

Martial Unity 1081

Chapter 1081: Goal

"I can prove it if you want," Rui shrugged. "Not necessarily the gravity part but bypassing anti-espionage techniques with my technique."

The man eyes him carefully. "I'll take you up on that. The chambers of the Floating Sect are lined with anti-espionage technology. Are you able to peer through those?"

Rui could suddenly feel the two guardians standing guard at the table had grown more alert and focused on the conversation.

Of course, they would.

If Rui could spy on all the guardians while they trained, that was a serious breach of their privacy that the chambers were supposed to secure.

"No," He shook his head. "The gravity of the island is extremely overpowered. It's like trying to hear whispers in the middle of a hurricane. My technique is unable to function normally on this island."

"Making it unavailable to be tested on this island, seems rather convenient."

"Given that it is true, I find it decidedly inconvenient," Rui retorted calmly. "I am willing to prove it on land."

"Hm," The man considered. "That offer will be taken into consideration. If we find that your technique and report are exactly as you say they are, then are you willing to aid us with a full-blown investigation of the alleged weapon?"

"No," Rui shook his head unhesitatingly.

"Why not?" The man's eyes narrowed.

"Because it will take away far too much time from my training," Rui simply replied. "I came here to grow stronger. I cannot do that if I am engaging in covert intelligence operations."

"Even if it's for the sake of the Floating Sect."

"I came here for my sake, not for that of the sect," Rui calmly replied.

"Hm," The man didn't take any issue with that. "However, engaging in operations with real stakes can be of benefits that mundane training cannot provide."

Rui cringed inside at the terrible attempt to persuade him. While the man appeared to be a competent intelligence officer, it was clear that his understanding of Martial Artists was not the best.

"My Martial Art and Path are not centered around fields relevant to covert operations," He sighed. "I will not make any gains by simply executing such operations. Furthermore, I am aware that the Floating Sect does not require my aid beyond this point. Just the fact that the Floating Sect was able to acquire the intelligence that the Graheria Kingdom was commissioning Frigga Industries means that the Floating Sect possessed an intelligence network that penetrated mid-level executives and officers of the executive government of the Graheria Kingdom. The fact that the Floating Sect was unable to find out what the commission was means that it has not penetrated the level of clearance needed to gain information on the commission."

The deputy director remained silent. Yet his silence was loud, he could not deny Rui's sharp deductions.

"However, now that I've pointed you well in the right direction, it should be possible for you to gain more information to either prove me wrong or right, correct?"

Rui had given them many details including locations, names, and details surrounding the transaction and the package.

He knew that these details, while not something that the Floating Sect could have acquired by itself were something it could look to verify now that they had become aware of it.

There were many things the Floating Sect could do with the sheer amount of detailed information that Rui presented to them

The man smiled. "You appear far more impressive than I gave you credit for, guardian Falken. Between this, the sheer information density and volume that you somehow recorded and documented, and your smooth means of infiltrating and spying, you've been of great service to the Floating Sect. You are eligible for all the training and growth services from the Martial Seniors once we verify your technique off Ajanta Island."

Although the man was gracious, he still insisted on Rui proving his ability to sense past anti-espionage techniques.

Rui was fine with that, it meant that he had achieved what he wanted and could now focus on the sparring training with the Martial Seniors of the Floating Sect.

In the following days, the deputy director kept up his word and made sure to test the veracity of Rui's senses. The test occurred in the sky, distanced from the island where Rui was asked to identify the objects within boxes that were heavily lined with anti-espionage technology.

Rui easily answered all of them, giving detailed answers on the objects within the boxes.

Once Rui had proven his technique, even the deputy director had to admit that Rui's tale was far more credible and believable after that.

The Floating Sect's intelligence department moved in accordance as it mobilized to dig deeper into the truth of the matter.

As far as Rui was concerned, he had washed his hands of the matter. The best thing he could do now was grow stronger. He intended to remain in the Floating Sect long enough to fulfill at least one of the conditions to becoming a Senior.

With that in mind, he entered the arena with a determined expression. Around him were dozens of Martial Squires of the tenth class.

At the center of the training arena was Senior Xanarn.

"Position yourselves." She simply instructed.

Various Martial Squires stood away from her at various distances. Kane stood closer to her while Rui chose to stand at medium range from her.

Rui had prepared quite well for this occasion, he had held nothing back as he adapted to everything that he saw about Senior Xanarn's motions, developing a predictive model while also organizing all the counters that he had developed for Xanarn's movements from the counter-adaptive model.

Although the sound nature certainly threw the Earth-based system off, he compensated by replacing the incompatibilities with more appropriate responses.

He had but one goal for this sparring session; he wanted to see if he could force Senior Xanarn to use her Martial Heart, the way the guardian of the first chamber did.

Chapter 1082: Begin

Rui exhaled deeply as he closed his eyes, concentrating. His breathing evened out as he gathered his awareness and focus. Honing them towards their target.

Senior Xanarn.

He breathed deeply, opening his eyes.

"Begin."

Immediately, the guardians began bombarding her with attacks. As always, the close-range Martial Squires rushed in, hoping to land some attacks immediately as soon as the session began.

Meanwhile, the long-range Martial Squire also rose up as they aimed at her, avoiding the close-range Martial Squires.

Rui, on the other hand, did not rush in or attack from range immediately.

No.

He waited. He waited as he watched her with hawk eyes.

She pirouetted through the air, releasing a tornado of painful melodies through the air, tormenting the Martial Squires.

Yet even then, the moment he was waiting for had already come.

('Now!') Rui blasted out a tier Transverse Resonance.

The supersonic sound bullet swam through the air, yet it wasn't until the last moment that Senior Xanarn sensed the Sonic Bullet.

THWOOM!

The sound projectile dispelled as she breathed heavily, activating a breathing technique that generated a wall of sound, barely blocking his attack just an inch away from her body.

"Tsk," Rui tutted. ('Her pirouettes are paired with some technique that produces a lot of sound of one particular frequency. If I can produce a sound projectile of similar frequency, then I can camouflage my sound behind her sound. But it looks like it wasn't that easy to get a free hit.')

Rui had noticed many patterns in her movements and had prepared extensively for a confrontation with her.

She turned towards Rui with a surprised expression, before an amused smile replaced her expression. She launched waves of sound against him, looking to incapacitate him.

Yet, to her surprise, it didn't happen.

He had already made up his mind to rely on long-range attacks for as much as he could. The reason was simple, in order to adapt to her, he needed to be able to ensure that her incapacitating sound did not get in the way.

Unlike all the other guardians, he actually had a way by which he could negate the effects of her sound on himself.

THWOOM!

He launched Mighty Roar Flash Blast before him, and the two sound waves interacted in a way that left him unharmed!

('Destructive superposition for the win,') Rui smirked.

This was the opposite of the Transverse Resonance technique that empowered attacks by relying on constructive superposition to superimpose two sound waves upon one another to produce a stronger resultant wave with the net energy of the two waves.

He had used destructive resonance to cancel out the annoying sound, furthermore, the best part of this little tactic was that it only required as much or a little bit more sound than the sound that the attack contained.

Considering her attacks were often centered around hurting people with sound passively produced by her movements, Rui found it prudent to be able to handle them.

She smiled mildly at that, yet she wasn't done. She swirled through the air, releasing

an enormous blast wave of sound!

The sheer power in every square meter exceeded even a high-grade Martial Squire's ability to defend against with ease, only the strongest of defensive Martial Artists managed to withstand the attack.

And Rui.

This time, Senior Xanarn looked surprised that not only had Rui defended against the attack even though it seemed to have hit him, but he also seemed unharmed.

('Hehehe... It worked,') Rui smirked.

What he had effectively done was release a large and diluted Mighty Roar Flash Blast just moments before the attack reached him. Instead of focusing on a single pulse to form a dense attack, he let it expand in front of him just as her sound attack reached him.

It was effectively no different from a shield as long as he timed it right and made sure it underwent destructive resonance. Furthermore, he burned less energy than she did, because she was constantly making wide-area large-scale attacks that attacked many Martial Squires at once, this was a pattern that she had yet to break in the times that he had observed her holding back.

It meant that he needed to defend against only a portion of her power, meaning he consumed less energy than she did.

Ordinarily, he would have unhesitatingly gone all out with Godspeed, employing Forestep to get as much of an advantage as he could.

But this time, he didn't.

('I'm not fighting alone,') He mused as he put distance between himself and Senior Xanarn. Rather than simply launching huge barrages of attacks, he chose higher certainty shots and used tier four and sometimes even tier Transverse Resonance to make sure he hit her as hard as possible whenever he did.

He was conserving stamina.

Kane, too held back, exchanging glances with Rui as they confirmed their intentions with just simple glances, The two of them were extremely familiar with each other and didn't even need to exchange a single word to understand each other in combat.

Now was not the time for the two of them to use their most powerful trump cards. She was far too fresh, and the sparring battle was still far too chaotic for them to do so.

One of the disadvantages of Rui's Forestep technique was it relied on predictions to keep up with the movement speed of his Godspeed. What that meant was that the more he could predict in a given circumstance, the greater the risk he was enduring.

Currently, the two of them were not facing Senior Xanarn alone, they were also fighting alongside many guardians who were going all out.

Guardians that Rui could not predict, what if he ends up attacking one of them because he didn't predict them getting in his way?

Or worse yet, what if he himself ran into one of their attacks because he couldn't predict them?

He couldn't use Forestep in such chaotic circumstances. Thus it was a better idea to let the sparring session die down a bit and let her burn her stamina while the two of them retained theirs.

Chapter 1083: Coordination

A long and stressful game began for both Rui and Kane as they participated in the battle but with only a fraction of their full exertion. They fought just enough to not be noticed for not participating, but they made sure to retain their energy reserves.

Kane didn't even bother using Void Step to try and get her with stealth. He already knew that there was no way his misdirection was working on a Martial Senior, Martial Heart or not.

Instead, he mostly stuck to occasionally trying to get her in her blind spot whenever she was pressed heavily by many of the offensive heavy hitters.

The battle slogged on and on for quite some time, however, Rui did not simply wait around conserving energy and getting in an occasional strike. He also made his sound-canceling defenses against her attacks more subtle than before, he timed it later and later, and even launched himself backward grimacing as though he had been struck or hadn't been able to cancel everything out.

To a certain extent, he could allow himself to get struck in order to make it seem more convincing too. His healing factor would mitigate lighter wounds by the end of the battle, so he carefully calculated how much he could let himself get hit in order to fake getting hurt.

Of course, this wouldn't entirely fool a Martial Senior with senses as powerful as hers were on Ajanta Island, but that was fine, as long as he did not stand out like a sore thumb for clearly holding back, he was content.

On top of that, he also spent more time refining his predictive model with the influx of data that he gained from this fight. Much to his delight he even ended up finding new patterns that he hadn't come across before.

('She disengages with the opposite foot of the direction that she pirouettes in,')

('Her primary response to be attacked with a grappling maneuver is opening up distance before launching a sound attack,')

('Her evasion is static as opposed to dynamic an overwhelming majority of the time against powerful singular attacks,')

It improved his ability to predict and adapt to her, making him more confident of taking her on when the time was right.

The battle slogged on, but the outcome was clear, the guardians were unable to take her down or even land major damage on her.

The sparring session went on for hours many of the Martial Squires who were partaking had already been mopped clean.

Yet just as it seemed as though the battle was over.

WHOOSH

Senior Xanarn spun away, twirling through the air as she evaded two attacks simultaneously.

"I knew you were stalling," She murmured without turning towards Rui. "Was it worth waiting? How are you going to fight me without the help of your peers?"

Rui didn't respond. "Fuuu....."

He exhaled deeply, sending a deep ripple through the dense atmosphere. She raised her eyebrow as she watched Rui employ a technique she hadn't seen before.

CRACKLE!

He heard a sound of electricity chirping beside him.

Rui and Kane exchanged glances.

The next second, they almost disappeared. Their speed skyrocketed so high that the other Martial Squires raised their eyes in shock as they witnessed the two of them exhibiting speed that they had never seen before!

Kane especially was truly bewildering, his Godspeed technique was perfect, and with Fulminata, he didn't need to prepare reflexive pre-moves ahead of time as Rui did.

In less than a millisecond, they had crossed the distance between them and her.

WHOOSH!

She barely evaded a flying knee kick from Kane with a shocked expression, yet what followed next was even more surprising to her.

Rui's foot was suddenly near her face.

He had prepared the attack even before she dodged.

BAM!!

A powerful Flowing Canon kick armed with the might of Outer Convergence, Godspeed, Reverberating Lance, and Adamant Reforging crashed into her chin!

Every guardian widened their eyes in shock!

This was the first time anybody had cleanly landed such a powerful strike on her!

A clear bruise appeared on her chin as she frowned in surprise.

Yet, they refused to give her any breathing room at all. The two of them flashed forward turning into hardly any more than blurs in the eyes of other Martial Artists.

In just the briefest of moments, Kane launched another strike, yet this time, she resolutely defended as she unleashed a powerful wave of pure sound!

Kane immediately recoiled back, putting as much distance between him and the attack before it connected, yet Rui pushed past the attack like it was a splash of water, canceling her sound with destructive resonance.

He threw a full-powered strike at her, one that she evaded easily.

Yet suddenly, his elbow was near her throat!

POW!

She barely managed to block the attack with a shocked expression on her face!

It was as though Rui was attacking from the future!

She realized that the previous attack had been a sneaky preparation for the next move from the very beginning.

('But that mea-!')

She couldn't even finish a thought before an abysmally swift Kane lashed out at her once more, drawing her attention momentarily off Rui,

That was a mistake.

BOOM!!!

She fended off a tier-five Transverse Resonance attack!

Such an attack had already far surpassed his regular power, it was a whopping five times more powerful than his normal Mighty Roar Flash Blast attack.

Yet even before that attack ended Kane had already prepared another attack, while Rui immediately scurried over, preparing to counter her response!

She wasn't stupid.

She had already realized what was going on.

('They're using one another to catch me off-guard... But it's only possible because of him!')

BAM!!

She glanced at Rui, barely blocking an attack that seemingly reached her spot even before she reached it herself!

('He knows... His insight into my movements is absurdly high for some reason. He doesn't react, he preacts. There is not only no lag, but there is negative lag!')

Chapter 1084: Tough

The fundamental structure of the human consciousness was such that the human could truly ever focus on only one thing at a time. Even if one felt that they were thinking about multiple things at once, this was not true. It was an illusion, what was actually happening was that the mind was thinking about multiple things in extremely rapid succession, making it seem like it was focusing on multiple things simultaneously.

This was the same mechanism that processors worked through, they could only engage in one distinct process at once and switched between many in extremely rapid succession.

It was because of this that in the brief moments where she had to focus on Kane, Rui's attack had almost completely landed on her!

As an experienced Martial Artist, she quickly realized the exact mechanics by which Rui was able to land powerful attacks on her bypassing her active defense due to effectively exploiting a momentary mental blindspot.

Yet she underestimated what was happening.

It wasn't just her that Rui was predicting, it was also Kane!

Kane was aware that Rui knew his movements inside out and was extremely flexible. So all he did was simply forget that Rui existed and went all out to become as much of a problem to Senior Xanarn as possible.

Rui had an extremely deep predictive model for Kane, he stacked the predictive models on top of each other to predict what Senior Xanarn was going to do many beats into the future!

This allowed him to prepare the most surgically adapted responses to her movements well ahead of time!

Despite her operating at a level that significantly surpassed grade-ten Martial Squires, the two of them were able to push her into a defensive state as they went all out. Although they were unable to dominate her because even without the Martial Heart, she could easily withstand anything other than Rui's most powerful attacks to her vitals, and Kane's occasional charged strikes to her eyes.

The battle turned into a spectacle, unlike anything the guardians around them had ever seen. They became so captivated by the movements of Rui and Kane, that they completely forgot that they were a part of the battle!

Rui and Kane momentarily exchanged grins as they burned their power to pressure Senior Xanarn to the absolute limit.

And it was working.

She gritted her teeth as she did her best to blast them back. Yet Kane was shockingly even faster than her in his Fulminata state. He could outrun her attacks until they diluted and weakened, while Rui efficiently canceled them a portion of the attack, that was going to hit him, out with very targeted sound attacks that functioned like sound shields.

He withstood the rest of her attacks with his body, while his enhanced healing factor worked furiously to fix all the damage to ensure he retained his combat effectiveness just enough.

Frankly, it was not easy. Her attacks were incredibly heavy, there was a reason that she had utterly mopped the floor with dozens of high-grade Martial Squires even without going all out.

Yet, Rui persevered. Because of the role that he was playing, he could tolerate not being in peak condition. His goal was to land more damage on her than she did on them.

That was why he narrowed down all his offenses to Flowing Canons and tier five Transverse Resonance. Furthermore, he had the opportunity to make sure they all landed on more vital areas than areas that would not do as much damage.

He aimed for her solar plexus, her liver, neck and above, and her diaphragm.

Because she had such a hard time preventing those strikes from landing, she most certainly suffered damage to her vitals.

A race between the two began as she stepped up her efforts even more and had long exited the 'teacher' stage of the battle, she was now focused on winning, and would not make it easy for either Rui or Kane.

A profoundly intense battle began between the two of them as they pressured her over and over, achieving an impeccable success rate!

The two of them had gotten into a comfortable rhythm as they grew increasingly cleaner and smoother with their cooperation.

Senior Xanarn on the other hand had been fighting continuously without even a moment's break for hours, exerting enough power to overwhelm dozens of Martial Squires for hours on end.

The source of power and formidability mainly came from their Martial Hearts, without which they were only above Squire Realm to whatever degree.

It meant that Senior Xanarn was truly running out of energy!

Rui could sense it as he watched her streamline her movements and reduce efficiency and unnecessary energy wastage.

Furthermore, she had changed her breathing technique to a gentler one, one that did not drain her power as much.

Her eyebrows knitted as she took on a deeper intensity. A lifetime of experience in combat began to reflect in her combat as she began fighting like she long begun fighting extremely seriously.

While she had a lot of trouble dealing with Rui, she was able to see through Kane with increasingly greater ease, as he was the least sophisticated fighter out of the three of them. She began reacting to his attacks more sharply, even ignoring his attacks unless they were genuinely threatening by aiming for her throat or her eyes.

This was Kane's greatest shortcoming because he could only exert meaningful damage if he struck her closed eyes, or her throat and neck, she very quickly became able to predict him with greater ease, since he only had a few options to make a difference!

This increasingly minimized the amount of time that Kane drew her attention away from Rui, making it harder and harder for Rui to land powerful attacks on her vitals.

WHOOM!

She managed to blow Rui away before he could land a strike on her, trumping their teamwork for the first time in the fight.

('Of course she wouldn't go down so easily,') Rui mused as he exchanged a glance with Kane.

Chapter 1085: Choice

"You're truly strong," She murmured as the distance between them momentarily paused the temp of the fight. "It appears that you only displayed a small portion of your might against former guardian Seronin."

"I don't overdo things," Rui replied while he stalled to recuperate from the attack, allowing his healing factor to quickly fix the most essential parts.

She paused for a moment, before bursting out laughing. "You have the audacity to say that after what happened to him? Yet to think you're this strong at the age of twenty-one... Just how far will you go?"

WHOOSH!

He dashed forward, appearing before her.

"I guess we'll see."

A devastatingly powerful Flowing Canon fist threatened to strike her, yet she elegantly evaded it.

SPLAT!

Kane's piercing bolt sliced a cut on her neck, appearing out of nowhere!

Yet before she could even express surprise, Rui had already released tier five Transverse Resonance at her. As an expert on sound, she was easily able to skillfully deconstruct and dissipate the attack!

Yet;

SPLAT!

Kane inflicted another cut on her just as she shifted her attention to him!

She leaped back as she realized what was happening.

('They're switching places! He became the distraction while the other brat targeted my vitals!') She furrowed her eyebrows.

Rui grinned. ('Because I can predict him, I can force you to run into his attack!')

The predictive model was not monolithic and static.

When predicting actions, Rui calculated one outcome using the predictive model, however, when it came to predicting reactions, Rui saw multiple possible futures!

The reason for this was that she would respond differently to different attacks. A powerful kick would evoke a dodge, while lighter attacks were better off being blocked. Thus, depending on the action, there could be varied reactions.

Thus Rui predicted Kane's actions and then chose the right attack to force the correct reaction such that she would run into Kane's attack while she was distracted by Rui's attack!

As an experienced Martial Artist, Senior Xanarn immediately realized what Rui was doing.

It was a feat that required an absurd amount of insight into both Kane and Senior Xanarn.

She subconsciously opened her eyes, widening them in shock. ('Just how well does he know me?! We slept together just once!')

She was understandably flustered. She didn't understand how Rui had such a deep insight into her movements, she felt transparent.

She felt completely naked under the profound depth of his eyes.

She actually knew exactly how that felt, after all.

It was a lot less pleasant than last time.

The abrupt shift in roles threw her off, forcing her back on the defensive.

SPLAT!

Kane inflicted another cut on the more tender parts of her flesh on her vitals. As he grinned, brought his arms together, before rubbing them away into his stance.

Because the stamina for the Fulminata technique did not come from his mind, he was doing better than both Rui and Senior Xanarn. He was thoroughly enjoying himself. He evaded all her attacks smoothly, before sneaking and exploiting an opportunity created by Rui, or creating an opportunity for Rui.

The two of them switch back and forth between their roles. This constant switch threw Senior Xanarn off even more. Now she didn't even know who was the decoy and who was the actual attack!

It was just an endless wave of decoys and attacks that landed on her almost before she even realized it!

She gritted her teeth feeling increasingly pressured as Rui kept staying one step ahead of her. Her damage was accumulating.

Her conventional stamina was truly reaching her limits.

Her mental fatigue was finally stepping in.

Yet despite the unpleasantness of the situation, she couldn't help but be truly impressed with the two Martial Squires. The two of them were individually only as much trouble as grade-ten Martial Squires at most, as a quasi-Senior even without her Heart, she could handle them individually.

Yet it was their phenomenal teamwork that elevated their threat level astronomically!

It created a sum that was far greater than the parts, allowing them to reach power that could potentially take her down.

Furthermore, Rui had wisely waited for her to drain her power with the rest of them, before unleashing a level of threat that he would have been unable to by himself.

The battle had entered a profound rhythm, one that captivated all those who beheld it. It was as though it would continue on forever and forever.

Yet, they were wrong.

THWOOM!

She dispelled a tier five Transverse Resonance attack, immediately looking to defend Kane's attack.

Yet it did not come.

CLASP!

BZZT!

Rui coiled around her body in the minute blindspot he had created while she shifted her attention, his arms curled around her neck, as he squeezed down in a vice, while applying Thundercoil!

Rui had gone off the beaten path, breaking the pattern.

He had not made this decision lightly. For one, he was nearing his limits. Godspeed was not a light technique, and it was one that he knew would burn him out soon enough. He didn't just want to push her into a monotonous battle before losing.

He wanted to push her past her limit.

That was why instead of simply opting for the regular combo with Kane, he decided to go for a finisher.

It was an ambitious risk, but this was a sparring session. He could afford to take such risks as opposed to a real battle where a loss meant it was game over!

Fortunately, he did her job well.

Catching her off-guard and drawing her attention to him momentarily.

Momentarily incapacitating her with partial paralysis.

He didn't know if it was enough, for what followed exceeded his cognition.

Kane burned all of his energy in one grand burst!

He reverted back to the original Godspeed technique that made use of all of his voluntary stamina and energy!

In less than a millisecond, he had long crossed the distance between them as two fingers rushed towards her eyes!

...

BADUMP

Chapter 1086: Aftermath

BADUMP

A profoundly deep avalanche of pressure swept over Rui and Kane, yet it didn't stop there. It rushed forward, untethered, bathing every sentient lifeform on the entire island.

THWOOM!

A wave of sound blew Rui and Kane with overpowering force, expelling them helplessly.

BOOM!

Rui crashed into the arena walls, coughing some blood as he quickly used Final Breathing to increase his pain resistance.

Yet he grinned as he beheld her Martial Heart.

"Twice in a week," She murmured. "Sarak and Leonil will never let me hear the end of it."

She sighed as she deactivated her Martial Heart, lessening the stress she exerted on the Martial Squires. "This sparring session has come to an end."

Soon enough, several medics and nurses entered the arena, tending to the wounded guardians.

Soon enough, Senior Xanarn went on a round speaking to all of them one by one. She did not ramble in her feedback and criticisms of all of them, she was concise and to the point, offering several short pointers before moving one.

Although it wasn't personally impressive to him, he respected the fact that she kept track of the various Martial Squires throughout the entire session.

"My initial feedback to you was to participate more, but I suppose I ought to scrap that," She said once she reached Rui. "I truly did not expect you to be able to accomplish forcing me to use my Martial Heart. Frankly, the level of performance you two demonstrated shows that you're more than qualified for higher Realms."

She wasn't wrong, but what she didn't know was the degree of preparation that went into the fight, not just for analyzing her patterns to build a predictive model, but also the deep familiarity he had of Kane.

"Were you actually gaining insights on me when you came to spectate on my previous sparring training with other guardians?" She asked with curiosity.

"Why else would I be there?" Rui raised an eyebrow as he got up, having consumed a potion.

"...Never mind."

"Any tips for me?" Rui asked.

She made an awkward expression. She had just effectively lost to Rui, so she wasn't even sure whether she had much of a footing to be able to coach him.

But fortunately, she did have an idea pop into her head. "Your manipulation of sound is rather rigid and unflexible. I'm surprised that a Martial Squire is able to merge sound, that too a Martial Squire that isn't even specialized in sound."

Rui nodded. He had also realized that compared to Senior Xanarn's more flexible manipulation of sound, his was certainly more limited.

However, he wasn't too keen on addressing this issue at the moment. His long-range techniques were good enough for now, they were not at the top of his list.

"Other than that, honestly, I don't have much else to offer," Senior Xanarn sighed. "I did not realize how deep your insight was. I have almost never come across such a degree of understanding of one's Martial Art before."

Rui raised an eyebrow. He recalled her saying something similar before, where she said that his Martial Art was the second most potent she had ever come across.

"Almost?"

She smiled. "Almost. You'll see for yourself when you reach higher classes."

Rui considered her words, gauging what she meant.

"Good luck," She turned around walking away, before suddenly pausing. "Ah, one last thing."

"Hm?" Rui raised an eyebrow.

"The Floating Sect can bring you infinitely close to breaking through, however, those that come from afar cannot break through just by spending a greater amount of time on this island," She told him. "Be sure to remember that."

Rui already knew this. The insights he had into the trigger that broke one through to the Senior Realm were enough to show him that simply training here on the island was not good enough.

It was a nexus and a haven that offered a place of tranquil growth and empowerment, but he already knew that it could not provide the trigger to the Senior Realm.

('I only intend to stay here to reach the peak of the Squire Realm and nothing more.') Rui mused.

He didn't want to take too much time doing that either. He only had nine years left before time was up.

('One thing that I can do to speed things up is upgrade to higher ranks as a guardian to get more favorable spots for training that will hasten the growth of my body as a Martial Squire.')

He did not intend to stay as rank nine-hundred-and-one forever. But there wasn't an immediate urge to upgrade ranks at the moment, he did want to strengthen his Martial Art.

('More like broaden it, at this point,') His foundations were rock solid in the Squire Realm, he was doing pretty well in all of the fundamental fields of combat. However, in order to be able to adapt to all kinds of Martial Art, he needed to be able to counter all kinds of Martial Art. It meant that he had to go far beyond the basics to find counters to things that were beyond the basics.

Fortunately, he already had several ideas about how to grow stronger. The environment he was in had given him several ideas on what he ought to grow stronger.

Individuality was the name of the game, and it was a game that Rui was pretty good at.

"Hey," Kane walked over to him with a crooked grin on his face. "We succeeded. Good job."

The two of them smacked their hands against each other in a high-five before heading back to their dorm.

Rui expected a bit of peace from then on, intense training, yes, but monotonous and peaceful intense training.

He was wrong.

As they walked through the corridor to their chambers, they stepped to the side evading a crowd of guardians barging past them. The two of them exchanged a glance in confusion as they avoided getting trampled by the stampede.

"Hey, what's going on?" Kane stopped one of his new-found friends.

"Didn't you hear the news. The Kaddar Treat Organization has just declared open war with the Floating Sect!"

Chapter 1087: Motivations

Rui's eyes widened. "What?"

"How did you miss the news?!"

"We just got back from training," Kane explained. "Are you serious?"

"Guardian Hrinil actually acquired a notice published by the Kaddar Treaty Alliance. It's all real!"

The man scurried away as Rui and Kane exchanged surprised expressions.

The nations of the Kaddar Region had never declared an open war on the Floating Sect, for reasons Rui had long realized. It could not afford to attack the island for fear of destabilizing the core esoteric ore that held the island together.

While there were skirmishes and the nations of the Kaddar Region had most certainly tried to make life harder for the Floating Sect, that was the limit that they could do.

Yet for some reason, that status quo had been abruptly upended.

Rui and Kane followed the crowd of guardians out to the open where a large notice had been pinned on a notice board.

[Ajanta Termination Act]

The title alone made absolutely no mistakes as to what it could be. Just glancing at it Rui realized that the situation was not being exaggerated.

[We, the constituents of the Kaddar Treaty Organization, invoke the fifth clause of the Kaddar Treaty to levy war against the Floating Sect, hereby referred to as the Sect, in the light of the existential threat of Ajanta Island to all life in the Kaddar Region.]

Several seals and stamps of various insignias and emblems stood by each other. These were the official proofs of authorization of the various constituent states that were members of the Kaddar Treaty Organization.

However, the notice wasn't done. It went on to announce the complete sealing of airspace around Ajanta Island!

Not a single person or thing would be allowed to enter or leave the island. This alone was big news, it meant that the Floating Sect would truly be cut off from the rest of human civilization. If it needed anything or came across any predicament, it could only rely on itself and not Martial Artists from outside the nation. In a war, this was a huge blow. Rui did not

However, that wasn't all.

The nations of the Kaddar Treaty Organization announced the founding of a joint task force spearheaded by the most powerful Martial Seniors and the best Martial Squires that the Kaddar Treaty Organization could muster.

"What?" Rui's eyes widened.

That was not easy for Senior-level nations. Thousand Martial Squires were far more than what any of them could handle individually.

('Yet if they gathered them from outside of the Kaddar Region, then it is more feasible') Rui's eyes narrowed.

He did not believe that the Kaddar Treaty Organization was so incompetent that they did not realize that the Martial Squires of the Floating Sect were far above the average Martial Squire. The fact that they had prepared a whopping one thousand-strong Squire-level task force meant that they felt this task force was qualified to take on the Floating Sect.

('Something isn't adding up,') Rui's eyes narrowed. ('Why has the Kaddar Treaty Organization decided to declare an open war against the Floating Sect when it hadn't done so all this time in fear of destabilizing the island all this time?')

Unlike the other Martial Squires, he possessed a good understanding of statesmanship, geopolitics, and economics on top of his sharp intellect.

The deterrence of causing damage to Ajanta Island in a war, causing it to break and plummet was strong and one that should have still existed. Yet for some reason, the Kaddar Treaty Organization seemed remarkably bold and aggressive.

Rui's eyes widened as a possibility came to mind. ('The weapon that the Graheria Kingdom purchased from Frigga Industries!')

The Graheria Kingdom most certainly intended to attack the Floating Sect one way or another, however, he had expected them to employ some esoteric weapon that could bypass it, but he had not expected that they would partake in a head-on war.

However, he was sure that the package that they had purchased from Frigga Industries would be relevant somehow. It was likely even the reason that the Kaddar Treaty Organization was this aggressive against the Floating Sect because this solution was perhaps a way by which they could bypass the threats of the island collapsing under the rigors of war.

However, that wasn't the only issue that came to mind.

('There is no way a Senior-level nation possessed the kind of wealth to gather so many powerful Martial Squires on demand without bleeding. More broadly, there is no way that this was isn't making them bleed alive.')

War was an extremely taxing endeavor, while Ajanta Island was a hypothetical existential threat that could do immense damage, there was no strong reason to believe it would fall, while the war was an absolute certainty in the damage it would do to the economy and the markets.

('It can't just be that the island scares them,') Rui realized. ('There needs to be more concrete incentives or disincentives for waging war on top of the vague and undefined threat of it falling that can justify such high initial expenditures.')

Rui's mind swum through all possibilities as one very real one stuck out to him.

('Is the island an asset that can generate a lot of revenue or utility to the Kaddar Treaty Organization?') Rui's eyes widened. ('Could it be that their goal is not to bring down the island, but to take over it completely?')

If they used the island to either generate revenue or strengthen their military, then he could definitely see how the war expenditure of gaining control of Ajanta Island could be compensated by securing control over Ajanta Island in the long run. There were many ways that it could be an absolute blessing to the nations of the Kaddar Region if they did indeed find some way to quell their fears of it crashing.

After all, the island was the very reason why the war was being fought in the very first place. It would be nothing less of an international treasure!

Chapter 1088: Conflicts

Ajanta Island was far more lucrative than the Floating Sect made out of it. Because the Floating Sect disregarded monetary goals when it occupied and developed Ajanta Island, it did not earn much.

It had instead put a lot of weight on creating an environment that could attract even the most powerful of Martial Squires, and give them a reason to stay committed to the island even in the event of the war.

Rui had long realized that the sheer quality of the free training chambers and their ability to luxuriously accommodate all ranges, and also train all kinds of techniques and attributes relevant to combat was meant to strongly incentivize guardians to stay and continue training.

And it seemed to have worked well.

After all, the tensions between the Floating Sect and the nations of the Kaddar Region were perennially extremely high, their relationship was hostile beyond diplomacy. Yet these guardians stayed in the Floating Sect despite the prospect of war not being too unlikely.

The Kaddar Region wouldn't need to employ such a strategy, thus it could make smaller chambers simply for engaging in basic training under the circumstances of the island's environment for a fee.

That alone would generate an enormous market and would attract Martial Squires from all over as long as they publicized it well. It could effectively become like what the Uminana Trench was for the coastal nations of the ocean.

('In fact, they're actually quite similar,') Rui realized.

The Uminana Trench and Ajanta Island were both existential threats to civilization in their respective surroundings, yet humans profited off them nonetheless.

Rui shook his head, dispelling such thoughts. Regardless of what their motivations were, it didn't matter.

The only thing that mattered was that they were in for a war.

Rui glanced around to gauge the reactions of the various guardians.

While they were surprised by this remarkably abrupt development, he did not get the sense that any of them were considering ditching the Floating Sect to avoid being targeted by the Floating Sect.

('They can't leave it even if they wanted to,') Rui mused.

The Kaddar Region was probably strengthening its grip on the island even as they stood there.

Rui heaved a deep breath before considering options.

Unfortunately, there weren't many.

('Besides, I've already committed myself to growing stronger on this island, I probably won't have an opportunity to hone my body as well as I can on this island.')

It was as though just existing here was a Squire-level training technique like Adamant Reforging.

He immediately felt an urgency to get to higher ranks, an urgency that he did not feel before. The higher the rank of his chamber, the greater the rate of his growth.

('I wonder what measures the Floating Sect will undertake in response to this declaration of war.')

He couldn't help but notice that the notice from the Ajanta Termination Act did not mention anything about dealing with the three Martial Seniors of the Floating Sect.

('They're being careful around the matter of the Martial Seniors.')

Rui realized.

For Senior-level states, Martial Seniors were national treasures. Every time a Senior-level nation deployed a Martial Senior to a battle, they were risking losing their national treasure.

This was starkly different from how stronger nations like the Shionel Dungeon treated them, hell, Rui had been able to purchase the services of Martial Seniors from Guildmaster Bradt.

He absolutely would not be able to do that if Martial Seniors were the strongest Martial Artists of the nation.

('They're a deterrence towards the other nations of the Kaddar Region,') He knew that no nation would willingly volunteer their Martial Senior for war.

The reason for that was deploying them for war would weaken their national security due to a deterrence being absent. Although the nations of the Kaddar Region were united on the matter of Ajanta Island, that did not mean they were united in general.

Many of them had major conflicts and grievances with each other, and there were always perennial conflicts of interest. It was just not something that the nations could ignore in favor of taking down the powerful and elite Martial Seniors of the Floating Sect.

If they died, then the nations that lost their Martial Seniors would be devastated.

('Though if they all deployed their Martial Seniors altogether, then maybe...') Rui considered the moment. ('No, that wouldn't work either actually. Oh that would be devastating because of external threats.')

The Kaddar Region was not isolated from the rest of human civilization, if the satellite nations of the region lost their largest deterrence, then the prospect of invasions became a lot more realistic.

These two concerns were probably what was holding back the Kaddar Treaty Organization from deploying Martial Seniors. Not even the prospect of obtaining Ajanta Island was good enough to make them take such a risk.

Suddenly a wave of murmurs swept through the crowd as their attention was drawn in by a powerful presence.

Rui instantly recognized the man as the Martial Senior he was.

This was one of the three Martial Seniors of the Floating Sect, Senior Leonil.

He didn't say a word yet as he waited for the incoming influx of Martial Squires to abate.

"You've finally gathered here," The man calmly remarked once all one thousand Martial Squires had stood in the courtyard before him. "We do not tend to stand on ceremony here at the Floating Sect. We are all Martial Artists here, so I will be brief and succinct."

He paused for a moment. "War is upon us. All of you have learned that the Kaddar Treaty Organization has declared war on the Floating Sect. They have spent an enormous amount of capital to immigrate over large numbers of powerful Martial Squires for quite some time now in top secrecy in addition to their own Martial Squires. You do not have any choice, you cannot even leave even if you tried, you would be taken down before you could make it to land. Your only option is to win, or die."

Chapter 1089: Upgrade

Many of the guardians had already realized that this was the case. Yet, being told so straightforwardly by one of the leaders of the Floating Sect made the reality set in.

Yet, thankfully, none of the guardians objected. They were all powerful martial Squires who chose to risk death in order to become a guardian and accepted the prospect of fighting for the sake of the Floating Sect.

It appeared that the policies to increase the commitment of guardians to the Floating Sect were effective, thus far.

"The details will be announced at a later time, but you will be deployed against the one thousand-strong Kaddar Task Force created by the Kaddar Treaty Organization to fight the Floating Sect," The man replied. "Fight hard if you wish to protect the place that has no doubt made many of you stronger, and will make many of you stronger as long as it exists. Do not forget who all of you are, and what you've had to overcome to get here. Good luck. Dismissed"

It was a simple and crisp announcement. He did not try to go overboard and evoke some sort of patriotic sentiment from the guardians. He was well aware that such a thing was not fit for the Floating Sect and the guardians.

"Damn... A war, huh?" Kane murmured with an uncertain expression. "I was hoping to avoid such trouble by coming to Ajanta Island."

"You're not strong enough to evade trouble like this just yet," Rui sighed. "Let's get going."

"What do you plan on doing now?" Kane asked.

"Train, aim for better chambers, get stronger," Rui replied with narrowed eyes.

This was probably the most pumped-for training that he had perhaps ever been. Not only was he motivated by his ambition of Project Water, but he had also developed a desire for power to protect the people he cared about, and now he was being thrust into war, he needed power more than ever before.

"Sounds fun," Kane huffed sarcastically.

Rui was engrossed in his mind as he thought of ways to strengthen his Martial Art. That meant creating techniques, of course. Technique with lots of individuality.

Yet, for some reason, he didn't feel good about it, for some reason.

('I can create techniques endlessly, and they do make me stronger, and they do increase the individuality of my Martial Art but...')

He couldn't quite put his finger on it. It just felt like like it wasn't the best he could do. Now, when he was pressed for more power perhaps more than ever in his life, he felt the need to do the best he could.

Perhaps other Martial Squires were satisfied with simply creating more technique with great individuality or any individuality...

Not Rui.

He wanted to live up to his full potential, especially when he arrived at the truth about Martial Art, and the truth about potential. He did not want to let a single bit about his potential go.

But the next question immediately presented itself.

('What more can I do aside from just creating powerful techniques with a lot of individuality?')

This was a question that would not appear in the minds of an overwhelming majority of Martial Squires.

They were not qualified to ask themselves that question when most of them struggled with ordinary individuality.

Only a handful of truly era-defining Martial Artists could ever even ponder the question seriously.

Rui was one of them.

('...The VOID algorithm,') Rui narrowed his eyes. ('I have long put away its upgrade, but...')

It felt right. He couldn't explain, but he felt he was finally ready to tinker with the masterpiece of his previous life.

In the past, he had been extremely satisfied just being able to use it. After all, that had been the holy grail of Project Water, being able to make the VOID algorithm viable. He did that with the help of Mind Palace and basked in the satisfaction of having fulfilled that part of his ambition for quite some time.

For seven years.

Yet, he was no longer satisfied with just that. This world had shown him that while it would have worked fine on Earth, it was inadequate here. He needed to do more, he couldn't just bask off previous successes.

('It's time to improve the VOID algorithm concretely,') His eyes narrowed.

Suddenly, he felt a deep sense of anticipation and excitement as a small smile crept on to his face.

"What is it?" Kane raised an eyebrow. "You just thought of something."

"I did, as a matter of fact," He smirked. ('The question is how am I going to upgrade it?')

He had built the VOID algorithm over many years with rigorous research and development. It was something that required access to lots of research capital, a team, and time.

He didn't have any of the things that he had when he created the VOID algorithm, yet he knew that he was going to do it, somehow.

However, he definitely needed a plan as to how he was going to go about it.

('Perhaps I can improve one of its systems?') He wondered with a skeptical expression.

That sounded extremely difficult, he knew the VOID algorithm inside-out, improving its systems was a losing game of diminishing returns. It would take him many years just to make a one-percent improvement.

Although he could perhaps find a new way to improve the existing systems given that the world was far less shackled by reality in his second life, it was still mostly a losing battle in his estimation.

('Well, I ought to keep an open mind in that regard, but it isn't the first option,') Rui had considered a brand-new idea. ('What if I add new systems to the VOID algorithm that will help me be able to better adapt to my opponents?')

His eyes widened.

That sounded far more plausible and realistic than trying to beat a dead horse. Furthermore, several ideas had already popped into his head in regards to how he could go about it.

Chapter 1090: Surpass

There were many elements in this world that were beyond that of his previous life, they were things that Rui sometimes had trouble adapting against because the VOID algorithm couldn't account for.

('Martial bodies is definitely one of those,') Rui sighed.

Because superhuman physicality did not exist on Earth, the VOID algorithm was often stumped when it came to adapting to some truly outlandish things. For instance, he knew that the VOID algorithm was often stumped when it came to adapting to such things. In such circumstances, he usually substituted for it with his own judgment which had worked out alright, but it was not ideal.

('If I do add a new system, it has to be based on a new parameter of my combat that can be optimally adjusted to be best able to handle my opponent.') Rui mused as he considered the matter deeply.

The systems of the VOID algorithm were essentially all ways by which he could maximize the adaptation of one aspect of combat, regardless of what it was. One of the simpler systems was the one with which he decided what kind of stance he would take against his opponent to have the best starting position to deal with them.

Another System was based on range evaluations and would allow him to model his responses most aptly depending on the range that his opponent operated from.

They were each centered around one, and only one element per system.

Thus if he wanted to add a new system that would allow him to adapt to his opponent better, then he would find ways to deal with it.

What that meant was that he needed to find an element or a parameter that could be altered or changed to adapt to his opponent, one that wasn't normally adapted.

"Hmmm..." Rui narrowed his eyes as he gave it considerable thought.

He had given this same matter a lot of thought in his previous life many times, it was what led to the creation of many of the systems of the VOID algorithm. He had long hit a dead-end in regard to this matter back in his previous life.

However, in this new life, in a world with many new possibilities, he did see hope to add new systems to the VOID algorithm and make it more powerful.

Still, it wasn't necessarily easy just because it was possible.

He needed to continue going through the many new elements that existed in combat in his new life, that did not exist in combat in his previous life. Then he needed to explore the capacity for adaptation of those parameters to an opponent.

('What aspects of Martial Art combat did not exist in my previous life?')

Several answers immediately came to mind.

The first one, of course, was the Martial Path.

The Martial Path was the fundamental and foundational element that truly separated Martial Art from martial arts. Without the Martial Path, the martial arts of this world would be identical to the ones from back in his previous life.

('But it's not adaptable or changeable,') He shook his head.

His Martial Path was adaptive evolution, but that did not mean that his Martial Path itself could change to adapt and evolve to his opponent.

It wasn't as though he could change his Martial Path from adaptive evolution to evasive maneuvering like Kane's when he was facing a Martial Artist whose weakness was evasive maneuvering.

His Martial Path was rock solid and absolutely could not be changed or altered in any way.

The Martial Path was a reflection of the very being that the Martial Artist was in a sense. It was unique because people were unique.

It was not something that could be altered to adapt to his opponent.

('Nor is it something I would want to change even if I could,') Rui snorted.

He immediately ruled out that possibility.

The second possibility that came to mind was the Martial body.

The evolution of the human body through Darwinian natural selection of cells was something that expanded the potential of the human body to be astronomically greater than it normally was. It also molded the body to be in line with the Martial Path of the Martial Artist for maximum synergy.

Its spec configuration was unique from person to person, just like the Martial Path was, because the Martial Path was.

('It too cannot be cha-') Rui paused, furrowing his eyebrows as a thought entered his head.

He almost remarked that it couldn't be changed, yet that wasn't entirely true.

The spec configuration of a Martial body was not as inviolably constant as the Martial Path was.

('The Godspeed technique forcefully exhales mass from the body rendered unnecessary after squeezing it for extra energy,') Rui mused. ('That turns the body into quasi-speed oriented Martial body temporarily.')

It meant that the spec configuration of the Martial body was something that could change in practice, and if it could change...

('Then it can be changed to be adapted to my opponent,') Rui's eyes widened in shock.

He had just come across a realization that he had never even considered before. Yet... It made sense. There were ideal spec configurations to deal with any given Martial Artist or opponent of any kind.

Thus being able to alter his spec configuration towards the most ideal spec configuration would mean that he could adapt to his opponent by changing his body!

It was a revolutionarily shocking idea that truly broke apart any norms or limits for adaptation that he believed he was inescapably subject to. It was so simple, yet it was absolutely game-changing!

If he could realize this to be true, then it would probably be the case that this was the single greatest breakthrough in regards to the VOID algorithm since the creation of the pattern recognition system!

('No... This new system has the potential to surpass the pattern recognition system in regards to how effective it is in regards to adapting to his opponent in combat.')