

Martial Unity 1091

Chapter 1091: Options

Perhaps that was a bit of an exaggeration, after all, the pattern recognition system of the VOID algorithm was incredibly potent and could bridge huge gaps between himself and stronger opponents.

However, if he could in fact add a system that allows him to manipulate the spec configuration of his Martial body, it had the potential to massively improve his adaptive capabilities to his opponent.

This was a level of evolution that probably far exceeded even Bruce Lee's original vision. It would allow him to embody the concept of adaptive evolution. To become one with it!

His mind started racing through many thoughts as he swiftly analyzed and processed countless potential possibilities in regard to his new idea.

('The Godspeed technique can actually serve as the first step of such a technique!') Rui realized. ('It can allow me to adapt much better to people against whom the best Martial Path type is a maneuvering or a speed-oriented type.')

He needed to find ways that could allow him to do that to obtain the spec configurations of other Martial bodies.

('That's not going to be easy,') Rui tutted.

That was, after all, the way to go about things. He wasn't sure what form the solution would take, but it was definitely going to take a lot of time.

The issue was that this was something that did not have a singular solution. It required most likely multiple techniques or training techniques, potentially multiple changes to his body.

('It's a shame I didn't have the option to make my Martial body of such a type.') Rui sighed. But there was no option of creating a Martial body that could change its configuration back when he underwent the Squire evolution breakthrough process.

('No matter, I do believe that it can be done even without having a Martial body that focuses on it.') Several ideas had popped into his head.

The first avenue of consideration was the integration of esoteric substances into the Martial body.

This was an avenue that he had explored twice before and had gotten promising results back. That was why he was quite hopeful about this possibility.

However, this wasn't the only avenue to explore when it came to realizing his brand-new ambition.

('I haven't thought about this in a while but... symbiotes are a possibility as well,')

Rui had not forgotten the Mindmirror Symbiote in his brain. Although the utility it provided was lessening the stronger he got because his Martial body didn't cater to it thus the amount of evolution that it could undergo was limited.

Still, he appreciated the boost in processing that it gave him. Furthermore, he never discounted the value they provided. In this particular, he did think that there was the possibility that symbiotes could potentially fix at least a part of the problem.

After symbiotes were external elements that granted new capabilities to the Martial Body did not intrinsically possess.

In this case, the ability that he was looking for; to manipulate his spec configuration, was not something that his Martial body had at all in the first place. This was exactly the kind of thing that a symbiote could help with.

('It could even be a fusion of solutions from esoteric material science and symbiotes, honestly,') Rui mused.

He wasn't sure about that, but it wasn't impossible. As long as it granted him the capabilities that he wanted, he was fine getting power from anywhere.

However, these were not the only ways by which he could get what he was looking for. It was possible that ordinary kinds of techniques would give him what he wanted. After all, that was what the Godspeed technique did.

Regardless, he highly doubted that he would find one single technique that would solve the entire issue allowing him to manipulate his body as he pleased. That was too outlandish, He would most likely need to bring together many solutions to handle parts of the problem.

However, when he was done, he couldn't even imagine the sheer power that the result would give him. The sheer individuality of the resulting solutions would probably bring him to the very cusp of the Senior Realm!

After all, this was probably something that nobody had even thought about, and it was probably entirely unique to him on the entire continent. Not only was his Martial Path rare and unlike almost any other Martial Art out there, but the goal that he was working towards was fundamental to his Martial Path, and thus probably not something that had ever been considered.

Barring the creation of the VOID algorithm, there probably was nothing that could bring him nearly as much individuality.

('Alright, it's time to begin,') Rui narrowed his eyes.

He had established a goal, and he was going to resolutely work towards it. In fact, he was so committed to it, he didn't even care about normal techniques for the time being. He had lots of them, and it wasn't as though he was particularly short on them.

One unfortunate circumstance that he was currently in was the war that was about to begin ramping up. It meant that he would most certainly have to partake in war. This was something he wanted to avoid.

His main two goals at the moment were strengthening his body under the powerful environment of the Floating Sect, and creating a new system of adaptation based on manipulating the spec configuration of the Martial Body.

('All while fighting a war that I can't avoid, wouldn't want to avoid since it would mean not fulfilling the first goal of strengthening my body to ensure that it can withstand the power of my Martial heart, opening up the possibility of breaking through into the Senior Realm.') He sighed.

Things were about to get rough and stressful, perhaps more so than they had in the relatively relaxing period that he had during the last year since he left the Shionel Confederation. That was fine, people conformed to pressure, and as long as he got through it, he would be stronger than he had ever been thus far.

Chapter 1092: Impact

The declaration of war by the Kaddar Treaty Organization was something that sent waves not just across the Kaddar Region, but also beyond it.

This was more than just a little shocking.

More than a century had gone by with no major outbreak of war and that had all been disrupted and upended abruptly.

Many people didn't understand, the Kaddar Treaty Organization had avoided an outbreak of war due to the fact that it was too risky to wage war against the Floating Sect that was holed up on the island, yet it had suddenly changed its tune.

Was it no longer afraid of the island falling?

The destructive might of one thousand Martial Squires was immense, a conflict of such scale on both sides could easily bring about the ruin of the island, and the Kaddar Region by extension.

The declaration of war had a profound impact on the nations of the Kaddar Region. For one, there was a small but noticeable decrease in imports and exports. Wars destabilized the participating nations, and generally, it was not worth investing in the markets of such nations in that case for many corporates that signed long-term contracts with suppliers or service producers from the nations.

Yet the Kaddar Treaty Organization went ahead with the plan without stopping at all, the Martial Squires that were going to be part of the Kaddar task force were soon in place.

The Kaddar Treaty Organization had not found it easy to obtain the Martial labor needed to take down the elite Squire-level army of the Floating Sect. Many funds had been expended into immigrating the Martial Squires into the Kaddar Region.

After all, as a Senior-level region, the Kaddar Region was not necessarily swimming in Martial Squires.

After all, the reason that they were restricted to the Senior Realm was that there weren't enough Martial Seniors to have one of them eventually break through to the Master Realm. This necessarily meant that there weren't enough Martial Squires for there to be enough Martial Seniors emerging from them.

That was why they brought in more powerful Martial Squires from outside.

The Martial Squires of the Floating Sect were far from run off the mill. They were powerful even among high-grade Martial Squires. If the Kaddar nations pit their own domestic native Martial Squires against them, they would get beaten so hard it wasn't even funny. That was why there was a need to rely on stronger Martial Squires as well.

The Martial Squires that they had gotten were not just temporary sub-ins for the war. They had made a strong attempt to ensure that they remained with the Kaddar Region even after the war, settling down permanently.

This would strengthen the nation in the long run, and increase the number of Martial Seniors that the Kaddar Region would have in the long run.

The Kaddar Treaty Organization had yet to make any statement on the matter of the Martial Seniors of the Floating Sect.

However, it was an unspoken rule that Martial conflicts were limited by the same Realm. If the Floating Sect retaliated with Martial Seniors, it would immediately escalate the war, and the Kaddar nations would be forced to deploy their Martial Seniors.

Many figured that the Martial Seniors of the Floating Sect did not want this outcome. There were fewer Martial Seniors in the Floating Sect than there were in the Kaddar Region as a whole.

The only advantage they had in that regard was that every nation was highly reluctant to volunteer their Martial Seniors for war. If the Kaddar Region was one nation then the Floating Sect would have never stood a chance to begin with.

However, due to the sheer lack of unity and trust between the Kaddar nations, the situation could be salvaged. The Floating Sect had not yet issued a public response, but nobody watching the situation had any doubts about what the response was going to be. After all, there was no way that the Floating Sect was simply going to surrender Ajanta Island to the Kaddar Treaty Organization after all this time.

Regardless, the situation grew increasingly tense by the day as the initial invasion could begin any moment. There was even a certain degree of migration observed in the Kaddar nations. Many of the citizens of these nations had long had enough and were on the cusp of leaving, and the declaration of war was the final straw.

The fear of the island was something that was deep-rooted in many of the citizens. After all, Ajanta Island had caused harm to the citizens of the Kaddar Region.

Yet the prospect of war was also too much for them, and many left the region permanently, hoping to find a new home in a less chaotic and dangerous region.

Of course, there also were many who were absolutely delighted with the decision and applauded the nations of the Kaddar Region for their decision. These were those who truly hated and despised Ajanta Island and the Floating Sect that defended the island.

Yet there were those who disapproved of the declaration of war. The Floating Sect was a haven for Martial Art, and many who were invested in Martial Art found the decision to be too much. They believed that the Floating Sect was an honored member of the Martial community for serving as a beacon of opportunity to grow stronger as a Martial Artist.

Regardless of the various opinions flying around, none of them could change the outcome. It truly appeared that the Kaddar Treaty Organization was deadset in its intentions to go through with the war.

It was clear that something had changed, causing them to gain the confidence to go all out and get rid of the threat and detriment of Ajanta Island to the entirety of the Kaddar Region.

Those that remained often looked to the skies, wondering when the fireworks of Squire-level attacks would begin, and how safe would they be on land as civilians.

Chapter 1093: Weapon

A more detailed announcement from the Floating Sect was released very soon. There were guidelines and instructions for guardians and how they ought to engage in the defense of Ajanta Island.

There were disadvantages that the Floating Sect had when it came to war, unfortunately. The first being that while the Floating Sect had a big army, they were far from united and able to engage in coordinated resistance.

All of the guardians of the Floating Sect were highly individualistic Martial Artists. They almost had to be, in order to develop their Martial Art with individuality. Any attempts to try and act as a unit were bound to end in devastating failures.

The good news was that the Kaddar Treaty Organization was faced with the same problem to a certain degree. The Martial Artists that they had managed to get to migrate to their respective nations were not capable of suddenly jumping into an army of people they weren't familiar with and begin coordinated efforts immediately.

Of course, there were native Martial Squires that were part of the military, and thus were capable of doing that, however, this did not apply to most Martial Squires.

Thus the war was projected to likely become a chaotic battlefield with most Martial Squires fighting one-on-one without much care for the bigger picture.

The Floating Sect offered a few guidelines with that in mind. The first one was to ensure that one had all the space they needed to fight their opponent optimally. There was no need to get cramped between others, most Martial Squires needed a lot of space for their many techniques to work after all.

Thus, making sure that one had all the space one needed to fight their opinion was crucial. The Floating Sect even encouraged distancing a battle from the island to a certain degree.

It could not afford to have two thousand powerful Martial Squires waging war that close to the island. Thus the greater the distance, the better.

Rui was sure that ideally, the Floating Sect would have loved to be the one to attack the Kaddar Region, however, that was not worth it. Although being the one to wage war would allow them to attack and make the battlefield the Kaddar Region, it was not a good idea because then the Kaddar Region would not hold back one bit whatsoever fearing for causing an island to drop.

Another guideline that the Floating Sect had instructed the guardians with was that some degree of coordination would be required during the arrival of the Kaddar Task Force. Long-range Martial Squires would need to get together and rain down on the incoming army to cause as much damage to the Kaddar Martial Squires.

There were also incredibly simple guidelines to ensure that there was no friendly fire or clashes. These were some of the basics that the Floating Sect could simply not tolerate. Its supply of Martial Squires was cut off by the Kaddar Region, and that meant that guardians hurting each other inadvertently was something that could not be allowed to happen.

There were also norms on ensuring that there was some basic level of efficiency, but beyond that, the guardians were encouraged to find an opponent and defeat them.

If enough guardians defeated enough opponents, victory would fall towards the Floating Sect.

However, Rui doubted whether it was going to be a straightforward all-out war from the very get-go. Given that the Floating Sect had an inclination advantage, it was not beneficial for the Kaddar Region to not launch straightforward charges to the Floating Sect.

However, the most surprising piece of information was the intelligence that the Floating Sect released on the trump card that the Kaddar nations had got themselves. The announcement revealed that the Kaddar Treaty Organization had commissioned a custom weapon that could be used to target the esoteric gravitational core and manipulate it from a distance using some complex mechanism to employ the island's gravity to hold it together.

This resultantly would apparently apparently would strengthen the bedrock of the island, holding it together, and allowing it to withstand the rigors of Martial combat!

This meant that Kaddar Martial Squires could attack the Floating Sect on the island without any fear whatsoever.

Rui's eyes widened when he read that the weapon was purchased from a weapons manufacturing corporation known as Frigga Industries!

He had been the one to obtain the intelligence on the weapon, it appeared that by doing so, he may have inadvertently triggered a war!

('Damn...') Rui tutted

If he hadn't supplied that information to the Floating Sect, they wouldn't have dug deeper to look into it and eliminate it which probably led to the series of events of the Kaddar Treaty Organization declaring war.

He shook his head, sighing. What was done was done, it could not be undone at this point, so there was no point even thinking about it at the moment.

But this revelation did explain a lot. It explained why the Kaddar Region had boldly declared war, something it had abstained from doing prior. They had found a way to get rid of the greatest deterrence that the Floating Sect had on the Kaddar Region, and that was the prospect of the island collapsing back to the ground, ruining the Kaddar Region in the process.

But now that they had a weapon that could prevent that from happening, it meant that there were fewer and fewer shackles in the Kaddar Region.

It was ironic because the Kaddar Region was attacking and threatening the Floating Sect by actually protecting it with an incredibly powerful esoteric technological weapon. That was how bizarre the circumstances of the Kaddar Region and Ajanta Island were.

He was curious about the strategic limits of the weapon, but unfortunately, the Floating Sect did not appear to be in a position to have such intel, nor did he expect them to have it, since they would have learned about its existence without him had they been able to.

Chapter 1094: Variables

Now that Rui had established his short-term goals, he needed to find a way to go about achieving his goal of adding a new system to the VOID algorithm centered around the altering of the Martial body or its spec configuration.

It was all good and fine to get excited by this ambitious new goal that would massively improve his adaptive evolution. But he needed an actual plan about how he was going to go about that.

The first issue was knowing what were the conditions and requirements for the mechanisms by which he altered the spec configuration of his body. If it turned out to be the case that altering his body to different types and changing his spec configuration was too difficult or cost too much, then it wasn't viable.

Furthermore, he couldn't really accept if the flexibility of the mechanism was not high enough for him to gain at least various different kinds of the most common kinds of spec configurations.

This included speed and agility-oriented Martial bodies like that of Kane's that were highly compatible with maneuvering techniques. Power-oriented, defense-oriented, stamina and endurance-oriented Martial Artists were also the bare basic necessities.

Then Martial bodies specialized for range, for breathing techniques, or other systems. Those were a secondary concern, it would be a nice bonus if he could pull it off.

('I should start by giving this project a simpler name,') He considered the matter for a bit. ('Metabody... Project Metabody.')

It wasn't the best name that he had come up with in his time, but it worked. The goal of Project Metabody was to achieve a way of altering the spec configuration of his Martial Body most suited to taking down his opponent in viable and feasible manners.

This would be the first project since Project Water whose end outcome wasn't going to be limited to a single technique. Although this project wasn't nearly as ambitious as the entirety of Project Water, it was still far too large to be limited to a single technique.

Now that he had named the project, and identified the broad bare basic conditions for the resultant techniques of the project to be considered a success.

('I should be able to specify and identify the variables of my physiological output that need to be manipulated to alter my spec configuration.')

Spec configuration was simply the degree to which the Martial body had the primary parameters of combat such as strength/power, durability/endurance, speed/agility, stamina, and healing. Although it wasn't limited to these, these were the most basic and primary parameters, and different Martial bodies had them to different degrees.

For example, the spec configuration of Kane's Martial body was simple; extremely high speed/agility, low power, low durability, medium stamina, and medium healing.

Normally, evasive maneuverers did not have any healing worth speaking of, but thanks to Rui's Hungry Pain technique, his healing factor and stamina were well above what he would have been able to obtain otherwise.

Rui's spec configuration was evenly distributed across all parameters, he did not place any particular weight on any one of them and instead distributed his physiological resources to all of the parameters of the body equally, thanks to the Hungry Pain technique, he too was well above how strong he would have been had he evolved without it.

However, what he was focusing on was the underlying variables that decided how high a certain parameter would be.

Strength was the simplest of them all, it was decided by muscle output. It was a straightforward parameter. Although there were different kinds of strengths, for now, Rui was focusing on the broad categories of the parameters before he focused on details. If he couldn't get the basics right, there was no point trying to aim for more ambitious things.

Stamina was a monolithic parameter, it corresponded with energy reserves with the rate of consumption of energy. Unlike strength, it depended on two variables across the board.

High energy reserves and low consumption of energy corresponded with high stamina. Whereas having higher energy reserves but high energy consumption resulted in medium stamina.

Low energy reserves and high energy consumption resulted in low stamina.

The relativity between the two variables was what decided stamina. If he wanted to alter his body's spec configuration to higher stamina than he already did, he would need to find a way to physiologically cut down his energy consumption increase his energy reserves, or both, then he could increase stamina and obtain a Martial body that was more centered around it for the time being.

('To a certain extent, I do that with Final Breathing,') Rui mused.

It cut down his energy consumption and increased his endurance, though it wasn't drastic enough to be considered body-altering, it did a decent job. What he was looking for was degrees of shifts that were comparable to the kind that he got from the Godspeed technique.

Still, it was definitely much better than nothing.

('Speaking of stamina... I wonder if she's finally a Martial Squire,') Rui thought of an old friend that he hadn't thought of in a long time. ('I'd given her the Hungry Pain technique, but I don't think that helped her get closer to the Squire Realm since she got it from, thus no individuality from her own end.')

He would liked to have thought that Milliana surely would have reached the Squire Realm by now, but he wasn't confident. It was unfortunate but, she never struck him to possess the qualities needed to eventually become a Martial Squire.

The same could be said for Dalen, another old friend from his days in the Martial Academy.

The harsh reality of the matter was that most Martial Apprentices did not make it to the Squire Realm. People like Fae and Kane were special.

He sighed, shaking his head, as he continued focusing on the matter of the variables that he would need to focus on in order to change his spec configuration and alter the parameters of his Martial Body.

Chapter 1095: Control

Speed was both multi-faceted like strength and multi-varied like stamina. There were different kinds of speed just like there were different kinds of strength, and there were multiple variables that decided speed, just like they did for stamina.

Speed could roughly be divided into three categories; combat speed, maneuvering speed, and reaction speed.

Combat speed generally referred to the movement speed of the body when engaging in combat motions, like striking, charging, or dodging, and the many smaller and undefined motions that Martial Artists frequently make.

Maneuvering speed referred to the movement speed when Martial Artists shift from one point to another in combat, including motions like sidesteps, shuffles, dashes, and sprints.

Reaction speed referred to the speed at which the body can receive, process, and respond to external stimuli like an incoming punch.

Although these three broadly fell under the category of speed, it wasn't because their underlying mechanics were all the same.

Combat and maneuvering speed were both based on how fast the muscles of the body were able to accelerate the body. There were even simple formulae based on the laws of motion and rotational

dynamics that would allow Rui to estimate speed if he knew how powerful the muscles generated and the weight of the body.

Thus if he wanted to increase or decrease speed, then he just needed to change the amount of energy generated and reduce the amount of mass the body had.

That was exactly what the Godspeed technique did, and it was what led him to realize that the Metabody project was actually plausible as a way of upgrading the VOID algorithm.

So in a way, he had already completed one part of the Metabody Project.

Martial Squires weak to speed probably could not contend with him due to the fact that he was too much to handle when he activated Godspeed and used Forestep.

('One issue is that I can only use it after I make a predictive model, so it isn't really the same as what I seek, but it is getting there.') Rui mused.

Furthermore, it could be applied to both combat and maneuvering speed equally. However, it could not be applied to reaction speed.

Unlike the other two, reaction speed was not something that he could improve with the Godspeed technique or by increasing his power output while lowering mass. In fact, the main issue he had with the Godspeed technique was that he could not improve his reaction speed to match his combat speed.

That was why he needed to rely on predictions to substitute for reactions. Kane had managed to improve his reaction speed to match his combat speed with Fulminata.

Even if his own solution wasn't nearly as good, he was fine with it for now.

One parameter that he had a much harder time working with was durability. How would he alter his Martial body such that the quality of his constitution improved on command?

Conditioning techniques were permanent improvements to passive durability. They were not reversible or changeable.

Active defense techniques were not changes to his Martial body, they were just applications of his body to defend against attacks, like all active defensive techniques.

('Hm, this one is rough, I can't even think of a concept of what I could do to temporarily amplify the defense of my body.') Rui frowned.

At least he had a specific goal and condition in mind to fulfill that would allow him to be able to obtain the Martial bodies of common Martial Paths. That was why he knew that there were little to no ways in which he could temporarily strengthen his body, off of the top of his head.

He considered the prospects of adding substances to his body to strengthen it at the cost of other parameters, but how would he be able to undo it when he didn't need it and it was not worth centering those resources on it?

After all, that was what was the of altering his spec configuration, it was lowering some specs in order to increase another spec that was needed to adapt even better against his opponent.

It was a more optimal redistribution of resources, an adapted redistribution of resources. He needed to figure out what was the best way of going about it, but he would need to explore his options more deeply.

('I'll put it on the list,')

As for being able to increase stamina, he already had created a technique like that, the Hungry Pain technique, he generated extra stamina that way and then burned that extra stamina for higher all-round specs.

('Maybe if I exert more control over my Hungry Pain technique, I can use it to manipulate the spec configuration of my Martial body,') Rui's eyes widened as he realized something that he hadn't considered before.

If he could somehow divert the energy and nutrients gained from the autophagy of Hungry Pain towards stamina and away from strength, he would be reducing his power output for the sake of higher stamina.

Furthermore, if he could somehow gain enough control, he could increase his power output sacrificing stamina!

After all, the Hungry Pain technique simply triggered autophagy, consuming dead cells, and converting them into energy and nutrients for alive cells across the body. It was an extremely efficient usage of power.

('It's going to be extremely difficult to be able to control Hungry Pain like that though,') Rui frowned.

He could immediately tell it would probably take both a breathing technique and a mental technique to be able to manipulate his metabolism like that.

However, it was not impossible, not at all. It was just another thing that he could put on his to-do list of things to be explored as a potential way to achieve Project Metabody.

He had just begun considering the matter very seriously, and he already had many things to do. It was going to take him more than just a little bit of time to get around to all of it.

Chapter 1096: Healing

He hadn't even finished going through all the parameters that he wanted to be able to adjust, and he had finally arrived at the last on his list.

('Healing,')

This was normally not a parameter as it was a constant. Yet he didn't think that it was something that was inescapable. It would be quite convenient for him if he was able to increase the rate of healing in times when he was gravely wounded. One time that immediately came to mind was the time when he was chewed out by the Root, allowing himself to heal at a much higher pace, recovering sooner.

Who knows, if he had that ability back then he might have been able to catch the Martial Squire who left, leaking intelligence to Chairman Deacon that eventually led to the discovery of his identity.

Regardless, one potential path forward in this particular parameter was the Hungry Pain technique, of course. But he didn't want to bank only on that technique.

('Is it possible to increase the quality of my healing if I develop a technique that allows my body to consume living healthy cells to serve as fuel for new cells to cover up the wound quicker than it would normally do so?') Rui's eyes widened.

In that case, he was essentially sacrificing some power output to increase the rate at which he was healing. If he ever suffered a grave wound, he could heal at a much higher pace as long as he sacrificed some stamina, power, and speed.

It would be worth using to heal not just severe wounds, but also against Martial Artists with high damage output but low durability. Thus he would be able to take them down even if they gravely injured him.

That was a deeply attractive prospect.

('Should I move beyond just the primary parameters and specs, or just stick with the basics for now?')

He had already come up with many ideas and was on a roll, who knew, maybe he would find something interesting in that regard.

('Ugh, let's not overcomplicate it for now,') Rui shook his head.

He already had more than enough on his plate. It was a single project, yet it had already given him a lot of work to do right off the bat. He would rather have secluded himself dedicating himself to solving those problems, but he couldn't even do that due to the incoming war.

('Once I finish the basics, I can focus on improving it by focusing on details, but for now it's unnecessary,') He sighed.

He closed his mind as he summed up his thoughts. He needed to explore the probability of Hungry Pain serving one of the mechanisms by which he manipulated his Martial body as he pleased.

He also needed to look into esoteric material science and symbiotes that could potentially help him achieve what ordinary techniques could not do.

As long as he explored all the avenues and put all the pieces together bit by bit, he was sure that he could put together a solution that fulfilled his needs. For now, however, he was going to have to work out all the minor chinks out of the way step by step.

Over the next few days, he began a preliminary search into both esoteric material sciences and symbiotes, just to get a good gauge of how easy or difficult a problem was.

The difficulty of finding the solution depended on how much progress he could make at the beginning of the project. He was hoping that he would somehow get a little lucky and end up with a solution on the very first day of searching, but alas, nothing came up.

What he was grateful for was the knowledge base of the Floating Sect, it was clear that the Martial Sect had more than just knowledge about Martial Art techniques. He was glad that they contained a decent amount of the knowledge that he was looking for.

After all, given how isolated the Floating Sect was from the rest of human civilization, they needed to be able to handle their own problems by themselves and needed to be able to raise loyal skilled workers of different professions, many of which had extensive knowledge bases that needed to be mastered before they were qualified.

It was not practical to pick up and drop these people from the island and back to the land, and then back to the island. That was far from realistic to do.

That was why the Floating Sect had the ability to train its own professionals, and that included having access to the kind of knowledge that he needed to be able to fulfill Project Metabody.

In just the span of a few days, he immediately judged that whatever he was looking for was something that wasn't common or something he could just run into. He had a scholar's degree in the general sciences, which meant that he already had a lot of knowledge on a lot of esoteric substances, and he was able to evaluate whether the various candidates that he had come across were able to solve his problem or not.

He also gained a good understanding of how esoteric substances were categorized, and that allowed him to make more pertinent choices when engaging in research. He was able to avoid delving into vast oceans of information that simply wasn't relevant to what he was looking for. Rather than just mindlessly reading everything he came across, he was able to look for what he wanted in the first place.

Over those few days, he did not even physically train at all as he surrounded himself with books. He didn't even feel the urge to use the chamber all that much despite its many features and avenues for training.

The time for that would come, but for now, it was just a process of exploration until he stumbled into the necessary things needed to build whatever it was that he wanted to build.

Chapter 1097: Tense

While Rui merrily grew engrossed in his new project, the Floating Sect began growing more and more tense in the span of the following days. Surveillance was tightened, and patrols were carried out by squads of guardians for extra safety.

The Floating Sect had inducted the Martial Squires initiates that had arrived on the island prior to the declaration of war into the sect. After all, there wasn't much else that could be done at the moment. At the moment, the Floating Sect was going to need Martial Artists more than it ever did for the war, furthermore, the Martial Artists that had arrived on the island could not leave either.

Thus the Floating Sect inducted them into the sect and allowed them to acquire the chambers of guardians as long as they beat them in a challenge.

They did, however, prohibit killing and eliminated the death victory condition from the conditions to win.

They could not afford members of the Floating Sect to kill each other at every opportunity that they got, that was not conducive to the Floating Sect's current circumstances. Instead, they incentivized the initiates to fight for the Floating Sect even if they didn't have a chamber with promises of one once the threat was overcome.

The Floating Sect engaged in a lot of wartime preparations, important resources were relocated and secured, and infrastructure was quickly reinforced to whatever degree was possible. The humans of the Floating Sect were the most at risk. They were the most vulnerable group, and extra measures had been put into place to ensure that they were likely to survive the incoming conflict.

Simple and effective evacuation plans were put into place. Alarms would be rung well in advance of the arrival of the Kaddar Squire army, and there were underground complexes within the island that served as shelters for the humans during this time.

Many of the workers who were in suits were actually Martial Apprentices who were able to handle the environment better, they would be most equipped to handle things if an emergency occurred and the guardians were busy. They could speed up the evacuation of the humans in the event of an attack.

The Floating Sect released more guidelines that required Martial Squires of all ranges to be on standby, there were also groups of Martial Squires whose entire job was simply to maintain a hawk's eye on the Kaddar Region and report the instance anything resembling an invasion spotted.

The tension on the island built up day by day.

It wasn't long before the first clash began.

"Nearly a hundred Martial Squires spotted sky-walking at a high speed towards!"

"Alert the Seniors!"

Alarms rang on the Floating Sect when the patrolling Martial Squires just outside the island spotted an army of Martial Squires surging up!

The Martial Squires on standby were immediately deployed while the human personnel of the island quickly evacuated to the shelters underground.

Rui and Kane prepared themselves for the clash, as they were abruptly deployed. It wasn't the case that all Martial Squires were immediately deployed. Nor was only one class of Martial Squires deployed. Martial Artists across all classes were deployed.

There was a bit of excitement amongst the Martial Squires.

Rui and Kane were not exempt either. A war was not a light matter, nor was it as orderly as a challenge or a duel. Anything could happen in a war, even the slightest mistake or instance of carelessness could cause one to lose their life in an instant. That was why Rui knew that he needed to be careful and on his toes. Growing arrogant or overconfident about his Martial Art and his Martial Path would simply lead to death.

What he truly regretted was that Project Metabody had just begun, meaning it was nowhere near completion. A war would have also been a perfect place to test his new system. A large number of Martial Squires would have been unwitting test subjects for testing the veracity of the new system of the VOID algorithm.

Still, a part of him hoped that the war would last long enough for him to gain some degree of success on Project Metabody to get in some initial data on how effective the system was in a war.

Just as he was pondering such thoughts something caught his attention.

Suddenly, the air changed.

A heavy presence swept over them all. For a moment, Rui thought it was a Martial Senior.

('No...') Rui frowned.

Yet it wasn't in the Squire Realm either.

The crowd parted, pulling Rui and Kane along with it as a single man walked through.

"It's him..."

"I cannot believe we get to fight side-by-side with the number one!"

"I heard he forced Senior Xanarn to go all out."

"Heh, those Kaddar Martial Squires are so screwed."

Rui's eyes widened as his eyes fell on the man walking through the parting crowd. He saw something for the first time in his entire life.

The man's black hair was lightly groomed, and his black eyes seemed to possess a depth that reminded Rui of what he saw when he looked into the mirror.

He put immense pressure on all those around him, indifferent to their unease. Every step he took seemed to echo against the world itself.

('He's stronger than me,') Rui instantly recognized that. There was no question about it. Even if Rui had the opportunity to build a solid predictive model on the man, he would lose. It had been a while since Rui had felt so outclassed. Just from the pressure alone, Rui could tell that this man was a greater hurdle than the Root and even Senior Xanarn when she wasn't using her Martial Heart!

Frankly, it was astounding. The only ones he had ever seen surpass the conventional limits of a Realm thus far to such a degree was... himself back when he was at the peak of the Martial Apprentice. He created new standards of Martial Art throughout the Kandrian Empire as a Martial Apprentice.

It appeared that Tokugawa Ieyasu was cut from the same cloth as him.

Rui did find it weird that the man's hair was black. That was a strange coincidence, but one that surely did not hold much significance. It was just hair and eye color, after all.

Regardless, Rui took his time sizing him up.

He could see why he was the number one guardian of the Floating Sect.

('Honestly, forget the Floating Sect, he might be the strongest Martial Squire... period,') Rui's eyes lit up in interest and admiration.

There were no Martial Squires that he had ever met that he would consider worthy of being considered the strongest. Until he met Ieyasu.

('I'm glad I get to see him fight,') Rui smirked just a little. ('I wonder what his Martial Path is.')

Rui immediately recalled Kane's account of the man's Martial Art, he wielded sound just like Senior Xanarn did, or even better apparently.

Yet he wasn't foolish enough to believe that this was a mere coincidence.

Either the man was a long-time apprentice of Senior Xanarn, or...

Rui's eyes narrowed. The alternative was so bizarre that he found it embarrassing to even parse the thought.

('We'll just have to see,')

The crowd did not stall for more than several seconds in real-time. After all, an army was approaching Ajanta Island, even if they couldn't cross the distance in an instant when sky-walking, they were still coming soon.

The Martial Squires soon enough aligned themselves at the edge of the island before receiving instructions to be dispatched.

More than a hundred Martial Squires plummeted into the air, diving down headfirst, as they accelerated downwards sky-walking to gather as much momentum as possible.

THWOOM THWOOM THWOOM!

Both sides began volleying Martial Squire attacks at the other side, hoping to take as many down. Rui focused, narrowing his eyes as he put his ODA System to use, he began striking Martial Squires down far earlier than anyone else did!

POW!

He even managed to nail one Martial Squire in the head!, sending him tumbling back down towards the Kaddar Region.

His heartbeat grew heavier as both sides drew closer to each other.

The atmosphere grew taut with the maelstrom of pressure that wrung the air between them!

Rui shifted as he avoided attack after attack, launching his own as both sides reached within the range of long-range attacks.

Waves of attack fell on either side as the long-range Marital Squires began throwing everything that they had.

Both sides began spreading out and taking space as the two sides got closer, something that both sides had planned ahead of time.

No Martial Artist wanted to be caught by strays all because they were too cramped. That was the reason that all of them universally were more than willing and their opponents to gain enough space before they engaged in close-quarter combat.

The defensive Martial Artists of both sides were placed closer to the front lines, as opposed to the rear.

This was effectively a Martial Artist version of charging in with shields up in order to withstand the ensuing collision.

And collide they did.

The sheer power generated by all the various ensuing clashes was so great that it changed the weather of the particular portion of the Kaddar Region that they were fighting over!

The very skies shook as many powerful high-grade Martial Squires clashed against each other, Countless fists and strikes were exchanged one after the other, as they fought with everything they had.

BOOM!!!

Rui evaded a strike from his opponent as he rushed forward with a Flowing Canon with all of the power that he had gathered from all of his descent!

CRACK!

The sheer power of the strike was so great that it broke the man's cleanly, causing significant damage. The Martial Squire plummeted back to the land as he lost consciousness.

Just one strike was all it took. The man lost consciousness as he began plummeting back to the land.

Martial Artists had already begun to fall like flies.

That was the intensity with which the war was being waged.

He tutted as he dialed his Primordial Instinct to the very maximum. It was the best sensory technique in combat circumstances. The chaos around him was staggering, it wasn't easy processing everything perfectly.

He heaved a sigh of relief as he verified that Kane was okay. Yet, he didn't have any more than a moment before he was bombarded with more attacks from an enemy Martial Squire.

SPLAT!

Rui evaded a serious strike from a piercing Martial Artist, glancing at her with a way expression.

She had a bit of her blood on her fingers.

('She's conditioned the fingers of her body to be especially sharp.') Rui realized as he got a good look at them.

Yet she didn't give him too much time to gain his bearings. She lashed forward, hoping to take Rui out.

She formed her hand into a sharp palm, before rushing at him and swinging at him in incredible fashion. Her attacks were unquestionably difficult to avoid, and making even a single mistake would lead to Rui getting hurt a lot.

Yet, that did not happen, much to her surprise. She frowned as he dodged all of her techniques with remarkable ease.

Rui wasn't even using a predictive model, he was merely dodging her with the merit of his own judgments bit by bit.

Yet he swiftly began analyzing her Martial Art bit by bit. He had no mercy going into this, he was always of the opinion that Martial Artists ought to be able to bear the consequences of consenting to participate in a raging war.

As the minutes flew by, Rui began changing bit by bit. His motions became smoother, his reactions also flew smoother, and his timing became increasingly perfect as he began adapting to her swiftly just like he had done so many times in the past to many of his opponents. It was almost a thoughtless process at this point, he could do it without the VOID algorithm. In fact, his mind was almost more preoccupied by his own shortcomings than that of his opponent.

Chapter 1099: Imitative

He couldn't help but wonder how much quicker this would be if he had the right type of Martial body to counter his opponent. After all, his opponent relied on piercing attacks. How much quicker would he take her down?

It was hard to know for sure, especially when she wasn't strong enough to push his predictive model to the limit.

CRACK!

"Argh!" She grimaced as Rui clinched her fingers with a well-timed and placed fingerhold, breaking her fingers thoroughly.

Having her primary weapon be broken so easily drew her attention, distracting her for a moment and drawing attention to the wound.

Yet it wasn't the time for that.

POW!

A swift kick to the jaw followed, causing her to undergo dizziness.

POW!

A swift but strong blow to the diaphragm followed it up, unable to help deal with the blunt force trauma that the attack gave her, she too lost consciousness as she ceased her sky-walking before plummeting from the sky.

Two down.

Rui wasn't sure how many he ought to take down, but he just decided to do his best. One of the annoying weaknesses of the Floating Sect was that he couldn't make predictions on all of them. Due to their current state and the fact that he was in the middle of the war, there was simply too much happening.

Yet despite all that chaos, there was one that stood above all of them.

One that drew attention to himself for the sheer spectacle that he was providing to everyone watching.

A hoard of Martial Artists, struggling to fight a single man.

Tokugawa Ieyasu. Rui watched as the man annihilated hoards of Martial Squires with a simple gesture of his hand. That was why Rui knew that there were things about him that set him out to be far stronger than he was.

The first was the most obvious enough.

('He's not using sound techniques,') Rui narrowed his eyes as he watched the man use all kinds of techniques left and right!

Furthermore, they weren't ordinary techniques either. They were all extraordinarily powerful, and not something that could be used by just anybody.

('Wait, so sound is not his Martial Path?') Rui frowned. There was only one other possibility that could justify what he was seeing.

The man used new Martial Art techniques extremely frequently. Yet Rui immediately noticed a pattern from the get-go.

The man used the same Martial Art as his opponent!

Rui's eyes widened as one clear explanation popped into his mind. One that he had jokingly considered, but now seemed to be quite real.

('Is his Martial Path...?') Rui mused with incredulity. ('Copying?!')

He didn't even know that such a thing was possible at all. After all, it wasn't every day that he ran into such a powerful Martial Art and Marital Path.

Of course, when he considered his own Martial Art, it was more frequent, of course.

Still, the very concept was something that Rui found quite strange, even if impressive.

('Martial Paths are a representative of one's uniqueness and individuality,') Rui mused. ('How is he able to copy other people's Marital Art and Paths?!')

That sounded like a bad joke, but it turned out to be real.

Yet, unfortunately, he did not have the pleasure of being able to watch Tokugawa fight entirely and fully.

He was in the middle of a way, he could not let his mind wander the way it normally did.

Yet, it was hard to miss him. Tokugawa Ieyasu's impact on the battlefield could be felt across the entire battlefield. He was so strong, that he was the sole reason that the Kaddar Task Force felt the need to send in more Martial Squires to reinforce their compatriots!

Just one man!

Rui gritted his teeth as he got the news.

The Floating Sect did not take this lying down. They sent their own guardians to reinforce the defending army of the Floating Sect.

Soon enough, the battle quickly began to pick up more steam, allowing it to become even larger and more chaotic than ever before.

The sheer amount of area that all the Martial Squires actually occupied with their battles was genuinely astounding, not even the smaller nations were enough to accommodate all these powerful Martial Artists in their air space.

The skies of the Kaddar Region quickly began lightning up now that the day grew darker and darker and dusk was arriving.

The many Martial Squires were exhausted and tired for the day. Many of them had been fighting from the very first wave, like Rui and Kane, and they were dead tired!

That was why both sides soon decided to withdraw their Martial Squires who were truly exhausted.

It was dangerous to have them continue fighting beyond this point. They already had long gone past the point of safety. Forcing them to fight beyond this measure would likely cause all of them to cause each other or themselves.

It was better for both sides to freshen up and catch a break so that they could return rejuvenated and fight a more meaningful conflict.

To a certain, it was probably more profitable to just the Martial Seniors fight and the winner gets the island, yet neither side wanted to take the perceived risk of losing their Martial Seniors, thus on the first day of war, not a single Martial Seniors rose from the Kaddar Region.

Rui was actually somewhat nervous about the matter too, that was why he couldn't keep too safe. He recalled when the matriarch of the K'ulnen Tribe just appeared out of seemingly nowhere, crossing a huge distance in a matter of seconds!

If not for Senior Ceeran saving him from her wrath that day, he would have died on the spot.

('Well, even though there were no Martial Seniors, we did the closest thing to them,') He quietly glanced at the number-one-ranked guardian of the Floating Sect, recalling his performance during the first attack with interest.

('Imitative Evolution, eh? Most interesting,')

Chapter 1100: Improvement

This was the first time he had come across a Martial Path that seemed to have as much depth as his own, it was astonishing.

Every Martial Squire he fought, he fought on their own turf. It wasn't too long after the initial clash that he would be replicating their stance, their form, their techniques, and eventually their entire Martial Art!

It was unfortunate that Rui could not focus on the man, after all, he had a war to participate in himself. He could only catch glances at the man, and that was why he only had a few details about how the man fought. However, based on the few glances here and there, Rui saw his fighting style continued to become closer and closer to that of his opponent. And sure enough, he went on to surpass him.

Rui didn't quite understand how the mechanics worked due to now being able to observe him in detail.

Regardless, whatever he was doing, worked.

Martial Squires fell left and right, so much so that he singlehandedly was causing the attacking army to incur unsustainable losses.

Rui had to admire his stamina as well, for being able to maintain such a potent Martial Art for that long. One thing that Rui was quite curious about was the mechanics of how he not only copied a Martial Art but also somehow made it stronger.

However, in order to be able to mimic any Martial Art, there were several conditions that he needed to be able to fulfill.

('For one, he needs to have the building blocks to be able to recreate Martial Art of any kind,')

This made sense. A Martial Art was made up of techniques, training, and principles; systems of movements, and processes that embody the Martial Path of the Martial Artist. He could not replicate the Martial Path without them.

It was like copying a Lego building by building an identical building of the same fundamental building blocks. Tokugawa even went as far as to improve the building by making it bigger while still maintaining the same core philosophy, style, and principles of the building.

('Which means he must have mastered an enormous number of techniques in all fields!') Rui realized.

Of course, he realized that it was probably impossible for the man to mimic all fields. Martial Paths related to poison, weapons, and symbiotes would be extremely difficult to accomplish.

Still, being able to copy most other Martial Art, was quite incredible.

('Though just having mastered all these techniques is not enough,') Rui knew that.

Just because a Martial Squire spent their entire life mastering all these techniques did not mean that Martial Squire would be able to suddenly copy techniques.

The man possessed the ability to peer into the depth of a Martial Art to an extreme degree.

That was what surprised Rui. This was the first time ever that he had come across someone who possessed as much insight into one's Martial Art as Rui did.

It was actually hard to believe for him. Rui gained the ability to acquire such insight into the depth of Martial Art after a lifetime of research, and then a second life undergoing neurological growth a second time.

Furthermore, it took him mastering the Mind Palace technique to be able to store and organize all the data for swift processing, something that he wasn't able to do without it.

('I don't think he creates predictive models, but he definitely looks at the patterns of his opponent and mimics them,')

It made sense, they both had access to the same information but used that information very differently. Rui adapted to patterns, and from what he could see, Ieyasu improved them, getting rid of flaws, weaknesses, and inefficiencies.

In a way, he showed Martial Artists their future self.

Rui could copy patterns to a small extent like he did when training Max and Mana. This was why he was confident that Ieyasu did much more than that. He wondered how Ieyasu went about gathering information on his opponents, and whether it was the exact same way that Rui did.

Rui learned more about the man the more he came up in conversations about his contributions to defending the Floating Sect.

The man had been in the Floating Sect for nearly ten years. That was longer than Rui had been a Martial Artist. Yet, against all expectations, he did not rise up in the Floating Sect slowly and step by step.

It was said that he became the lowest guardian of the Floating Sect, and remained there for quite some time, enduring challenge after challenge, and winning them all. He didn't challenge another guardian for a higher-ranked chamber for years, until one fine day, he challenged the former number one guardian.

He won, and it wasn't even close.

He shocked the entire Sect with his feat. So much so that for the next year he got bombarded with challenges from all guardians, fighting one nearly every day, sometimes multiple times a day until he defeated all one thousand guardians of the Floating Sect at the time.

That was when even the greatest of skeptics had to concede that he was the strongest. It was undeniable, and yet shocking.

No one had ever seen such a growth trajectory, though it had also appeared that he was cultivating his strength, and only challenged the guardian ranked number one when he felt that he had obtained the fruits from his training that he wanted.

That was quite fascinating to Rui, and to a certain degree what Rui intended to do.

He did not intend to challenge a guardian before he made at least some progress on Project Metabody, he didn't feel the greatest need to chase after higher-ranked chambers. He would be able to make more progress in the long run if he grew stronger, before aiming for a spot that was much higher than he would have been able to obtain on his own, that was for sure.