

## Martial Unity 741

### Chapter 741: Unsophisticated

"Wait," Julian raised a hand. "You're telling me that their version of the Squire evolution breakthrough process takes years to complete?"

Rui nodded. "Their evolution breakthrough process, or their sacred Transcendence Ritual as they called it was speculated to work with crude applications of some highly potent esoteric substances that can be found on the island."

The intelligence team assigned to the Vilun settlement had managed to collect information on the Squire evolution breakthrough process across the entirety of the duration of the mission.

They had come to the conclusion that the procedure was absurdly long and required the Martial Squire to undergo a truly extensive process.

"That might actually make sense," Julian nodded deep in thought. "Their technology is non-existent and they do not possess healing potions that rapidly heal grave injuries, which is one of the reasons that the Squire evolution breakthrough process of the Kandrian Empire is able to occur within a short amount of time."

And still, it yielded inferior results despite taking exponentially more time. This was the difference that the sophistication in technology was able to cause.

Regardless, the Martial Union did not have anything beyond curiosity surrounding the Squire evolution breakthrough process of the Martial tribes on Vilun island, they had no desire to obtain a crude and primitive process when they had their own state-of-the-art and cutting-edge technology when it came to Squire evolution breakthroughs.

The two conversed for some more time about a variety of matters, including Max and Mana breaking through. Rui was intrigued to know that Julian had already had a handful of discussions about the Apprentice Realm with them. He was happy to know that he had exercised discretion and controlled the amount of information that he gave them unlike with Rui, who he had far more trust in.

Rui spent the next few days relaxing with the family and taking care of the children. He had truly missed them and wanted to squeeze in as much time with them in a brief period of time.

After all, he was going to get really busy real soon.

STEP

He stopped before the Hajin branch of the Martial Union.

"Identity and purpose of visit?" The Martial Squire security guard asked him.

"Squire Rui Quarrier," Rui replied calmly as he handed them his Martial license. "Purchase of information."

"Alright," The guard nodded, returning his license and passing him through.

Rui navigated the Martial Union reaching the Martial exchange department and counter. "Excuse me."

"Yes," An employee addressed him with a smile. "How may I help you today, sir?"

"I would like to purchase all the information surrounding the Shionel Dungeon, please," Rui calmly requested.

"Give me one moment, sir," She replied as she accessed her terminal.

"That will cost around fifty-two thousand eight hundred and ninety Martial credits, sir," She replied straightforwardly.

Rui winced inwardly at the enormous price but nodded. In reality, while the price is high, he was probably being given the information at a lower price. He did not think for a second that an outsider to the Martial Union would be able to purchase all the intelligence on the Shionel Dungeon at this price.

"Please deduct the price of the information from my account,"

"Of course, sir. Kindly provide me with your Martial license please,"

"Squire Quarrier, the transaction is complete. Is there anything else that you would like to purchase?"

"Not for now, thank you,"

"In that case, the information will shortly be available on your accounter," She informed him. "Thank you for your purchase."

Rui left the Martial Union heading back home. Unfortunately, he wasn't allowed to directly share the information purchased from the Martial Union with other parties. After all, that became far too ripe for exploitation where they sell the information at a slightly lower price and end up attracting all of the customers of Martial Union while selling something that the intelligence department of the Martial Union had spent a lot of resources in obtaining.

The funds that the Martial Union obtained from this little side business were one of the sustainable sources of funds for the intelligence department of the Martial Union. They could not allow themselves to be ripped badly.

Thankfully, that rule did not extend to indirect and transformative distribution of the information. Meaning, Rui could read everything, understand and assimilate it before conveying it to Kane and making their plans based on that information. Even the Martial Union understand it was stupid and impractical to try and restrict such application of information.

He quickly reached home and secluded himself in his room with his accounter as he began scrolling through the information that he had purchased.

"This is..." Rui's eyebrow rose. "I can see why they charged that much for all this information."

The information was more extensive than he had expected, though, in hindsight, he shouldn't have been too surprised. The Martial Union must have bolstered its intelligence network in the Shionel Confederation once the discovery of the new dungeon had come to light. Thus it was no wonder that they were able to gather so much information regarding the matter.

The information was divided into multiple categories, starting with the foundational information regarding the Shionel Confederation itself as a state.

"Oh...?" Rui raised an eyebrow.

The Shionel Confederation was a state that was ruled by the Shionel Merchant Guild, its governmental structure could more or less be characterized as a corporatocracy. The state had been founded in a time and region of war between surrounding small kingdoms and tribes that were perennially in conflict with each other. A large number of wealthy merchants and businessmen had come together and formed a guild that manufactured or purchased arms and ammunition, logistical resources, essential goods, and supplies and supplied it to external parties that were engaging in war with another party. They had bolstered just enough of a military to disincentivize an attack and had formed pacts with the forces that would go on to win the wars and become the established kingdoms of today.

Today, the once humble opportunistic merchant guild had absorbed many merchants and businessmen, businesses, and corporations and had matured into a commercial and economic state.

A massive dungeon had been unearthed in such a place.

"Oh boy..." Rui couldn't help but feel an ominous chill.

## Chapter 742: Capitalism

It couldn't be helped. It was clear that the Shionel Confederation was nothing more than a group of greedy businessmen who were only interested in accumulating more capital, one way or another.

These greedy businessmen were untethered and unhampered by anybody but themselves, as the Shionel Merchant Guild served as the legislative branch of the Shionel government. As such, the legislations in place were highly capitalistic in nature and were highly inviting for any aspiring merchant.

They had signed several treaties and bilaterals with the surrounding sovereign states that gave them significant reductions and cuts in import tax and tariffs, as well as lowered regulations and a

Now, what would such a group of people if a dungeon opened up in their nation?

The answer was obvious.

They would exploit it to their best to make as much money as possible!

Senior Ceeran had already informed him that they were far too weak to monopolize the dungeon, thus they had no choice but to share it.

If they did do that, then they would probably erect a system that would allow them to commercialize the dungeon to the greatest degree possible!

"I hope those money-grubbing snakes haven't turned their dungeon into the biggest market on this side of the continent!" Rui slammed his face.

This made things more complicated and dangerous, but at the same time, a little more interesting than they had been before. Still, Rui hoped that he would be able to simply explore a dungeon in peace with his friend and make away with as much plunder as possible.

What he found interesting about the Shionel Confederation was its Martial Artist situation. Martial Artists were treated as mercenaries whose only goal was to aid with security and intelligence. By contributing to peace and security, they gained wealth and status that was proportional to their value and contribution.

It made sense that a lot of Martial Apprentices and Martial Squires would be attracted by the wealth and status that the Shionel Confederation would be providing. It was harder to imagine how they managed to reel in Martial Artists of the upper Realms. They even managed to get their hands on a Martial Sage.

('So there are even Martial Sages who chase after wealth and status huh?') Rui couldn't help but sigh in disappointment. He had already long learned that Martial Artists were different from those that he would frequently come across in the fictional media of Earth. Movies, anime, manga, and even novels would frequently portray martial artists as highly pure and idealistic warriors driven by profound philosophy that was deeply embedded in whatever martial art they practiced.

Still, this was all just unrealistic and naive bogus in a world where genuinely powerful Martial Art existed. No more than childish romance.

He kept needing to remind himself that Martial Art was viewed as power. A powerful means to an end. Most Martial Artists did not pursue their Martial Path for the sake of their Martial Path, or out of pure ambition to pursue their Martial Path to its end.

Most people did it because they wanted something that Martial Art could give them. The most common being power, but there were a variety of reasons. Social status and money were also powerful drivers for people to aspire to pursue Martial power. And it appeared that there was one who wanted to status and power to such a degree that they were able to become a Martial Sage.

It was a little depressing to Rui, who pursued his Martial Path for the sake of his Martial Path, for the sake of Project Water.

He shook his head, as he swept through the information that the Martial Union had gathered.

Unfortunately, his suspicions were right.

The Shionel Merchant Guild had created a Shionel Adventurer Guild that essentially served the same purpose that the Martial Union serving as a highly effective liaison between the consumer market for Martial services and Martial Artists.

The difference was that the Shionel Guild's Martial Artists were only interested in exploring and plundering the Shionel Dungeon. And the parts of the consumer market for Martial services that the Shionel Martial Guild catered to was the part of the market that had become invested in the Shionel dungeon.

There were many merchants, businesses of all scales, and investors of all kinds that were interested in directly procuring a chunk of what the Shionel Dungeon had procured.

The Shionel Martial Guild allowed for an easy way for Martial Artists to undertake commissions of all sorts from all kinds of people, relating to the dungeon.

Of course, given that this guild was brand new and an infant compared to the long-established Martial Union, the two could not even be compared with each other. It was lot less credible and reliable, and its sophistication fell far behind the far larger well-oiled machine that was the Martial Union.

Besides, Rui was not interested in undertaking a mission from the Shionel Martial Guild. If he was, then he would rather go ahead and take it from the Martial Union which was far more reliable and trustworthy in his eyes.

This time, however, he wanted the goal to be open-ended. He and Kane could decide what to do when it came to exploring the Shionel Dungeon.

He skimmed through the bits regarding the Martial Guild, mindlessly dumping the information into his Mind Palace. He would review it later in more detail, for now, he was interested in the dungeon more than anything else.

"The Dungeon is measured to extend for thirty kilometers in any direction?!" Rui exclaimed out loud as read about the dimensions of the Shionel Dungeon. "That's gigantic!"

It made the Serevian Dungeon look like a tiny little kitten. The sheer vastness of the volume and area that the dungeon covered was mind-boggling. Furthermore, half of the volume of the Shionel Dungeon was below the ground, while the other half had risen over the ground as the Serevian Dungeon had in the Serevian Plateau.

"Just what is it like inside...?"

Chapter 743: Dungeonification

Rui read on with great amazement. It was formed when a tree underwent dungeonification after absorbing soil deep below the surface that was rich with highly powerful esoteric mineral resources. In a process that was not very well understood yet, the flora enlarged and mutated, expanding as it absorbed more.

What the scholars of this world had not quite understood yet was how flora was able to naturally integrate esoteric mineral ores into it and develop into all kinds of strange manners that utterly defied how said species of the plant evolved.

Some thought that the esoteric mineral ores were somehow slowly refined and naturally integrated into the biology of the plant, giving it strange and seemingly reality-defying properties and characteristics that created strange environments inside the dungeon.

This was something even Rui wasn't able to find an explanation for. It was part of the fantastical phenomena in this world that entirely defied what was possible in his previous life. He was unable to extrapolate a satisfactory based on his scientific background.

He shrugged. "No point in breaking my head over it."

What he was more interested was in the further details surrounding the dungeon.

The dungeon was equally divided into a tower above the ground and an underground dome that was both equally vast. There were a number of small and large pockets of space connected by tunnels that were suspected to contain reservoirs of processed or raw esoteric mineral ores referred to as floors. Each of the floors was numbered to make it convenient for reference. The floor that was level with the ground level of the Shionel Great first that the dungeon was in was numbered as Floor Zero. Floors that went up in the tower were numbered with positive numbers, while floors that went down were numbered with negative numbers.

"Fascinating..." Rui scratched his head as his mind flashed back to some of the more modern anime that were around. "Isn't this concept quite similar to some of the dungeons that occur in some anime?"

He wasn't entirely sure, he was an old-school anime fan, and he generally couldn't really stand the newer anime and their more childish appeal.



Regardless, it was quite fascinating to see such an otherworldly natural phenomenon and have the opportunity to visit it and even explore it.

He went through the data collected on the floors of the dungeon, yet when he reached the mapped areas, his eyes widened.

"Only a minority of the floors of the dungeon is mapped," Rui frowned. "And an even smaller portion has been cleared."

This was surprising to Rui. The dungeon had been open for more than three months now, how was it that such a small portion of the dungeon had been cleared?

Even if the dungeon was large and dangerous, a huge number of Martial Artists were undoubtedly exploring it at the moment. They should have been clearing it at a rapid pace, with the sheer amount of powerful Martial Squires that would no doubt be joining from all across this chunk of the continent would no doubt be taking part in this grand opportunity.

After all, it was a fleeting opportunity that would no doubt allow

"Ah..." Rui read on as he comprehended the reason. "There are mutated beasts... so-called monsters occupying all of the floors...?"

The animals in the ecosystem that existed before the Shionel Dungeon were all integrated into the dungeon after having fed on the mutated vegetation, which in turn made the entirety of the food chain increasingly mutated.

('Mutation... Does this have something to do with electromagnetic radiation?') Rui frowned in confusion. ('Is this a process similar to the evolution breakthrough?')

He wasn't sure. He knew for a fact that the highly potent esoteric mineral ores would have been entirely lethal to fauna life forms if consumed directly, but somehow when consumed when the esoteric mineral was integrated into flora directly or indirectly, it was for some reason not unstable.

Of course, this did not mean it was entirely safe. There were still a huge number of animals that died regardless, while the remaining populated the dungeon. In that case, it was probably not safe for him, or for anyone else to consume any of the processed esoteric minerals integrated into the vegetation.

He would need to make sure that he kept that in mind. Even if it was related to the Squire evolution breakthrough in principle, it meant that it was particularly dangerous to Martial Squires, since they had hit their absolute limit when it came to radiation-induced evolution. Otherwise, the procedure could be extended for much longer if not for the limits of the brain.

Regardless, he could understand why the exploration and clearance of the dungeon had taken so long. The explorer Martial Artists had run into a lot of hindrances, to the point that the exploration could not proceed. They had not even mapped out most of the dungeon yet!

('Not just that...') Rui read through the remaining details listed in the intelligence procured by the Martial Union.

('It appears that sensory techniques are highly restricted due to the high concentration of esoteric substances that insulate or disrupt the flow of energy that was often used in sensory techniques,') Rui frowned.

That was inconvenient.

His long-range sensory techniques were dependent on air currents and seismic radiation. With those crippled, Rui would not be able to use those to sense past one floor to another, which would explain why much of the dungeon was simply shrouded in mystery.

('I need to find a way to bypass the sensory restrictions that prevent Martial Artists from being able to easily map out the dungeon...') Rui's eyes narrowed as thought of a few possibilities.

Furthermore, with Kane's abilities...

('It may not be impossible for us to clear the dungeon before any other force in the Shionel Dungeon...') Rui's eyes twinkled with interest.

He continued to browse through all of the information that the Martial Union had collected for him. There was much to be studied.

#### Chapter 744: Goals

Rui had spent the past few days going through all of the information that the Martial Union had gathered regarding the Shionel Dungeon. Thankfully, the Martial Union had organized and presented in a way that was quite user-friendly. Martial Artists were not known to be the brightest tool in the box, and intelligence management and processing was not their strongest point.

Thus, the Martial Union first provided an extremely broad outline of all of the information present that was simple enough for even a child to understand. The complexity slowly increased only if the Martial Union then further studied any particular aspect of the information provided.

Of course, this was an unnecessary measure for Rui, but it did make things easier. He needed time to process all that information once he stored all of it in his Mind Palace. After all, memorizing it did not necessarily mean storing it.

('But before that, I should try and clarify the goals and objectives of this little adventure...') Rui narrowed his eyes.

They weren't going on a picnic to the local hill, or anything like that. They were going to be partaking in an incredibly dangerous and risky adventure that could while stimulating them and pushing them forward in their Martial Path, also take put them at grave risk and even kill them if they made a single mistake.

Thus, they needed to make sure that they were aware of the risks and aware of what they were seeking.

('Kane doesn't particularly seek anything asides from putting distance between himself and his family... And he has a lot of trust in me so he's willing to follow me along in pretty much anything I do. I shouldn't take that trust for granted, and I should make sure that Kane not only doesn't regret trusting me but also rejoices in doing so,') Rui had resolved himself to make sure that would end up being the case.

In which case, he needed to iron out exactly what their objectives were, and how they were going to achieve it.

('The first objective is to be the first to clear the dungeon after having explored the entirety of it,') Rui smirked.

Rui did not want to subject himself to a safer and more peaceful objective of simply exploring the dungeon at their own pace. That was boring and did not pressure him enough to gain meaningful experience or to stimulate him to develop his Martial Art with even more individuality. He came here to get stronger, and only by holding himself to the highest standard could he possibly achieve that.

This was not a light objective. He wanted to be the first to reach the extremities of the dungeon, both the tower dungeon and the underground dungeon.

('Second... earn enough money to sustain long-term exploration of the dungeon...') Rui concluded.

Rui did not want to eat into his savings for months and months on end to sustain his little adventure, he wanted to make sure that he always had enough earnings from his little escapades, and then some. He wanted to make sure that he was earning as much as he would have had he been doing regular and normal missions.

For now, these two objectives were good enough, and he wasn't the only one who thought so either.

"You want to be the first to explore and clear the entire dungeon?" Kane furrowed his eyebrows as he stared at Rui with scrutinizing eyes, looking for a hint of humor.

Even though he knew Rui was not joking.

The two of them had agreed to meet at Kane's little cottage in the town of Crene. The latter did not feel comfortable residing in the town of Hajin where his family's main manor was. Although it wasn't likely, if they got word that he was residing that close to them he would not be able to resist them.

"That's incredibly ambitious and incredibly difficult, you know that right?" Kane sighed, half resigned and half amused.

"I'm aware," Rui nodded with a calm expression. "But that is the objective I have set for myself."

"You do realize that you are competing with many Martial Squires across the nation, right?" Kane sighed.

"Of course," Rui snorted. "But we'll win the race anyway."

"Alright, I'm in," Kane shrugged. "You also said something about earning enough money to sustain our activities and still have enough to match the equivalent time spent in completing normal missions?"

Kane frowned. "That is really difficult, you know?"

"We're going to have to earn a lot of money, that's all," Rui shrugged. "Shouldn't be too hard considering how lucrative this adventure will be."

Kane scratched his head as he thought about it. "Well, how do you plan on doing that?"

"There is the most straightforward way; we plunder a huge amount of esoteric mineral supplies and then sell them in the market."

"Hmmm," Kane considered that possibility, before shrugging. "I guess that could work, but we'll be competing against people who will also be selling a ton of that stuff too, right?"

"True," Rui admitted.

In reality, he knew that there was a limit to how much they could earn with just the two of them. Yes, they could be considered geniuses, but at the end of the day, their actual Martial prowess was not shocking or anything of the sort. They did not possess too many advantages.

"That's one plan that we could go with," Rui mentioned. "As of right now, I have another idea but... it will take some time to confirm whether it is viable or it isn't. I'll also need to come up with a way to realistically achieve the first objective too so, this whole endeavor will require an immense amount of preparation, that is true without a doubt."

Kane nodded. "I'll work on a technique and grow stronger."

"That is definitely on the list of things that I'm planning to do before we set out for the Shionel Dungeon," Rui nodded. "I have no intention of going there as weak as I am now."

#### Chapter 745: Monsters

The two of them had settled on the basics of their objectives that meeting before Rui returned back to the town of Hajin quickly.

He had a lot of work to do.

('I need to become more intimately familiar with the threats innate to the dungeon,') Rui noted.

He had memorized all the information about the various species that inhabited the floors of the dungeon. What he needed to do was intimately familiarize himself with them, their strengths and weaknesses, among other things.

According to the information that the Martial Union had provided him, there were many powerful species living in the Shionel dungeon. There were triple-tusked catoblepas, a species that resembled buffalo that had fused with a dinosaur, warthog, and hippo. They were aggressive herbivorous creatures that aggressively attacked any threat.

Their threat level was evaluated to be low-grade Squire level at most.

However, their numbers made them difficult to deal with. According to the information provided by the Martial Union, many a Martial Squire had fallen to their rampages due to an underestimation of them.

One needed to deal with them with finesse rather than brute force unless one possessed a huge number of Martial Artists on one's side.

One of the species of the upper floors of the dungeon was the longfeather cinnamy bird species. These creatures tended to have a wingspan that was more than two meters long and were capable of rapid and swift flight thanks to it. They could even manipulate the air currents to optimize their flight with their breathing in what eerily resembled a breathing technique.

The problem was that these creatures were now much stronger than their previous baseline forms due to having consumed a lot of the esoteric substances making their way into the blood of the animals present through the food chain.

What that meant was that Rui did not possess a good understanding of what was worth undertaking just yet by looking into the scholarly literature regarding these species, at most, he would understand what the baseline performance of the monsters in the Shionel Dungeon would be.

Most of the intelligence that the Martial Union provided was first-hand intelligence gathered by the internal Martial Squires of the Martial Union that were deployed to the Shionel Dungeon.

These Martial Squires had fought the monsters of the Shionel Dungeon personally and had collected valuable information on their physical parameters, their lethality, and their approach to combat.

Rui had an opportunity to study the available data and chalk out solutions for them.

Thankfully, it wasn't as though each floor of the dungeon had its own brand new species, thankfully, that would be truly troublesome and would most likely stall the exploration of the dungeon by several extra years.

That made his job of scouting the dangers of the dungeon easier since he had a lot less data to sift through to get what he needed.

He was doing this not only because it was better to be prepared than not to be, but also because it would be relevant to his next training phase and the next set of technology projects that he would be setting out to work on.

Both Kane and himself had come to the agreement that they were unequipped to take on the Shionel Dungeon themselves at the moment. Thus they had both agreed to work on getting stronger so that they were more prepared to succeed in their endeavor and able to handle the risks.

Kane's path forward was relatively simple. He was an evasive maneuvering specialist and used any and everything that could allow him to evade better, this included stealth. At the moment, the best thing he could offer was stealth. It was true that he had the VOID Step technique, as well as other stealth-oriented techniques to aid with his stealth, however, it was not invincible. Rui could still sense him, roughly to the degree that he had been able to sense him in their fight in the preliminary contest more than five years ago.

Of course, Rui was special. His mind was vastly superior to every other Martial Artist, he possessed a cognition that was great enough to be able to resist Kane's misdirection in addition to possessing three sensory techniques.

However, it was possible that there would be other Martial Artists that could sense Kane. He was not absolutely imperceptible even when this was taken into consideration.

('For example, if there is someone who has mastered the All-Seeing Eye,') Rui noted.

This was the only grade-ten sensory technique that he had ever come across to this day. He had yet to meet anyone who had mastered it, the Martial Union did not sell such information, after all.

Still, he would be a fool to assume that that was the one and only grade-ten sensory technique in existence that they could run to. Just how many countries were partaking in the Shionel dungeon exploration and raid?

Who knows what kind of techniques might come about?

Of course, Rui was not too worried, even if there was a Martial Squire who possessed the ability to sense Kane, it wasn't that big a deal. Considering how utterly titanic the Shionel Dungeon was in its size, the odds of Rui and Kane running into them were minuscule.



Kane's stealth was the key to mitigating their inability to confront too many monsters or hostile Martial Squire forces. Rui would have very little confidence in their ability to be the first to plunder and explore the rest of the dungeon without Kane.

Still, there were other issues that Kane's stealth would not be to overcome, he couldn't possibly do everything himself.

('I can take it upon myself to overcome these issues,') Rui nodded.

He intended to on three more projects. This was his absolute limit to accomplish in a standard training phase. He needed to make sure that each of the techniques that he would be developing would contribute to his Martial Art while staying true to his Martial Path and having high synergy, while also being geared to overcoming the barriers and hurdles of the Shionel dungeon.

#### Chapter 746: Projects

Would three techniques be enough to handle all of his problems? He wasn't sure. He wasn't able to predict the end outcome of a project before he even started it. He could only do his best.

So far, he had a seventy-five percent success rate. Out of the four Martial Art projects that he had set out on, he had successfully completed three of them, while one of them had failed.

That wasn't too bad. He was sure that it was far higher than the average Martial Artist. He highly doubted anybody could create new techniques the likes of which no one had ever seen the way he did thanks to retaining the knowledge of his previous life.

That was reason enough for confidence.

He shook his head, putting aside such superfluous thoughts, before getting back to business.

('One of the biggest problems is the fact that Kane cannot maintain Void Step with two people forever,') Rui sighed.

Kane had once maintained it for twenty-four hours in their mission in the Commonwealth Duchy of Vinfrana in their mission to destroy the research on the Squire evolution breakthrough process. However, that was by himself. It was much more mentally strenuous to misdirect attention from not just himself but also Rui, who was also a Martial Squire.

He would definitely need to take breaks in between. At that time, the two of them could potentially be overwhelmed by a peak Martial Squire or by greater numbers of Martial Squires, or monsters, since there were so many of them.

Then there was also the fact that sensory techniques were hindered by the esoteric properties of the high-density esoteric mineral resources that were predominantly present across the entirety of the vegetation of the dungeon.

He needed to find a way to overcome to obtain an unhampered sensory technique or some way of retaining his ability to sense through the sense-hampering vegetation.

For that, he needed to figure out exactly why senses were being hampered.

According to the intelligence provided by the Martial Union. One's sense of hearing was hampered the most. It was further revealed that sensory techniques based on air and the ground were also quite hindered in comparison.

Furthermore, sensory techniques based on perceiving heat were also highly hampered. The sense that was the most hampered after that was actually the sense of sight. For some reason, even peering through the tunnels was harder than it normally was and their range of vision had been reduced.

According to the Martial Union, the high density of large amounts of esoteric substances was disrupting the flow of energy through which senses and sensory techniques functioned.

('The fact that even infrared vision and normal vision are being affected strongly suggests that the esoteric substances, or at least the ones that are present in this dungeon, can meddle with electromagnetic radiation,') Rui concluded. After all, both those techniques relied on perceiving radiation.

('It's quite likely that my Primordial Instinct will be hampered as well,') Rui sighed.

Primordial Instinct was a powerful technique that had great synergy with him. However, it was a combat-oriented sensory technique, not a long-range technique geared toward surveillance. Of course, it would still be immensely helpful in increasing his likelihood of survival, but he needed something else to be able to help gather information on the Shionel dungeon effectively. He could not afford to be able to go out in the dark inside such a dangerous dungeon.

That was one area he could try and overcome with the help of a technique.

('Alright, that's project number one,')

A project to develop a sensory technique that would allow him to surveil larger amounts of area despite the sensory jamming effect of the Shionel dungeon.

('As for the name... Hm,') Rui thought about it for a second. ('Let's go with Project Eyespy.')

It was a cool quirky name that he took a liking to immediately.

As for how he was going to go about this project, frankly, he wasn't sure. This was the first time that he had started a project for developing a technique whose mechanics and principles he had not even a shred of an idea at this point in time. After all, this was the first time that he had come up with a project out of sheer need rather than an idea that could potentially lead to a project.

This was the case even for his previous project.

Project Wavelap was born with a clear-cut idea for the mechanism of the technique. It relied on the ability to produce supersonic sound that allowed for two separate sound projectiles to meet and overlap in constructive resonance.

The same could be said for his first three projects as well.

For this project though, he had no idea what this technique was going to look like on any level. He just needed it to come to fruition.

('Well, I can work on it in a second after I figure out what I want to do with the remaining two project slots...') Rui pushed it aside for the time being. He could work on it full-fledged once he began all three projects.

The sensory issue was one of the biggest issues of the Shionel dungeon and was one of the largest contributing factors to why the exploration had stalled. With that out of the way, he could focus on handling another issue.

('The monsters,') He sighed.

The VOID algorithm was bad at counter monsters because the adaptive evolution model was not created to address non-human animals. He usually had to toss it out and rely on his own combat sense and intuition as well as his reflexes and instincts to take them down.

Considering that the Shionel Dungeon is infested with beasts and monsters, he could not afford to walk into such a dangerous place with such a shortcoming. He needed a way to mitigate the threat of the beasts without the help of Kane's stealth. Having a strong failsafe would greatly improve their chances of survival and success.

#### Chapter 747: Success

Thus, he decided that the goal of the second project would be to develop a technique that would allow him to drastically reduce the threat of beasts and monsters.

It was a general goal, but it was vague as far as what he wanted the technique to look like. Even more so than Project Eyespy, after all, project Eyespy at least aimed to develop a sensory technique.

He had no idea what category this technique would even fall into. It would require a huge amount of work regardless.

As for the third project, he couldn't necessarily think of anything too great right off the bat, the biggest two problems were already addressed by the previous two projects. While there were other smaller issues, there weren't any that were on the magnitude of the previous two problems that he dedicated a project to.

('I should create a technique that is centered around maneuvering,') Rui scratched his head, as he realized it had been a long time since he had improved his maneuvering.

The last time that he had improved his maneuvering was back when he completed his first training phase in the Squire Realm a few years ago. He hadn't improved his maneuvering since he had mastered Wind Breathing and Phantom Steps.

His speed and agility were definitely more important in the Shionel Dungeon than his striking power or any other offensive parameter. Even his long-range offensive was not as important as his ability to outrun his enemies.

('Furthermore, if I'm too slow, I'll hold back Kane as well,') He sighed.

Kane was extremely fast. Barring the absolute fastest creatures in the dungeon, none of the creatures would probably be able to keep up with him, especially when his stealth came around.

However, this was not the case with Rui. He was not a particularly high-speed Martial Artist, as unfortunate as it was. And Kane was not the type to leave his comrades behind. Especially when it came to Rui, the two of them were really close and Rui knew that Kane was willing to die fighting by his side than run away by himself.

It was precisely because of that that Rui had to come up with a way to ensure that at the very least he wouldn't hold Kane back too much. He refused to be the reason that his best friend died, he would rather die alone.

('Thus a technique that improves my speed and agility is worth looking into,') Rui nodded.

He sighed.

All three of these projects were born out of necessity, rather than an idea. This made them more difficult to go through with than his earlier projects.

('It's hard to know where to begin,') Rui sighed.

Suddenly, his comms device began ringing.

[Fae]

Rui's eyes lit up in delight. ('She made it!')

While Rui and Kane had gone away for his mission, Fae had reached the peak of the Apprentice Realm before finally achieving the conditions for Squire candidacy and going for the Squire evolution breakthrough procedure during the end of Rui's diplomatic mission.

Rui had long supplied her with his customized Mind Switch technique that he had chosen to dub Hungry Pain, and after mastering it she had immediately gone for the Squire evolution breakthrough process.

"Fae!" Rui greeted her with a delighted smile. "Long time no see, how did it go?"

"Hello Rui," She smiled at him. "According to the doctors, the process went flawlessly, all of my tests and results have come back just fine with no issues or complications, it seems."

Rui could sense the relief in her tone, he could sympathize too.

The Squire evolution breakthrough process was not perfect. The possibility for complications, minor and serious, as well as death, existed. Furthermore, the Martial Artist was utterly helpless in this situation, and could only trust the medical team and hope for the best. A single stroke of bad luck could end a career.

Rui took a good look at her new Martial body. Even though they weren't face-to-face, he could sense tremendous power within her entire body. She most certainly chose a configuration that maximized her

striking power, more than anything else. Furthermore, with the Hungry Pain version of the Mind Switch technique, she had access to far greater power than a baby Martial Squire like her ought to have access to. Rui had the power of a grade-two Martial body of his configuration from the very get-go due to the extra energy and power that the autophagy process had naturally supplied to the body.

There was no doubt that despite breaking through to the Squire Realm extremely recently, her Martial body probably had the power of a grade-three body even as of this moment. When she finally got around to mastering techniques, she would probably blow the minds of everybody in her Martial Family, her status as the heir of the Dullahan Family was guaranteed.

"That's great to hear," Rui nodded. "So what are your plans from here on out?"

Rui was glad to have contributed a little to her cherished dream.

('She's grown more beautiful too,') Rui noted. ('Good for Kane, hehe.')

"I have the need to master new techniques, of course," She replied. "But before that, I need to finish the Squire habilitation phase."

"Right, good luck with that," Rui smiled, noting her wearing the power suppression suit that she needed to wear for her training. "What about after that?"

"I haven't entirely decided, however, I do suppose the basics would be to start undertaking basic Squire-level missions, correct? I do need experience with combat in the Squire Realm, so I should focus on sparring a lot as well."

"You're going to need to develop your own techniques as well," Rui reminded her. "No more simply learning existing techniques verbatim, not if you don't want your rate of growth to stall, and lose any chance of becoming a Martial Squire."

"True," She nodded at him. "I have learned of the importance of individuality in one's Martial Art once one becomes a Martial Squire."

## Chapter 748: Idea

"By the way, Kane told me that the two of you are planning on an outing to the Shionel Dungeon, though he also told me to keep it a secret," She told him. "I must admit that I'm rather frustrated at my inability to partake. Even if I finished my Squire habilitation at this very moment, I would be far too weak to even consider participating in the Shionel Dungeon exploration and plunder raid. Quite unfortunate, really."

Rui raised an eyebrow. He didn't know Kane was close enough to her that he would confide that in her. It seems that their relationship was going better than he had expected.

The two had always bickered back when they were all in the academy. Yet despite that, Rui felt that they always had an affinity for each other.

"He told you that, did he?" Rui smirked. "Heh."

"My, what is that supposed to mean?" She asked with a raised eyebrow.

"Not much... I guess he must really trust you," Rui smiled. "The two of you must have a close relationship."

"We do not," She plainly stated.

"Is that so, it seems I'm mistaken then," He smirked even more. "Not that it's a problem of any sort, kids like yourselves ought to get along."

"I'm older than you," Her eyebrows furrowed.

"Ah right," Rui smiled wryly. "Still, don't mind me. It's just a nice thing to see."

"What is?"



"You know, his intimate trust in you..."

"Listen here you. First of all, we don't..."

Rui laughed as she grilled him for it. Her exaggerated response only made her look more suspicious. No one would want to deny something this benign if it wasn't true.

Half an hour, later, he managed to end the conversation, laughing all the way.

"Alright, I need to get to work," He smiled.

The three projects Eyespy, Monster Spray, and Keep Up With Kane were set in stone. He felt rather depressed looking at their names, but his creativity sucked when it came to things like this.

He began with the first one.

('The intelligence of the Martial Union makes it clear that the Shionel Dungeon disrupts and jams flow of energy in general,') Rui quickly analyzed all of it.

Techniques like Seismic Mapping and Tempestuous Feel relied on currents and vibrations across the ground to infer information on their surroundings. This would naturally be quite suppressed if the Shionel Dungeon did not allow for kinetic energy to flow through its structure in the form of waves through the air or the ground.

Furthermore, techniques that involve perceiving temperature have also been reported to be suppressed, in addition to normal vision as well. From that Rui could infer that the Shionel Dungeon's jamming of energy flow was not limited to just kinetic vibrations, but also included radiation.

These covered an overwhelming majority of techniques. Only techniques that explicitly relied on sensing matter such as the sense of smell were less affected.

('Smell lacks the precision and accuracy at the Squire level to navigate the entirety of the Shionel Dungeon, unfortunately,') Rui sighed.

This made things really rough, there wasn't a single sensory technique that he had ever come across that did not rely on perceiving some form of phenomena that ultimately involved the flow of energy between the user of the sensory technique and the object being sensed by that technique.

It was almost as though the Shionel Dungeon was the very antithesis of sensing itself. He was encountering a very difficult dilemma.

There were almost no sensory mechanisms and principles that he could use to sense a large amount of area.

('I bet Martial Artists with immensely powerful smell and taste senses are probably being heavily sought after in the dungeon,') Rui noted.

However, he did not think that these Martial Artists possessed the ability to sense vast chunks of the dungeon by merely sense and smell. That was probably a feat that could not be achieved at the Squire level.

('Maybe there is some obscure grade-ten smelling technique out there that maybe one Martial Squire in the modern era has managed to master, but that individual alone is not going to be able to influence the exploration and raid rate of the entire dungeon by themselves,')

What he needed was something new that utilized his knowledge and mental ability to be able to sense despite the sensory jamming effects of the Shionel Dungeon.

('If it jams energy flow then... perhaps I need a way of accessing information of my target without a flow of energy from my target and myself,') Rui mused. ('At the very least, there can't be a direct flow of energy.')

Suddenly, Rui's eyes widened as an interesting idea popped into his mind. A way that, if successful, could hypothetically allow him to sense the entire layout of the Shionel Dungeon within a certain range.

Yet his vigor immediately cooled down when he realized that his idea was probably far too crazy, it was frankly ridiculous.

('All mass and energy warp space-time according to the General Theory of Relativity... if there existed a way to detect the warps in space... then maybe I could use that to read the layout of a large chunk of the Shionel Dungeon.') Rui wasn't too enthusiastic about this idea.

It seemed too insane, even for the Martial Art techniques of this world. What he was attempting to do was something that even technology back on Earth had not yet accomplished. However, he knew that this principle was used in astronomy.

If... he had no idea how, but if he could somehow find a way to sense the curvature of space...

('It would be game-changing, frankly,') Rui knew that.

It would probably be one of the most revolutionary sensory techniques in the Squire Realm. He highly doubted that any other Martial Squire across the entire continent could possibly have such a technique.

('There's a good reason for that, however,') Rui mused. ('It is an insanely difficult challenge, one that I'm not going to find easy to overcome.

#### Chapter 749: Esoteric

Rui considered the matter deeply. Frankly, this was the only hypothetical way he had come up with at the moment. The task before him was so difficult that he couldn't even begin to come up with a way that could allow him to sense the curvature of space. Even if he could, it didn't necessarily mean that he could comprehend it.

He had taken the General Theory of Relativity as an elective in his bachelor's degree and had been fascinated by the subject. He had never had to the entirety of all topics that could fall under the umbrella of the General Theory of Relativity, but he had learned the core theory itself, and based on what he understood of it, it could hypothetically serve as a way of perceiving the world.

The concept of the theory was simple in a qualitative sense. Einstein had one day come to the realization that if one were in an elevator with no windows or any way to perceive the outside world, then one would not be able to distinguish between uniform motion with a constant velocity, and being stationary. The only way we distinguished whether we were in motion or not was by looking at the outside world.

He found that this could be extended to all kinds of motions in general. Who could say whether one was moving while the world was stationary, or whether one was stationary while the world was moving?

Einstein was quite satisfied with the notion until he realized that it was not universally true. There was one phenomenon that disagreed; gravity, it did not adhere to this principle. One could not say that falling objects were stationary while the world was moving due to the fact that gravitational forces caused a squeezing effect due to what is known as tidal forces. Thus one could distinguish between being pulled by gravity towards a planet and the planet moving towards one due to the squeezing effect present in the former. Einstein wiggled his way around by stating that gravity warped space and time in a manner that squeezed nearby bodies, which explained the phenomenon well while still being consistent with the principle of relativity.

It was precisely this curvature of space and time that Rui was hoping to use to try and estimate the mass, volume, position, and distribution of mass.

Still, he had no way at this point in time.

('I don't have a way to sense space curvature, that is the biggest issue, if I could just somehow come to sense it, with my knowledge of the field equations of general relativity, I can come to be able to understand and decipher it...')

Unfortunately, to this day, he still had no idea, even theoretically, how would one develop any ability to sense curvature in space? It wasn't even as though there were any substances on the periodic table that were especially reactive to gravity.

The periodic table contained every known element to mankind, and their susceptibility to gravity was not high enough for Rui to be able to accomplish that. No known element on Earth would suffice.

"Wait a minute..."

Rui's eyes widened as he realized he had discounted another possibility.

('Even if no element on the periodic table can work... what about substances that chemistry from Earth cannot account for?')

There were such substances on the Panama Continent.

('Esoteric materials and substances fall outside the norm in all ways and manners!') A grin formed on his face. ('This whole problem was caused by esoteric substances in the first place! I can fight fire with fire, maybe I can solve this problem with other esoteric substances!')

Specifically, what he was hoping for was some sort of esoteric substance that was highly reactive to gravity or space curvature. He wasn't sure whether such an esoteric substance existed, but he wouldn't be surprised. These strange substances had already done things that defied physics before, or the field of physics that he was aware of at the stage it was on back when he was alive on Earth.

Thus the possibility that there perhaps existed one kind of esoteric substance that would exhibit some kind of reaction to different kinds of gravity was not low.

('I need to consult someone on this,') Rui immediately thought of Julian.

Although Julian had focused on the field of research on Martial Artists, he had also spent a good amount of time on research in the fields of esoteric science, there was a good chance that he would be able to point Rui in the right direction.

This was one of the best advantages of having someone like Julian around. Unfortunately, Rui was not familiar with esoteric science, he had no background in the field after all.

He had never had an interest in pursuing it either, although he was fascinated by what these strange substances were capable of, as well as how and why, ultimately he was far too invested and dedicated to his Martial Path.

Any time spent on learning esoteric science was time that was not spent on Martial Art, and to Rui, that was an unacceptable compromise.

Martial Art always had to come first. There was no point in general in learning about esoteric material science either since he had no intention of becoming a scientist. Though, he knew that if he mastered esoteric science in conjugation with his existing general theoretical and non-esoteric science, in time he would be capable of wonders that could only be seen in science fiction movies. He could probably revolutionize the world into a level of technology that made even the cutting-edge engineers of the twentieth-first century of Earth look like primitive cavemen.

But, he had no intention of going down that route. Perhaps he would have had Martial Art not existed in this world, but alas, it did. And thus the fate of the world changed when Rui on the career choice that Rui made nineteen years ago when he arrived in this world.

Chapter 750: Help

"An esoteric substance or compound that reacts to gravity?" Julian frowned. "Such things do exist but... Why on Gaia could you poss-"

"They exist?!" Rui's grin was wide.

Julian frowned as he furrowed his eyebrows, taking a good look at his younger brother. Usually, he possessed quite a composed temperament. Even at an extremely young age, Rui demonstrated the serene patience that one would really only see in the elderly.

The only exceptions were when a matter was related to Martial Art, then for some reason, he became as excited as a child.

Julian had no doubt that whatever this was, this had to be related to his Martial Art. Not even all the wealth in the world could shake Rui's composure as much as his passion for Martial Art did.

"Yes... They do, or at least that is what seems to be the case with many of them. As you know, we mostly test hypotheses with experiments, and there are esoteric substances where the only reasonable prevailing hypothesis is that they are especially reactive and susceptible to gravity," Julian explained.

"Brilliant!" Rui grew absorbed in his own thoughts.

"...Why exactly are you seeking esoteric substances that are especially reactive to gravity?" Julian raised an eyebrow, he couldn't help but be curious.

This was not the first time that Rui had consulted Julian before, yet he was usually a lot more composed, even if energetic.

The last time that Julian had seen Rui exhibiting this kind of energy was when Rui had returned home from a mission after receiving a message informing him that Julian had finished compiling his explanation and report on the research data that Rui had brought from the Commonwealth Duchy of Vinfrana and had translated himself.

"I'm trying to develop a technique that allows me to sense my environment through the forces of gravity that the environment generates," Rui sighed.

When explaining it to Julian, he used a different model of gravity; the Newtonian model of gravity which stated that gravity was a force and not a war in space-time like it was in Einstein's General Theory of Relativity.

The reason for that was that he was absolutely confident that the theoretical physics of this world had not reached a stage where such a theory existed, so even if he told Julian, he would probably get a bewildered look.

"I lack a fundamental way to sense gravity itself," Rui sighed. "If there are esoteric substances that are reactive to gravity, then it is possible for me to integrate them into a technique and figure out a way to use them to sense my environments."

"That's... ambitious," Julian cautiously murmured. "It is possible that what you are going for may very well be impossible, you know?"

"That's always a possibility for every endeavor I undertake," Rui replied calmly, unfazed. "Now, can you help me out with these esoteric substances brother, please?"

"Of course, it will take me a while because I don't know all of them off of the top of my head since it is a little outside of my field of expertise, but I can get your data on them within a week for sure. From there you'll be able to handle yourself, right?"

"Of course," Rui grinned. "Thanks a ton, brother, you're awesome. See you later."

"Good luck."

And just like that Rui disappeared from his seat, leaving Julian chuckling. Usually, Rui didn't use his super speed inside the house, since it was scary and startling to everybody.

"He must be extremely excited..." Julian smiled, amused and resigned.

He was right.

Rui was quite excited to get his hands on the data that Julian had promised to get him. However, until then, he did not intend to sit still. He had other projects to work on.

('Project Monster Repellant and Project Keep Up With Kane are not going to be easy,') Rui sighed.

He did not ask Julian about the former because zoology had never been a focus of his. Rui would need to do his own research on the matter.

('What I need is a technique that uses my strengths to grant me an effective solution against monsters of their caliber,') Rui noted.

His strengths lay in the parts of battles and techniques that employed mental faculties. Thus techniques that provided great results while having high demands of, or burdens on his mental faculties were what he was looking to create.



('The first issue is that there is a great variety in the fauna of the Shionel Dungeon, thus I cannot create a technique that is highly customized to focus on particular species, I need to exploit traits that these monsters all share. There are many species in the Shionel Dungeon, and trying to create a technique for only one of them is pointless, and creating separate techniques for all of them is highly impractical.') Rui sighed. He needed to create something that was effective against all of the monsters. Even if it was less effective against each species than a technique that was created only to deal with one species, it was more useful to Rui.

This means that he had to focus on a technique that used a mechanism that applied to almost all monsters.

This narrowed it down considerably.

('Massively superhuman physical prowess, affected by esoteric substances in their bodies, and low intelligence...') Rui immediately came up with three traits that matched all of them.

If he could somehow use all of them against the monsters with a technique that requires a lot of brainpower to produce great results that he would not be able to reproduce always, then that would be extremely convenient.

('I don't think I can really use their superhuman physical capabilities against them, those are plainly huge disadvantages for me... But the other two...') Rui smiled as a few ideas came to mind.

The matter surrounding low intelligence was easier to exploit. Low intelligence meant it was easier to trap and fool, Rui absolutely intended to use it to whatever degree he could.