

## Martial Unity 671

### Chapter 671: Outcome

Even if Rui had made predictive models for all of the Martial Squires ahead of time, he could not know which Martial Squire was being deployed when the K'ulnen Tribe's Martial Apprentice inevitably failed, ahead of time. That was why Kane had been deployed outside of the K'ulnen village, waiting to identify which of the Martial Squires of the K'ulnen Tribe had been dispatched against the Martial Apprentices of the Martial Union to protect the K'ulnen Martial Apprentices.

He was to immediately inform Rui of which of the Martial Artists had been deployed via a pre-decided code since they did not know the names of all of the Martial Squires of the K'ulnen Tribe.

Code H was a low-grade Martial Squire, lower than Rui but not by much.

Based on the intel that the intelligence team had gathered on the man, he was an extremely close-quarter striking-oriented Martial Squire whose Martial Path was centered around elbow and knee striking. This caused his Martial Art to turn out to resemble something like a fusion between Muay Thai and Silat, two traditional martial arts of Earth from Thailand and Southeast Asia.

Rui had painstakingly constructed a predictive model of his incoming opponent based on the intelligence gathered by the Martial Union as well as data that he himself had collected based on surveillance of the battles between the K'ulnen Tribe and other Martial Sects that Squire H had partaken in.

Rui closed his eyes as he brought up the predictive model for Martial Squire code H from his mind palace, readying it to immediately fire in an input and pass the output to the ODA System.

And soon enough, Squire H entered the very periphery of his Tempestuous Feel technique. One of the challenges of applying his Pathfinder technique to Martial Squires was the fact that Martial Squires often traveled and fought in the air, which meant that Seismic Mapping was useless in this scenario, the only thing that he could do was rely on tempestuous Feel.

The second that Squire H hit the edge of Rui's Tempestuous Feel sense, Rui's pupils dilated. His brain went into overdrive as the entirety of his mind fired up, furiously rushing to ensure that the VOID algorithm and the ODA System would be completed as early as possible.

He pumped his latest sensory data into the VOID algorithm, and immediately he extracted a high-certainty prediction of his opponent's position. Almost reflexively, he tossed that prediction of his opponent's future position and trajectory into the ODA System, establishing the predicted data as the position of the target.

Instantly, he computed it and obtained the trajectory of the Sonic Bullet that he would be launching against his opponent.

The second half of the ODA System was also computed rather swiftly. Thankfully the atmosphere was tranquil, the atmospheric factors were rather easy and simple to predict.

It all came together.

An image formed inside Rui's head.

The exact movements he had to make. From the position of his limbs to the center of gravity. He could see exactly what he needed to do, where he needed to be, and when he needed to be there.

With almost no delay, he shot into position, opening his mouth and launching a small, yet potent Sonic Bullet.

THWOOM

The sound bullet flew for just three seconds... before stopping. Stopping after it crashed through the right eyeball of Squire H.

There was no scream, nor a struggle. There was no resistance, nor evasion.

THUD

The body of Squire H fell from the sky, falling straight down to the ground like a puppet whose strings were cut.

Rui heaved a deep sigh as he began panting slowly. The sheer mental strain of pulling off what he did was not low. The VOID algorithm was hard enough as it was, the ODA System piled on top of that, on top of yet another layer of difficulty being the fact that his opponent was a sprinting Squire gave him no room for error whatsoever. He had to be exactly perfect, and not even the tiniest bit less.

Yet, one could be quite certain that he'd succeeded, given the unmoving body of his target. Rui couldn't even sense a heartbeat through Seismic Mapping.

Rui hit a button on his comms device, before sky-walking above the trees, revealing himself to the world. He donned his grade-ten Martial Squire mask, allowing any scout of any Martial Tribe to feel his presence and the illusion of power he projected.

He also wanted to highlight the distance from which he had successfully taken that shot, highlighting the power of his technique quite deeply.

He quickly began retreating towards the Vilun Settlement at top speed. The K'ulnen Tribe would no doubt be extremely furious at the death of a Martial Squire, and he did not want to wait around to deal with repercussions directly. He did not think he stood a chance if he had to deal with more than one Martial Squire at a time unless they were extremely weak.

His mouth broke into a shark-like grin as he rushed back towards the Vilun settlement at top speed.

He couldn't help but feel quite excited at the feat that he had just accomplished. It was not hard at all to believe that he was a grade-ten martial Squire given that he just nailed a Martial Squire from nearly a kilometer away!

If the G'ak'arkan Tribe was merely interested before, he had no doubt that they were extremely shocked at this point. After all, the feat he accomplished was not something that any Martial Squire could possibly accomplish, yet if there was one that could, it could only be a grade-ten Martial Squire, correct?

He did not think that even the Martial Squires would be able to keep their composure when they learned what Rui could do despite the distance. If Rui was not wrong, then he had achieved a feat that they likely were not confident of replicating with their own long-range prowess.

#### Chapter 672: Reaction

As he had predicted, the impact that his feat had was not low. The most immediate of which he could see the moment he returned.

"As expected!" Senior Ceeran grinned excitedly. "You were able to pull it off! I did not doubt you for a second!"

It was true, Senior Ceeran was one of the few people who expressed his full-fledged support for Rui's plan after he had brought it up and proposed it.

The Senior had long known and had directly witnessed Rui's spectacular long-range accuracy, he had even begun training in the technique after Rui sold the technique to the Martial Union. His support for Rui came from solid foundations as opposed to blind faith.

However, it had become clear to Rui that of all of the Martial Artists of the Longranger Sect that had been deployed to the Vilun Sect, none of them had any knowledge regarding the Pathfinder technique at all.

They all stared at Ves like he was an alien that landed from outer space. Their stares were wide-eyed, their silence was loud, and they naturally parted ways for Rui as he walked through the crowd.

"Rui, great job!" Kane grinned.

He had been quite surprised when he had heard Rui's plan. Of course, this wasn't the first time that he had heard of the Pathfinder technique from Rui. Yet this certainly was the first time he learned what the technique was capable of. Rui had merely introduced it as a long-range technique.

Of course, knowing Rui, he knew that it would be anything but a normal mundane technique, having benefited from Rui's previous original technique greatly as a Martial Squire. Still, he had been more than just a little surprised when he learned about exactly what Rui had been setting out to accomplish, and what he had ended up succeeding in accomplishing.

"Thanks Senior Ceeran, Kane," Rui smiled at the two of them, before turning to special agent Cravis. "What is the response from the K'ulnen Tribe?"

"Your feat has caused quite a bit of ruckus within their village. A lot of rage, shock, and even panic," Special Agent Cravis replied. "The body has already been retrieved by a high-grade defensive Martial Squire. It is quite clear that despite you retreating from the battlefield in an overt manner, they are still taking remarkable precautions to ensure that what happened will not repeat."

Rui nodded, having expected that. Even if Rui left, they would feel incredibly stupid if the same thing happened yet again because they let their guards down.

"We have observed a warmongering spark within the tribe. It seems that the impact that this shocking death has had on them is much greater than if he had died in an extended fight. It appears that they are highly unsatisfied with the seemingly vain and meaningless death of their Martial Squire." Special agent Cravis explained.

Rui raised an eyebrow and looked at him with a hint of concern. "Surely this won't escalate beyond the expected degree, right?"

"Rest assured sir, we are quite certain that the K'ulnen Tribe will not abandon all their pursuits and engage in an all-out war against us purely because of the death of a single Martial Squire. Though, as expected, you can rest assured that we have gained the highest priority of all of their ongoing conflicts." Special agent Cravis explained.

"Good, because it sounded like they were going to do something rash based on what you'd just described to me," Rui sighed in relief.

"They cannot afford to do that, sir," Special Agent Cravis explained. "We have not crossed their bottom line by engaging in gross violations of their purely civilian population. We killed a Martial Squire that they had deployed to a battlefield that was supposed to be only for Martial Apprentices. Considering

that their Martial Squire perished on the battlefield, a battlefield he was not supposed to be a part of, they do not have much of a compelling incentive to react extremely."

"You would think the death of a Martial Squire would be a more compelling reason to lash out than the death of civilians, at least that's the way it is everywhere on the Panama Continent," Rui mused.

"On the Panama Continent, perhaps. But we are quite far away from the mainland. The culture here is different. Deaths of warriors on the battlefield are anything but unusual to them. Sometimes one side wins, and sometimes the other side does. Every Martial tribe is intimately experienced within both outcomes. However, an attack on civilians is something entirely different. If they let that slide, it would be no different from announcing to the entire island that they have grown weak, and that their warriors were too weak to protect their own people. Not only is that a disgrace that they are highly repulsed by, but being perceived as weak or soft would invite greater opposition and pressure from their rivals and enemies."

"Their values are fundamentally different from that of ours. Their strong desire for war and conflict is what allows them to cope with the deaths of their warriors since it is an unavoidable consequence of their very way of life. But a dastardly attack on their non-warrior members isn't," Rui shook his head, sighing in resignation.

It was this warped culture that had made what should have been an open-and-shut diplomatic endeavor long ago, draw out across many years.

"Never mind all of that," Rui continued. "Just be sure to update me on any and all abnormal movements of the K'ulnen Tribe. And also, keep an eye on the surrounding Martial Tribes as well, it won't be bad to cue in on their situation as well."

Rui paused in his tracks as he realized he forgot to inquire about arguably the most important party on the island.

"Tell me what we know about the G'ak'arkan tribe's reaction. We already know that there's no way they missed a conflict of this scale in their geographic vicinity, relatively speaking."

"What?!"

A wave of incredulity spread across the members of the village council meeting of the G'ak'arkan Tribe.

Inside the little council meeting room at the center of the village were many dozens of members, each of them being a Martial Artist. This was the prerequisite to being qualified to be a member of this meeting. The three Martial Seniors of the tribe faced the rest of the Martial Artists, whose seating position was determined by their power. The strongest of Martial Squires sat the closest to the leaders of the tribe, while the weakest of Martial Apprentices sat the furthest away.

Currently, they all faced one of the youngest Martial Squires of the tribe who had just returned from observing the latest battle between the K'ulnen Tribe and the Martial Union. The sheer scale of the battle was so high that the G'ak'arkan Tribe decided to send a Martial Squire to observe the happenings of the battle rather than a Martial Apprentice.

Normally, a council meeting would never be called just to hear the report of such a battle. However, the leaders of the Martial tribe decided to call one nonetheless when they heard his shocking accounts of the battle.

"What? What did you just say?" One of the eldest Martial Squires of the tribe couldn't help but murmur in shock.

"It is exactly as I said, sir H'Rulu," The Martial Squire scout managed to squeeze out. "When the Martial Artist of the second rank was dispatched from the K'ulnen Tribe, one of the Martial Apprentices stayed behind and waited for his arrival, seemingly. And when the K'ulnen Martial Artist was just a little under a few kilometers away... the outsider Martial Artist opened his mouth and launched an attack, a few seconds later the K'ulnen Martial Artist suddenly collapsed to the ground a kilometer away bleeding from his eye... And then the rank of the outsider Martial Artist went up by one! His aura became that of a powerful rank-two Martial Artist. It was unbelievable. I thought I was daydreaming! How could something like that happen? I'm not sure, it was..."

The scout had become absorbed in his own thoughts, losing cognizance of where he was.

"Wait wait!" Another Martial Squire raised his hand. "You're telling me this rank one outsider Martial Artist became a rank two Martial Artist?! After launching an attack that killed the K'ulnen Martial Artist from a kilometer away?! Ha! Do you think we're fools? Have you been drinking?"

A few nervous chuckles rose from the crowd. It was easier to believe that this was merely a drunk man's ramblings than to accept that this was the actual truth.

The scout's eyebrows furrowed at the accusation. "It's the truth! I know what I saw. I confirmed it many times. I even pierced my own flesh because I thought I was literally in a dream!"

He pointed at the reddened layers of cloth wrapped around his palm. "It happened. I checked! I saw the K'ulnen Tribe drag away its corpse very soon after! The blood on the ground is still there! I carefully verified the distance between the battlefield where the outsider Martial Squire was present, and it was without a doubt a huge distance!"

The members of the council meeting stirred at those words, this was far more undeniable proof of the man's words.

"Enough," K'Mala, one of the Martial Seniors of the tribe, said with a measured tone to the members of the council who tried refuting the scout. "X'Na is one of our best scouts, his word is very credible. We have already verified with other scouts watching the K'ulnen Tribe of his report. It is true."

One word from her, one of the most powerful and important members of the tribe ended all of the reluctance from the recalcitrant members. As a Martial Senior, her word was nearly absolute to the rest of the tribe.

"But... how can this be?"

"How can a rank one Martial Artist jump to the second rank so quickly and without the ritual?"

"That too in the middle of battle! Is this a technique of the outsiders?"



The atmosphere of the council meeting grew chaotic and unstable, the reluctance to accept the scout's report as true was understandable. After all, the implications of the truth were scary.

"That outsider Martial Artist... I can't be sure of this... But his aura felt exactly like that of the diplomat who came to meet us a few months ago. Almost identical, really. It's a shame that I couldn't see his face," The scout squeezed out, breaking the silence.

"If that is the case... then that means he has the ability to hide his strength," K'ahru, the youngest Martial Senior realized. "It's unheard of, but it's a much less insane explanation than a rank one Martial Artist jumping to the second rank in the middle of battle..."

This earned some nods as several members sighed in relief.

If the outsiders had the ability to break through to the second round without the Sacred Ritual, then they would have been a terrifyingly powerful force. However, this explanation made more sense and was grounded closer to what they knew.

"Still... launching an attack from that far away, hitting the eye of the target accurately and killing a rank two Martial Artist..." K'ahru gritted his teeth. "His powerful aura does not do his prowess justice. This is the strongest outsider we have ever come across after the rank three Martial Artist... the strongest rank two Martial Artist that I have ever seen, at least."

This earned the nod of many members of the meeting. Such a statement would normally wound the immense pride of the rank-two Martial Artists of the tribe, however, given the magnitude of the feat that they were being compared, not a single one of them dared to express any disagreement.

"Honestly... I don't think I could replicate this," K'Mala honestly admitted as she heaved a sigh of admiration. "That technique that he used to accomplish this... I wonder if he is willing to trade it with us..."

Chapter 674: Opposing

That statement turned heads, filling their eyes with greed at the thought of obtaining such power.

Were the outsiders willing to offer them this technique, among others?

If so... that made the prospect of trading with them much more alluring than before. As a long-range-oriented Martial tribe, obtaining such a technique would likely boost their power significantly.

"Do not lose yourselves in your greed," The chieftain ordered, immediately drawing the attention of all the members of the council meeting. "Even if we were to obtain that powerful technique, it is quite likely that very few of us will be able to master it. Such power does not come easily, and the greater the power of a technique, the greater the difficulty of a technique. With how immensely capable this technique is, it may be so that none of us can master it."

This dampened the excitement and greed in the atmosphere of the council meeting. The chieftain's words weighed the heaviest, and everybody took them seriously. Of course, they were all aware of the correlation between power and the difficulty of techniques.

"Furthermore, we don't know if they are willing to trade it with us in the first place..." Senior K'ahru. "But even if they aren't..."

He gritted his teeth as his aura intensified, bathing the entire council in his heavy aura. The Martial Squires present shivered as they felt his immense greed and battle lust.

"Even if they aren't..." He continued. "Can we really let them keep such a technique to themselves?"

The question awoke the fighting spirit of many members of the council. He had directly appealed to the battle lust that every G'ak'arkan warrior was imbued with from birth. He had directly appealed to their greed to obtain such power.

"That's right..." Their eyes widened. "We must obtain this technique at all costs!"

They were warriors. They fought. It made sense. Why give up their sacred techniques when they could simply obtain what they wanted by force?

"Enough," K'Mala warned them with a stern tone. "Have you forgotten why you want their techniques in the first place? Because they are strong. Do you think such strong people will roll over and let you have their techniques? What if they decided to do that with us? Would we roll over and let them have our techniques?"

This stirred up the council members even more.

Giving up their techniques just because someone was attacking them for it? Just the very thought of that was disgustingly alien to them.

"Never!"

"We will fight to the last warrior to protect our techniques!"

"Then you can be assured that you'll have to fight to the last warrior to obtain their techniques as well," K'Mala retorted. "We will lose more than we have gained."

"Your words are cowardly, sister," K'ahru's icy tone grew dangerously perilous. "Do you think we are weaker than them? They don't even have a single rank three Martial Artist right now!"

"Don't be naive, little brother," She scoffed contemptuously. "Look at all of their actions thus far. Do you really think they trust us to act friendly after showing us their treasure? I wouldn't be surprised if there was a rank three Martial Artist lurking in their village, laying low."

"Ha! A rank three Martial Artist lowering his head and hiding among lesser Martial Artists? That is absurd!" K'ahru snarled.

"The outsiders have absurd customs. We know too little about them," She retorted. "Waging war with them will bring us many losses. Even if we win, we will be too weak to defend against our sworn rivals and enemies... Does anybody want that to happen?"

This struck a greater chord with them. Unlike the Martial Union, the G'ak'arkan Tribe's relationships with the other Martial tribes on the island were more than just extremely bad. They had centuries worth of

bad blood built up. The very thought of losing and being destroyed by their enemies and rivals put a stop to all of their momenta. The stakes were too great for even thick-headed warriors like them to rush in.

K'ahru gritted his teeth as he sensed the ceding flames that he had tried stoking in the warriors of his tribe. He turned towards his older sister with a hateful look. "A little coward who's too afraid to fight even lesser Martial Artists. Pathetic. You're a disgrace of a warrior!"

Her eyes sharpened as he insulted her in front of the entire tribe.

She walked towards him. "An immature child who needs to needs to be treated like a baby. Think with your brains instead of your balls, for once, fool."

The two of them surged forward with furious expressions.

"Enough," An overpowering aura suppressed theirs.

They winced under the overwhelming pressure of the most powerful warrior and the leader of their tribe.

"Yes, sir," They bowed toward him.

"I have heard enough," he raised his hand, heaving a sigh. "I have made my decision."

The atmosphere of the council meeting grew more severe as everybody waited for the chieftain's decision. His word was absolute. His power was much greater than that of K'Mala and K'ahru, and his experience on the battlefield dwarfed that of theirs. Even the two of them did not possess the capital to defy his orders.

"As usual, the two of you have opposing views," He began. "And, as usual, both those views possess merit nonetheless."

He turned towards K'Mala. "Your concerns are valid and sound. There is a lot at stake here. Cooperating with them in a trade is a much better outcome than having to wage a war against them. We can grow considerably more powerful without suffering any material loss."

K'Mala nodded, delighted to see her opinion being given its due credit.

"However, K'ahru is also right. Our tribe is much larger than their settlement. Furthermore, in the past three months, we have not seen a hint of a rank three Martial Artist leading their settlement. We haven't yet come across an individual possessing such power. While it isn't impossible that they are in hiding. To remain in hiding for nearly an entire season seems very far-fetched. It is much likelier that there is no rank three Martial Artist, this is consistent with that rank two diplomats clearly being the leader of their village," He said.

#### Chapter 675: Decisions

K'ahru grinned at the chieftain's words. "Does that mean-!"

He froze as a wave of anger washed across him.

"Do not interrupt me," The chieftain's sharp eyes glared at him. "I see much merit in both your stances. However, what we lack is the necessary information we need to make this decision. Therefore, I have decided we will wait until we can move with confidence. None of us wish to weaken ourselves with a war that doesn't need to be waged just to be consumed by our real enemies. Yet, at the same time, none of us wish to simply hand over our precious and sacred techniques so easily."

He stood up, indicating the end of the meeting.

K'Mala and K'ahru felt ambivalent, while they did not get what they wanted, at the very least what they definitely didn't want happening did not happen. Thus the outcome was tentatively neutral.

The council dispersed quickly as each member processed what they had learned from it.

Back in the settlement of the Martial Union, Rui and Special Agent Cravis were still concerning themselves with the reaction of the G'ak'arkan Tribe.

"It's unfortunate that we do not have a functioning wiretap in the council meeting room anymore," Special Agent Cravis sighed with regret.

"There hasn't been an appropriate opportunity since then," Rui shook his head. "The presence of three Martial Seniors concentrated within such a small village makes it difficult to infiltrate the place."

Martial Seniors possessed tremendously powerful natural senses, Rui had confirmed. Senior Ceeran's natural senses were sharper than all of Rui's sensory techniques combined. This meant that trying to infiltrate the village when there were Martial Seniors was a suicidal operation for the most part.

"Last time, it was an exceedingly rare opportunity that the two younger Martial Seniors K'Mala and K'ahru had left the village temporarily at night while the chieftain was asleep. That is the only reason I approved Kane infiltrating the village and planting wiretaps," Rui sighed. "Even then, it was extremely dangerous. If the chieftain woke up for any reason, Kane would have zero chance of survival."

Rui was not willing to put his best friend on such a dangerous mission again.

"Forget the wiretaps, what can the intelligence and analytics teams tell me about the impact that this battle will have on the G'ak'arkan Tribe?"

"There are only a few possibilities as we had discussed briefly when you suggested the idea," Special Agent Cravis calmly replied. "For one, we can be assured that they will be shocked regardless of what course of action they choose to come to. Your feat is unprecedented to them,"

Rui took some pride in knowing this. The fact that his Void Pathfinder was able to shock a tribe that had been practicing and refining their long-range techniques for centuries was greatly validating, but that was beside the point of the discussion.

"Well?"

"We believe that they will eventually choose to cooperate to obtain our techniques, or they will choose to wage a war against us to obtain our techniques," Special Agent Cravis explained. "Cooperation would be the common sense option were they a normal state, but given their warped culture as well as the fact that they perceive a Martial Squire instead of a Martial Senior leading our settlement will likely make the latter option more alluring than it normally would be. As for which route they will choose to go. Only time will tell."

"Then it is time to prop Senior Ceeran back up, I presume?" Rui asked as he quickly understood the circumstances and immediately came up with a straightforward solution.

"It will serve as a deterrence, that is true," Special Agent Cravis nodded. "However, the problem is that propping up Senior Ceeran may also make the situation worse."

Rui turned towards Special Agent Cravis with a knowing expression. "His previous interactions with the G'ak'arkan Tribe."

"That's exactly so, sir," He nodded in return. "Senior Ceeran had wounded their pride in his previous endeavor to negotiate with them. One of the reasons that war didn't break out then and there was because he apologized. Martial Seniors apologizing are an extremely heavy and significant gesture in the G'ak'arkan Tribe, after all. Although Senior Ceeran never intended to offend the and was merely being brutally honest, that doesn't change their impression of him. Given how irrational the G'ak'arkan Tribe is, they may be more driven to wage war seeing him. After all, one Martial Senior is not enough to defeat three of them, in their eyes. Extracting the techniques of a Martial Senior may even appeal more to the Martial Seniors of the G'ak'arkan Tribe."

"May?"

"Unfortunately, we are unable to model all of their thought processes and patterns. Thus it is unclear how they will respond. However, the results of propping up Senior Ceeran cannot be undone, good or bad. Please keep that in mind."

"Can we switch him out for another Martial Senior?" Rui wondered half-heartedly.

"Definitely not," Special Agent Cravis shook his head. "Senior Ceeran enthusiastically volunteered for this mission. That is one of the reasons that Martial Commissioner Derun got him onboard. Martial

Seniors are at the peak of the lower Realms. It will take a lot of time, capital, and justification to replace Senior Ceeran with another Martial Senior. Furthermore, Senior Ceeran strongly desires to be here, it is impossible for you to override his will on that matter. Remember that you are able to command him to a small extent because he has graciously allowed you to exert authority over him."

Rui knew that. Senior Ceeran was a purist, quite like himself, when it came to becoming stronger. If allowing Rui to take charge of a mission that he was part of meant that he could obtain the techniques of the G'ak'arkan Tribe and become stronger, he was more than willing to allow it. It also helped that he was fond of Rui for creating the Pathfinder technique.

"I'm aware of that," Rui sighed. "Keep a closer eye on their movements, if we see something alarming, then we can reveal the presence of Senior Ceeran."

"Yes sir."

#### Chapter 676: Escalate

The latest battle between the Martial Union and the K'ulnen Tribe had reached the ears of all the Martial tribes on Vilun island. The manner in which Rui had downed a promising K'ulnen Martial Artist had impressed many Martial Artists. Some found it to be absurd, while others were shocked. There were some who even wanted to challenge Rui to a fight to test themselves against someone of his caliber.

The battle marked the escalation of the conflict between the Martial Union and the K'ulnen Tribe. Now that not only had the first Squire battle been fought, but Squire blood had also been spilled, the battle would no longer go back to being fought between Martial Apprentices.

Of course, Martial Apprentices would still be involved in the conflict, but their conflict would wrestle around less important avenues and assets of the many reasons that there was friction between the K'ulnen Tribe and the Martial Union.

The more prime reasons such as the war over the hunting and water sources, as well as claims over secondary and extended territories, would now be fought by the Martial Squires of both sides.



The Martial Tribes had their primary territories which were the lands that their villages occupied. However, the Martial Tribes did not tolerate other Martial tribes getting too close to their village. For example, if another Martial tribe tried building a village just a kilometer away from an existing village of another Martial tribe, the latter would most definitely do everything in their power to drive away the intruders.

They were territorial and did not tolerate other entities and groups infringing within their direct domain of influence.

This was the reason that the Martial Union could not build their settlement on the Vilun mountain even though there was plenty of space. The Vilun mountain fell within the domain of influence of the G'ak'arkan Tribe and thus the Martial Union's attempt to build a settlement on the mountain would not be tolerated. It would definitely be a source of intense conflict between the G'ak'arkan Tribe and the Martial Union.

And it was one of the sources of conflict between the Martial Union and the K'ulnen Tribe.

"And that is the point of today's conflict," Rui said out loud.

He eyes his audience, which consisted of the Martial Squires of the Vilun settlement.

"This is the first Squire-level conflict that consists of more than just a few Martial Squires," Rui told them. "There's going to be a lot of chaos, and unlike the previous Squire-level conflicts that we've had with the K'ulnen Tribe it is much harder to control the flow of the entire battle, or plan the entire battle as well as we'd like to."

It has been a week since the first Squire-level conflict between the Martial Union and the K'ulnen Tribe. Since then, several clashes had occurred featuring more than one Martial Artist. Rui had partaken in a portion of them after carefully planning and making all the preparations that need to be done.

He couldn't just enter the battlefield rashly. After all, he was targeted far too aggressively and hatefully. The K'ulnen Tribe identified him through his build, not to mention the overpowering aura that he was projecting thanks to the Mind Mask technique. He was still a grade four Martial Squire at the end of the day, maybe grade five at best. Any Martial Squire at a higher grade would be able to fight and eventually overwhelm him. Since the K'ulnen Tribe was fooled, like everybody else, that he was an extremely

powerful Martial Artist, they would undoubtedly send especially powerful Martial Squires to take him down if they ran into him in combat.

He had experienced something similar in the Serevian Wars, the only problem was that back then he was actually strong enough to deal with even such measures, but this time he definitely was not.

This meant that he absolutely could not get any close to any of the K'ulnen Martial Squires for more than an instant, otherwise, he might suffer grave damage. In order to be able to do that, he needed to make much greater preparations in advance to close the gap. He spent a greater amount of time analyzing the Martial Squires of the K'ulnen Tribe, sharpening his predictive models. There was no upper limit to the degree to which a predictive model could predict the target, the more data it had, the better it was.

However, because he didn't have much time, he needed to cut down on the number of targets that he had.

He looked through all of the data that the Martial Union had on the K'ulnen tribe. Especially, he scoured through the conflicts that they had partaken in and the Martial Squires that had been respectively deployed in each of those.

By organizing and tabulating the parameters and nature of their battles vs the parameters and nature of the Martial Squires that were deployed in those battles, he was able to develop a predictive model for the Martial Squires that would be deployed in any given battle, given that he had access to enough information.

This was not part of the VOID algorithm, of course. What he was doing was employing the same branches of statistics and probability that were used to create part of the predictive capabilities of the VOID algorithm.

This allowed him to anticipate which Martial Squires were likely to be deployed. Knowing that, he could make more extensive and deeper preparations for the Martial Squires that were likeliest to be deployed against the Marital Union.

('They're pissed off at me, so they won't fight back half-heartedly,') Rui knew that. But he was actually somewhat happy to know that. Since it meant that he could make better preparations due to having access to better information regarding his opponents.

"Be careful, this battle is going to escalate the scale of conflicts once again," Rui reminded them. "If things go as planned, then it's entirely plausible that this conflict will reach the Senior Realm."

### Chapter 677: Contingency

The Martial Union wasn't interested in a long-drawn conflict that would stretch out for many months to half a year. The goal of this entire conflict in the first place was to demonstrate the power and utility of their long-range techniques and draw out the greed of the G'ak'arkan Tribe for those techniques so that the next time that Rui makes an attempt to negotiate with them, it would go much better than it did before.

That was why Rui had no problems rushing the conflict between the Martial Union and the G'ak'arkan Tribe to the next level. After all, once the conflict between the two groups reached its peak, then their little exhibition conflict would be done, having exhibited everything that they need. At that point, the conflict was no more than a liability that did nothing but sapped away the capital of the settlement.

Once that happened, Rui would immediately have Kane execute Operation Endline, an operation that would frame another tribe of having abducted the women of the K'ulnen Tribe. Once that happened, that tribe would earn the absolute ire of the K'ulnen Tribe. It was far worse than killing one of their Martial Squires fair and square on the battlefield.

"Hm?" Rui's attention was drawn by one of the younger and weaker Martial Squires raising a hand. "Speak, what is it?"

"Uh, sir? I thought that this plan could only be executed when certain conditions were fulfilled, conditions that weren't always fulfilled?"

"Correct," Rui nodded. "The goal of this operation can only be accomplished if the K'ulnen has already dedicated a considerable portion of its Martial Squire capital to other battlefields. The intelligence team very recently discovered that this soon going to be the case, most likely. Once we verify that this is the case, and the K'ulnen Tribe dedicates greater manpower to its battles against H'Nata and the F'Ruku

Tribes, then we shall swoop in and attack in its temporarily spent state. It will need to muster out all of its remaining Squire-level assets once that's done."

This also helped Rui's predictive model, allowing him to make far better predictions with the information that he currently held.

"What about the mission bill for this operation?" Another Martial Squire asked.

Each of the Martial Squires had grown so accustomed to the system of mission bills that contained all of the information that they needed to know in a compact form that the settlement adopted the same briefing to all of its Martial Artists.

"They've been composed, of course," Rui nodded to the team of assistants in the room. "I'll break down the most important parts of the plan myself here, you can go through the details in your own time immediately after. Of course, there isn't much time left before the commencement of the mission."

Rui paused for a moment as each of the Martial Squires received a mission bill, before continuing.

"The goal of this operation is to make a final demonstration of all the cards relevant to the trade that we wish to make happen between the Martial Union and the G'ak'arkan Tribe," Rui informed them once more. "Which means, by the end of it, we'll have deployed every Martial Squire we have, and more."

Several Martial Squires frowned mildly at that.

"And more?" One of them asked as her eyes widened. "You mean..."

"That's right," Rui nodded. "If all goes as planned, then Senior Ceeran will have intervened in this battle."

The otherwise composed Martial Squires stirred at those words. Their reactions ranged from excited and motivated to a little anxious and uncertain.

"Based on our estimations, the K'ulnen Tribe does not possess the assets to push back against the forces in this room with their Martial Squires. This means that they will be forced to deploy a Martial Senior if they wish to avoid incurring heavy losses. After all, the remaining Martial Squires in their village at the moment are the only Squire-level assets between us and their village," Rui explained, before continuing. "If we deploy all of our long-range Martial Squires at once, then it is quite likely they will take one look at our numerical advantage and immediately deploy a Martial Senior, with or without their Martial Squires."

The Martial Squires looked a little pale at the scenario that Rui just described. While the gathering of the Martial Squires within the military conference room was certainly impressive, none of them thought they could fight a Martial Senior and win.

"Of course, I think we can all agree that such a scenario is undesirable," Rui smirked. "Instead, we will begin by deploying a number of Martial Squires just five percent below the number of Martial Squires that they are able to deploy at all once they have committed Martial Squires to other battlefields. This is just enough of a margin to be assured that the K'ulnen Tribe won't deploy its Martial Senior from the get-go."

"What if it isn't?" One of them asked, with a skeptical expression.

"Even if it isn't, and this is very unlikely, but even if it isn't, we have Senior Ceeran waiting on standby and on high alert. He'll move in at top speed the second we have even the first indication that a Martial Senior will be deployed immediately."

This brought some relief to their faces. As Martial Squires of the Longranger Sect, all of them looked up to Senior Ceeran. Furthermore, as a long-range Martial Senior, he could protect and intervene even before he actually reached the battlefield. This was an even greater reassurance.

"The likeliest scenario is that we will be embroiled in a heated conflict with the Martial Squires of the K'ulnen Sect," Rui reminded them. "We will need to fight hard and fight strong and produce good results. You have all been assigned duties and roles that are suited to your strengths so that your very best performance can be drawn out of you. Be sure to go all out and show them what we are capable of one last time."

Those words motivated the Martial Squires a lot. Since this would be their final battle against the K'ulnen Tribe, they were definitely going all out.

"If this is our final battle, then that means that Senior Ceeran will be taking part anyway, correct?" Another Martial Squire asked.

"Of course," Rui nodded. "The battle will begin with only Martial Squires, however, as it progresses, we will have reinforcements giving us the edge against their Martial Squires. The K'ulnen Tribe will have no choice besides from deploying their Martial Senior and by that point, it will be outside our hands."

The Martial Squires nodded, understanding the plan.

This way, they get to demonstrate the full power of the Squire-level assets of the Martial Union, before then demonstrating the full power of the sole Martial Senior of the Martial Union settlement.

"Um... The K'ulnen Tribe has two Martial Seniors, right? Will Senior Ceeran be able to handle them by himself?" Another Martial Squire boldly voiced out.

Of course, he immediately turned himself into a target for the glares of his fellow peers and sect members. It was a considerable lack of faith on his part to ask that question, though Rui did appreciate the caution.

"Had it been more than just a handful of Martial Seniors, I would entirely share your concerns," Rui smiled. "But just two of the native Martial Seniors of this island are not enough. Senior Ceeran is in the upper echelons of the Senior Realm by the Martial Union's standards. That's good enough."

There was a moment of silence as the air turned awkward. Not everyone was convinced.

Rui sighed. "The quality of our Martial Apprentices is greater than that of theirs. This is true across all Realms to varying degrees. The difference is the least in the Apprentice Realm."

The power of Martial Apprentices had the fewest variables controlling them out of all of the three lower Realms. The potency of one's Martial Path, the quality of techniques that one had mastered, physicality, and experience were the major factors that decided the power of Martial Apprentices.

"Because there are fewer variables that determine the power of a Martial Apprentice, that ends up meaning that there are fewer advantages that our Martial Apprentices possess over theirs," Rui explained. "Which is why the gap is the smallest. From what I can see, their Martial Apprentices are about two grades lower than that of ours, on average."

Rui was absolutely certain that his Martial Apprentice self would have crushed any and all Martial Apprentices on Vilun Island with laughable ease. He was once the strongest Martial Apprentice in the entirety of the Kandrian Empire, it was possible that he would have been mistaken as an extremely weak and young Martial Squire on Vilun Island. Especially when he had the Mind Mask technique making him look like a weak grade-one Martial Squire.

"However, the story is not the same when it comes to Martial Squires," Rui smiled. "The power of Martial Squires comes from not just all of the aforementioned factors for the Apprentice Realm, but also the compatibility and synergy between each of the Martial body, the Martial path, and the Martial Art techniques. The synergy between each of these three provides tremendous amounts of power."

Rui would know. He produced a grade-eight defensive technique, something that was probably beyond his ability to learn otherwise, and a grade-ten long-range technique that put even Martial Seniors like Senior Ceeran in a fervor.

"In this regard, it is absolutely the case that we are well beyond them. Take a look at our revolution breakthrough process. We each possess Martial bodies that are most aligned with our Martial Art and Martial Path. However, do you think the same can be said for them?"

The evolution breakthrough process of the super-nations of the Panama Continent gave the Martial Squires a physicality best suited for their Martial Paths. However, the intelligence and analytics teams had come to the conclusion that their sacred Ascension ritual was incapable of providing the same benefit to the same degree that the Martial Union could.

This meant that on top of all of the advantages that the Martial Union Apprentices had over the Vilun Apprentices, the Martial Squires had the advantage of a superior and more customized evolution breakthrough process.

On top of that, they also possessed a greater diversity of techniques and a much stronger foundation due to the sheer amount of research and development that went into optimizing and creating techniques.

"By my estimate, we, on average, are superior to the native indigenous Martial Squires by two grades. Two grades of the Squire Realm," Rui continued.

The difference between grades was larger in the Squire Realm than it was in the Apprentice Realm, which meant that there was a greater gap between the Squires of both sides than the Apprentices of both sides.

"Now, if we extrapolate this to the Senior Realm..." Rui smiled. His point had become apparent at this point. It was a solid rationale that was quite convincing to the Martial Squires present.

Of course, not all of the Martial Squires were aware of the conditions to break through to the Senior Realm, and he highly doubted any of them were actually aware of what the apotheosis to the Senior Realm actually was. Still, even if there were no additional variables in the Senior Realm that further widened the gap between the Seniors of the two sides, it could certainly be no smaller than the gap between the Squires of both sides.

"And that alone is enough to have confidence in Senior Ceeran," Rui calmly told them. "I have already spoken to Senior Ceeran regarding the matter, and rest assured that his confidence was quite compelling and reassuring to me. In fact, he seemed quite excited to see action after a long time of doing nothing but laying low. All of you can talk to him when you get the chance."

Rui's words reassured them, his logic was sound which made his confidence much more relaxed.

## Chapter 679: Deployed

The preparations were soon made. Each of the Martial Squires equipped themselves with the bare minimum unlike what they would for normal missions. Since this operation involved direct combat and nothing else, there was no need to make other kinds of preparations or take utilities that they wouldn't need.



The only thing they took was a pair of potions, a rejuvenation, and a healing potion. Though, since the G'ak'arkan Tribe was not inclined to accept their technology that they did not understand or trust, using them was not conducive to the goal of the operation.

"Is everybody ready?" Rui asked once they all gathered back in a dispatch facility in the outer ring of the settlement.

He didn't even need to ask, he could feel their steeled wills and determination through their aura.

"We've just gotten word from the intelligence team that the K'ulnen Tribe seems to be about to dispatch a large chunk of their Martial Squires to another battlefield very soon. As soon as we've received confirmation that the battle has begun and that it's too late to call them back, we'll immediately head out ourselves, got it?" Rui informed them, receiving a series of nods in return.

Just then, an extremely potent yet restrained presence entered their senses.

"Senior Ceeran," Rui bowed his head lightly, expressing the respect that the Martial Senior deserved by virtue of being a Martial Senior.

Rui had also noticed the differences in his demeanor as well. Usually, the man was in a light-hearted albeit highly passionate state of mind. He resembled an excited adventurer or even an artist pursuing their craft into the unknown, looking to improve their craft. Yet today, he was nothing short of a grizzled warrior. His focus was single-minded, single-mindedly on the upcoming battle.

He had long been briefed about his role in the battle, and he knew that his role was pivotal, it was no surprise that he took it extremely seriously

Nobody said a word as they all waited. A brief time passed before Rui finally received the confirmation that he had been waiting for.

"Alright, it's time," Rui quickly signed on the last bit of paperwork to commence the operation officially, before eight Martial Squires set out immediately.

They sprinted through the sky at top speed, zipping through the reluctant air.

While they could travel much faster when they were on land, there were far too many obstacles that they would have to permanently destroy in order to surpass their speed through the sky. They had chosen to avoid doing so since their environment was very necessary to their self-sufficiency and sustenance on the island. All of the Martial Tribes were well aware of this. It was why there was an unwritten agreement to avoid certain parts of the island when engaging in conflict because if something went wrong, everybody would suffer.

Martial Squires generally avoided the ground the only time that Martial Seniors clashed on the island had left a gigantic crater that seemed to permanently wipe out any and all vegetation and served as a battlefield for many of the occurring conflicts that came much later.

As they flashed through the sky at tremendous speeds, it was only a short matter of time before they could see the village of the K'ulnen Tribe in the distance from their elevation. Even though the Martial Union settlement and the K'ulnen village were separated by several dozens of kilometers, such a distance meant very little to Martial Squires.

"They're coming," Rui's eyes narrowed as he managed to distinguish several tiny dots escalating from the village, headed directly toward them. "Just as we predicted, all nine of the remaining Martial Squires in the K'ulnen Tribe have been dispatched to defend their village. Let's pause here."

This confused his peers. "Why do you want to stop? Shouldn't we drive the battle as close to their village as possible?"

Rui shook his head. "If we're too close to their village, Senior Ceeran will not be able to intervene in the battle in time, even with his long-range attacks, to handle the Martial Senior that will inevitably be killed."

This made sense. The rest of the Martial Squires immediately acquiesced, none of them wanted to be left alone facing a Martial Senior, that was a suicide battle that they had no hope of winning whatsoever.

"Tsk, looks like they're not so stupid after all." Rui tutted as he saw the Martial Squires of the K'ulnen Village covering their eyes.

It was clear that they were extremely wary of Rui's super long-range accuracy. None of them wanted to have their brains scrambled by a sound bullet crashing into their eyes.

"That's a shame, but it isn't outside of my expectations." Rui sighed. It didn't take a genius to figure this solution out. "Alright, get ready, they're starting to get close enough."

The Martial Union's Martial Squires took their stances as they prepared their long-range attacks.

Rui went even further back since he had a much greater long-range capability. He was arguably the weakest Martial Squire on the battlefield since this battle was meant to showcase long-range techniques. Which meant that he could not use the vast majority of the techniques that he had mastered.

This was a serious handicap. If not for the fact that he had a grade-ten long-range technique, he would be utterly inconsequential in this battle. At best he would be able to provide distractions and brief moments of relief for his teammates.

Of course, Rui had long predicted that this would be the case. He had not come this far only to be helpless in battle.

('This is going to be one the most challenging battles I will be putting myself through since I became a Martial Squire,') Rui grinned. Although he was displeased that he wouldn't be able to utilize his Martial Art, he did enjoy the prospect of pushing his mind to the limit as he tried to make the best of what he had, and he intended to excel at it.

Chapter 680: Clash

"I WILL AVENGE MY BROTHER!"

Was the first instance of communication between the two groups. The woman who bellowed those words from a few kilometers away was one who led the charge of the K'ulnen Martial Artists.

Rui could feel her hateful glare pinning on him even from that distance away. "He just had to have a muscle-brain high-grade Martial Squire for a sister, didn't he?" He sighed. This was outside of his prediction, but it didn't alter the battle too much. However, he had to be careful about how far this Martial Squire would be willing to go to take him down.

She was powerful, he could very clearly feel that she was several grades above him, which meant that she was very capable of ending his life if she wanted to.

Even though Rui was a grade-four Martial Squire, this grade was above the power that his techniques and Martial body should have yielded.

It had been less than two years since he had become a Martial Squire, the growth that his Martial body would have had thanks to the evolved muscle hypertrophy and evolved passive tissue conditioning that every Martial body had would have been minimal. He had been told that the power of his Martial body was a few grades below what one would expect from a grade-four Martial Squire. The number of techniques that he had mastered was also lesser than that of other grade-four Martial Squires.

It took many years to reach close to the halfway point in the Squire Realm power-wise, years that Rui had certainly not fulfilled

The reason that he was in grade-four despite his infancy in the Squire Realm was thanks to the VOID algorithm and also little thanks to the powerful techniques that he had created.

However, those were no longer factors in this battle due to the fact that his Martial Art was restrained. The only thing he could use was the Void Pathfinder.

This meant that the difference between some of his opponents and himself was much more exaggerated.

('Especially against that vengeful grizzly bear of a woman,')

Her body was huge, packed with muscles that he didn't even know existed. Hell, considering how strange Martial Squire could be, it may very well have been that they didn't exist in normal human bodies. Rui wasn't sure he could take more than even a few attacks from her.

Thankfully, she didn't seem too agile, and most of her prowess was likely centered around muscular power and defense. As long as he avoided allowing her to enter within a certain range, he could be assured to be safe.

It would have been too dangerous for a long-range Martial Squire to fight another Squire many grades above the former, but Rui had a grade-ten technique, perhaps even above grade ten after he used it along with the VOID algorithm.

He opened his mouth.

THWOOM!

A powerful Sonic Bullet flew through the atmosphere, traveling at the speed of sound. The Martial Squires of the K'ulnen Tribe noticed that gesture, scrambling the direction furthest away from when he seemed to have launched the attack, covering their eyes.

BAM!

"Argh!" One of the Martial Squire groaned as immediately reached to caress their bruised and bleeding neck, leaving his eyes exposed for just a split second.

That was the last gesture he ever made as a second Sonic Bullet crashed into his eyeball the second he dropped his arm guard over his eyes instinctively.

...

All of the Martial Squires froze as they realized what had happened.

"I'LL KILL YOU!" The leader of the K'ulnen Squire team screeched as her expression grew even more intense and hateful. The other Martial Squires also threw hateful glares at him as they raced forward more intensely. Seeing their comrade fall so easily and quickly shook all of them, angering them to their core.

It instilled their hatred and fear of him, atop the grief of losing a brother.

Yet, this was no time to mourn.

Rui grinned wildly, further enraging his opponent. ('Taste the power of a predictive model refined over many weeks!')

The only predictive models of his that were more refined were that of his friends who he had spent many years observing.

"I'LL HANDLE HIM. THE REST OF YOU FIGHT THE REST!"

"Fire!" Rui ordered once their opponents entered the more limited firing range of his comrades.

The remaining Longranger Martial Squire immediately began raining attacks galore on their opponents. As much as Rui would have loved to fulfill his curiosity and analyze their attacks, he didn't have much leeway. After all, this wasn't an Apprentice-level battle that posed zero danger to him, one that he could perceive in slow motion.

This was a powerful battle that could get him killed with even the slightest bit of carelessness. Furthermore, he was facing someone very determined to kill him.

"YOU'RE DEAD!" She raged as she sprinted across the air toward him.

She was extremely careful of his one-shot attack, of course. She was infuriated, but she had not lost her mind. Rui could sense the wariness in her demeanor even as she chased after him. He could tell that she was putting a lot of attention on his mouth. Guarding her eyes every time he opened his mouth.

THWOOM!

BAM!

The attack crashed against her neck.

"IS THAT THE BEST YOU CAN DO?!" She snarled as a brief smile cracked at the edge of her mouth.

Rui tutted. He had already known that the same trick wouldn't work twice, but what really displeased him was how little damage his attack caused.

('Her body is a fucking tank!') Rui groaned.

The Sonic Bullet was not a tremendously powerful attack. He could not possibly inflict much meaningful damage on her body unless it hit a vital, like her eyes.

Honestly, it was an impossible scenario, if not for a few elements.

Firstly, Rui did not need to win. He merely needed to engage with his opponent to a respectable degree, and that was enough for the most part. The other Martial Squires were genuine experts at long-range battle and would take care of evoking the greed of the G'ak'arkan Tribe's techniques.

Secondly, her combat style was elementary, which meant that his already extra-refined predictive model was especially effective against her.