

## Martial Unity 1051

### Chapter 1051: Training

There were multiple long-range fields that allowed for all kinds of long-range training. As well as a myriad of training sections for different ranges, and fields. Rui could probably find ways to train any technique that he came up with.

Furthermore, he knew that the Floating Sect also offered techniques to master. One could sell a Martial license of their Martial Art technique, allowing them to earn some merits in the process with which they could purchase their techniques.

The techniques in the Martial Library of the Floating Sect almost certainly weren't as wide and varied as the library of techniques of the Martial Union, but given how many Martial Squires were, and had been, a part of the Floating Sect, it was probably still quite the respectable amount.

This was especially the case when all of those Martial Squires of the Floating Sect were all exclusively high-grade Martial Squires. Since reaching the upper echelons of the Squire Realm required techniques with individuality, Rui knew that they were probably going to be some really juicy stuff that he could break apart and incorporate elements of into his techniques.

"Sweet stuff," Rui finally murmured after initially inspecting the entire chamber.

"Sir," He was greeted by a staff of people in full bodysuits. "We are the staff manning the nine hundred and first chamber. Please allow us to be of aid in any way that we can."

"Appreciate that," Rui nodded as he turned back to inspect the entire chamber. "This is good."

He hadn't forgotten that the reason he sought a chamber was to get a place to train on the island under its special circumstances. The gravity would serve as a natural conditioning training where it would cause his body to adapt to the pressure over time, allowing it to become tougher and stronger.

While the denser air would nourish his body with the oxygen that it was able to sustain, causing growth to its capabilities the longer he was exposed to it.

Of course, the longer the time he spent here, the slower his rate of growth, he couldn't just keep getting stronger at the same pace indefinitely. He knew that there were few means that could give him such sustained natural growth.

He intended to truly soar higher into the Squire Realm with the power that Ajanta Island would give him.

Unlike their previous destinations, Rui had no intention of spending only a few months training and working on a single technique. The reason that he had left his previous destinations was because the potential for training for far too limited in those previous destinations.

For one, he could generally only train one parameter or field in those places.

In the Uminana Trench, the only thing to train was striking, and he did do that, but he couldn't just spend an indefinite amount of time training only striking. Neither he nor Kane was a striking-oriented Martial Artist.

He trained in one game and made some gains with the Reverberating Catapult.

In the Thundering Valley, one could really only train evasive maneuvering or durability if one subjected one's self to the lightning.

Both Rui, but especially Kane made great gains, but again, it was not a place that the two of them could stay.

Furthermore, Kane wanted to find a way to retain the Fulminata technique, causing them to go to Crexeet Town.

Crexeet Town was probably the worst place to spend extensive amounts of time to train. The Martial Squires of the region were mediocre, unlike the elites that gathered in the Floating Sect across the entirety of the continent.

Furthermore, it was a town of academics, it wasn't easy for Rui to truly feel a genuine opportunity to grow stronger in such an atmosphere.

Of course, he most certainly did not regret the time that the two of them spent there. He was glad that the two of them had long left the area.

The Floating Sect was far better than all of their previous locations and destinations because of the fact that it wasn't transient in the value and utility it could provide to the two of them. It was a place that allowed them to train their body all around while also offering them great prospects for long-term training.

A Martial Squire could spend their entire life in the Floating Sect, and there would be absolutely no problem, and no shortcoming that they could find with the place.

"Your chamber is the exact same as mine, right?" Rui asked.

Kane nodded. "The layout and the location of the various training sections are a little different, but everything else is the same for the most part."

"Hm. So the true merit in trying to aim for higher chambers is to obtain a more beneficial training avenue so that the two of them could naturally become stronger even quicker," Rui murmured. "Thankfully, we still have plenty of time to train here before we feel the need to challenge Martial Squires of a higher chamber."

Rui was confident that whenever that rolled around, he would be more than qualified to handle it.

Rui couldn't wait to become stronger and stronger in the Squire Realm. He had long missed the days when he was essentially invincible within his Realm from back when he was a Martial Apprentice.

Furthermore, he was convinced that the Floating Sect was able to give him what he needed to be able to break through to the Senior Realm, which is what he was truly aiming for. Even if he did not break through on the island, he was sure he would come around to gaining whatever it was that was needed for the Senior Realm.

('Not that I even know all the things needed to break through to the Senior Realm,') Rui sighed. He regretted not gaining that knowledge back when he was in the Kandrian Empire, but he hadn't been in a rush for power as he was now.

Hopefully, he would find the opportunity to learn it in his time on this island.

## Chapter 1052: Bullies

A few days passed as Rui began getting used to his new living quarters. He wasn't particularly irked when he found out that his personal quarters inside the chamber weren't luxurious or particularly hospitable. In fact, he would even feel guilty if he was given a five-star accommodation. Like he was just relaxing, having a vacation even though the protection for his family was running out every second.

Word must have spread about the newbie that jumped to the nine hundred and first chamber directly because he could definitely feel fellow guardians sizing him up when they passed him when he occasionally passed them. It meant that he went from being an amateur initiate to a superior to the ninety-nine guardians who were below him at the moment.

"Hoh..." A group of guardians bumped into him one time when he left his chamber to go meet Kane. "So this is the Martial Squire that beat Saiwal. You look young as hell."

The three of them tried looming over him, scowling with contempt. "You don't look like much."

Rui simply ignored them. He couldn't be bothered with these types, with an ego that surpassed their intellect, they were essentially bullies that tried to pick on those that they perceived as weak.

"Hey, I'm talking to you," He scowled as he tilted his head as Rui simply shifted away from them.

PAT

"I said..." The man's glare intensified, as he stopped Rui with an arm on his shoulder. "I'm talking to you. Looks like reaching the nine hundred and first chamber has given you a bit of an ego, eh?"

A wave of bloodlust arose from the man as he tried intimidating Rui with his aura.

"I'd suggest you let me go."

It was as though the atmosphere itself held its breath. The air chilled uncomfortably, growing icier by the second.

Rui's eyes sharpened into slits as a profoundly deep wave of pressure washed over the three of them.

They leaped back, taking their stances instinctively as a bead of sweat trickled down their head.

Yet, just a moment later, the pressure disappeared.

"Physical conflict is prohibited outside a chamber or an official duel," Rui calmly remarked. "I'd rather not break any rules so soon after joining the Floating Sect. I'm feeling rather good today, so I'll make this easy for you; leave, and I'll forget this happened."

Rui expected the three of them to scurry away with their tails between their legs. He had experience with bullies. One of the reasons that he had developed a strong love and admiration for Martial Art as a child was because he was bullied due to his illness, and yearned to be one of those martial artists that soloed groups of antagonistic mobs.

Bullies targeted the weak to make themselves feel better, however, the more resistance and impedance that the target offered, the more inconvenient it became, and the likelier it was that the bully would just avoid the trouble.

He had expected something similar to occur here, after all, he had projected a particularly powerful aura, partially with the help of Mind Mask, though most of it was authentic. He had shown them that he was not to be trifled with well enough with just that. Putting on a Senior-level mask was far too overboard.

Yet to his surprise, the three of them didn't back down and simply leave. Instead, the man who appeared to be their de facto leader smirked. "You're right, violence is prohibited outside duels and chambers. So, why don't we fix that?"

"Hm?" Rui raised an eyebrow.

"He challenges you to a duel." The man gestured to one of his lackeys.

Rui furrowed his eyebrows. This was not proceeding the way he expected it to. Not only were they still sticking around for some reason, but they even made the affirmative gesture of challenging him to a duel.

That was strange.

A challenge was actually something Rui was going to do if they stuck around just to show he didn't mind fighting and beating them. Most bullies were full of hot air and would not put their money where their mouth was.

Yet they upended his expectations by challenging him to a duel.

Now he was confused. Did they really think they could beat him? After reflexively distancing themselves from him when he flexed his mind back?

He didn't understand.

"Are you serious?"

"Hah!" The man who allegedly challenged him snorted. "What. Too scared?"

Rui just frowned. "I accept."

"Hehe, of course, you do. You haven't accepted a challenge in the past ten days, so you're obligated to," The man grinned.

"Don't get the wrong idea," Rui remarked as his sharp eyes fixated on them. "I'd accept your challenge even if you challenged me right after a duel, or a heavy meal. There are no circumstances under which I'd run away from the likes of a group of pathetic losers that compensate for quality with quantity."

"You fucking bastard..." The man's expression curled. "You talk that shit, we'll see if you can back it up."

"Come along, I'd rather get it done sooner than later," Rui calmly retorted.

"Eh, now?"

"What's the matter?" Rui teased. "You're the one who challenged me. Now you don't want to do it?"

"Three days! The challenger gets to decide when the duel will occur, the duel will occur in three days."

Rui shrugged as he left them behind, equally confused and amused. He wasn't sure if they were just genuine morons that somehow managed to avoid dying to this point, or if they thought they were just trying not to lose face.

('Or are they trying to intimidate me by challenging me first?') Rui scratched his head. ('This could be a silly little ploy of some sort too where they think they're being devious and clever.')

He wasn't sure. It was easier to predict the thoughts of an intelligent man than a moron, he realized. It all depended on how stupid and egotistical they were, really.

## Chapter 1053: Challenge

"You got challenged already?" Kane frowned. "By an initiate?"

"No, actually..." Rui sighed.

He went on to narrate what happened to Kane.

"That's weird," Kane concluded.

"It is," Rui nodded. "But the duel is in three days. It is what it is. They didn't see me fight, so honestly, they probably know very little about me barring what they can learn from second-hand accounts."

"What was the Martial Path of the one that challenged you?" Kane asked. He knew that Rui was freakishly good at estimating the Martial Paths of Martial Artists just by studying their bodies.

After all, the Martial body was designed to be compatible with the Martial Path. Based on that Rui could infer what the Martial Path was to a certain degree of precision.

"The muscles of his legs were disproportionately larger and stronger than those of the rest of the body. I'm guessing power-oriented Martial Artist that uses Martial Art techniques that are centered around drawing power from his legs. Given that the rest of his body was a lot leaner, I'm guessing that he will most certainly be a mobile fighter." Rui guessed.

"Hm, sounds like you'll be fine," Kane noted. "Was he strong?"

"Sure," Rui shrugged.

There wasn't a single Martial Artist in the Floating Sect that was weak, and those three goons were no different. They were strong for having beaten a guardian to get their spot, and strong for having maintained their chambers for however long they did.

Still, Rui had not experienced too much pressure from them. That probably meant that they were not too strong for him to defeat.

"What about the Martial Art of the other two?"



"One of them was definitely defensive, an active defense-oriented Martial Artist," Rui remarked. "As for the leader... I couldn't tell aside from the fact that he was an all-rounder. But he was definitely the strongest of the three. I find it strange that he did not challenge me himself."

The more Rui thought about it, the more strange it was. Even if he dismissed the oddity of them pursuing him even after he showed that he wasn't a target worth bullying, there was the fact that the leader spoke for the other Martial Artist as though he already knew that the man would agree.

The one who he said would challenge Rui did not look surprised either. Which likely meant that this wasn't something he hadn't expected.

From that, Rui could infer that they had likely done such a thing before. But why would that be the case? Were they really just trying to flex on him to satiate their ego or maintain face?

He didn't think so. The impression that he got from the three of them wasn't that they were driven by a lot of pride and ego and had only challenged back because he made their pathetic attempts at intimidating look stupid.

This looked a lot less impulsive and emotional but deliberate and intentional.

There was also the fact that he was the guardian of a higher chamber, which meant that they did have something to gain if any of them did beat him in a fight.

('Still... duels are one on one, so their numbers are meaningless, unless...') Rui's eyes narrowed.

Rui was not worried about foul play, the Floating Sect was very rigorous in its check-ups, and he did not expect anything short of a bountiful morning. That was why he knew that the Floating Sect

Three days passed, and the duel quickly arrived. Rui made no preparations of any kind this time since he obviously did not have any intelligence on his opponent's Martial Art, he would have to start from scratch.

"Challenger; Guardian Drevolus. Defender: Guardian Falken." The arbiter announced. "This match is about to be commenced, take your stances."

The man stretched one leg back while crouching his other leg, One arm came forward bent, while the other shifted back, bent.

It was a dash stance.

His intentions could be clearer.

Rui lightly hopped on his feet, keeping them centered, making it easier for him to dash off in any direction.

"Begin!"

BOOM!

The man pushed the ground back with such force, a tremendous ripple radiated outward on solid ground!

The atmosphere tore apart as it made way for the sheer amount of force that the man unleashed.

Yet,-

WHOOSH!

-he was unable to hit Rui with his bullrush. Rui swiftly moved out of the way with Outer Convergence, Parallel Walk, and Gale Force Breathing.

('He didn't even prepare an attack to hit me with it.') Rui mused. ('His bullrush is his attack.')

Yet, the man wasn't done.

"RARGH!" He roared as he launched forward at Rui with tremendous power.

Yet it wasn't enough.

WHOOSH

Rui evaded him rather handily. In fact, the pattern recognition system loved what it was seeing because his bullrushes were easy to dissect and he had already noticed several patterns in the maneuver.

"RARGH!" The man once more dashed forward. Yet Rui was already getting bored. The easiest way to adapt to such a strategy was simply to avoid it. Although he certainly needed to employ his speed because the man was no doubt fast, it did not mean much because he was consuming more power than Rui was in the long run.

He would simply tire himself out, and then Rui could take him down swiftly after he had exhausted his stamina.

Not every adaptation was flashy, and it appeared this would be one of the more boring and mundane ones.

Yet, it appeared that Rui had underestimated the man too much.

RARGH!" Squire Drevolus launched himself forward a fourth time, yet, when Rui was moving out of the way, he kicked the ground in the opposite direction that Rui had moved in, launching himself straight at Rui.

BAM!!

A successful hit on the fourth try!

He should have been satisfied as he felt himself blasting into Rui with a powerful impact.

Yet he didn't feel that. Instead, he felt as though much of his power completely disappeared!

SHHHHHH...

Rui paused at the edge of the battle arena, appearing unharmed.

#### Chapter 1054: Clash

"Tsk, you're not as dumb as you look and sound," Rui offered while he rotated his palms, massaging them. "That hurt."

He had managed to disperse most of the impact with a remarkably well-timed Flux Earther. He had to hand it to the grade-nine technique. It was damn good when he nailed the timing. On the other hand, the timing was everything with this technique, it wouldn't be able to disperse even a grade-one technique, or even an Apprentice-level technique if one mistimed.

If not for the fact that the patterns in his dash were easier to read, he would not have gotten the foreknowledge of how and when he needed to time it.

That was the reason he could walk away largely unharmed from a powerful attack of a high-grade power-oriented Martial Art.

It was a shame but he couldn't possibly replicate this level of defense for every attack he ran into.

Squire Drevolus on the other hand was bewildered. ('He's... a defensive Martial Squire? He has to be! No one can take my Meteor Dash head-on if they're not specialized in defense or power. And he doesn't look like he's specialized in power!')

He felt as though this was an intelligent deduction, it was only a few seconds later when his rationality caught up, and recalled that he had exhibited long-range techniques against Squire Saiwal.

('So he's a defensive Martial Squire with strong long-range techniques?') He frowned. ('But he hasn't used them against me yet.')

There was a reason that Rui had abstained from using Pathfinder, or Transverse Resonance against someone like this. The Pathfinder technique was great because it allowed him to tag his opponent over great distances, preventing them from evading his attacks over long range, allowing him to prevent them from ever getting close to him with well-nailed shots.

It did not do well against opponents who did not care to evade and simply rushed forward to evade. It was why he had used it against Squire Saiwal. She did not have great defense because she relied heavily on the counter-offense that her frictional skin brought her. Meaning she could not just rush through a barrage of attacks. Nor was she fast enough to wind through them.

Those were the circumstances where his Pathfinder and long-range techniques were most useful.

However, Rui could already tell this guy was the kind that would just bullrush past his attacks in an attempt to get to Rui. He could not overpower a power-oriented Martial Artist with his long-range attacks either, unfortunately.

Thus he ruled out long-range offense as a way to adapt to him.

('Close-range it is,') Rui took his stance as he exhaled deeply. Squire Drevolus also prepared for another bullrush.

The two of them locked eyes momentarily, before dashing towards each other.

The air grew tumultuous under the sonic booms that they produced as they coursed through the atmosphere.

**BOOM!**

Rui struck him with a powerful Flowing Canon, yet, much to his surprise, the man withstood the attack with the power of his bullrush. In fact, he was pushing forward.

Yet, Rui simply grinned.

He was just getting started.

He spun out of the way of the pushing contest as he began delivering a barrage of swift blows to the man's bodies. A combination of Wind Breathing, Outer Convergence, and Reverberating Lance, and his conditioning tough body with Adamant Reforging resulted in waves of powerful heavy blows that hurt the man to his core.

"RARGH!" The man swiftly kicked Rui only to widen his eyes when Rui's image disappeared.

('You balance your weight between your legs too evenly,') Rui mused with narrowed his eyes. ('Every shift in weight you make makes it easy to read your next move.')

He had already begun picking apart at such patterns, predicting the man with greater and greater ease. Rui's movements became increasingly more fluid as he began growing more and more comfortable with his predictions.

He never ceased the onslaught.

Squire Drevolus was subjected to wave after wave of heavy and incredibly swift blows that seemed to hurt deep in his body far more than the strikes should have for some strange reason. Squire Drevolus threw powerful and swift kick after kick with enough to shake the entire arena.

Yet what use was power if it never hit?

Rui moved so sharply that Squire Drevolus could hardly believe it. He wasn't able to put it in words, but it was as though...

('As though knows me better than I know myself...') His eyes widened as his lip trembled.

"RAAAARGH!" The man screamed in frustration as he launched flurry of kicks. Short and swift combos, as well as powerful attacks that were thrown with tremendous accumulated torque and momentum.

Yet, they never landed.

CLASP!

Rui rushed in after the man threw a powerful high kick with ready arms that coiled around his neck and head. Kicks were powerful and hard, but they had their own downsides, and one of the was the compromise of defenses to prevent attacks and people from entering close-range.

Rui effortlessly squeezed his arms around the man's neck as he got him into a rear choke hold. He squeezed with Outer Convergence as he applied an immense amount of pressure on the man's carotid arteries.

Seven seconds of prolonged restriction of blood flow to the brain was all it took. Yet seven seconds was a ton of time to a Martial Squire, especially to those of their caliber.

The final stretch of the fight began as the man thrashed around violently, truly putting Rui's grip strength to the test. His powerful legs launched them around while he also kicked hard at Rui to the best of his abilities.

Rui simply gritted his teeth as he withstood his body getting bruised by the man's powerful kicks. Every attack rattled at his body as he realized just how much power than man held in his legs.

CRACK!

Rui felt a bone crack in his foot when the man simply stomped on it!

Yet, sure enough, his body eventually weakened, before going limp.

## Chapter 1055: Scavengers

THUD!

Rui tossed the man's body to the side.

('Had it not been for Thundercoil, he would have been able to break through my grip,') Rui grimaced as he looked at his crumpled and broken foot. The power that he had in his legs was something else entirely. A single stomp had completely cracked the bones in his foot.

Thankfully, Rui managed to restrict blood flow to his brain long enough to cause his brain to shut down.

"Winner; Guardian Falken!" The arbiter declared.

Rui glanced at the spectator stands in the colosseum. Much to his dismay, the little ringleader of the little group that bumped into him did not appear to be fazed at all, instead, he looked quite pleased.

This was again, not something that he expected from a simple bully.

Just as he walked out of the battle arena, he was greeted by Kane.

"Good fight, good job," Kane did a thumbs up.

Yet before Rui could even reply, he was interrupted.

"Don't get cocky, just because you beat Drevolus,"

Rui glanced over at him in dismay. This one was the second of the group that had bumped into him.



Rui wasn't stupid.

There was something going on, but he hadn't yet quite comprehended it. Why challenge him one by one, and why were they so cocky?

Why did their little ringleader look pleased by the outcome of his previous challenge?

This wasn't just some classic bullying, they clearly were trying to achieve something. Given that numbers didn't mean much when it came to retaining chambers and positions, he was unsure of what it was that they were trying to achieve.

"Give me a break," Rui sighed. "I'll take you on in an official duel right here and now and get this over with."

"Three days," The man grinned. "See ya, have fun while you can."

Rui sighed as the man left, he turned and glanced at all of the guardians eyeing him with odd glances. ('Is this some kind of little test that the guardians put newbies through or something?')

He shook his head. They would probably not be this pedantic about it if there was such a thing. This was clearly something those three were doing on their own for the most part. Yet what they could gain?

('The only thing he could gain is information...') Rui narrowed his eyes. ('Is the whole point of this simply to gain more information on me?')

"You seem to be having a tough time," A voice emerged from behind them.

Rui turned back, getting a good glance at the man. He was a guardian, given away by his attire.

"Just a bit," Rui cautiously replied.

"You don't have to be wary," The man cheerily replied. "Not all guardians are like those three scavengers. In fact, most aren't. Those three are just nasty to deal with, especially if you're new and higher than them."

The man was short and sporting a small beard. "You get those types everywhere. So it cannot be avoided."

"You are...?"

"Ah, I forgot to introduce myself," The man remarked. "The name's Serin. I'm the guardian of the eight hundred and twenty-second floor."

The man boasted a strong presence that could not be ignored. He was certainly not to be trifled with.

"Falken."

"Nake."

"It's a pleasure to actually make your acquaintance haha," The man chuckled as he approached them. "It's always fun meeting new guardians."

"You called them scavengers," Rui noted. "What do you mean?"

"This whole challenge thing," The man remarked. "It's a ploy. To get your chamber."

"So they expect one of them will defeat me in combat?" Rui raised an eyebrow.

That was the only way to get a higher chamber in the Floating Sect, of course.

"They do," The man nodded. "And unfortunately, their confidence is not unfounded."

"Still, there doesn't mean that there's any point in grouping together when such tactics aren't useless in the Floating Sect," Rui huffed.

"Ah, but in this case they aren't, I'm afraid," The man cheerily remarked.

"What do you mean?"

"You see the ringleader of those three scavengers actually possesses an interesting Martial Path," The man explained. "It is said that he possesses the ability to adapt to his opponents."

Rui's eyes widened in shock. "What?!"

"It's not that shocking, the world has tons of strange Martial Paths, you know?" The man friendly explained.

Rui couldn't help but ponder his response with a bewildered expression. To think he would actually run into a Martial Squire with a Martial Path that was seemingly similar to his own.

"Explain," Rui demanded.

"Woah, you seem really wound up," The man remarked with an uneasy face. "Chill out man, it isn't that serious. The man adapts to his opponents by choosing the right balance between offense and defense needed to combat his opponent. Thus his combat approach actually changes to adapt to his opponent's fighting style. Kind of incredible, isn't it?"

"..." Rui was shell-shocked.

Choosing the balance between offense and defense was one of the first and most important to adapt to his opponents. The fact that someone had a Martial Path centered around this part of the VOID algorithm was just surreal to him.

He had always assumed that he was the only one on the continent whose Martial Path was centered around such a concept. Yet for the first, time, he was being told that this perhaps wasn't the case.

It made him wonder what the actual number of such Martial Squires was, it was hard for him to imagine the sheer number of them in the first place, the sheer difficulty of such a Martial Path was extraordinarily hard, so much so that he spent his first life on just creating the basis and foundation for it after eventually dying and then reincarnating in a new world causing him to finally put his previous life to work and gaining a Martial Path centered around it. He couldn't even imagine how difficult it would be to start from scratch in a new world.

#### Chapter 1056: Parallels

"...Are you serious right now?"

"Hey! I resent that. Why would I lie? Just trust me."

"We met less than a minute ago, you realize that, right?"

"When you put it that way..." The man shrugged. "Unfortunately, it's not like I can offer you proof or anything like that. You'll just have to take my word."

Rui raised an eyebrow. He obviously wasn't going to do that.

This man could easily be with one of those three scavengers that was pretending to be friends with Rui, before eventually feeding them misinformation. As implausible as it was.

He could also be someone that knew of his true identity and was simply trying to tease him.

However, it would explain things if that were true.

"Explain."

"There isn't much to explain really," The man shrugged. "The offensive one you just fought is actually a way to gauge your movements and how effective you are against power and offense-oriented Martial Art. The man who just challenged you is meant to serve as a measuring tape for how good your offense is. Then Guardian Croxet will spend some time formulating the basis for how to adapt to you and perfecting it before finally taking you down. In an official duel."

This... made a lot more sense.

Rui could do a lot with foreknowledge and preparation, and it stood to reason that someone with a similar Martial Art could do just as much.

"If you want, I can challenge him," Kane offered. "That way you can learn more."

"That's not necessary," Rui shook his head.

Rui did not want to subject Kane and drag him into it. It was a small mess that was limited to him. It could potentially be dangerous for Kane if he had to deal with it. Rui did not want to endanger Kane for his own matters once more.

"Why tell me this?" Rui asked out of curiosity.

"Oh... The man shrugged. "Honestly, those scumbags ought to be purged. And I'm inclined to believe that you could do it. A man with your proven capabilities, as well as a little guesswork on the part of my instincts, I'd say you are certainly capable of doing it."

"Is that so?" Rui raised an eyebrow. ('I could say the same for you too.')

Rui could tell that the man was quite strong and capable. After all, one did not just stumble into the ninth class of chamber guardians, he was most certainly highly competent.

"Anyway, I'll leave you to prepare for your next challenge, good luck," The man waved them goodbye as he left.

Rui appreciated the information unless he was completely making it up. However, he actually had very little to prepare for.

Instead, he simply returned to his chamber and began meditating in the center of the chamber. He was maximizing the benefits that he was getting from the special environment to the best degree possible.

By subjecting his body to greater pressure, his Martial body grew stronger and stronger as he continuously nourished it with increasingly dense air. The extra gravity and air pressure over time caused his body to improve on multiple levels. The force forced the tissue to adapt its structure to be able to withstand such levels of force without any detrimental effects while newly reproduced cells were better able to handle the weight that was being exerted on his body.

He could definitely feel the benefits of the environment of the floating Ajanta Island as he trained. Each breath he took nourished his body as highly enriched blood traveled from his lungs to all cells in the entire body, transferring copious amounts of oxygen. He could feel each breathing invigorating the entire body from the ground up.

He tried clearing his mind, focusing on his training, yet inevitably thoughts went back to what he had just learned about the three scavengers that had tried to bully him. Rui guessed that the man had witnessed Rui's fight, and although he did beat Squire Saiwal straightforwardly and directly, he must have felt that Rui was easier to handle and wasn't as much of a threat.

That along with the fact that Rui had gotten the nine hundred and first chamber meant that Rui turned into an attractive target for someone like those three scavengers.

However, what he was most consumed by was the fact that the leader of the three scavengers had a Martial Path that ran parallelly with his own Martial Path. He couldn't help but become curious as to what the man's Martial Art and combat approach looked like.

He already knew that the man relied on preparations to adapt at least mentally and strategically to Rui. That was clearly how he was approaching this battle. He was doing what Rui recognized was not good for his own progress.

He was a little dismayed that the first person he met with a Martial Path and Art that echoed his own was a scavenging bully. He was a man of poor character, furthermore, he seemed to only be willing to fight when he had certainty on his side.

('He's a coward,') Rui tutted disapprovingly.

That was why Rui was not as hyped as he would have been had the man been better, but alas, it was a shame. He wouldn't have minded talking to the man as they exchanged notes on their Martial Art and Martial Paths.

Rui was curious about the adaptive evolution that he went through versus his own. It appeared that the man stuck only with the spec configuration adaptation and even his adaptation was limited to how offensively he would fight versus how defensively fight.

That was why Rui was eager to fight the man and see for himself.

('An exchange of fists will surely surpass any exchange of words,') Rui narrowed his eyes. He would abstain from judging the man until he experienced his Martial Art. He hoped he liked what he saw because if he didn't, he himself wasn't even sure how he would react.

## Chapter 1057: Ten

Three days passed as the challenge issued by the defensive scavenger came up eventually.

"Challenger: Guardian Fzartil. Defender: Guardian Falken."

The two of them stepped forward as they faced each other.

"Take your stances," The arbiter experienced.

Squire Fzartil grinned as he took a closed stance, bringing up his arms before him in a guarding position. Furthermore, he had spread his legs crouching, anchoring him to the spot as the divided weight made it more difficult for him to be mobile, but it also gave his stance a lot more stability.

('He's not going to be easy to move,') Rui narrowed his eyebrows. ('Very well then,')

They had both chosen close-range distance, thus the two of them faced each other up close. Rui adopted a classical boxing stance with both fists lower and pointing at his opponent. Such a stance was aggressive and offensive, and it showed Rui's intentions of fighting to beat him down.

"Begin!"

Instantly, not even a moment after the fight began, Rui dashed forward, launching himself at the man.

BOOM!!!

The combined power of Outer Convergence, Wind Breathing Reverberating, and a Flowing Canonon crashed into his guard as a huge shock wave arose from the collision.

The man gritted his teeth as he almost certainly experienced a tremendous amount of stress on his guard. He was a passive defensive Martial Artist, and a lot of it involved that he was employing some form of conditioning.

Rui could feel his Adamant Forging, pushing against a much greater degree of conditioning on the man's flesh.

POW POW POW!

Rui never let up, bombarding Squire Fzartil with blow after blow. Each blow stung more and more, as Rui began employing the Reverberating Lance. It was the perfect tool to bypass external flesh.

POW POW POW!



The man had clearly not expected such a technique to work despite the sheer power that it was conveying deeper and deeper into his body.

('Your defense is far too passive,') Rui mused. ('Because of the lack of active defensive techniques, any pattern or limitation that exists in it becomes much harder to get rid of in the middle of the fight.')

If an active defensive technique was not doing too well then one could simply cease using it. Yet this simply wasn't the case with passive techniques like that.

BAM BAM BAM!

Rui blasted him with blow after blow. He even threw him some Lightning Ripple techniques that shot through the man's nervous system occasionally. These caused brief periods of hampered and limited movements.

He had experienced the lightning across his body, causing him to pause in the middle of the battle as his body suddenly experienced paralysis and numbness at certain moments.

Rui rushed in after momentarily stepping back to crash yet another powerful Flowing Canon on the man's guard.

Yet he didn't.

Just as the attack was about engage, Fzartil brought his guard forward, ready to block the attack.

Yet it never came.

Rui simply twirled by.

BAM!

A swift attack to the exposed head was enough. Although the man had conditioned even his head, it was not enough for Rui to simply knock him out the way he did his previous opponent. The difference was far too much.

But it was concrete progress. Rui wasn't even using the Void algorithm for such an opponent. He did not need it against such a caliber of Martial Artists.

The strategy was straightforward, and unless it failed, he had no intention of using it at all. There were bigger fish to fry, and if the ringleader of the three scavengers was watching, then Rui decided it was best not to divulge all cards.

That was the issue because he was being watched and extensively prepared, he did not want to get carried away and show off.

Thus far, in the Floating Island, no one had truly forced Rui to use his Flowing Void Style to the absolute maximum. None of them had been able to push him all that far, and certainly, none of them had gotten him to use the Foreststep technique be used to the absolute limit with the VOID algorithm.

He wondered if the little gang leader would be the first one to force him to divulge his full power. After all, he was sure that in order to climb up, he would need to use the entirety of his Martial Art.

Squire Fzartil gritted his teeth as the image of Rui that he attacked was a well-timed feint, leaving his solar plexus completely open consequently.

BAM!!!

A powerful straight blow struck the man's diaphragm. The sheer amount of force that he had outputted was severe.

THUD

Squire Fzartil.

Rui glanced at the leader of the three scavengers, the man still had a confident look on. Rui wasn't sure where his confidence emerged from, but he was curious. After all, it didn't seem like he was new to this place.

And if he wasn't new to this place, then it meant that he had been in the tenth class of the Floating Sect for quite some time. It clearly meant that he wasn't qualified to get to higher chambers and classes without this ridiculous song and dance of forcing an opponent to show some of the moves and then making more elaborate preparations to counter them.

And even then, he hadn't gotten too very far, though he probably was in the upper echelons of the tenth class, which means he certainly would be paying attention to the highest-ranked Martial Artists of the tenth grade.

Unfortunately, that was Rui this time. And Rui was not a hurdle that he could cross that easily.

"Winner: Guardian Falken!" The arbiter announced once he saw that Guardian Fzartil was unable to continue fighting.

Rui pointed at the man in the spectator standards. "I challenge you to a spar. Ten days."

He went out of his way to challenge the man!

He even gave him ten days to do his little preparations. He wanted to see how strong this man could be.

## Chapter 1058: Relax

A small ripple spread through the lower classes of guardians of the Floating Sect. In hindsight, everybody was certainly aware of the ways of scavenger guardians. It had become evident to everybody that Rui had become their target from the moment he was challenged by Squire Drevolus.

Rui came to learn that this pattern had occurred multiple times in the past. The man in question, guardian Seronin, had slowly climbed up, chamber by chamber. Furthermore, Rui learned that he always

had an offensive Martial Squire and a defensive Martial Squire fight his target, recruiting weaker Martial Artists and promising to help them reach higher chambers in exchange.

Essentially, Guardian Drevolus and Fzartil were being treated as crutches to help him become stronger than he normally was.

The more Rui heard, the more disgusted he became. It was gross to him looking at someone with a Martial Art in the same field being so pathetic that he needed to go through such a song and dance just to fight a duel. The idea that the man was so insecure in his Martial Art that he did not feel the confidence to win even a single simple duel against anybody, as well as the fact that he would go through such means to try and secure victory was almost offensive to Rui.

He noticed his reaction was definitely leaning towards exaggerated, but apparently, he was touchy when it came to matters surrounding his Martial Path, clearly. Just thinking about the fact that this man had an adaptive Martial Art like him irritated him a lot.

Normally, Rui would not have been too invested in a duel against a guardian of a lower chamber. But in the next ten days, he tempered his mind and body, preparing for the duel. He wanted to ensure that there was absolutely no chance of him losing the duel to guardian Seronin.

"Aren't you taking this too seriously?" Kane scratched his head as he came across Rui meditating under increased pressure.

"Perhaps," Rui murmured as he opened his eyes. "However, it isn't as though there are no stakes at all whatsoever. I will lose my chamber if I lose. I don't to grow relaxed."

"Yes, but you seem like you're going to kill the guy," Kane remarked. "Not that that's an issue. That dickhead can die for all I care, but relax a bit."

Rui considered his words. Perhaps he was right, he did feel a little stressed recently. Although his drive to become stronger most certainly grew ever since he left the Shionel Confederation, it also made the journey of developing his Martial Art less enjoyable.

That was definitely a negative. But he hadn't even noticed it thus far.

"Fuuu..." Rui exhaled deeply, relaxing every muscle in his body. Just that simple gesture alone made him feel more at ease. "Good advice."

It was at moments like these that he appreciated Kane's cool simplicity. He definitely had a point.

Still, it wasn't going to change Rui's thoughts on the matchup. He did not intend to hold back against Squire Seronin.

Ten days passed in the blink of an eye as the allotted time for the duel came.

"Woah," Kane murmured once the two of them entered the colosseum. "There are a lot of guardians today."

"Yeah..." Rui glanced around the spectator stands briefly.

It seemed that word of Squire Seronin aiming for the nine hundred and first chamber with his little tactics had spread. Rui getting the nine hundred and first chamber in the first place directly as an initiate was quite exciting in and of itself, but Seronin trying to make a quick pass to reach the top of the tenth class would be quite startling.

Rui guessed that most of the guardians disliked guardian Seronin, after all, he was trying to beat them using tactics that did not translate to real strength. If he did end up beating Rui, he would be above ninety-nine other such Martial Squires, many of whom were above him prior.

('Even if he does beat me, he's going to get swarmed with challenges from these disgruntled Martial Squires who don't approve of him,') Rui mused.

Either way, it was a lose-lose for him. There was no way he was going to be able to keep the nine hundred and first chamber regardless.

('This is what happens when you try substituting real power with cheap tricks,') Rui snorted inwardly. ('If he spent all this time and energy on actually improving and developing his Martial Art earnestly, he

would definitely be able to climb higher without needing to rely on such pathetic tactics. He would probably end up making more progress this way than otherwise.')

Of course, the fact that he retained his chamber for this long meant that he certainly wasn't weak. He couldn't prepare against initiates this way, and it meant that he certainly had some merit.

But it was precisely because of that that Rui felt a little irked. If he was already this strong, it meant that he had to have worked to obtain that power. It meant that he was capable of developing his Martial Art with individuality.

Yet, for some reason, he chose to go down this path.

Had he been a weakling who had no choice, it would have been understandable, but that was not the case here. This man could have been a peer to Rui, who could have been a valuable acquaintance.

After all, in all the years that Rui had been exposed to Martial Art, he had never come across anything remotely similar. It took him traveling across the continent to finally run into one in a place where Martial Artists gathered. While other Martial Squires interacted with people with similar Martial Paths, this was Rui's very first time and he should have been excited to finally meet someone he could perhaps compare notes with or learn a thing or two, or at least gain a new perspective if nothing else.

But unfortunately, things didn't turn out that way.

Chapter 1059: Balance

"Good luck," Kane wished him as they split ways.

"Challenger; Guardian Falken," The arbiter announced once Rui entered the arena.

"Defender; Guardian Seronin."

The two of them approached each other as they stopped two meters away from each other. Rui had declined to go for any particular range and offered his opponent to choose the range of the battle, who promptly chose a short-range battle.

"Hehehe..." The man grinned. "Hope you're ready to go down because that's the only place you're going in this fight."

"I've been wanting to ask..." Rui remarked, ignoring his little taunt. "Why?"

The man snorted. "Naive little brat. This is the way of the world. I'm going to crush you because you don't know that."

"Take your stances." The arbiter instructed.

Rui took a simple neutral stance that didn't particularly place much weight on any field of combat.

The man, instead, grinned as he put forth one arm forward defensively while the other was tucked by his side, coiled and ready to strike. He spread his legs partially, enough to have a good and strong foundation, but little enough to ensure that he could still maneuver comfortably.

It was a rather basic all-rounder stance, so Rui didn't really look much into it.

"Begin!" The arbiter commenced the duel.

Both men rushed in toward each other, and immediately unfolded a flurry of blows!

POW POW POW!

A barrage of blows was launched from both sides!

The battle accelerated to top gear the very second the battle broke out, and yet it was only a minute into the battle that the clashes began achieving a stable equilibrium despite the high intensity.

Rui was pushed back on the defensive. He began throwing fewer and fewer strikes from the initial clash the moment the battle had commenced, being forced to defend more.

('I see...') His eyes narrowed. ('So this is his Martial Art, not bad.')

Rui immediately understood what was happening in just a moment. While he disapproved of Guardian Seronin and his tactics, he had to admit, they had merit as distasteful as they were.

('He's understood the optimal balance between offense and defense to apply when fighting in hand-to-hand combat.') Rui mused.

Rui was stronger defensive in hand-to-hand combat than he was offensive. The reason for this was simple, it wasn't that he put more weight on defense than offense in his Martial Art, not at all. The reason for this was that his offensive capital was spread across multiple ranges, while his defensive techniques were applicable at all ranges barring a few circumstances.

That meant that in close-quarters combat, he was easier to defend against than hurt. His defense had powerful techniques such as Flux Earther, Adamant Reforging, Inner Divergence, and Acute Edge. His offense in hand-to-hand combat was not nearly as rigorous with Outer Convergence and Reverberating Lance.

That was why Squire Seronin maximized effectivity by putting a greater weight on his offense while putting less weight on his defense.

('A good allocation of physical capital,') This was part of what he did, analyzing combat distributions and choosing a distribution of resources that was most apt to combat it was one of the more fundamental steps when it came to adapting to one's opponent.

('Still, it isn't going to be enough for me,') Rui's eyes narrowed.



A surge of pressure mounted on Squire Seronin as Rui focused, glaring at him.

WHOOSH!

Rui disappeared in the face of an attack.

A well-timed feint. He had used the fact that the battle, while intense, had reached monotony to catch him off-guard.

TAP TAP TAP!

Three swift pokes to his abdomen, striking the intercostal nerves on his abdomen caused momentary paralysis to several muscle groups.

WHOOSH!

Narrowly avoided a haymaker as he crouched, simultaneously launching a sweeping kick, knocking him slightly unbalanced.

He rushed in, charging in for a wrestling shoot maneuver. Yet Squire Seronin leaped back swiftly, determined to avoid Rui's charge.

('So he isn't confident of beating me in grappling,') Rui swiftly noted. ('Most likely due to the recount of Thundercoil that he got from Drevolus.')

Grappling was a field with very little room for mistakes, it was a field of inevitability. If he was weaker, then he would certainly lose without many avenues to cope.

('Yet opening up the distance is not a good idea against me,')

THWOOM THWOOM THWOOM!

Rui blasted a barrage of long-range attacks, employing the ODA System to tag him even after he was some distance away.

BAM!

"Urgh!" He grimaced as one of them struck, surprised. He had been continuously moving so he hadn't put much thought into deliberately avoiding since the accuracy of such a great distance was hard, yet Rui managed to perfectly nail him on the head!

Rui rushed forward as he continued his onslaught of sound attacks. Squire Seronin, however, did not just fool around. He unleashed a powerful wind blast as a way to counter Rui's attack.

It was enough to somewhat stop his attacks, but not Rui's approach himself. He rushed forward like a demon as he applied Gale Force Breathing and Parallel Walk to swiftly approach Squire Seronin from behind his attacks.

('And this is why simple adjustments of combat approach are insufficient...')

BAM!!!

Squire Seronin gritted his teeth as he blocked Rui's Flowing Canon amplified with Outer Convergence, Adamant Reforging, and the momentum generated by Gale Force Breathing. The sheer impact was so high that it sent him skidding back several meters.

('...Dynamic fighters require dynamic solutions, you are far too simplistic.')

Squire Seronin returned to his aggressive offensive striking when Rui returned, yet Rui had no intentions of going back to the game.

BAM!

"Ack!" The man gasped as Rui cleanly avoided his swift leaning back as a swift kick landed on the man's solar plexus. He gritted his teeth as he lashed back with barrages of swift yet solid blows, hoping to force Rui into the defensive position that he was in prior.

Yet Rui dodged every single attack with contemptuous ease, as though they weren't even there!

"What?!"

#### Chapter 1060: Break

('All your attacks begin from a tucked position,') Rui mused. ('Furthermore, because you have put a heavier weight on offense, none of your attacks begin within a certain range of me, allowing me to easily eliminate the possibility of an attack when they are within that range.')

Rui had already picked up fourteen such patterns in his movements, both active and passive, and they were already good enough to form the basis of a simple predictive model that was effective enough.

And the difference was evident.

"How is he evading all those strikes so well?"

"Even though he was being pushed back at the start of the fight..."

"Did he hold back?"

Both initiates and guardians alike instantly noticed the difference in the quality of Rui's movements. He timed his evasions just right, he began moving before the man's motions began, but just a beat prior when it was too late to change his movements!

This was Foreststep in its core concept being employed without the speed boost of the Godspeed technique!

However, Rui did not restrict himself to merely evading the man's attacks.

POW POW POW!

Well-timed and placed strikes found themselves cleanly slamming into Squire Seronin one by one.

The same attacks that he defended against earlier were no longer something he was able to defend against anymore.

Squire Seronin gritted his teeth as he abandoned defense, throwing himself, maximizing his offense to the absolute limit abruptly. If he could just catch Rui off-guard, he might be able to regain the advantage!

At the very least, he was sure that he would be able to break the flow of the battle, and 'reset' the initiative.

In the best-case scenario, he would even be able to regain the initiative.

It was his one hope.

And soon, it became his despair.

BOOM!!

"URGH!" He grimaced as he felt unyielding pain reverberating across his entire body from his gut.

Rui had disappeared before his eyes, leaving behind an empty feint. His own tunnel vision had given Rui the perfect opportunity to feint away and launch a powerful blow into the man's gut with his most powerful attack. The combined might of Flowing Canon, Outer Convergence, Adamant Reforging, and Gale Force Breathing struck his upper abdomen.

CRACK!

He felt a sharp piercing pain as the sheer power of the strike broke his ribs.

It was over.

Yet, it didn't end

BAM!!

Rui kicked him in the jaw. A wave of dizziness flashed across his consciousness.

POW POW POW!

Rui pummeled him, blasting him with attack after attack, breaking down the paltry defenses that the man put up reflexively.

"AAAARRGH!" He threw himself at Rui, an expression of rage and pain crumpling his face. "I'm not done ye-!"

BOOM!

Rui launched him hurtling across the entire arena with Thundering Catapult, rushing in immediately to follow up.

Squire Seronin staggered to his feet.

Something had broken.

But it wasn't just his body.

Every last bit of resistance had crumbled.

Yet, his body healed, preparing him for battle. Yet, Rui was not done with him either.

POW POW POW!

Rui mercilessly beat him to a pulp. Bruises, cuts, fractures, and swelling had long made him unrecognizable from his appearance at the start of the battle.

Yet it wasn't the physical pain that hurt the most.

Bodies healed, especially Martial bodies. Yet it wasn't just his body that was breaking down.

His attacks.

His defense.

His very Martial Art.

Rui's silver eyes should have reflected light, yet he saw endless darkness within them.

An endless void that consumed everything it saw.

"AAAAARRRGH!" The man cried in horror as he turtled up, tugging at his hair.  
"ARRGRGRGGRRRHEGEE!!!"

The pain was too much.

But not of the body, but of the mind.

His body shivered as his eyes rolled up, and he began convulsing, dropping straight to the ground.

"Huh?" Rui stopped, frowning as he stepped back, glancing at the arbiter.

"Due to his opponent being unable to continue the fight, Guardian Falken is the winner!"

The entirety of the colosseum stared in silence at Rui's shocking performance. While Squire Seronin was far from being strong by the standards of the average guardian, Rui had crushed him with such dominance, that it was hard to believe that he was only of the caliber of the tenth class. The sheer power that he had demonstrated was something only Martial Squires of much higher classes could possibly employ.

Yet, unbeknownst to them, Rui hadn't even gone all out. He had thought that he would need to use Godspeed to beat the man, yet it quickly became evident that a basic predictive model alone would suffice.

('He sure was confident,') Rui huffed as Squire paramedics administered a powerful healing potion while strapping him securely to a bed. ('This is what happens when you have a flawed understanding of what your opponent is capable of.')

Had Rui decided to use the pattern recognition systems, Guardian Seronin probably would have never even dared to challenge him in a fight.

He had to admit that the fight was a lot closer without the predictive model, although Rui was confident that he would have definitely won that fight as well.

Rui shrugged before turning and leaving the colosseum.

"Great fight," Kane gave him a thumbs up. "Also, did you create a new technique that causes someone to... have a mental breakdown?"

"Obviously not."

Kane threw Rui a dubious look in response.

"I didn't," Rui huffed. "I actually don't really understand what happened there either. But he just went nuts in the middle of the battle. I might have caused some brain damage which caused a seizure of some sort. But they can easily fix that."

However, much to everyone's surprise, that did not happen. Although Squire Seronin recovered mentally, he was almost unrecognizable. His face was gaunt and pale, while his eyes were listless and dead.

He announced the ending of his career as a Martial Artist before leaving the Floating Sect forever. It was said that he even needed someone to carry him down because he lost his ability to sky-walk.