

Martial Unity 911

Chapter 911: Difficulty

It wasn't for no reason that he thought of Kane. Kane was an evasive maneuverer, which meant that speed and maneuvering were extremely vital and significant to him. To him, speed and maneuvering were what the VOID algorithm was to Rui, it was central. If anyone could help Rui, it was him.

On top of that, Rui knew exactly how he could help him.

After all, Kane was still in possession of the most powerful speed technique that he had ever known in his entire life.

"You want me to teach you Godspeed?" Kane looked at him incredulously when Rui approached him with his request. "You know you have absolutely no chance whatsoever? Like absolutely no chance in hell, or heaven, or anywhere else for that matter. Zero."

"Thanks for the vote confidence," Rui retorted sarcastically.

"Hey, I know you like it straight, and I'm giving it straight to you," Kane shrugged. "It's not possible, you're super talented, but you lack the immensely strong affinity to both speed supplementary and maneuvering techniques that is needed to master it. In practice, that means the enhancements you got from breaking into both, the Apprentice and Squire Realms, do not match the necessary configurations needed to master the Squire-level version of Godspeed."

He was, of course completely correct. Rui would be arrogant if he believed that he could simply master a grade-ten speed and maneuvering technique. Furthermore, the one thing Kane was wrong about was that Rui was talented. Of course, someone who didn't know the truth about Rui would think he's an absolute genius who simply bloomed later than people like Kane, Fiona, and Ian did.

In reality, Rui was not talented in the conventional sense. He made up for his lack of innate advantages with his mind that had gone through two lives of growth, as well as the knowledge and memories he had inherited from his previous life. With these advantages, it appeared to others that he was just a genius who took some time to discover his own talent.

He knew that he did not have the raw talent for Martial Art mastery, and in this case, he did not have an affinity for the technique that he was looking to master either.

"I'm well aware of that," Rui replied to him. "What I want is to learn the principle and the mechanics of the technique."

Kane considered his words. This was definitely a lot more reasonable in his eyes. There were grade-ten techniques of which much weaker and diluted versions were meant for other Martial Squires. Rui had even mastered one such technique; Wind Breathing which was a weaker version of the original Lightning Breathing.

"Sure..." Kane shrugged. "I suppose that's worth exploring if you really want to. But are you sure? Even if you master the core principles, they're meant for people who have an affinity for movement speed techniques. The technique only improves your movement speed not your reaction speed. Because your Martial Path and your Martial body are not speed oriented and have no affinity for speed, you definitely lack the reaction speed necessary to use the technique properly."

Rui smirked at those words. "Don't worry, I have it all figured out, probably."

Kane was a little worried for a second. But he did trust Rui's judgment, even if it was a little scary at times.

Besides, he was curious as to what Rui was hoping to achieve. After all, whatever Rui achieved with the Void Step, Kane ought to also be able to replicate.

Although it would not further his own Martial Path by copying someone else's techniques, he had no intention of doing that. After all, it would not deepen his Martial Path, nor would it help with his path to the Senior Realm.

Still, it might help him with creating his own techniques. This is something he had an immense amount of difficulty over. He had come to learn that extremely gifted individuals like himself tended to face greater difficulty in the Squire Realm because they were far too accustomed to blindly mastering the techniques that they wanted to without any issues whatsoever, that the idea of creating their own techniques for their Martial Art was a much more shocking difference than it was for more ordinary Martial Artists.

Kane even recalled the warning that Squire Kyrie and Squire Dylon had warned all the Martial Apprentices in the Academy of that. That talent was not decisive and mattered less the stronger they all became.

He could feel that already.

As a Martial Apprentice, he was much more dominant than he was as a Martial Squire. Now he had to work much harder to achieve lesser amounts of power.

It was one of the reasons he admired Rui. For some reason, Rui only seemed to grow stronger faster as a Martial Squire than he did as a Martial Apprentice.

It was utterly confounding to Kane.

"Alright then," Kane agreed after deciding to take Rui at his words. "Let's get started then."

"You seem enthusiastic," Rui smiled.

"I am, I'm curious to know what you're up to with this technique," Kane pointed out. "Let's get going. Where do you want to start training?"

"We can probably use one of the empty sites that we would use as a deposit site for esoteric ore deposit deliveries for Guildmaster Bradt," Rui told him. "Let's go,"

The two of them set out for their location after quickly deciding it. The location for esoteric ore deposit deliveries was remote and uninhabited for several kilometers, making it easier to get away from prying eyes. They could also leave the nation temporarily since that wasn't a problem with their speed.

Regardless, Rui definitely wanted to make sure that he wasn't being spied on. Although it was entirely and completely normal for Martial Squires to engage in training, he was a little paranoid that something about his techniques would give him away as the Voider, still, he was willing to endure a little bit of risk to train and grow stronger.

Chapter 912: Speed

It wasn't too long before they arrived, yet it was a while before they actually began. Rui's paranoia caused him to sweep an extensive radius around them thoroughly with his Riemannian Echo and his many other powerful senses that were ineffective inside the Shionel Dungeon. He did not want to begin without making sure that there weren't some spies assigned to him that were keeping tabs on him from a distance.

It wasn't until he found nothing he heaved a sigh of relief. He was not worried that someone was perhaps evading his senses with a powerful stealth technique if Kane could not hide from him inside the Shionel Dungeon, then no Martial Squire ought to be capable of hiding from him outside the Shionel Dungeon.

"Are you finally ready now?" Kane asked exasperated.

"All done, let's get started."

Kane sighed, before beginning. "Okay, so let me begin by going in-depth into the technique."

Rui nodded attentively. He had always been curious about how the technique worked, but never actually cared to bother finding out because it never pertained to him. The same went for the other grade-ten techniques, they were all special but also highly irrelevant.

Until now.

"What is speed?" Kane asked simply.

Rui considered the question for a moment before answering. "Speed is the resultant outcome of force, varying based on the weight of the subject and how much force was applied."

Kane nodded. "Right, speed is not a discrete thing that exists fundamentally and independently of everything else, it can only exist in a state be possessed by things, and whether one possesses or not

depends on perspective. If you and I are moving equally fast, then can you truly say I'm moving? Especially if I got rid of the environment entirely?"

"Whether something is moving, and how fast they are moving if they are moving, are all things relative to the frame of reference of the observer, it is entirely subjective," Rui replied, talking about the principle of relativity that was mainstream physics.

Kane nodded. "Ultimately, putting aside the subjective nature of speed, speed is a product of force and mass. The more the force, the faster your maximum speed will be, the heavier you are, the slower your maximum speed will be. Speed is equally a resultant outcome of both these quantities, thus in order to truly increase speed itself, both these quantities need to be altered to maximize speed. In order for a technique to qualify as a speed technique, it cannot just increase force, that is merely a strength supplementary technique, not a speed supplementary technique."

Rui frowned a little. "But amplifying strength alone does amplify speed, how much does it matter at the end of the day? Results are what matter, do they not?"

Kane shook his head. "You're not wrong, the results will not change regardless of whether you call it a strength technique or a speed technique. The distinction comes from looking at what it primarily is, and what its purpose primarily is. A strength technique focuses its resources on amplifying the raw power generated, the increase in speed is a favorable consequence, but it is not the intent of a strength supplementary technique. However, a pure speed-supplementary technique focuses on both the quantities that determine speed. However, more speed behind an attack consequently results in more power, even though this is not the intent of the technique."

Kane paused, before continuing. "Speed for power, and power for speed. These are as different as they are the same."

Rui's eyes lit up as realization dawned on him. "That's definitely insightful."

This was one area where some biases from his scientific background and research in combat sports had held him back. Back on Earth, fighters in combat sports were divided between weight classes, what that meant was that weight and mass of their bodies were roughly equal all the time. Thus stronger opponents were also faster because their body weights were all the same.

A stronger flyweight kickboxer was a faster flyweight kickboxer. The same went for heavyweights as well. While there certainly were other variables such as flexibility and wing span that also played a role, this principle held true if all these variables were controlled for.

Thus Rui had subconsciously retained that intuition even when he was reborn in this world, however, that intuition did not necessarily hold true in this world, where Martial Artists of different weight classes fought against each other and broke all the common sense rules of Earth as far as weight classes and speed went.

Kane had just shown him that certain vestiges of the common sense of the combat sports from Earth still remained in his head subconsciously without him thinking of it.

He looked at Kane appreciatingly. He had to admit that the young man was more insightful and possessed a much greater depth of understanding of his own field than Rui had given him credit for.

He looked forward to learning from him.

Kane on the other hand found it extremely refreshing to be the one to share his understanding with Rui and correct flaws in his understanding than the other way around. It definitely came as much needed boost for his self-esteem, given how much he had been deferring to Rui in recent times.

"So tying this back to the Godspeed technique, which is a speed technique, it doesn't increase speed by simply increasing the amount of force exerted, it also reduces the weight of the body temporarily," Kane continued. "It momentarily accelerates the conversion of food into energy momentarily producing more power in exchange for some stamina, and then forcibly expels the resultant products out via breathing, along with other waste materials, thereby reducing the weight of the body. By increasing force and reducing weight, it truly increases speed," Kane explained.

Rui's widened. "That's unbelievable!"

Rui was truly stunned by the explanation that Kane offered.

"By ridding your body of all the materials and substances that it doesn't need at the moment, you can obtain speed beyond your wildest dreams," Kane smirked.

Chapter 913: Concerns

Rui had to think about what Kane had just told him.

"Increase speed... by increasing power but also reducing body mass by exhaling matter that can be discarded for the moment? What in the world...?" He murmured with a shocked expression.

It was an absurd proposition, frankly. It offended his sensibilities, even.

How could one shed so much weight with a single technique? Rui knew that he had to be shedding a solid proportion of the weight of the body.

Rui's eyes widened. "Is that why you looked so starved every time you finished using the ability? You were basically incapacitated every time you used the technique."

"It's not an easy technique to use," Kane sighed. "As you have surmised, there are great drawbacks to using it. Just barely obtaining the power of a higher Realm, even if just for the briefest of moments, requires one to pay a great price."

Rui was not surprised.

As a Martial Apprentice, Kane could break the sound barrier and move as fast as a Martial Squire, and every time he used that move, he was completely incapacitated by exhaustion.

That was the price of using the power of a higher Realm!

Rui briefly considered the implications and impacts that this revelation had on him and his plan. Knowing the technique that he was hoping to integrate into Project Forestep was quite useful and required him to consider the prospects of doing so more deeply.

"Firstly, I'm not looking to achieve the speed of a higher Realm for the briefest of moments," Rui began.

"You wouldn't be able to achieve it either," Kane chimed in. "Even for me, my reaction speed is far too slow to be able to use it flexibly. That's why I can only go in straight lines, and that's why I need so much distance between myself and my target. Even with my highly heightened reflexes and reaction speed as an evasive maneuvering Martial Squire, I cannot fully keep up with the Godspeed technique."

That made sense.

In fact, Rui recalled a fight between Fae and Kane a long time ago. Kane had won the fight by using Godspeed, but Fae had managed to get in a hit regardless, despite being far slower. This was probably because Kane was unable to react to her strike because of how fast he himself was moving, and did not possess the reaction speed to control his body and move in time either.

"I'm not looking for something like that," Rui shook his head. "I do not want speed beyond my control."

"Well, just by looking to master the Godspeed technique to a certain degree, you kind of are, you do realize that, yes?" Kane tilted his head, looking at Rui oddly. "After all, your raw neurological reaction speed is above average for a Martial Squire as old as you at most. And it normally ought to be average, but it's above average only because of your Hungry Pain technique allowing for a stronger and faster Martial body."

Rui understood his concerns but knew that they were misplaced. The reason that he wanted to master the technique despite his lacking reaction speed was because he had long decided to rely on predictions in addition to reactions.

"I have a plan, don't worry about it," Rui shook his head for the time being. "I don't want the original version of the Godspeed technique, it doesn't suit my technique, and I cannot master it due to difficulties due to incompatibility. What I want is a diluted version of the technique that can be used more continuously and fluidly."

"That's going to be difficult," Kane frowned. "I'm not even sure how to teach you that when I don't know if I can do that myself. I've only learned the Godspeed technique, and the only alterations I've ever done are merging it with the Void Step technique."

The mentions of Kane merging two grade-ten techniques into one were almost significant enough to draw his attention away from his important considerations, but he put that matter aside.

"You can leave that part to me, I'll begin the training for the conventional Godspeed training, and in my inability to master it, I will strive to discover alternatives. Lower intensity for more grounded, but more controllable speeds," Rui told him as he grew increasingly excited.

Imagining himself wielding a partial Godspeed technique while using the VOID algorithm to compensate for the lacking reaction speed, and even surpassing it, made him incredibly excited.

He couldn't wait to realize this ambition and obtain a tool to be able to keep up with the Root.

"Alright, if you say so," Kane shrugged. "I'll continue by explaining the training methodology."

"Will it require special equipment?" Rui raised an eyebrow.

The issue with the needed equipment and training definitely was something that he was worried about. Given that the Martial Union had developed training equipment and gear for basically every technique that it sold, he was worried that he would need to somehow get his hands on a ton of different equipment and devices and instruments to train in the training regimes that the Martial Union had developed.

In that case, it would make his training regime that much more cumbersome and problematic.

He would need to contact Martial Commissioner Reze and discreetly purchase the necessary training equipment, devices, and gear. It was another matter of whether Commissioner Reze would agree to engage in such a risky deal. Rui was especially worried if the training for the technique entailed a ton of different training equipment and gear. Or if it required training resources that were simply impossible to transport all the way to the Shionel Confederation.

For example, the training regimes for sensory techniques were much more demanding. It required controlled training rooms infested with all kinds of esoteric technology that muted any and all senses.

Transporting an entire training room ten thousand kilometers away for Rui's sake was far too impractical. If that was what was necessary, Rui could forget about completing Project Forestep soon.

Chapter 914: Necessities

"Hmmm..." Kane gave it a thought. "Honestly, only two of them are truly necessary. The rest, I can teach you without them. They're more optimizing training equipment."

He turned towards Rui. "What you truly need are the Parymethia gas masks and the Franmulth drug system."

"What?" Rui raised an eyebrow. He did not like the sound of those.

It wasn't that he hadn't undergone training regimes that required special esoteric substances, it was just that he hadn't expected it for the Godspeed technique.

"What kind of substances and what's their purpose?"

"The Parymethia gas masks are necessary to help you train the weight expulsion method and the Franmulth drug system is necessary to help you train the accelerating of power generation and consumption of your body for the greater speed," Kane mentioned.

"Is it possible to train the Godspeed technique without the training equipment?" Rui wondered.

"Technically, it's possible to train all techniques without their training equipment, it's just way harder because these training systems make use of sophisticated esoteric technology to help you master them faster," Kane pointed. "In this case though, I wouldn't recommend it, I have no idea how long it will take you to even reach the level that you seek to reach without the training equipment, definitely won't happen within a short amount of time."

"Hm," Rui nodded. "Makes sense. But if training equipment is needed for the most important parts of the technique, then why even begin the training?"

After all, what were they supposed to do without the training equipment?

"The training equipment is not needed for all stages of the training, especially not the earliest training stages," Kane told him. "You first need to master a breathing technique and learn how to apply it in combat."

"A breathing technique?" Rui raised an eyebrow. "What for?"

"It's the breathing technique with which you will eventually use to expel mass and to speed up your energy consumption and generation for the extra power to become faster," Kane explained. "Once you've mastered the breathing style and are able to use it consecutively with the movements that you specifically want to apply the boost in speed too."

"Movements that I want to apply the speed boost to?" Rui raised an eyebrow. "You mean that you cannot simply apply the speed boosts to all kinds of movements freely?"

"I did tell you that your reaction and processing speed will lag behind your movement speed, right?" Kane reminded him. "You need to build a certain degree of muscle memory of using the speed amplification of Godspeed with whatever movements you want to use them with. If you plan to use Godspeed with a straightforward bullrush, you need to memorize the timings of the technique by reflex. Because the movement speed is so much faster than your reaction speed, you won't have time for active coordination."

"I see..." Rui frowned. "I plan to use it as a general speed boost for all movements, so that means..."

"You need to master timing that breathing technique with all movements with your muscle memory alone," Kane confirmed. "It's usually because of that it's the norm to apply it to a handful of movements like I do. For example, I have mastered applying Godspeed breathing technique to bullrushes, thus when I do use Godspeed to amplify my speed, I amplify a charge."

Rui nodded. He did recall Kane always using Godspeed to cross distances between him and his opponents to land a strong strike.

"If you want to use Godspeed to amplify the speed of all movements that you make in combat, then you're in for an even rougher time than I was," Kane threw an expression of pity towards Rui. "It's extremely difficult. Normally I'd say it takes too long, but your growth rate and speed of mastery have always been spectacular, so who knows, you may be able to pull off what I wasn't able to, at least, with a diluted version of the Godspeed technique."

Rui appreciated the optimism, but it only made him realize how difficult the venture he was seeking to go out on was.

"Alright, let's get started with the breathing technique," Rui told Kane.

Kane nodded. "It's best we came out here rather than did this in the inn since the breathing can be disruptive to the environment."

Rui nodded.

A normal person's breathing was, of course, unproblematic. However, that wasn't the case when Martial Squires. Their breathing was so powerful that normal people could even die to them just breathing at full power with breathing techniques.

"The breathing technique places a great amount of emphasis on the quality of exhalation," Kane explained. "After all, it is the manner by which you will be expelling mass to increase mass."

Rui nodded, absorbing everything Kane conveyed.

"Of course, as you are currently, you won't be able to expel any mass," Kane continued. "But that's fine, the point is to get you to memorize the form and learn to use it with your movements. Once you have that down, you can start training with the two training equipment and resources that I mentioned earlier, they will help you actually master the ability to expel mass via breathing and to be able to use it to trigger higher energy consumption and dispel mass using the breathing technique."

He inhaled deeply, holding his breath for a moment, before suddenly exhaling.

BANG!

Rui's eyes widened as Kane's forceful exhalation sounded like a heavy-caliber gunshot. Given how heavy his breath was, it was not actually far from the truth at all.

"That was strong," Rui murmured. "Is that what it's like?"

"That was just one breath of the technique, yes," Kane nodded. "You have to do this in rapid succession and only then can you possibly be able to actually trigger the Godspeed technique."

"I see," Rui nodded. "Well, let's get this out of the way."

Rui was eager to master the breathing technique. He had just learned that the road ahead of him was going to be tougher than he had expected, but he was up for a challenge.

Chapter 915: Next

More than a month had passed since Rui began training the Godspeed technique, and Rui marveled at how different it was from any other breathing technique that he had ever mastered.

It was the only technique that placed greater weight on the frequency of breaths and on the quality of exhalation compared to other techniques that focused more on the timing of inhalation. The timing of exhalation mattered a lot more with this technique than it did.

The first thing he discovered was that it was incompatible with his other breathing techniques, of which he had three at the moment.

Final breathing, Wind Breathing, and Gale Force Breathing.

He discovered that their timings clashed and that there was no way he could use any of them with the Godspeed breathing technique simultaneously. It was why he felt it was difficult to integrate it into his muscle memory, but he persevered.

His days had become jam-packed. He had to raid the dungeon as the Voider to supply the Shionel Dungeon and the Martial Union, on top of that, he needed to keep up appearances and clear the dungeon as Rui Quarrier as well so that he didn't draw any suspicion from the investigations that Chairman Deacon had launched into the identity of the Voider.

He knew that the Martial Union was actively protecting him by sabotaging the investigation to ensure that he would never be caught red-handed. Considering that Chairman Deacon had yet to come to suspect him personally, he supposed that they were doing that job well. Still, there was no need to make life harder for himself and them by not keeping up the perfect appearances that he had kept all this time.

On top of all of that, he needed to train hard as well. These three jobs took most of his time.

It didn't help that each of the dungeons that he had discovered kept getting progressively larger and larger.

No longer was it possible to empty a dungeon in a single day. They began becoming cumbersome week-long processes to completely clear and plunder. On top of that, all of the adventurers had finally destroyed all the ants that Rui had released into the entire dungeon. A powerful S-rank team had found the ant floor, discovering the ant mountain and, eventually, the queen ant before informing the Adventurer Guild. This resulted in a large crusade that ended up eradicating all the ants and killing the powerful queen ant as well.

The increased dangers of the Shionel Dungeon above the norm had been alleviated, and the adventurers had begun to once more crawl across the entire dungeon, exploring the dungeon more fiercely than ever before. All of the many Martial Squires that had poured in from that local segment of the continent in more recent times as well as Ma

Much to Rui's dismay, they had discovered many as well. This had been within his predictions. Even though he considered his ability to explore to be greater than that of all of them combined, he did not, for one second, mistake the combined effort of many thousands of Martial Squire adventurers as trivial. With so many pouring through the dizzying maze of tunnels in the Shionel Dungeon, they were bound to discover new floors, including the ones that Rui had already found but hadn't gotten to yet.

The good thing was that once a floor was discovered, they immediately all flocked to that floor, putting aside exploration for a brief amount of time.

Thus, a certain pattern had begun in the matters regarding the Shionel Dungeon as things seemed to reach a balance. The conflict between the Voider and Chairman Deacon had certainly not ceased, but it was clear that they weren't clashing against each other.

Chairman Deacon's efforts were partially successful.

He had not succeeded in finding the Voider, frustratingly enough, but he had managed to break the Voider's monopoly and dominance to a certain degree.

It turned out that as powerful as Kane and Rui were inside the dungeon, the same could be said for thousands of Martial Squires. Chairman Deacon's efforts of uniting domestic and foreign stakeholders who were negatively affected by the Voider to obtain an incredibly powerful Martial Squire force that could cover a huge amount of ground exploration, and monopolize an entire dungeon, were successful. He had managed to obtain several large floors all to himself and his allies, the contents of which they distributed based on their contribution to the alliances.

Chairman Deacon, as the prime uniter and by far the largest contributor of capital, resources, and Martial power, received the lion's share of benefits.

Although it wasn't quite as strong as his dominance prior to the Voider, it was still satisfactory, and he was able to regain a growing trend.

Guildmaster Bradt on the other hand had benefited largely from partnering with Esosale Suppliers and had consolidated even more economic and political power, readying himself for the confrontation with Chairman Deacon over the position of Guildmaster in the Shionel Confederation.

Rui had stopped concerning himself with those matters.

He had unerringly dedicated an absurd amount of time to mastering the breathing technique.

"Sleep is important you know," Kane watched with incredulity as Rui every single hour of every single day to maximum use. "You're going to go insane if you don't take a moment to breathe, holy shit."

Rui didn't even bother responding as he practiced the breathing technique with his other techniques and attacks.

He needed to finish mastering the breathing technique with the many techniques of his Martial Art for starters as well as foundational moves and maneuvers.

He didn't have time to expand it to all possible moves that the human body could make, thus he settled for all combat-related ones. He wasn't sure he even needed to expand it to non-combat-related movements.

It took him a month and a half to master the Godspeed breathing form, and master its timing alongside other techniques and movements, much to Kane's surprise. He was already ready to move on to the next stages of the training of the Godspeed technique.

Chapter 916: Uninterested

"You wish to acquire the training resources needed for the Godspeed technique?" Commissioner Reze asked, raising an eyebrow. "Surely you do not plan on training this technique in the Shionel Confederation?"

"I wouldn't be asking for them if I didn't, now would I?" Rui calmly retorted. "Please transport the training equipment immediately. You can deduct the expenses for the equipment and other matters from my account regardless of the price."

Every second he wasted on other matters was one less second he could spend training. He did not want to wait too long for what he needed.

"Alright, will do," Commissioner Reze nodded, goodheartedly, despite Rui's colder tone. "I would advise you to be extremely careful though. Chairman Deacon has begun ramping up the investigation with even greater intensity. Furthermore, our intelligence also indicates that the Underworld is displeased with the sanctions from Esosale Suppliers. It has been a particularly difficult task to sniff out their new

shell fronts as they have also been ramping up their investments in order to get a piece of the pie that is the Shionel Dungeon that we have restricted. The political alliance and they have both become a pain to our interests."

"Ok,"

"..."

"So when can you get me my equipment?" Rui asked blankly.

"... I will endeavor to ensure that you get them as soon as possible," Commissioner Reze sighed in a resigned manner.

Rui nodded before he and Kane got up and left.

"It sounded like he was saying important stuff," Kane glanced at him as they Void Stepped out of their clandestine meeting. "Maybe you should have paid more attention to what he had to say."

"It's the same shit as always," Rui snorted. "Chairman Deacon this and that, Underworld this and that. I don't have time to spend chit-chatting about these matters. I am keeping an eye on the investigative progress of Chairman Deacon that the Martial Union is supplying me as per agreements. If I feel the need to take extra precautions, like if I discover they have begun a personalized investigation on me, then I will do so, but beyond that, I don't care."

Rui's eyes narrowed in determination. "If I'm to master the technique that I aim to create, I cannot pay too much attention and energy to other matters."

Rui knew that the path to a higher Realm of power could not be attained unless he singlemindedly dedicated himself to his Martial Path and Martial Art.

In that sense, it was bad enough that he had to dedicate himself to dungeon clearing. But that was still an acceptable and necessary expense since he knew that he didn't have much choice. The technique

was for the dungeon clearing which he had made a personal commitment to, and thus he did not want to sacrifice the goal for the means.

It wasn't long after that they received an anonymously delivered package soon enough.

The Martial commissioner had understood Rui's urgency and had respected it enough to ensure that he abided by Rui's wishes regarding the speedy delivery.

Soon enough, Rui and Kane arrived at their training location.

Rui spent about ten minutes surveilling the area, before finally relieving his paranoia.

"Ah, it's been a while since I've seen these," Kane chuckled as he examined the gas mask and the vials of a certain drug.

"It's about time you explain how these work, Kane," Rui reminded him.

"Right," Kane nodded. "Well, it's simple, really."

He reached for one of the vials that had been given to them. "This drug, known as Franmalth venom, inhibits energy production and consumption even for the likes of Martial Squires. It's basically poison. You're going to inhale it. And it will travel across your body and begin affecting it. Then you need to use the Godspeed breathing technique to increase the energy that your body generates against the inhibition of the drug. The rapid short and high-paced breathing will force the body to generate a lot of power, and that's how you'll counter the drug."

Rui raised an eyebrow. "That's... actually quite an ingenious way to teach someone exactly how to force their body to momentarily generate more power."

He immediately understood the purpose of the training. By introducing a drug that inhabits power generation into the body, they would force the subject to push themselves to their limits consciously and subconsciously to counter the drug by increasing cell power generation and consumption.

Then with enough repetition, they would be able to reproduce the same effect when not under the influence of the drug, in normal physical conditions. In that case, without any drug-inhibiting cell power generation and consumption, the generation of power would increase significantly above the norm.

"Then we just keep increasing the dosage, bit by bit," Kane explained. "Until you eventually reach your limits. And then the training for that stuff stops."

"Hm," Rui nodded. "What about the gas mask?"

"That inhibits exhalation, it also forces you to learn how to expel the Franmalth venom in your body via exhalation. You need to learn how to expel temporarily unnecessary substances and matter from across your entire body, and the Franmalth venom basically acts as a substitute instead of your actual body mass," Kane continued. "Then once we get rid of the gas mask and the drug,

"Let's begin," Rui told Kane.

Kane pulled out the gas mask, before fiddling with it himself.

"You should probably read the instructions," Rui told him.

"Relax, I've trained with these for two years. One year as an Apprentice and another as a Martial Squire. I'll be fine," He reassured Rui as he swiftly calibrated, before nodding. "Alright, it's done. You ready?"

Rui breathed deeply before he steeled his resolve, narrowing his eyes. "Yeah, let's get started."

"Gotcha," Kane walked over with the gas mask at hand, handing it to Rui. "The dial on the right controls breathing difficulty, clockwise for increasing it, and counter-clockwise for decreasing it. The button on the left releases the drug so be sure to inhale when you hit it."

Chapter 917: Exhale

Rui still recalled to this day the sensation of passing away.

Unlike anybody else, he knew what the sensation of death was like having experienced it once himself.

And now, he was being assailed by a sensation that was quite similar to it, for the first time in his entire life.

('Shit,') Rui cursed mentally as he felt the energy of his body dripping as his consciousness began to blur ever so slightly.

His vision began darkening.

His muscles began relaxing.

His thoughts began flailing around as mustering up conscious resistance became even harder.

It felt strangely comfortable, as death had.

But instinctually, he knew that this was not something he ought to be allowing to happen. Thankfully, the muscle memory he had burned into his body in the past many weeks kicked in.

FUUU. FUUU. FUUU.

The breathing technique kicked in as he began breathing at an extreme frequency, almost like he was panting. His exhalations were forceful and remarkably powerful, more powerful than he had ever done them in his entire life.

The vigorous and aggressive breathing technique that kicked in almost entirely due to muscle memory sent a jolt across the entire body.

A ripple of power spread from the lungs across his entire body. A surge of energy woke Rui up from his stupor.

He narrowed his eyes as he pushed even harder with the breathing technique, achieving a level of intensity that he hadn't achieved yet. His body began to feel more alive as his breathing technique

fought back against the influence of his drug, forcing the cells of his body to kick into action and push back.

The energizing effect of the breathing, now that he was pushing himself to levels of intensity that he didn't even know he could achieve, was overwhelming the effects of the drug, causing him to feel more active.

"Great," Kane nodded. "It's impressive you managed to succeed with overwhelming the lowest dose on your very first try. You must have powerful breathing."

Rui had actually gone through a strenuous training regime when training for the Mighty Roar Flash Blast technique from the G'ak'arkan Tribe. Part of it had involved strengthening his lungs considerably. Thus he wasn't surprised that he was able to do well with resisting the Franmalth drug in his system trying to show down his power generation.

('This drug must be some kind of substance the mitochondria somehow,') Rui concluded as he became able to resist the drug with increasing ease, although his lungs were growing sore.

"Now you need to expel the drug," Kane informed him. "You're doing well in resisting the influence of the drug, but you don't have endless stamina. Use the exhalation breathing form I taught you to expel the drug that you ingested, through your lungs."

Rui nodded as he packed in more force with his exhalations. He felt as though he was squeezing his blood dry of every ounce of the drug like twisting a drenched piece of cloth to squeeze out water.

"Nice," Kane nodded as Rui expelled a purple gas from his nose. "You're doing just fine."

Rui continuously exhaled the substance as his breathing grew increasingly laborious. He knew that he wasn't supposed to be able to have this much trouble, yet he realized how heavy the drug was in the first place.

('It's like a dense liquid, it's like I'm trying to pump out water with my lungs alone,') Rui gasped for air as he finally pushed out the last bit of Franmalth Venom from his body.

He instantly felt much lighter, as though he had just taken off some weights from his body.

"Great job man," Kane nodded approvingly. "I forgot how good you were with breathing techniques. I can't believe you nailed both on the first try."

"Yeah..." Rui panted. "It's a shame that won't be enough to master the full power of the Godspeed technique."

"That's correct," Kane nodded. "Your strange affinity for breathing is definitely going to help you get further than I expected you would, but the breathing technique exists for speed and agility, which you do not have enough affinity or talent for. However, I do think you may have the chance to master this technique to probably around forty-to-fifty percent of its grade-ten potency. Which is still quite impressive, really impressive."

"I'll take what I can get," Rui sighed getting up once he caught his breath. "You said that this was the lowest dose, correct?"

"Yep," Kane nodded. "The most dilute version where the drug is still effective."

"To think it's going to become substantially harder," Rui shook his head. "You're the amazing one for being able to completely master it."

Kane shrugged. "I'm too good, what can I say?"

Rui chuckled, yet inwardly he wondered if his Forestep technique would allow him to beat someone like Kane head-on. He knew that he would probably become more competitive with Kane in combat when it came to speed and agility, what he was curious about was whether he could actually surpass Kane when it come to speed, agility, and maneuvering.

Rui grew more excited now that he had a better inkling about where his current training was leading him to go.

The training of the Godspeed technique was appearing to be more promising than he had initially predicted. On top of that, his insight into his target had grown in the past month and a half, increasing the quality of the predictive model he could build on the Root.

He had spent a good amount of time observing its movements, ascertaining the patterns that existed between physical cues that occurred with specific kinds of motions ahead of time. He had spent quite a lot of time memorizing these passive patterns that all existed within the movements of the Root.

But unfortunately, he hadn't yet gotten a chance to observe the active patterns that the Root had in combat. He hadn't seen any other living interacting with the Root in any kind of fashion to trigger a conflict that he could use to collect data.

Chapter 918: Clash

Rui did not feel confident enough to fight the root without data on, both, active and passive patterns of the Root.

There was a difference between these kinds of patterns.

Passive patterns existed in all movements of all living beings. These were patterns between involuntary and subconscious movements, including twitches of muscles and tendons, minute shifts in weight, respiration, perspiration, heart rate, complexion, and a dozen other variables. By analyzing these, Rui could predict the movements that a certain person was going to make by building a predictive model based on these tells and cues.

These subconscious cues and tells were devoid of any conscious or voluntary intent and control. Not even the most intense body control that the best of diplomats and spies trained in could get rid of the micro-physiological phenomena that Rui could perceive thanks to his senses.

Thus far, he had only collected passive patterns of the Root. He had spent many hours watching it lash out as it grabbed unrefined esoteric ore deposits. It had given him a good idea of the way it moved and would allow him to predict it to a certain extent.

But it hadn't been enough.

('I need to see it fight others,') Rui narrowed its eyes. ('Extensively.')

One or two fights did not suffice.

He needed hundreds if not thousands of fights to surveil.

Fortunately, Rui had just the right idea of how to get the data that he sought.

There were few ways in which Rui could possibly go about it, and he intended to spend time refining the plan.

('For now, training takes precedence,') Rui sighed.

And train he did.

He had underestimated the difficulty of the training of the Godspeed technique, even if Kane insisted that he had done quite well. He knew that it was going to be painful and difficult.

Still, he intended to get past it and complete it.

Months flew by as the monotony of the Shionel Dungeon truly began settling in for the first time since its discovery.

Even back when it had originally begun becoming normal after it had been discovered, Rui had come in and singlehandedly disrupted things, sparking a new wave of chaos that triggered even more volatile dungeon and political happenings.

But things had truly calmed down as dungeon floors began being discovered at an accelerated pace.

The reason was simple. The number of Martial Squires clearing the dungeon had tripled since Rui had begun his activities as the Voider. Furthermore, he himself had accelerated his own dungeon clearing.

One by one, both sides began whittling down the floors of the Shionel Dungeon as they traveled deeper and deeper into the dungeons.

That segment of the continent began discovering the many floors that the Voider had singlehandedly cleared. They couldn't help but admire the mysterious being that had taken that section of the continent by storm.

The election for the position of Guildmaster had begun approaching.

The many merchants of the Shionel Merchant Guild would vote for one of the hundred merchants of the Shionel Merchant Council, as the next Guildmaster of the Shionel Merchant Guild.

Normally, this was not as exciting of a matter.

However, this time, things were different.

The air across the nation was tense. Because people knew that for the first time in many years, the elections might break a pre-existing pattern that had stood strong for many years.

The Bradt Distribution Service had an enormous amount of sway over all the voters in the Shionel Merchant Guild. Guildmaster Bradt had previously bought seventy percent of the votes by deeply entangling voters with the Bradt Distribution Services' high-quality essential distribution and communication services.

That had been enough to sweep the elections every time despite Chairman Deacon's best efforts.

This time, however, things did not seem very clear.

Chairman Deacon and Deacon Industries had grown astronomically more powerful and influential as time passed.

He had exploited not one, but two massive opportunities to gain more power and more support.

Yes.

Two, not one.

The Shionel Dungeon was God's gift to him. It directly fueled his primary field and gave him unfathomable gains. He gained more than just wealth. He had gained economic dominance and political allegiances.

The second opportunity had come in the form of the Voider, surprisingly enough. No one, not even Chairman Deacon, had predicted that the Voider would end up becoming an avenue to gain more support. He united a tremendous number of stakeholders who had been negatively affected by the Voider's absurd success.

This resulted in a frightening amount of political capital. He had gained more from uniting people and gaining their loyalty through mutual interests against a common enemy than a common boon.

In some twisted way, Chairman Deacon was even partially grateful to the Voider for having arrived and united so many people against himself that Chairman Deacon had managed to splendidly harness thanks to the new gains that he had made from the Shionel Dungeon.

Of course, what speck of gratitude he had for the Voider's appearance was drowned by the endless hatred he had for the Voider. The sheer amount of trouble that he had given Chairman Deacon made him wish he could tear apart the little shit's face.

Still, he had shifted his attention away from the Voider for now. As much as he hated the Voider, the Voider was not his greatest enemy.

The image of Guildmaster Bradt appearing in his mind alone stoked his temper, but he kept his composure, grinning.

He was confident. This time, he truly had the ability to win. He had exerted more capital and resources into campaigning than he had ever done in his entire career. The capital expended in this time's election was greater than the sum of all the capital he had expended for campaigning ever before.

He was truly staking everything on the line. The sheer amount of commitments and expenditure of capital, resources, and commitments that had gone into buying as many votes as possible meant that Deacon Industries might collapse if he failed!

Chapter 919: Preliminary

More than three months had gone by. Rui's life had turned into an intense monotony of dungeon clearing, both as Rui and as the Voider, gathering information on the Root, and training with Project Forestep.

Rui had dedicated the entirety of his mind and body towards mastering as much of the Godspeed Breathing technique, hoping to gain as much of this power as he could.

Unfortunately, as good as he was with breathing techniques, he was not as good as Kane was with speed and thus was unable to reach Kane's level of mastery of the technique.

After more than three months of dedicated training, his growth had finally plateaued at about forty percent of the full level of mastery.

"That's still pretty good all things considered," Kane told him. "If not for the fact that you lack the reaction speed to keep up even with thirty percent of the full mastery of the Godspeed technique, you could use it without compunctions. I still don't know how you plan to get past that restriction though, honestly."

Kane had not attempted to pry out Rui's intentions regarding the Godspeed technique. Martial Art related matters were deeply personal to each Martial Artist, and they were not light matters that were generally discussed without care.

Rui on the other hand did not want to make claims that he could not support, and thus did not go too deeply about what he was trying to accomplish. All Kane knew was that Rui was trying extremely hard to realize his ambition of applying the Godspeed technique.

"I'm not entirely sure of much myself, Kane," Rui sighed. "I guess we'll find out. Come at me."

"What?"

"I said, come at me," Rui stood still.

"I'm confused," Kane frowned. "Have you actually completed the technique? I thought you were going to spend time trying to look for a way to compensate for your lacking reaction speed."

"I thought of a potential solution to that problem even before I decided to learn the Godspeed technique," Rui replied.

Kane tilted his head. "Huh. That's unexpected, to say the least. Is there nothing you haven't thought of a solution for? Leave some intelligence for the rest of us man."

Rui smirked. "Well, let's see if I was right. Thankfully, you're the perfect test subject. Come at me with your fastest standard attacks. Let's see how I do."

Kane shrugged, taking his stance.

His eyes narrowed as he generated a faint inscrutable pressure. His feet were centered, right beneath his torso, a position that was conducive to immediately begin moving in any direction. His heels were elevated, making it harder to read the moment of the start of his charge.

The rest of his body was loose, yet it was because of the lack of rigidity that he could move at astonishing speeds.

Yet despite all of this, Rui didn't feel any wariness. The problem for Kane was that Rui knew him too well. The prediction model he had on Kane was probably the most well-developed one that he had in his Mind Palace.

He knew Kane too well inside out.

Even without Project Forestep, the VOID algorithm could crumple Kane with well-timed movements that devastatingly countered him in the most effective way possible. The combination of all his other techniques of his Flowing Void Style when applied through the VOID algorithm was simply too much.

"You don't intend on taking a stance?" Kane raised an eyebrow.

"I don't intend to use any of the techniques of my Martial Art," Rui replied calmly. "I'm going use only the technique I'm trying to create with Project Forestep."

Kane raised an eyebrow. Had anyone else said that they intended to compete with him with a single technique, he would strongly doubt them. Barring people like Hever who dedicated themselves to a single technique, or people in possession of an extraordinary grade-ten technique, it was not possible to compete with him with a single technique.

However, he knew better than to underestimate Rui, so he simply abided by his instructions.

His approach was swift.

In the eyes of Martial Apprentices and even low-grade Martial Squires, it would appear as nothing short of teleportation.

WHOOSH

STEP

In the tiniest of split seconds, he was already face to face with Rui, a swift blur of a jab flying to his face.

THWACK

Kane's eyes widened.

Where Rui's face should have been was his hand, intercepting the attack.

It came out of nowhere.

Yet he swiftly changed gears as he spun, launching the opposite leg into a blindingly swift backward spanning roundhouse kick to the side of Rui's head.

WHOOSH

Kane half-expected a block, but what he did not expect was his kick passing through Rui's head, dispelling the empty image. He quickly stepped away.

"I thought you said you weren't going to use any other techniques," Kane folded his arms.

He recognized the illusion that his kick had struck, he was sure it was the Phantom Step technique that created illusions inside the target's head with extremely convincing and deceiving fakes.

Rui smirked.

"I didn't,"

Kane's eyes widened at those words. Yet he didn't even have time to respond as Rui resumed the battle.

Yet this time, he was on the offensive.

WHOOSH

FLICK

Kane barely managed to dodge a palm jab as it nicked his cheek. He leaped back with an incredulous impression. ('He came out of nowhere! Was that Blink?!')

"You let your guard down,"

Chills shivered down Kane's spine as he heard Rui's voice from behind him, as his mind instinctively lashed away.

WHOOSH

Barely evading another palm jab from Rui.

"Tsk. Missed twice," Rui frowned. "Preliminary results; quite effective defensively. Has much to be left desired as far as offensive application goes."

Kane stared at him bewildered. "What as that?! How did you master the technique instantly? This is supposed to take time! No, wait. More importantly. How did you do all of that?"

Rui smirked. "All in good time, my friend. Come, I have more tests to run."

A chill crawled up Kane's spine at those words.

Chapter 920: Real Deal

The feeling of the prototypical preliminary application of the Forestep project was quite strange, to say the least.

Rui did not expect it to feel in any particular way, but it was jarring when he did use it. It was as though he was manipulating his own body like it was a puppet.

When he used Godspeed with ordinary combat movements, he couldn't react to his own movements. It was extremely difficult to control his speed and stop his movements in time. He basically needed to plan every movement out ahead of time carefully, and then start and stop it at the right time relying purely on highly prepared reflexes.

"WOAH!"

BANG!

He had crashed into a boulder when he had mastered the forty percent of the Godspeed technique.

"I told you, you can't react to it if you wait for the right moment, it happens too quickly. You don't know what the right moment is, either," Kane had told him months ago when he had tried applying the Godspeed boost to his combat movements.

It wasn't until the present day when Rui challenged him to a spar did he realize how wrong he was.

"Come, I have more tests to run," Rui smiled.

Kane got up with a bewildered expression. "You said... you were using only one technique?"

"That's right," Rui nodded. "Preliminary applications of Project Forestep are highly optimistic. It seems that the substitution of reaction speed with predictions of my Flowing Void Style is feasible, upon initial observations."

Kane's eyes widened at those words. "You're managing timings that you cannot react to by predicting them ahead of time!"

"Yep," Rui nodded. "I wasn't sure if it would work as well as I intended but..."

Kane stared at him with a shocked expression. "You can keep up with me, no, overwhelm me, all with the help of one technique?!"

"Well, we'll have to see to what extent," Rui took a stance this time, hopping lightly on his feet. "Here I come,"

Kane's hair stood on end.

His nerves tingled as Rui tuned into a blurry flash even his evolved hyperkinetic vision.

WHOOSH

He ducked backward evading sweeping kick to the waste.

"Your reflexes truly are something else," Rui murmured.

Had Kane had the time to complain that he was struggling, he would have, but alas, he didn't.

Even if the maelstrom of pressure that Rui began exerting on him didn't push him back, his attacks sure did.

Every active movement was empowered with his incomplete Godspeed technique, much to Kane's fascination.

Rui's movements began growing increasingly fluid compared to prior. His movements had been discrete and choppy, as though they had been put together by a robot, but they were starting to become increasingly human and natural as time passed.

POW POW POW!

Rui launched his first successful combo with Godspeed, something he had failed miserably to do prior. A look of joy could be seen on his face aftermath as if he himself realized it late that it had succeeded.

Which, he did.

A confident smile bloomed on his face as he ticked one of the many boxes that he needed ticking in order for the technique to be considered a complete success.

Rui rushed forward as Kane reeled from the attacks. Rui had not even used any offensive or power supplementary techniques. His raw physical power without any Martial Art techniques was enough to hurt Kane because the nature of the Martial body, which placed the least amount of weight on its constitution, was not strong enough to resist even such limited power.

This was one of the reasons that Kane was evaluated to be a grade four or five Martial Squire despite possessing two grade-ten techniques.

His durability was simply far too lacking. Even an accidental hit from a competent Martial Squire could leave him battered and bruised, taking too much damage.

Right now, Kane was more concerned with his inability to land a single attack on Rui.

('This is ridiculous,') He went absolutely all out against Rui. ('Why can't I land a single attack on him?')

Despite the fact that Kane's Martial body was far faster and more agile than Rui's. Despite the fact that Kane had more speed supplementary and maneuvering techniques, he was unable to land a single clean attack on Rui!

THWACK THWACK THWACK

Rui cleanly redirected every single attack that Kane made despite the fact that the latter's Martial body was superior as far as general motion went. Kane cursed because one of his biggest trump cards in this situation was the Void Step technique, yet it was completely ineffective against Rui.

When Kane looked at Rui's expression, it became clear that Rui was unable to keep track of his own movements. His movements were extremely swift, yet they did not make Rui faster than Kane's fastest motions. They were quite similar in speed, with Rui having a slight edge in raw speed with Kane having the edge in agility and fluidity.

Yet there was a huge gap in their clashes!

It wasn't until he paid closer attention to Rui's movements that he noticed something.

('This isn't because of speed,') He noted with incredulity as Rui effortlessly dodged all of his attacks. ('He's... moving before I move.')

Kane was seeing it more often the more he paid attention. Just moments before Kane's attack began, Rui had already begun to defend against it. The strange part was that it was always somehow too late for Kane to change his attack!

('This is absurd!') Kane felt everything he knew about the Godspeed technique crumbling apart. Just a single technique allowed Rui to compensate for a far slower body and far fewer techniques. Kane was employing two speed-supplementing techniques and three maneuvering techniques!

Yet he couldn't harm a hair on Rui's body.

Whatever technique Rui was using could singlehandedly overwhelm physical superiority and all of his techniques.

('Almost all...')

His eyes narrowed as he sharpened his resolve, leaping back, before crouching in a sprinting stance.

"Oh...?" Rui raised an eyebrow as his smile widened. "Let's see if I can match the real deal."