

Martial Unity 771

Chapter 771: Guildmaster

Given that the Shionel Confederation was a through-and-through corporatocracy governed by the Shionel Merchant Guild, they were naturally involved in all kinds of commercial trades and industries, and real estate was certainly part of it.

Now, they had just been given the chance to acquire a large amount of uninhabited area if and when they cleared the Shionel Dungeon, given that the Shionel Dungeon fell inside their territory.

Perhaps other nations would have treated it as a base of sorts, and armed into a national inventory for storage of military resources, among other things. Perhaps some would treat it as a shelter in times of disaster.

But not the Shionel Merchant Guild. It would undoubtedly choose to make the bold and highly capitalistic decision of turning the Shionel Dungeon into a real estate commodity even after the dungeon had been explored and plundered.

"But how do you know what their plan with the Shionel Dungeon is definitely going to be turning into real estate?"

"I studied the Shionel Merchant Guild's history, and more important the history of the current guildmaster Bradt Partick," Rui explained. "Once you look at the decisions they've made in different kinds of circumstances, it becomes rather clear what the decision they will make is going to look like."

Rui had become even more certain of his prediction on Bradt Partick when he looked at the legislative bills he passed ever since he was elected as the guild master. The man was a ruthless capitalist. An absolute proponent of free markets, and economic liberty. It had very quickly become evident to Rui that this man viewed everything as money, and that he had no bottom lines. One of his first legislative acts as guildmaster was to leave the East Panamic Narcotic Drug Convention, a convention that had been ratified by forty nations, including the Kandrian Empire. This was directly based on his philosophy of individual libertarianism and free-market capitalism. The man had decided that if adults wanted to ruin their lives with narcotic drugs, they had every right to and that the state had no right to restrict that.

He had revealed in a press conference additionally that, funds that were being funneled into the underworld through the black market for narcotic drugs, would not be funneled into law-abiding manufacturers, suppliers, and distributors, thereby invigorating the economy of the nation significantly and dealing a powerful blow to the underworld and the black market.

That same year guild master also left the Slavery Convention and legalized slavery within the Shionel Confederation, declaring that even human lives were products that could be exchanged.

Of course, this still needed to be abided by the law as forcibly enslaving a person through violent means was still a violation of the law, constituting battery and assault, as well as unlawful slavery.

He had set up an executive branch within the government that overlooked and regulated slavery and ensured that the slave industry was not violating the many laws that it had the propensity to violate.

"Those aren't the only examples, the man has gone to levels you won't believe when it comes to commercializing and capitalizing everything into goods or services. I am very confident that regardless of what shape or form he and the Shionel Merchant Guild will find a way to commercialize and capitalize the Shionel Dungeon in some way or the other. I suspect they will find a balance between turning some of it into government property while selling the rest free to the Shionel Confederation." Rui calmly analyzed the situation. "Regardless of what form it takes, they need accurate and precise information on the Shionel Dungeon's geography topography, and layout before they can make any venture with it," Rui continued. "Thus my ability to sense extremely large distances accurately and precisely inside the dungeon, and also memorize it extremely accurately thanks to my Mind Palace will be priceless in the eyes of the Shionel Merchant Guild. Accommodating our disruptions to the market with some limits will become one hell of a deal for the Shionel Merchant Guild."

"Hm..." Kane scratched his head, deep in thought. "I gotta admit, you've thought this through incredibly well."

"Thanks," Rui smiled.

"I'm curious though," Kane continued. "Do you really need to drain each floor of as many esoteric substances as possible? I feel like if we just take a little, that wouldn't be as much of a challenge."

"The whole point of the venture is to push ourselves, Kane," Rui explained. "Why do you think I even set an objective as high as being the first individual to clear the dungeon? Do you think it's for fame and money? No, it's because being the first to clear the dungeon and its resources is extremely difficult, and it's only because of the sheer difficulty of the objective that I managed to push myself to create extremely powerful techniques. You need to set high standards for yourself, otherwise, you'll grow comfortable with lower standards. Acquiring all the esoteric resources and supplies of the Shionel Dungeon is a high-enough target, that has already aided in my growth."

"That's extreme, you know," Kane raised an eyebrow. "Are you really willing to go that far to get stronger?"

"I'm willing to go that far to develop my Martial Art and go even further down my Martial Path," Rui corrected him before raising an eyebrow. "Are you perhaps having second thoughts?"

"No, just curious," Kane shrugged. "But coming back to the main point, you intend to buy off the Shionel Merchant Guild with an accurate and precise map of the Shionel Dungeon, to let you off the hook for disrupting the market?"

"Among other things yes," Rui nodded.

"And what about the Martial Union?" Kane raised an eyebrow. "They're not going to be happy you threw them off the scent and are hurting their team of Martial Squires by being too successful, right?" Kane asked.

"True, at that point, I'll have no choice but to placate them with an attractive price, we'll probably make a bit of a loss, but it should be able to handle our expenses, I hope."

Chapter 772: Storage

"Hope?" Kane frowned. "Our expenses are not going to be that extreme, you know."

"That's where you're wrong, the covertness of our operations itself will require a lot of money, my equipment requires constant funds, and the portable dimensional storage device that we're going to need to purchase to keep our loot hidden costs a small fortune."

"Wait," Kane cocked his head backward. "You want to buy a portable dimensional storage device?? Do you have any idea how expensive that is? Why on Earth do we have to go for such extravagant and ostentatious means just to transport some goods?"

Kane's reaction was not an exaggeration. Dimensional storage esoteric technology was extremely expensive and scarce. It was based on esoteric substances that had the property of making matter in contact with it seemingly disappear when its temperature rose too much. Numerous experiments revealed that matter it made disappear when its temperature exceeded its standard temperature would return unharmed, and also unchanged. The duration of the disappearance was dependent on the time period that the temperature was maintained.

Further experiments that the 'disappearance' of the objects was such that it did not affect change anything about the matter that disappeared. Objects whose physical and chemical states had been carefully measured prior hand had found to have the same physical state, to such a degree that it could be said that time did not pass for the disappeared objects. Food did not spoil or even grow colder, and corpses did not rot. Living creatures returned unharmed, and the first time a human subject had been used, it was found that even memories of the time they disappeared did not form.

It was one of the most astonishing esoteric phenomena, even by the standard of esoteric material science. There were a lot of theories as to what was actually occurring, with the most prevailing theory being that the esoteric substances were connected to a parallel space where time did not pass. Another popular theory was the information storage theory which stated that the disappeared objects were actually destroyed and only the information of the object was stored, which when released reconstituted the destroyed mass back to its original state based on the information stored.

Regardless, it was an incredible phenomenon. At the time, it was thought that this would revolutionize the world, yet that quickly turned out to not be the case. The biggest problem was that it cost too much energy to keep anything stored for extended periods of time. This meant that transport, distribution, and storage could not be made easier with the help of dimensional storage. Any and all industries and sectors could not afford to turn this into their regular inventory system because it was simply far too expensive to maintain.

Individual businesses would go bankrupt within merely one hour of usage of the dimensional storage for their inventory. While wealthier and larger businesses could last longer, they too would suffer plummeting losses.

It was simply not worth it. Thus what could have changed the world ultimately became an extremely extravagant and ostentatious that would end up being used in only a minority of circumstances.

"It's the only way to keep our identities as the ones who plundered all of the esoteric extracts of the Shionel Dungeon, after all," Rui explained. "While they are too expensive to maintain generally, that only applies to merchants and businesses who generally have small profit percentages and cannot afford to add another significant expense on top of that. Furthermore, once we're successful, we'll easily be able to afford the dimensional storage and maintain it. We can store an overwhelming majority of our loot in there while we'll walk out with a normal amount of plunder in bags and things of the lot. That way we'll completely blend into the crowd without attracting any attention."

"That makes sense," Kane nodded. "Though wouldn't we use Void Step while exiting?"

"No," Rui shook his head. "That actually invited more suspicion. If anyone ever notices that we entered the dungeon but seemingly never exited, and then suddenly enter the dungeon the next day, that is what will truly invite suspicion. We need to be ordinary in every way that matters."

"I see, that actually makes sense," Kane nodded. "Makes my life easier too."

"Don't worry, I don't intend to rely on you alone and dump all the hard stuff on your shoulders. The techniques I've developed will ease your burden a lot, although your Void Step will definitely be crucial nonetheless."

"I appreciate that," Kane nodded. "Although I don't need to be coddled, I can pull my weight."

"I don't doubt that at all," Rui smiled at his determination.

Kane was probably going to be one of the least experienced Martial Squires in the Shionel Dungeon, if not for his Void Step technique and the Godspeed technique, he would also be the weakest without a doubt. As far as Rui knew, he had yet to have the opportunity to develop an offensive technique. Which meant that his ability to take down his opponents was very low. To the point that he could forget trying to hurt Martial Squires who were above grade four.

Rui knew that the road ahead was going to be difficult for him. Unlike Rui had knowledge and experience from another world and another lifetime, Kane did not have anything that would allow him to develop techniques as fast as Rui did.

It would take a lot longer for him to the strides that Rui had taken.

That was why Rui had decided it was absolutely paramount for him to develop means and ways to be able to handle himself just fine even if Kane faltered at some point. He already knew Kane could not maintain Void Step for extended periods of time when he had to expand it to other people.

In the times that he couldn't it would be Rui's turn to carry them, metaphorically, while Kane caught a break for a while. Rui was confident that he would be able to fulfill that role.

Chapter 773: Preparations

The two of them discussed some more details, before setting off to complete the preparations. The plan Rui was proposing was not simple at all, and it required plenty of preparation and planning. Rui needed to make sure that he knew exactly what he was getting into, otherwise, things could easily fall out of his plans.

The two of them needed to covertly acquire new masks and Martial attire. Using the Martial attire they got from the utilities and amenities department of the Martial Union would be an incredibly foolish move.

The two of them went on to commission a few sets of Martial attire from an international company. Purchasing it from a company native to the Kandrian Empire would be no different from announcing that he was part of the Kandrian Empire. That would easily allow his competitors to track his identity given time.

He couldn't help it with the weapons that he commissioned, commissions for blacksmiths could not be internationally for the most part.

The biggest preparation he needed to make was throwing the Martial Union off for a while. Specifically, he needed to spend some money on the false propagation of rumors in a foreign nation, as well as someone who could cosplay as him to spread the misinformation that he was hoping would be spread.

It took him a week to complete the task. He left the country on a simple mission in the general vicinity he was looking to plant his red herrings, and quickly made all the preparations to ensure that he and Kane would not be on the list of suspects of the identities of those who disrupted the market of the Shionel Confederation.

Rui had to rely on unofficial means to commission a people and a Martial Artist to make it seem like he was still in that foreign nation.

The reason for that was the fact that the Martial Union probably kept a close eye on the happenings of all the Martial organizations in the geographic vicinity, and all matters related to Martial Art.

Otherwise, they would not have found the top-secret information of the research lab for the breakthrough to the Squire Realm in the Commonwealth Duchy of Vinfrana.

What that meant was that Rui could not rely on any existing well-known organization in an official commission. He needed to approach a Martial Squire individually and pay them off.

However, most Martial Squires would not accept such a shady commission, thus Rui needed to research.

Finding an appropriate Martial Squire who was in need of a large number of funds took time, however, with the information of the Martial Union alone under the pretense of necessity for his expenditure, he managed to find the right Martial Squire for the job.

Once the deal was sealed, Rui would simply return for the Martial Union, and go about his day like nothing happened.

The biggest issue was the dimensional storage device.

Rui could purchase that, but...

('It takes away almost eighty percent of my savings,') Rui sighed.

Still, he did not want to back down after everything he had been through. He wasn't surprised that the Martial Union had the ability to sell him a dimensional storage item, but he was surprised that he was easily able to gain access to it.

It meant that his value to the Martial Union was enough that he could gain access to their inventory that easily.

However, he knew that he was investing an insane amount into this venture, but that only made him more motivated to go all out and succeed.

He quickly bought the item, which was a ring that he put on his finger.

Once all of those preparations were finally made, the two were finally ready to leave for the Shionel Confederation.

However, they couldn't just straightforwardly travel to it, unfortunately. They needed to keep up with the act and extensively take a detour. They could even be seen leaving at the same time, thus Kane left the Kandrian Empire a few days before Rui did, heading in the opposite direction of the Shionel Dungeon.

A few days later, Rui also set out.

"How long will you take this time?" Julian asked.

"Hard to say, but probably quite some time," Rui replied.

"Well, you're planning to pull off some risky adventures, so stay safe," He bade Rui.

He was the only one in the Quarrier Orphanage who knew the truth about where Rui was going and what his goal was. Rui felt bad for lying to his family, but he could not afford to spread the truth too much.

Of course, they would never actively rat on him, but it was far too easy for the truth to be extracted from them in ways that they could not be able to fathom. Julian was definitely much more trustworthy in that regard, and would also have figured it out naturally with all the requests that Rui had made of him.

"I intend to," Rui told him before bidding him and his family goodbye and heading off for the border. Like Kane, he too had chosen a nation in a completely different direction than the Shionel Confederation.

It only took him a few hours to reach the border, when he was intercepted by the Kandrian Border Patrol Force and escorted for a formal exit of the country.

"Purpose of transit?" The officer processing his documents asked him.

"Personal venture," Rui smiled.

"Destination?"

"Including but not limited to the Kingdom of Viola,"

Soon enough, he had left the nation.

He began traveling on land, heading to the transit port of the Kingdom of Viola. Normally, he didn't bother entering a small nation legally, but this time he wanted his arrival in the Kingdom of Viola to be recorded. It would make it more credible if he was ever investigated.

Yet he intended to leave illegally without using their formal port of transit, which would support the notion that he hadn't left the nation upon a cursory glance.

Chapter 774: Reached

"Welcome to the Kingdom of Violis, sir," An officer smiled at him before passing him through.

"Thank you," Rui nodded before leaving the transit port office and heading across the busy streets of the Kingdom of Violis.

He didn't want to keep Kane waiting, but he couldn't just leave the nation either. Based on his understanding of the intelligence-gathering capabilities of the Martial Union's intelligence department, the amount of information that they possessed on any given subject of any sort depended on the importance and necessity of that information as well as the difficulty of obtaining that information.

He was relatively certain that the Martial Union would very soon find out that he had entered the Kingdom of Violis. Of course, they wouldn't set up a tail or a spy on him, since the importance and necessity of his current whereabouts and intentions were not all that important.

He intended to make sure that there was nothing wrong on the surface of the matter, thus he intended to use his Martial Union account, which was widely accepted as a valid form of payment to book a hotel and spend some money on some items here and there before setting out.

It would not be enough to fool the Martial Union if they conducted a serious investigation, however, it was unlikely they would do this any time soon, they had no reason to, and the Martial Union, like all intelligence agencies, was probably very particular regarding what they could spend the resources of their department on. At the moment, Rui probably did not qualify.

Half a day later, it was time.

STEP

He quickly jumped over the fence that marked the border the nation, before heading away from the nation, as he traveled to the Republic of Henerin, where Kane was situated at the moment. They had agreed to meet outside the Republic before heading towards the Shionel Confederation.

Thankfully, the distance was not that great, and it was only half-an-hour later that Rui met up with Kane.

STEP

"Hey," Rui greeted him, landing on the ground. "You are sure you followed all the steps, right?"

"Yeah yeah don't worry, I made sure that I did everything you said," Kane reassured him.

Rui had given Kane precise instructions to ensure that the Martial Union would only find that he hadn't moved from the Republic of Henerin, ever since he entered it.

Of course, with Kane, however, there was also the matter of his family keeping an eye out for him, thus Rui had had him go through more steps to obfuscate his family from figuring out the truth.

If the Arrancar Family ever managed to catch wind of the fact that he was not where he claimed to be, then they could raise an inquisition to the Martial Union and the Martial Union would quickly realize that the two of them had left their last known locations.

Rui could only do his best and create as much of an information illusion as he could. Still, he was not an intelligence agent, and he did not think that his efforts matched up to actual covert agents who successfully fed foreign nations false information using more refined versions of the methods that he was using.

"Alright, let's head out then," Rui nodded before the two of them headed towards the Shionel Confederation in the shortest route that they could find on map.

The two of them were wearing the indistinct Martial attire that they had commissioned that purposely did not strongly attribute to any particular nation's style. Their masks too were different from what they normally used in missions.

The Shionel Confederation was quite far away from the Kandrian Empire, even with their remarkable speed, it would take them a few hours to reach their destination.

"You've grown faster," Kane complimented him with a surprised expression beneath his mask. "Much faster than I remember you being, is this thanks to the Gale Force Breathing technique that you developed?"

Rui nodded. Kane was easily keeping up with him relaxed while Rui was going all out with Gale Force Breathing, Outer Convergence, and Parallel Walking. Rui had known this, but seeing Kane casually keep up with him with a fraction of his speed was still quite revealing.

"You've grown faster too, it seems," Rui huffed.

"Well, stealth isn't the only thing I've improved, I am an evasive maneuverer, after all," Kane replied casually. "At my current level, I can forget about facing the monsters of the Shionel Dungeon head-on, my only option is to avoid them, so I have been polishing my agility and speed to a higher level."

The two chit-chatted on the way there, though that wasn't too easy since Rui needed to maintain Gale Force Breathing which made it more difficult to converse with him.

"There are floors in the Shionel Dungeon where your specialty is especially relevant," Rui informed him. "At that time, you're going to be the one that will be leading the charge, my friend. Of course, I have made preparations for that as well myself, so I do not believe I'll be left behind."

Rui had extensively studied the intelligence of the monsters of the Shionel Dungeon, he had spent quite some time building predictive models on them, although they weren't complete yet due to a lack of complete intelligence. Unfortunately, second-hand data did not compare to observing them first-hand.

He pulled off the same trick with the K'ulnen Tribe of Vilun Island, but at that time, he and Kane had spent quite some time observing their targets, allowing Rui to build a predictive model of their targets better due to more access to more accurate information.

Of course, once he began observing the monsters in person, he would be able to develop better predictive models for them, that was one of the things that he was hoping for when they finally actually entered the Shionel Dungeon.

Time passed as the two of them ran across the continent, due to the great distance between them as well as the many countries and other settlements in between they were unable to maintain their top speed the entire time.

At long last, they finally reached the Shionel Confederation six hours later.

Chapter 775: Rush

The Shionel Confederation was more than what Rui had pictured. He had initially thought that he would not be surprised or overwhelmed by what he saw since he lived near the town of Hajin, which was a popular and dense trade and Martial hub in the Kandrian Empire, but he was extremely wrong.

"This is..." Kane murmured, his voice trailing off.

"We haven't even entered the nation yet," Rui's eyes widened.

The rush to enter the Shionel Confederation was absurd. Even outside the walls of the country, there were huge swathes of people trying to enter.

Rui glanced around them, scrutinizing the many people outside. A large chunk of the population seemed like a makeshift flea market. A lot of the market seemed like small-time merchants, making a living out of a small-time business selling a small set of goods or offering some basic manual labor services.

There were also small housing units that offered stay to people who were trying to enter the Shionel Confederation, yet had failed, for one reason or the other.

Rui's eyes narrowed as he spotted a ton of Martial Squires as well, unsurprisingly enough. Their grade wasn't too low, either, based on the sense of pressure and danger that they generated in him.

"I'd read about this... But it's more than I had expected," Rui admitted as he took in the sheer population of people outside of the borders of the nation.

"How can the Shionel Confederation allow such a large proportion of people to stay outside its borders in this fashion?" Kane frowned. "Isn't that, I dunno, not good for a nation?"

"You're not wrong," Rui replied. "It's just that the Shionel Merchant Guild implemented a policy of taxing all these people for infringing on the domain of the Shionel Confederation."

"Ugh, is there nothing that these people won't extract money from?" Kane frowned.

"No, actually. Not at all." Rui smiled wryly.

"Why don't these people actually enter the Shionel Confederation and sell their goods and services there, rather than outside the nation? Seems like a weird choice to choose sell here rather than in there" Kane wondered.

"That's because it isn't a choice," Rui calmly explained. "These people aren't able to sustain their small-time sales in the Shionel Confederation. They're people who got crushed and shoved out of the nation by more fierce competitors that monopolized estate, supply lines, distribution capital, etc."

"What does that actually mean?" Kane raised an eyebrow.

"Every nation has a hard limit to the amount of resources and capital that can exist within the nation," Rui explained. "Normally, this maximum amount is extremely high and is usually enough that most of the supplier market can get a share of it. However, the competition in the Shionel Confederation is so extremely high, that only the best can actually obtain the resources needed to sustain and allow their business to thrive."

"I see," Kane looked around. "So, all of these people couldn't cut it inside their nation, so they're losers who have no choice but to make do with scraps outside of the nation?"

"That's a harsh evaluation, but it is true,"

"Wait, we intend on participating in this competitive commercial environment?" Kane jerked his head back. "Are you sure this is going to work? How can we compete?"

"The market for the esoteric resources is currently the biggest at the moment, any group of Martial Squires that achieves a reasonable amount of success can compete fairly well," Rui explained. "On top of that, we don't just intend to succeed, we intend to dominate. There is absolutely no way that, as long as our plans in the Shionel Dungeon succeed, we'll fail."

"If you say so," Kane shrugged. "Alright, what do we do now?"

"We can enter the nation for starters," Rui smiled wryly. "We'll have to go the legal way this time."

"That would require registering with our actual identities, correct?" Kane frowned. "Wouldn't that be too dangerous?"

"Yes, but it's inescapable unless you want to have our identities forged with a fake identity card," Rui sighed. "Not that it's far harder for Martial Squires to fake our identities because we're massively more high-profile than normal citizens. I can assure you that every nation in the geographic vicinity of the Kandrian Empire probably has a file on both of us."

Kane's head jerked back as he turned towards Rui, surprised. "Wait what?"

"Did you really think countries didn't keep tabs on the Martial Artists of other countries?" Rui glanced at him with an amused expression. "We're no different from walking weapons of destruction in the eyes of not just other nations, but also our own nation."

"Damn," Rui murmured.

"Yeah, so it's better to just stick to our real identities for the paperwork," Rui noted. "Thankfully, the Shionel Confederation has been pressured by all nations participating in the Shionel Dungeon raid for a higher level of data security since the Shionel Merchant Guild did set up the Adventurer Guild that requires information about the Martial Squires of other nations. So it is unlikely that the documentation of our identities will spill easily, or be easy to acquire. The Shionel Merchant Guild is trying to create an attractive avenue for commerce, and being able to enforce its own rules and its own data security is necessary for building up the trust in its services."

"If you say so," Kane shrugged. He was content leaving the details of the plan to Rui, without butting in too much. Had he been partnering with anybody else, he would definitely not have left his fate in their hands and would have involved himself deeply with the plan. However, with Rui, he could trust his intentions, and most certainly his competence and intelligence. Rui was cautious and careful, usually. And he certainly would not do something that would be detrimental to Kane for his own benefit.

They quickly got into a massive line of people inside the transit port department. The process was even more rigorous than the entry to the Kandrian Empire.

Chapter 776: Time-consuming

"That took ridiculously long!" Kane complained.

Three hours had passed since they went in for a transit registration, and they were finally out after an extensive registration process.

"True," Rui huffed, massaging his head. The process had been as tedious and lengthy as the sheer amount of processing one went through when traveling internationally by flight back on Earth. He did not expect the immigration process would be so tedious in a relatively more primitive world where the concept or the equivalent of passports and visas did not even exist.

The international immigration policy of nations on the Panama Continent was more primitive and relied on basic government-issued identification proof, and was closer to how things worked in the nineteenth century of Earth.

"Yet they were so meticulous and rigorous," Rui sighed. "It must be due to the astronomical influx of migrants since the discovery of the Shionel Dungeon. I highly doubt that their system has always been this sophisticated. They probably needed to step up the security in their processing for national security, they cannot allow such a large number of migrants to enter without any security measures. However, that is only more relieving to me."

"Why so?" Kane turned to him.

"Their interrogation room and identity check-ups were conducted in a separate room walled with the same kind of energy-jamming esoteric substances that prevent espionage and spying," Rui explained. "They have to, with the sheer concentration of Martial Squires in that facility. It's the same thing that the Hajin branch of the Martial Union uses for important matters. That gives me an even greater assurance that our data will not be leaked."

"Makes sense," Kane nodded, before scanning his environment. "So we're here huh? The Shionel Confederation."

The two of them took a good first look at the port town of Kanour of the Shionel Confederation as they stepped out of the transit port facility.

The visage they captured could only be summed in a single word.

"Chaos..."

An ocean of people could be seen in the vicinity outside of the airport. A majority of them were people entering or exiting the nation, while the remaining people consisted of those who wanted to make money off of them.

"Sir! Do you need a rickshaw? Come this way!" One man suddenly appeared out of seemingly nowhere as he began bombarding them with offers and praising self-proclamations about his rickshaw services, among other things in the international dialect. If one closed their eyes and took the words at face value, one would think he was offering a five-star carriage journey.

"Sir!" Another man reached out to them. "Sir come this way! I'll offer you a discount!"

"Nonono! Come this way, I know the best hotels in town!"

Soon several rickshaw men began quarreling for them.

"Enough," Rui's expression grew cold as he exposed a portion of his mental pressure on all of them.

Their expressions paled as they squirreled away.

"Tsk," Rui tutted. "I normally dislike attracting attention, but it might be better to unveil my power to drive away scam artists who wish to exploit foreigners.

"Hehe," Kane chuckled. "Where do you want to actually go though?"

"First, we ought to head to the Adventurer's Guild and register as adventurers. We have already decided to not undertake the mission from the Adventurer Guild's library, but at the very least, we need to register in order to be able to enter the Shionel Dungeon." Rui reminded him.

"Sounds like a plan," Kane nodded.

Rui had already memorized detailed maps of the Shionel Confederation and stored them in his Mind Palace, he did not want to handle cumbersome maps once he entered the nation. He quickly waded past the chaotic crowd, straightforwardly heading in the direction of the Adventurer Guild situated in the town of Kanour. Every town in the nation had a built Adventurer's Guild that could accept new registrations, while also distributing missions.

One branch of a guild would be unable to handle the sheer amount of workload that would come with being the bureaucracy that was responsible for managing matters surrounding the Shionel Dungeon.

"It's convenient that you've memorized the map," Kane noted. "Now that I think of it, doesn't that mean you know the entire layout of the entire country in your head right now?"

"That's right," Rui nodded.

"Doesn't that also mean you could do the same thing for the entire continent?" Kane looked at Rui with amazement.

"It would be difficult, but possible, yes," Rui nodded as they jogged through the more remote parts of the town.

He had no reason to go through the difficulty of doing such a thing, of course.

"Still," Rui looked around as he absorbed the town of Kanour. "It's even more busy than I'd heard. The migration must be causing such a spike in growth to the native markets and sectors of the Shionel Confederation that even relatively recent intelligence might quickly already be outdated."

The town of Kanour was a bustling town of commerce and business with an intensity that far surpassed the town of Hajin. The town was divided into ten wards, nine of them centering the first and the largest ward. On the outskirts of the wards were countless flea markets comprised of smaller-scale individual retailers and merchants selling a limited variety of products of services, while the center of the wards was infested with showrooms, shops, factory outlets, and even malls. The infrastructure was even better than that of the town of Hajin and came one step closer to resembling modern first-world rich cities of Earth, Rui could even see that the proportion of sky-scrappers was significantly higher than that of the town of Hajin.

"Incredible," Kane murmured.

"Yeah, I can see why this is one of the largest trade hubs in the eastern section of the Panama Continent," Rui nodded as took his novel new surroundings. "Life here must be quite interesting."

Kane snorted. "Yeah, interesting is a mild way of putting it. I wouldn't spend a day in this country if it weren't for the dungeon."

Chapter 777: Adventurer's Guild

Soon enough, they reached the Adventurer's Guild standing prominently in the central ward of the town. The rush and the population density only grew, and Rui and Kane almost bumped into other Martial Squires despite sky-walking in the air!

"This is ridiculous," Rui murmured. "I know that the Shionel Confederation probably has the highest Squire population density, but still. They're everywhere right now."

The two of them squeezed their way into the Guild, making their way over the support counter.

"Excuse me, we'd like to register as adventu-"

"The adventurer's registration counter is in the left wing of the guild," She curtly interrupted him. "Is there anything else I can help you with?"

"No, thank you fo-"

"Please move along, there are other customers who are waiting," She interrupted him yet again.

Rui and Kane quickly shifted aside with surprised expressions. It wasn't that they were entitled arrogant little brats, it was just that they were entirely unaccustomed to being treated with rudeness by a customer service employee of an organization.

"Well, I suppose the value and esteem of a single Martial Squire have probably gone down ever since their population has spiked in the country," Rui noted.

"She must be dealing with hundreds of us every day," Kane chuckled.

The two of them headed towards the left wing of the guild, joining yet another massive queue formed for the adventurer registration in the adventurer's guild.

"Oh come on," Kane groaned. "We just got out of a huge line prior."

"Have patience," Rui sighed. "This is inevitable."

The fact that several months had passed since the opening of the Shionel Dungeon, and there was still such a rush to register as adventurers meant that his predictions about the Shionel Dungeon were correct. The fact that its clearance rate after nearly half a year was still low meant that there was plenty of time before the dungeon actually ended up being cleared, and plenty of time that it would remain open.

The fact that it wasn't a fleeting matter like the Serevian Dungeon, as well as its open nature to all Martial Squires meant that the influx was far greater than one might normally expect in these circumstances.

Rui and Kane spent nearly an hour before they finally got their turn. A copy of their transit pass obtained from entering the Shionel Confederation through the transit port was provided to ensure that the two of them didn't migrate illegally before they were directed to separate isolated rooms and provided thick stacks of paper constituting the application form.

The questionnaire was remarkably thorough and made sure to record all the essential data surrounding his identity, followed by his purpose of application as well as the 'settings' of his adventurer account.

Both he and Kane had already decided to not take any missions, thus he ticked the 'do not display profile, or make profile publically available' option, which would ensure that the Shionel Adventurer Guild would not announce their presence in the Shionel Confederation.

There was a promotion system in place that promoted the presence of prominent and powerful Martial Squires as well as the most successful ones. The system existed because there were a huge number of Martial Squires coming from a huge number of places, and the market that would be commissioning these very Martial Squires. The unfamiliarity between the clients from across the East side of the continent and the Martial Squires across the East side of the continent was problematic, and thus the promotion system and the public profiles helped.

Martial Squires, dubbed as 'adventurers' were ranked from E to S. With Rank E adventurers referred to the weakest of Martial Squires, and Rank S adventurers referred to the strongest of Martial Squires.

They had to undergo a brief ranking test where their rank would be confirmed and broadcasted on their public rankings page.

Thankfully, Rui and Kane chose to opt out of the publicization system and didn't need to undergo any test that would reveal their skills.

('Assuming the ranks scale linearly with the grading system of the Martial Union, then I would probably be ranked at Rank B,') Rui noted. ('Kane would probably be ranked at Rank D, maybe Rank C.')

Soon enough, their application process ended, and both of them walked out of the guild with an Adventurer license in their possession.

"Why do they deviate so much from the norm when it comes to grading systems?" Kane frowned. "Seems redundant to not stick with the basic numeric grading system that most nations use universally. It's what everyone is used to, right? Forcing people to adapt to this new bullshit is just annoying."

"It's deliberate," Rui replied. "They're trying to create a distinct system, and have the Martial Squires, who will probably be spending quite some time in the nation, get used to it."

"Why do that when they'll be returning home after?" Kane sighed with exasperation.

"Because they don't want them to," Rui replied. "Their goal is to culturally and normatively tie down at least a portion of the Martial Squires who have entered the nation from abroad."

Kane's eyes widened. "I see, the vast number of foreign Martial Squires who have entered the nation can be potentially poached. Thus they're trying to create a distinct and unique system to get the Martial Squires familiarized and comfortable with it, in hopes that some stay."

Rui nodded. "Of course, I'm sure they're well aware of the fact that this is a long shot. However, given that this was a low-effort measure, any success at all can be considered a win. Not all Martial Squires come from large and powerful nations like the Kandrian Empire, there are many from smaller nations who could potentially be swayed by the Shionel Confederation. It is a Sage-level nation, after all. Besides... It isn't even that unique."

"Hm?" Kane glanced at him.

"I heard that the Panamic Adventurer Guild that caters to the Beast Domain as a whole also has a similar system that the Shionel Adventurer Guild has copied to a certain extent."

Chapter 778: Inn

The Panamic Adventurer Guild was a continental organization that connected the market and demand for Martial services surrounding the core of the Beast Domain, and Martial Artists who frequented the Beast Domain.

This gigantic organization catered across the entirety of the Panama Continent, and Rui suspected that due to being short on time due to the sudden discovery of the Shionel Dungeon, the Shionel Merchant Guild might have copied the Panamic Adventurer Guild.

"Regardless, the ranking system doesn't have much to do with us," Rui replied.

"True," Kane nodded. "Now then, the next move according to plan is..."

"Before that, let's get some rest and a real meal," Rui sighed, wiping sweat from his forehead. "Best to complete the more important stuff when we're freshened up. I'd rather not have to use a potion when it is unnecessary."

"Makes sense," Kane nodded. "You wanted to avoid higher-end hotels, right?"

"Hotels have more thorough registration and management faculty," Rui calmly explained. "There is a greater chance for a data leak to occur. I'd rather go to a more humble and smaller inn with no paperwork and upfront payments."

"Aw, man," Kane sighed. "I really wanted to dive into some nice luxurious beds."

The central district of Kanour was far too luxurious in the possible avenues to book rooms. The two found a small inn on the outskirts of the outer districts run by a family.

"No need for registration, pay up-front and we'll give you a key." The man smiled with a thumbs-up. "You can also get two meals a day for two bronze coins each. That's quite the discount you know? My wife's cooking is the best!"

"Two rooms side-by-side please," Rui smiled.

"Will do!" The man laughed. "That'll cost five bronze coins per day."

Rui quickly took the amount from the Shionel currency that he had exchanged with the physical Kandrian currency that he had withdrawn from his savings. He did not want to withdraw it from his Martial Union account directly as that would instantly alert the Martial Union of his current whereabouts.

"Thank you for your patronage! Here are the keys, room numbers five and six," The man pushed two keys toward them.

"Thank you," Rui and Kane quickly made their way to their rooms.

They were both wearing ordinary clothes, and they both hid their presence as Martial Squires. Rui employed his Mind Mask while Kane employed a highly diluted version of Void Step where his presence was detectable, but his status as a Martial Artist was not.

Rui quickly drew himself a bath in a tub, before sinking in.

"Ahhhh..." He groaned with relief and relaxation. "That hits the spot."

He was surprised that even smaller-scale inns such as this possessed a bathtub, that was remarkably luxurious and something that only luxury hotels in the Kandrian Empire.

('That standard for all goods and services is several levels higher in the Shionel Confederation than it is in the Kandrian Empire,') Rui mused as he gave it deeper thought.

It made sense, there was a reason all the small-timers they ran into outside the Shionel Confederation were not even qualified to set up shop inside the Shionel Confederation. That meant that all those who were people who were able to stay competitive inside the Shionel Confederation. It was no wonder that the basic quality of goods and services was higher than even what he had seen in the town of Hajin.

It was only after an hour that Rui managed to muster up the willpower to pull himself out of the comfort of his bath, before dressing up and meeting up with Kane.

"You all freshened up?"

"Yeah, got a good bath and caught some rest," He nodded with a relaxed expression.

"Good let's catch some dinner before talking about our plans," Rui suggested as the two of them headed down to the small little makeshift canteen that existed on the floor below the ground floor, before quickly collecting meals and retreating to their rooms.

"No one's nearby at the moment, regardless, speak extremely quietly," Rui told him.

Being Martial Squires, even the mildest of whispers were extremely clear and audible to them, thus they could converse extremely lightly. Besides from remarkable esoteric wiretap technology, and another Martial Squire, Rui was relatively certain that their conversation could not be spied on. He was equally certain that neither option was the case here at the moment.

The possibility of a wiretap that could pick up even the minutest of conversations was probably cutting-edge technology, nothing he saw from the intelligence team assigned to the Vilun settlement was capable of this. And his senses were extremely sharp and very few Martial Squires could possibly hide from his sharp sense.

"So what's the next move?" Kane asked.

Rui considered the question for a few seconds, before replying. "Assuming our first dungeon raid goes as planned, we'll gain a huge harvest from the dungeon. The question is what route do we ought to go with the plunder specifically. A solid minority of all Martial Squires raid and plunder the dungeon for missions from the Adventurer's Guild. Another solid proportion of Martial Squires raid and plunder the dungeon for patrons in the city. A lot of the wealthier merchants and corporates in the nation directly approach powerful Martial Squire parties and make lucrative deals with them privately outside of the jurisdiction and purview of the Adventurer's Guild. The remaining Martial Squires are deployed military or special forces or internal forces of the various nations' militaries or organizations like the Martial Union. The smallest minority of Martial Squires sell their harvest and plunder on the open market, usually through some third-party organization in various forms."

He looked at Kane. "We're going to be falling into that last group, for now, at least. We need a means to sell our harvest in the market. So, what that means is... we'll need to start a supplier corporation right here in the Shionel Confederation."

"What?" Kane's eyes widened as Rui grinned.

Chapter 779: Arrived

"You're telling me that we have to become businessmen?" Kane frowned so hard that Rui burst out laughing.

"You don't have to do anything, I'll handle it," Rui assured. "But yes, we're going to have to become businessmen. Specifically, I want to set up a nationwide supplier that can sell the esoteric harvests that we get from the Shionel Dungeon to the industries and sectors that require a supply of the esoteric resources of the Shionel Dungeon."

"Isn't that going to be extremely burdensome and tiring?" Kane groaned. "How on Earth are you planning on doing all of that by yourself? You have to manage all of the things that chairmen and presidents have to manage which is very much a full-time job! Isn't it better to just get a singular patron?"

Rui shook his head. "Patronage gives patrons some degree of control over the actions of those they are patroning. I do not wish to sell that right to others. What I want is a simple and effective way to distribute the plunder and harvest we get without empowering any one particular section of the consumer market."

"And how exactly do you plan on doing that?" Kane asked with an exasperated expression.

"Don't worry about it, I have a pretty good plan in mind," Rui smirked.

"Alright, I'll leave all of it to you. I honestly have no idea what you're talking about at the moment," Kane sighed. "So what is the next step that also involves me?"

"Get some good sleep, then tomorrow, we'll head to the Adventurer ring town," Rui replied.

The two of them were currently quite far from the dungeon, which was on the other side of the country. The Shionel Merchant Guild had redrawn maps to accommodate the creation of an 'Adventurer town' that accommodated all of the matters directly related to the dungeon itself. The Adventurer Ring town was a ring-shaped town that circled the perimeter of the Shionel Dungeon. Thus, if one wanted to enter the Shionel Dungeon, one needed to go through the Adventurer Ring town.

That was the plan for now.

"Alrighty, good night it is then," Kane shrugged.

The two of them split up for the night before quickly going to sleep.

That night Rui couldn't help but grow excited. He was eager to jump into the dungeon and put his newly-created techniques to the test in the circumstances that they were created for.

The night passed as Rui did his best to get a good sleep while suppressing his excitement. Thankfully, he was fatigued enough to fall asleep despite that.

The very next morning, the two of them got up quickly before packing up and heading out quickly.

"Not staying?" The innkeeper asked as the two returned their keys.

"Unfortunately not," Rui smiled before bidding them goodbye and leaving the inn.

Normally, Rui would not be comfortable sky-walking outside the Kandrian Empire for drawing far too much attention in an unsafe and unfamiliar environment, but there were so many sky-walking figures in the sky, that it was a futile worry, they would not be particularly eye-drawing among others, and it was quicker than wading through the highly dense streets of the town of Kanour.

Even though sky-walking was much slower than racing on the ground, it still took them more than an hour to cross the distance.

"I know we're sky-walking but, damn, it's unbelievable that we can see the dungeon tower from all the way back here," Kane murmured.

Rui nodded.

It was truly gigantic, standing far larger than even the biggest of mountains, dwarfing them in comparison. It represented the net volume of all the tunnels and floors inside the Dungeon, being the earth that was displaced and removed to create the empty tunnels and dungeons.

"No wonder it's taking time to clear the dungeon, it's huge!" Kane exclaimed, awed at the sight.

"Indeed," Rui stared at it with anticipation. "I am glad that I got to be part of this transient part of history. It's not every day that a Squire-level dungeon opens up."

They passed a myriad of Martial Squires on their way there, each staying above the chaotic and dense streets of the Shionel Confederation, they were all heading either to or from the Adventurer Ring.

Rui scrutinized all of them, gathering more information about the competition.

"Most of them are in larger groups," He remarked. "Makes sense given that larger numbers can partially mitigate the risks that come with the hampered senses within the Shionel Dungeon."

An ideal party would be comprised of the right combination of Martial Paths of varying ranges and fields, thus Rui could see why Martial Squires decided to team up in groups of five to be able to deal with the various challenges in the Shionel Dungeon.

"It would be annoying if we ran into them," Rui mused with narrowed eyes.

Half of his strategy and planned tactics would not work on Martial Squires as they were designed for monsters, which were the more prevalent and dominant threat. However, there were plenty of Martial Squires that clashed with each other inside the dungeon.

This was not prohibited either, nor could any prohibition of such a kind possibly be enforced by the Shionel Adventurer Guild.

He needed to keep an eye out for all of them

('The good news is that I can see them coming from literally a mile away, while they're not gonna perceive me until I come within a limited range where they can sense me, Kane will and I will be able to kill anybody who tries to pick a fight with us,') Rui did not have any intention of attacking Martial Squires while they were plundering the dungeon, but he would gladly kill anybody who dared to try and take their lives inside the dungeon. He was not a large-hearted man who could overlook attempted murder and forgive and forget.

Soon enough, the two of them reached the Adventurer Ring town around the Shionel Dungeon, and it was finally time to raid the dungeon.

Chapter 780: Floors

The concentration of Martial Squires increased exponentially the closer they got to the Shionel Dungeon. There were many Martial Squires sky-walking at certain points that it became easier to travel through land!

"Unbelievable," Rui grinned as he felt tingling excitement from the visage before him.

The countless Martial Squires gathered in the town, the bustling markets dense with vibrant energy.

It was only natural that this would infect even the most lethargic of people. Even Kane grew more energetic once they entered the large town.

The outer ring of the town contained all of the markets and bazaars of all kinds. Many of the goods and services were catered to Martial Artists who were headed towards entering the dungeon, or towards those who had exited.

Rui didn't spare them a second glance. He already had everything he needed, the only thing they were looking for was an inn where they could reside in.

('We can look for that later,') Rui noted. ('For now, we can drop our luggage at the Adventurer's Guild in our inventory that comes with registering with the Guild.')

The Adventurer's Guild guaranteed protection and management of the personal belongings of the Martial Artists who chose to store them there, in exchange for a small fee.

They quickly headed over to the closest Adventurer's Guild office in the inner ring which was restricted only to Martial Artists, yet despite this, the rush in the office was remarkably high. It took another half an hour before they could finish their business and exit the Adventurer Guild.

"Ugh, that was tiring," Kane complained. "Now I just want to go back and sleep."

"We still have a dungeon to raid, can't have you dropping dead already my friend,"

"Ugh..." Kane stretched a bit before sighing. "Alright let's get going already."

"That's the spirit," Rui chuckled, half serious and half sarcastic.

Rui could feel dominant pressure originating from the very dungeon itself. It was no wonder that ordinary humans simply stood no chance of coming close to the dungeon without feeling a traumatic amount of fear and anguish from the Shionel Dungeon. Not only did the vegetation absorb the esoteric mine reserves to grow to form the dungeon and possessed an enormous amount of power that exerted pressure onto hapless humans, but the many monsters inside the dungeon also exerted a lot of pressure.

The air grew somber as Rui and Kane walked toward the elevated land with steeling expressions. The light-hearted mood from just a minute prior had all but gone, and the Martial Squires within this distance from the dungeon could feel that entering the dungeon was not a light decision to take.

They soon reached the final barricade that separated the dungeon from the inner ring of Adventurer Ring. Rui could sense that many Martial Squires of the Shionel Confederation military manned the barrier, alert and ready to intercept any monsters that escaped the dungeon.

Not all monsters peacefully remained in the transmuted environment of the Shionel Dungeon, there was a small proportion of monsters that emerged from the dungeon and migrated outwards. Part of the reason that Adventurer Ring town was created was to protect the rest of the Shionel Confederation from the outbreak of monsters.

The inner ring was filled with Martial Squires both of the Shionel Confederation and of other nations. This strong presence ensured that no monster could ever get past a certain point and start wreaking havoc on the rest of the nation.

Soon enough they crossed the final gate, and the elevated land of the dungeon was just some distance before them.

Rui could already feel his senses straining. All five of his senses, as well as Tempestuous Feel and Seismic Mapping, grew increasingly hampered the closer they walked toward the dungeon.

"So this is the sensory jamming trait of the Shionel Dungeon, hm?" Rui narrowed his eyes. "If it's this bad despite us not even having entered it yet, how bad will it be when we're actually inside?"

Thankfully, there was one sense of Rui that still functioned unperturbed. His Riemannian Echo allows him to detect the curvature of space and gravity generated by the Shionel Dungeon's external and internal shapes and layouts, allowing him to generate an image of the structure of the dungeon unproblematically.

At this point, Rui was truly grateful that he had taken the initiative to develop such an incredibly powerful and useful sensory technique. He couldn't imagine how enormously difficult it would have been trying to clear the dungeon without it.

"Damn..." Kane murmured, clearly discomforted by his increasingly hampered senses. "This is going to be rough."

"Ready?" Rui asked with a solemn tone.

"Is it too late to go to the bathroom?" Kane smiled wryly.

The elevated land had an immense number of cave entrances emerging from its walls, most of them had not been mapped or entirely explored, as it was extremely dangerous to simply jump into the caves. One could potentially run into an unexplored floor and be swarmed by an army of Squire-level monsters.

STEP

What they saw atop was a large cave that had been marked and gated.

"This is one of the known entrances to the first floor," Rui noted.

The Shionel Adventurer Guild had marked all the known tunnels that led to the shallowest floor which had been marked as floor number one. This allowed adventurers to be able to follow known routes to known floors where they could pool their power with other adventurers that had also followed the same route.

Although they would be competing with them for resources, they would also be in the presence of other Martial Artists, thus the chances of being overwhelmed by sheer numbers were far lower. It was a safer bet for most Martial Squires who were simply looking to go for exploring and plundering that had less risk to it.

"I don't necessarily have intentions of sticking to the known path though," Rui murmured. "Floor one has long been cleared and the Shionel Adventurer Guild has even occupied it to a certain degree so that discoveries of new floors can quickly be confirmed and routed."