in one hour than some Martial Artists did in weeks!

Even now, he was dodging the projectiles smoothly, catching them whenever possible.

('He's an unparalleled prodigious genius in the field of sensory Martial Art!') The assistant gasped in excitement.

Of course, this wasn't exactly true. The way Rui had gone about it was very simple, yet very different from all other Martial Artists.

He made the obvious deduction that the strange sensations he was experiencing were generated by the projectiles. However, while most people would stop there, Rui went much further,

In the beginning, Rui had simply spent quite some time observing and collecting data. He had begun by measuring the time difference between the inception of the sensation, and the actual clash between the projectile, while also measuring the momentum of the projectile based on the impact, and also

measuring the weight and size of the projectile. These three measurements over a period of time allowed him to understand the correlation between these physical parameters and the sensations that they caused.

('Higher momentum seems to linearly correlate to a more intense sensation, as does density.')

('Higher speed seems to linearly correlate to the abruptness of the inception of sensation of increased fluctuations.')

('The sine of the angle of incidence is directly proportional to the intensity of the sensation, while also causing a similar angle in the pressure causing the sensation.')

There were several correlations between what he felt and what they told him about the incoming projectile. Using these rules, Rui could infer the speed, weight, size, momentum, and even direction of the projectile, allowing him to effectively 'see' these projectiles at any given moment using these calculations.

Unfortunately, it was still far from perfect.

POW

Rui was smacked in the face by a football-sized projectile.

('Hm, I was too slow in my estimations.')

Rui noted. He wasn't particularly displeased. He knew that this would take time, he needed to be able to read these sensations subconsciously, unlike the conscious calculations he was making at the moment.

Conscious calculations were far slower than reflex, the moment the assistant reached even the very base of the Squire Realm as far as the speed of the projectiles went, Rui knew he wouldn't be able to keep up.

Chapter 546: Lagging

Rui decided to call it a day for the training of the Tempestuous Feel. While he had made remarkable progress in a single day, he had quickly discovered the hard limit that no number of tricks would help him overcome, from here on out it would be grueling sustained hard work over a long period of time. Once Rui was done with the technique, he got out of the sweaty suit, feeling the satisfaction of all his senses returning, including the Primordial Instinct technique.

"Incredible work sir!" The assistant came to his aid. "I look forward to your next training session!"

"Hm?" Rui threw an odd look at him. "Ah, er, yes, thanks."

He ignored the strange assistant before heading towards the long-range offense training facility. It was one of the largest facilities in the entirety of the Martial Union branch, for obvious reasons. In fact, Rui was partly worried whether it would be able to facilitate his needs considering the kind of technique that he sought to develop.

Once he entered the facility, he took the time to sit in the corner as he unraveled the scroll for the Sonic Bullet technique, before reading through it as quickly as he could, inputting all the data into his mind palace before closing the scroll and keeping it away.

It took him a while to process all the data he had come across.

('Interesting.')

The technique first required conditioning of the larynx by applying stress to it, causing it to grow thicker over time. This was the very first step taken that was necessary to generate powerful sound waves that could be concentrated into a bullet.

After that, Rui would be subjected to a vocalizing strengthening stage where his ability to generate sound would be exercised with breathing apparatuses that were mechanically designed such that one could not exhale through it unless one generated a certain degree of sound. The difficulty of the apparatus would be continuously increased over time as Rui improved, strengthening his larynx and his diaphragm.

The final stage of the technique involved learning how to efficiently convert the power potential energy in one's diaphragm when fully inhaled into sound energy and learning how to direct that sound energy.

It was definitely going to be different from the techniques he had learned prior.

"Ah, the Sonic Bullet technique, is it?" An assistant helper nodded. "I will fetch the conditioning device for the first phase."

"Please do." Rui nodded.

Rui put on the device, resembling an oxygen mask, on his face as the assistant aided him with the functioning of the device.

"RRGH!" Rui gritted his teeth once the conditioning process began. A tremendous amount of pressure was exerted onto his larynx. He felt as though he was choking. He couldn't even scream due to the fact that his larynx couldn't even contort under the pressure causing him to lose his voice while he was under training.

He wasn't even sure with what mechanism with which the device was exerting pressure on his larynx, but he didn't particularly care at the moment. He quickly gathered his composure as he breathed through his nose.

The exposure of his larynx to pressure on its tissue over time would cause it to become stronger, allowing it to be able to project the intensity of the sound he needed for the sake of the technique. Tissue tended to develop a greater degree of toughness due to long-term exposure to pressure. This was one of the ways that the human body could adapt to its external circumstances.

A few hours passed before Rui could finally take off the wretched device, drinking a healing potion as soon as he could. The moment he was done, he left the facility without a moment's waste.

He did not enjoy the training for the Sonic Bullet technique one bit, especially when compared to the highly pleasant training that he had experienced with his previous technique's training. Hell, it was almost as though they balanced each other out. One was quite fun, while the other was straight torture.

"That was rough." Rui sighed as he skywalked back home.

He had already completed all of his remaining business in the martial Union, all he left to do was go home and go through the results of the poison compatibility tests.

('And also begin developing the core techniques for the Bounce Project.') He sighed.

Out of all three projects, Project Bounce was the one technique that he had yet to make any progress with. He needed to immediately start developing techniques for the core principles of Project Bounce, until he did that, he would not be able to take a single step towards successfully realizing the project.

('But how am I going to do that?') Rui wondered.

He needed to figure out a way to actually at least get his foot in the door. The progress of one project could not lag too far behind the others, otherwise, he would be more inclined to abandon it. However, the ambition of Project Bounce was certainly something that was still alluring to him to, he would rather it succeed in any way he could.

('Even the simpler of the two problems, elastically observing all her kinetic energy and converting it to my body's own kinetic energy is quite hard.') Rui sighed. ('I would literally need to be made out of rubber or springs for such a thing to be poss-!')

His thoughts paused as an idea flashed through his mind.

('Made out of springs, huh?') Rui considered that thought.

It was, of course, impossible for him to be made out of springs, but that didn't mean he couldn't get the next best thing.

('Springs are coiled wires that exert a restoring force on themselves, when stretched or pressed, that is directly proportional to the degree of their stretching or pressing.') Rui recalled the basics about springs.

('If I can replicate the functionality of a spring with my own body by mimicking their mechanics with my body.') Rui glanced down at his hands. ('I might just have a fair chance.')

Chapter 547: Severed

"Ah, shit." Rui sighed.

The moment he had gone home, he had gone through the results of the poison compatibility tests that he had undertaken. More than enough time had passed since he undertook the test, thus the results would have undoubtedly been processed and sent to him.

Unfortunately, the results weren't what he was looking for at all.

('My compatibility with the Serinflow Powder is too low.')

Serinflow Powder was the poison Rui most hoped to master out of all of the other low-grade poisons that the Mindmirror Symbiote wasn't incompatible with. However, based on the results of his test with the poison, it became evidently clear that he wasn't compatible with the poison.

('Shitty luck.') Rui shook his head.

There was nothing he could do about it. The problem at hand was the fact that compatibility wasn't something he could alter, it was innate. With poison, it was a bit different because compatibility was marked by the degree to which the body was able to tolerate and flourish despite the introduction of a new poison, rather than it being a mental problem like it was for other fields, where compatibility related to the affinity one had with the field.

He could not change the degree to which his body was able to inherently tolerate the Serinflow Powder poison, so he could forget about trying to master the poison. At best, he could look at the poisons he was compatible with to at least a decent degree and consider them as candidates to employ in Project Severer.

('Problem is...') Rui glanced down at the list. ('They aren't particularly optimistic either.')

Gangaer Drop, Hurndrum Nectar... These were the poisons that he didn't see as much value in mastering. Should he try to forcefully incorporate them into the technique and try to make it work? Or perhaps, should he try to reinvent the concept of the technique?

He wasn't sure.

The whole point of the technique was to help him increase his lethality, perhaps as long as it solved that problem, it didn't matter what form it took.

('That sounds wrong.') Rui frowned. Was a technique truly synergetic with him like he had decided he wanted his to be if it didn't have any other conditions asides from them being lethal?

In that regard, perhaps he had been wrong about how he went about Project Severer in the first place. While it was true that the concept he had come up with was not weak, how synergetic was it with his Martial Art and Martial body?

...

('...Not at all.') Rui realized.

After all, he was struggling to find a poison compatible with him that was also quite useful. All the ones that he truly desired were incompatible with him. It wasn't synergetic with his body, and Rui was starting to see that it wasn't synergetic with the core of his Martial Art either.

Unlike Project Sniper that concretely made use of his strengths in systematic analysis and calculation in order to potentially result in revolutionary long-range accuracy, Project Severer did not offer anything of the sort. It was just a powerful tool that would no doubt be put to good use in Rui's hand, but it didn't use his strength to become even greater as a technique.

Individuality was important, but he needed to make sure that the techniques born out of that were also synergetic with his Martial Art and Martial body, taking his strengths and using them to produce even greater outputs than just the sum of the parts.

With that condition in mind, Project Severer was lacking. It did not particularly resonate with the VOID algorithm with Rui's personal strengths or his Martial body.

('If that is the case, then Project Severer was a failure from the start.') Rui sighed. He had simply gotten excited with the technique, but now that he had realized its greatest flaw, he no longer felt any desire to develop it.

At least, he made this realization somewhat earlier than later. It would have been best to realize that now than months later after he had already made a lot of progress in developing the technique.

('Should I... try to create a replacement project?') Rui wondered, before shaking his head. Ensuring the success of the two ongoing projects was more important than creating a new third project. As long as he completed those two projects, it would give him a measure of understanding of the difficulties of creating one's own techniques.

('In that case, I need to do everything I can in my power to ensure that Project Sniper and Project Bounce succeed.') Rui was determined.

Project Bounce's lack of progress was worrying him a little. He had gotten a bit of an idea prior, an idea that he may be able to convert into actual progress.

('I'm going to need to test my ideas out in some way.') Rui realized. ('Should I go back to the Martial Union?')

He could purchase Squire sparring services and get one of the Martial Squires of the Martial Union to help him flesh his technique out.

('Nah.') Rui shook his head.

It was too expensive, and although he certainly had funds, he could not spend them too ostentatiously.

('It's cheaper to commission a low-grade Squire to be my training partner.')

This was because purchasing Squire sparring services from the Martial Union required purchasing their sparring facilities as well in addition to the price of commissioning a Squire. While it would be nice to train in a training facility, he didn't particularly need it this time, and as such would rather save his money.

('Well back to the Martial Union anyway.') Rui sighed as he headed back to the Martial Union to make a commission himself. He intended even add a small fee that would speed up the process as much as possible. Thankfully, he didn't need a high-grade mission either, the mission would be a grade-one mission that would allow him to pick up a newbie the rates for whom would be cheap.

Chapter 548: Test

A day later, a Martial Squire stopped by the Orphanage. He immediately found another Martial Squire waiting for him at the gate.

"Squire Casen." Rui greeted him. "You're here."

"Squire Quarrier." The woman replied. She looked several years older than Rui, with brown eyes and green hair extending to her waist.

"Let's go," Rui told her, as he began sky walking.

"Where to?" She frowned, as she followed along.

"To where we'll be training," Rui told her as he led her deep into the forest near the Orphanage, towards a hill.

Rui had cleared himself a lot of land, suspecting that he'd need the space for what he was planning.

"You do have a striking technique, right?" Rui asked for confirmation. He had made that one of the conditions of the commission. He was going to be testing the idea he had come up with for the Bounce Project. He needed his training partner to possess at least one striking Martial Art technique.

"Of course." She replied.

"Good." Rui nodded.

"What kind of training do you wish for me to aid you in?" She asked.

Rui hadn't been specific in the commission, he had simply mentioned that he simply needed a training partner that could strike.

"It's a defensive technique that I'm currently working on," Rui told her. "All I need you to do I launch straight punches when I tell you to."

"Okay." She nodded, shrugging. This was a simple enough matter.

Rui walked up to her before taking a forward-leaning stance with his left arm reaching, facing her.

She frowned at the bizarre stance, before proceeding to wind up a right punch and swinging it.

POW!

Her fist struck his open palm, pushing it aside as it shot forward, striking his chest.

("Tsk, that was a failure.") "Again, this time aim for my palm."

She nodded, before striking him again.

POW!

Once again, the strike flew past his palm, landing on his chest.

"Again."

POW!

"Again!"

POW!

...

Only after the tenth time did Rui take pause.

What he was trying to achieve was effectively trying to turn his arm into a spring that would intercept strikes in the same manner that springs would. The spring needed to be positioned between himself and his opponent for it to be effective. An incoming strike's power would push against the 'spring' causing it to contract and in turn push his entire body backward, sending him flying.

This way, instead of the strike hitting him and causing damage, it would hit him and launch his body into motion. The spring would act as the middleman between the strike and Rui, ensuring that no damage would be inflicted on Rui and that he would only be launched into a motion.

However, in order for this to be possible, his arm needed to function in the same way a spring did. Springs linearly increased the force they exerted the more they were contracted. Which was a fancy way of saying that springs became harder to press the more they were pressed.

His arm would need to intercept the incoming strike and mimic that mechanism.

('The problem is that it's hard for me to properly intercept an attack with my palm.') Rui sighed. ('I need to intercept it at the base of my palm that is reinforced by arm and ensure it stays there.')

"Alright, let's get back to it," Rui told her.

She nodded before they both took their respective stances.

As she threw a straight punch, Rui adjusted his palm ever so slightly.

POW

FSSS...

Rui's eyes widened in elation as he realized he had skidded a few meters away from her. ('A hint of success!')

The fact that he had managed to push himself away meant that he had at least partially managed to convert a portion of her attack into kinetic energy instead of damage. ('But it's still really rough, an overwhelming majority of her strike hurt my hand.')

That was fine, of course. It was commendable progress considering he had just begun!

"Again."

The two got into position again, before she once more pulled back her right fist, winding up for a punch. Rui's sharp eyes were fixed on her fist.

POW!

FSSS...

"Tsk." He tutted. This time, he had only skidded a single meter. ('Inefficient, my angle was wrong.')

"Again."

POW!

This time, he completely failed as his palm was pushed aside, striking his face.

A few hours of practice went into this singular exercise. Rui had managed to make very minor general improvements as he figured out some flaws in his maneuver that were causing his arm to be flung out of the way.

The biggest change he had to make was offering no resistance to the strike with his palm to the strike as it arrived. He needed to flow with the strike and only after ten centimeters begin slowly offering increasing resistance like springs being pressed would. This would cause his whole body to move backward, converting the attack's power into harmless kinetic energy.

('It feels like pushing a wall to go backward on roller skates.') Rui likened the sensation to a memory from his previous life. ('A wall that is moving towards you. You can either let it hit you and get hurt or slowly push it as it approaches you and roll backwards away from the wall on your skates.')

That was the best analogy he could come up with, and it helped him get a better idea of how he ought to treat incoming strikes.

By the end of the allocated daily training sessions, he had managed to reach a stage where he shifted by about a few meters at least. His record was five meters, which was pretty respectable progress for the very first session.

More importantly, he had received confirmation that it was most likely viable, considering the rate of progress he was making. He had found the answer to converting his opponent's attack into harmless kinetic energy. Now, if he could find a viable way to get rid of all the kinetic energy instantaneously, then he would be very satisfied!

Chapter 549: Trainer

While he was quite satisfied with his progress, there was one issue.

"This is going to take longer than I expected," He muttered, turning to the distant figure of Squire Casen in the sky. "And even if she is a low-grade Martial Squire, it's not easy to commission Martial Squires constantly. I don't have that kind of money."

This obviously meant only one thing.

"I need to do missions if I am to continue commissioning her." Rui scratched his head.

He had considered buying a Squire-grade punching machine, before tossing the idea out the window.

"This technique needs to apply to more than just a punch. I need a Martial Squire training partner."

Project Bounce needed to work on all manners of striking attacks, it would be actually detrimental if he limited his training to mechanical and inorganic strikes.

"This will also be the first time I'm working on mastering techniques while also completing missions," Rui noted. "It's going to be a messy schedule."

While he could organize his training sessions well, it became harder to regulate the amount of time on missions, the types of missions he chose generally didn't allow him to predict the amount of time it would take to complete them.

"In which case, I should probably choose missions with defined time periods," Rui noted. "Ideally, long-term missions with defined timings would be perfect."

Though, those missions tended to have very low pay, unless he managed to get a real big shot to hire him as a bodyguard. In those cases, he would usually be doing nothing while earning really well.

('Do I really want that kind of a mission though?') Rui frowned.

Time was precious and even if it was a mission, Rui felt it was a waste to burn that many hours a day. Missions that gave him some kind of experience somehow, were the best.

('Oh wait...') An idea lit up in Rui's head. ('I wonder...')

He plucked his accouter, going through his personal missions. He had opened up his profile and inbox for commissions recently, and he had received more than just a few.

[Defense class commission: Bodyguard

Client: Savil Vengard

Grade: Two

Remuneration proposal: Fifty gold coins per hour.

Daily time: 84 hours a week.]

Rui raised an eyebrow at the mission. Just based on the rate alone, he could tell that this was one of the richer clientele of the martial Union. Fifty gold coins an hour was an outrageous income that an overwhelming majority of Martial Squires, especially at his current grade, would not hesitate in accepting the commission.

But not Rui.

('eighty-four hours a week?') Rui shook his head. His time was vastly more valuable than the time that would be burnt away standing around doing nothing. There was no amount of money that could purchase eighty-four hours a week from Rui.

He moved on to several others. They weren't too unfamiliar; standard defense-class commissions, as well as those from the hunter-class.

However, those weren't the ones that Rui was interested in at the moment.

"Ah..." A smile broke out on Rui's face. "Found it."

[Miscellaneous class commission: Sparring trainer

Client: Hestia Beauregard

Remuneration (negotiable): twenty gold coins per hour minimum

Mission timings (negotiable): fifty hours a week.]

He had been known as a highly effective sparring partner in the Martial Community and had received commissions to spar with other Martial Apprentices to help them grow. They had been enjoyable commissions, although they did not contribute to the growth of his Martial Art in any particular way, it felt good to apply his Martial Art in other ways.

Seems that people still remembered him for that quality.

He looked for the commission for the highest pay and negotiable timings, before accepting the commission.

[Miscellaneous class commission: Sparring Trainer

Client: Jeane Viermont

Remuneration(negotiable): Thirty-five gold coins per hour

Mission timing: sixty hours a week.]

Although this mission didn't give him any meaningful combat experience unless the target of the training was a Martial Squire, it did bring him satisfaction, so Rui was willing to allow the lack of high productivity.

Training someone via the VOID algorithm wasn't really an application of the VOID algorithm that Rui had thought about in his previous life. After all, the VOID algorithm was designed to win against any and all opponents. Rui had not even entertained such notions back then. But now he was starting to see how this could be the same. The VOID algorithm forced all Martial Artists to confront their flaws, shortcomings and imperfections.

There was no other form of training that forced Martial Artists to work on their lacking Martial Art and combat the way the VOID algorithm did. Furthermore, it did in the midst of combat, rather than through targeted training and exercises for any and all of their flaws like was normally the case. What Rui had learnt that demonstrating exactly in what manner their flaws, shortcomings and imperfections could be exploited against them allowed them to learn how to deal with those that would exploit their weaknesses.

It allowed Rui to see patterns in their Martial Art and combat style that they themselves would have never ever noticed without him. It was simply too difficult for them to introspect that deeply into their own Martial Art. They would need to get researchers of Martial Art to study their Martial Art extensively with all kinds of devices while processing the data they received before obtaining such results.

Rui just needed to observe them, and he would end up extrapolating even more information than any team of Martial Art scholars of the Kandrian Empire ever could.

He had applied this to Max and Mana when he trained with them, showing them their flaws and weaknesses. He was never too overbearing in his instructions, he did not want to have an undue effect on their Martial Path and end up causing them to become something that they weren't. It was possible that using the VOID algorithm to train potential Martial Artists was dangerous, and had thus acted very conservatively.

Chapter 550: Client

Rui arrived before a giant manor, escalating down from the sky.

"Huh..." He frowned.

He had accepted the most well-paying sparring trainer mission in his inbox and had arrived at the client's residence, but the residence was more extravagant than he had expected. However, what surprised him was the insignia of the Kandrian Empire outside the gates.

('Did I misunderstand who my client is?') Rui frowned. ('Or am I in the wrong place?')

Furthermore, the guards below also had armor and weapons with the Kandrian Empire's insignia on them. They were spear-wielding Martial Apprentices, who immediately took a stance once they saw a Martial Squire stepping down from the sky before them.

"Purpose of visit?" They asked, noticing his garb from the Martial Union.

"Commission."

One of them pulled out a comms device, reading a message on it. "Name?"

"Rui Quarrier," Rui replied.

This commission was made directly to his actual identity, so he did not use his official alias to protect it. He also didn't bother bringing his mask for this mission, anyone who commissioned him had access to his public profile in the Martial Union.

"Mission verification code?" They asked.

"8b49ebJ87" Rui replied, recalling from memory.

"You may enter." They nodded, evidently also possessing the mission verification code. "We will escort you to the Master."

Rui quietly followed them about, noticing the various Martial Apprentices stationed at various locations guarding the mansion. They too were armored and armed with various weapons that also possessed the insignia of the Kandrian Empire.

('None of these Martial Apprentices are of the Martial Union.') Rui concluded the obvious. The fact that their armor and weapons possessed the insignia of the Kandrian Empire alone implied that they were part of some governmental or Royal branch. That combined with the fact that the gates of the mansion had the insignia of the Kandrian Empire implied that the client was an authority high up in the hierarchy of the government or the military. No ordinary employee of the government possessed this much power.

Rui frowned, the information on the client that the Martial Union had provided him did not match the inferences he had just made.

('Did the client use a personal servant to commission this mission?') Rui wondered.

Still, wouldn't the Martial Union have easily detected this? After all, it was able to figure out the true client of a mission he had completed a while back that did exactly the same thing. Furthermore, this was in a foreign country, while this was within the Mantian Region of the Kandrian Empire.

The guard led Rui inside the mansion, where Rui froze for a second.

"Hm?" The guard noticed.

"This..." Rui frowned. ('This pressure... isn't just a Martial Squire, is it?')

His senses were remarkably sharp, with Primordial Instinct, he could easily sense Martial Artists who were suppressing their presence to an extent. The moment he actually reached the mansion, he had come across a presence with a sense of danger that far exceeded what someone within the Squire Realm ought to be able to produce.

"What happened? The master is waiting, come." The guard insisted, coaxing Rui.

Rui nodded as he continued following him inside, growing curious about who his true client was.

They walked in deeper and the presence drew closer to Rui until it was just a rock's throw away.

"Hm." Rui heard a strong deep voice acknowledging his arrival.

"You've arrived." He walked towards Rui rigidly.

The man was seven feet tall, standing a foot taller than Rui. Rui could sense that his body was coursing with power, the sheer amount of power that coursed through the man's body was intimidating and unnerving. Yet he didn't give Rui the profound sense of pressure that people like Master Aronian did, who could make Rui bow with sheer mental pressure alone.

"I am Martial Colonel Geringan Jenken." The man addressed Rui. "I've heard much about you, Rui Quarrier.

Rui's eyes widened at the man's introduction. "Pleasure to meet you too, colonel."

The man curtly nodded before gesturing to his lavish sofa, never taking an eye off Rui. "Have a seat."

It sounded more like an order, Rui suppressed the urge to salute with a 'sir, yes sir!' as he took his seat.

"I take it you are the real client of the commission?" Rui asked, breaking the ice.

Geringan didn't respond, he simply waved his hand. A few seconds later, a butler appeared. Rui wasn't surprised when he recognized the man as the actual client of the commission. What he was surprised by was why the Martial Union didn't inform him of it. Unless the colonel had gone through extensive means to hide it, he didn't think there was any possibility that the Martial Union wasn't aware of it.

Rui remained silent. He was dealing with an individual with far more power than himself in every measurable parameter. Although he was curious and cautious about why a person from the Royal

Kandrian Army had commissioned a Martial Artist from the Martial Union, he didn't want to be too forward in his inquisition.

"You must be wondering why I went through such a degree of obfuscation to commission you, correct?"

"Perhaps." Rui remained ambiguous.

"Hmph, fret not. I'm not going to do anything to you." He replied. "The Martial Union will not tolerate a Martial Senior of the Royal Army bullying one of their Martial Squires even if I did have any malicious intentions. It does violate the commission contract too."

"You are powerful and of high rank," Rui replied, with a little bit of straightforward honesty.

"Exactly." He nodded. "It is because of my status and my rank in the Royal Kandrian Army that the Martial Union cannot tolerate the affront, it would affect their prestige within the Kandrian Empire. Besides, they're not afraid of a Martial Senior in the first place."

He met Rui's gaze. "Besides, as I said, I don't have any ill intentions. I simply feared the possibility that you might reject my personal commission because I was from the army, hence the deception."