

Martial Unity 1101

Chapter 1101: Underestimated

Many spectators to the war between the Kaddar Treaty Organization and the Floating Sect could not help but feel surprised at the outcome of the battle.

Of course, this was merely the outcome of a battle containing around ten percent of all the forces at play, yet it showed that the guardians of the Floating Sect were not weak.

The Kaddar Treaty Organization was aware of the fact that the Floating Sect's guardians were elites among high-grade Martial Squires. After all, the process of becoming a guardian, and then maintaining it was grueling. It filtered out the cream of the crop and ensured that even weaker high-grade Martial Squires simply never had the ability to become guardians of the Floating Sect due to simply lacking the necessary resources.

Yet even then, the performance of the Floating Sect was jarringly impressive. The guardians were powerful enough to win against their Kaddar counterparts.

Especially the one that killed dozens of Martial Squires.

It was absurd to the Kaddar nations that one Martial Squire killed so many others. In fact, the Kaddar nations had initially thought that he was actually a Martial Senior who had been deployed to wipe out their Martial Squires.

It had taken them a while to realize that this wasn't the case.

The Kaddar nations immediately realized that they had underestimated the Floating Sect. It didn't help that the Floating Sect's contact with the outside world was almost non-existent. Gaining intelligence on the level of power of the Floating Sect on average was not easy. The Kaddar nations had naively thought that simply hiring decently powerful Martial Squires would be enough to seal the deal, but apparently, this was clearly not the case.

Yet, it wasn't the end of the world.

While the Floating Sect had quality, the Kaddar Region had quantity. That was the reason that the Floating Sect was in a bit of a punch. Every guardian that they had lost, and would lose from here on out was going to stick.

The flow of Martial Squires entering the Floating Sect had reduced, although it appeared that a particularly slippery Martial Squire appeared from time to time, entering the Floating Sect, and immediately becoming a guardian.

That was the only incentive to join the Floating Sect at the moment, there were vacancies that could definitely be filled with new blood.

However, it was not enough compared to the influx of Martial Squires that the Kaddar Region could bring in at the moment.

This was what the Floating Sect had evidently prepared for when they focused their policies on attracting the strongest of Martial Squires, and making sure that the strongest of Marital Squires remained within was clearly paying off.

The Kaddar nations needed to persevere and truly grind away at the Floating Sect's problems.

And grind away it did.

The Kaddar nations could not gather, organize, and replace Martial Squires too frequently, but they were able to do it enough to ensure that they could attack the Floating Sect regularly. The Martial Squires of the Floating Sect held on strong, even on days when Rui wasn't on the battlefield.

Rui grew to cherish those periods. He could invest in himself significantly, and grow stronger naturally as a result. The best part was that he had a very clear-cut direction forward. After all, he had spent quite some time ironing out his plan centered around his ambitions and goals. Now he just needed to refine them a bit and begin the exploration and training.

In order to upgrade the VOID algorithm, he had chosen to add a new system based on changing the Martial Body in order to adapt a spec configuration to another kind of Martial Art.

He had immediately begun with one of the more promising and accessible methods that he had proposed in mind.

The Hungry Pain technique, was not as though there was anything new to the technique itself, it was just that Rui realized that the energy consumed by the Hungry Pain technique could possibly be used for specific physical parameters as opposed to others.

Doing this would allow him to manipulate his spec configuration to a certain degree, although not entirely.

There were other avenues that he already had his eyes on, like the esoteric material science solution, or the symbiote solution. However, those were more long-term projects that could not be resolved in any short amount of time. Not even he could complete that research in any short period of time.

Another thing that he had come to realize in recent times was the fact that breathing techniques were also a possible solution to realizing the new system that he wanted to realize.

In fact, he recalled the breathing techniques that Ian Nepomniatchi used. The man's breathing techniques allowed him to manipulate his physical parameters. The only problem was that the breathing techniques used to do that did not manipulate his Martial body in any way. They only supplied it with more energy and strengthened it in some ways, they did not grant the spec configurations of desired Martial bodies needed to counter his opponent.

It meant that those on their own could not possibly be the solution to the challenge at hand.

However, he did think that there was a good chance that they would be part of the solution as a whole.

Regardless, he had multiple avenues of research. That was why he wasn't too disheartened by the difficulty of the ambitious goal that he had undertaken. Furthermore, he was also confident because of his track record. Projects that he undertook generally succeeded, and those many successes allowed him to reach a level where he undertook projects with great confidence and dedication.

Furthermore, this was no ordinary project, and he had been more excited about upgrading the VOID algorithm than he had been about any other technique project that he had ever tried to engage in before.

With that in mind, he headed to the Martial library of the Floating Sect, taking his first step in realizing Project Metabody.

Chapter 1102: Imperfect

The Floating Sect had a dedicated library for Martial Art and Martial Artist, and he wasn't surprised to see that the quality of the institution was high.

After all, the Floating Sect existed for Martial Artists. That meant that all things related to Martial Art were done with care. That included creating databases of Squire-level techniques, among other things.

Of course, it still wasn't impressive by the standards of the Kandrian Martial Union. However, it was respectable. The number of techniques was broad enough, and the organization system was not as good as the highly sophisticated as that of the Martial Union, but it worked for what he had in mind.

Although he immediately wanted to dive into the symbiotic techniques, he restrained himself. Symbiotic techniques were one of the few classes of techniques where the risks and dangers were high.

He was not calling the Floating Sect incompetent, but if he was going to trust an organization's information and skill with medical procedures and symbiotes with his life and potentially even his Martial Path, it needed to be an organization of the caliber of the Martial Union. He simply did not trust anybody else to not mess up, either by action or through information.

The esoteric material science solution did not have that drawback, so he put it on the list of the things that he ought to consider.

However, it was not at the top of the list. Esoteric material science was also an option that required a lot of access to high-level knowledge, this meant that it wasn't the best environment for him to study something that was unrelated to Martial Art at its essence.

Although he was applying them to a Martial Art context, this wasn't a particularly common or popular field of material science applications as far as he knew.

The Martial Union had not batted an eye when he purchased its medical services to insert esoteric substances into his body when he was working on Riemannian Echo.

Furthermore, he had come across paradigms from other Martial Artists that focused on applying esoteric substances to the body when he was studying and researching at Crexet Town. Thus it wasn't something he had pioneered, that was for sure.

But it also wasn't a super popular field, which meant that there was a chance that he himself would need to do a lot of the original legwork and research for Project Metabody. If not, there was no chance that there would be new things that could possibly be done about the matter.

It was better to begin with the easiest avenues for solutions which, in this case, was the Hungry Pain technique.

('I need a technique that can allow me to manipulate the energy and nutrients that my body gains from autophagy, and channel it to different physical parameters as per my wish.')

He already knew that even if he chose the easiest avenue for research, it was still quite challenging at a bare minimum.

What he sought was a level of bodily control that he had never achieved before, nor had he ever seen before.

Autophagy was the process of the body eating up dead organic matter, and recycling the energy and nutrients gained from that to sustain the body in times of great hunger. It was an extremely good resource because it was estimated that approximately one million cells died in the human body every second, nearly one point two kilograms of cells died every day!

Yet, most of these cells were simply discarded without their resources being used for anything. It was an extremely inefficient process, but alas, the body would not budge under any circumstances.

Unless, of course, the body was starving and autophagy was activated. It was why Rui was able to heal light wounds in a short period of time, something that was certainly unusual for someone of his kind of Martial body to have a developed healing factor.

It was also why his Martial body came out of the womb starting out at grade-two from the very get-go. That was because he was able to tap into a resource that existed within the body that was routinely discarded by the human body.

If he could gain the power to control how his body applied that autophagy, then he would be able to dictate where that power was spent, allowing him to control his spec configuration to a certain degree.

One shortcoming was the fact that while this was a lot more optimistic, it was also a lot less perfect.

The mass of the body did not change when autophagy was applied, which meant that he could not really alter his specs to become that of a speed-oriented Martial body the way Godspeed did. He could not amplify strength either, since simply supplying more energy straightforwardly would not change anything by itself. He would also need to increase the muscle's energy consumption of the increased energy to output greater results.

In the same vein, it could not amplify the toughness of the body.

However, it could massively improve stamina if he wanted. This meant that he could potentially match stamina and endurance-oriented Martial Artists if he succeeded. He could last an incredibly long time to last without sustenance.

That wasn't the only thing he could do if he succeeded in gaining full control of the Hungry Pain technique.

If he was severely injured, he could assimilate and redirect the millions of cells that died every second to the wound, rapidly healing it up in real time as his evolved healing factor massively benefitted from the influx of building blocks and energy for new cells to quickly cover up the wound.

He could obtain a healing factor that was on par with the Wolverine!

It was true that it could not do anything about the primary fields of combat such as strength, speed, and durability. But that was fine, he had already gone into this matter knowing that it was unlikely that he would get what he was looking for from a single solution.

Chapter 1103: Breathing

The question was how he ought to go about gaining control over the energy and nutrients that his body obtained from the Hungry Pain technique. This was where the hard part began.

('The issue is that cells deal occurs uniformly across the body barring the brain,') He sighed. ('This makes it hard for me to gather all of it and channel it the way I want to.')

Had, for some reason, all the dead cells that the Hungry Pain technique recycled all been concentrated in one location conveniently, then there would have been no problem for Rui to come up with some way to control it as he pleased because it was so conveniently rounded up for him.

It would have just been a matter of engaging in some conditioning, both mental and physical.

But he wasn't sure how he could redirect all of the yield of Hungry Pain to whatever physical parameter he wanted.

('Well, unfortunately, I can't really improve my offensive or defensive output with this or my maneuvering,') He sighed. ('So it's really a question of how do I control whether my Hungry Pain technique improves my stamina, or my healing factor at the moment.')

Just simply supplying more energy and nutrients to muscle cells would not make those muscles generate greater force. That was not how muscle tissue functioned. They weren't steam engines that would generate more power the more coal was dumped into the furnace. They had upper limits, and could only burn so much energy to output some corresponding result.

('This is, of course, barring the Martial Heart, which can and does increase output.')

The energy and nutrients that his Hungry Pain technique provided was stamina at its core, it allowed him to fight far longer due to the recycling of energy. Thus he wasn't too concerned about using it to improve stamina, that was what it did by default.

Improving his healing factor, on the other hand, was something he needed to figure out how to handle. When the human body was wounded, the cells at the edge of the wound would immediately begin the division process, closing the wound with new cells over time. This required the body to slowly supply cells with the necessary compounds and nutrients to divide and form new cells.

Rui narrowed his eyes. ('So if I find a way to dump all the energy and nutrients of Hungry Pain into my blood when I'm severely injured, then the cells healing the wound will be able to receive the required energy and nutrients to make new cells much sooner, allowing the production of a new cell to occur much sooner, and the process of the new one also growing quicker.')

That was an optimistic condition for him to set for himself. If he suffered a wound, then all he needed to was find a way to simply use the energy and nutrients of the Hungry Pain technique to enter the bloodstream after the wound was inflicted.

He didn't need to somehow control where it went after it entered the stream. Blood reached all places in the human body, and dead cells were present everywhere in the human body, thus if he could get them to enter the blood when a wound was inflicted, the cells around the wound would naturally begin taking in the huge amount of energy and nutrients that would enter the bloodstream, thus healing faster.

All he needed to do was come up with a conceptual framework of how the mechanism would work.

('Hm, I need some sort of principle that will push the energy and nutrients of the assimilated dead cells into the bloodstream,') Rui narrowed his eyes.

It was not easy, after all, the only interactions between the blood and cells came in the form of the diffusion of gases. Every time one inhaled, one was essentially dissolving the gases breathed from the outside into the blood, while expelling the gases from the blood out, which was exhaled. The blood would then travel with the oxygen and other gases dissolved into it, before exchanging gases with cells.

Rui's eyes lit up as an idea popped into his head. ('Wait a minute, I can use air to wash out all the energy and nutrients stored in cells and tissue from the Hungry Pain technique.')

It sounded silly, but it might work. Cells received oxygen from blood and returned carbon dioxide. If the amount of carbon dioxide that exited it was great enough it could also allow for the removal of excess energy and nutrients in a cell from Hungry Pain.

It was sort of similar to how water cleaned out a bucket when it was thrown out, in a sense. However, it only worked if the density of gas was enough to be able to hook along excess and non-essential nutrients with it like a fishing net.

('In order to get such a dense fishing net that will extract all the energy and nutrients, I need to inhale dense breaths.') Rui realized.

However, he didn't fail to recall that he was on an island where the atmosphere was naturally extremely dense.

('However, that's not enough, it needs to be even more, and I also need to replicate it when I'm off the island,') Rui realized.

He did not want a technique that was off the island, and considering that the island didn't do the trick, he needed to find a way to make sure that he could inhale and exhale that much air at once.

Thankfully, this was a much more manageable area. Breathing techniques were one of the most foundational bread-and-butter techniques of nearly every Martial Artist in the world. There was an enormous amount of research that had gone into the field, and he was sure that he would be able to find some technique the principles of which he could apply to his Hungry Pain technique to create a new technique that allowed him to enhance his healing factor.

Rui grinned as he found the path forward to eventually realizing Project Metabody.

However, that did not mean that there were no issues with the technique. It was not perfect. Rui was already using the Hungry Pain technique on a permanently regular basis. After all, he had used the Hungry Pain technique to obtain a stronger Martial body that was grade two right off the bat.

Because he was measured to have extremely high stamina before he became a Martial Squire, his evolution process evolved his other physical parameters to a greater degree than at the cost of stamina.

Because he had chosen an all-rounder Martial body that was perfectly equally balanced between all parameters, the evolution process to reach that balance needed to evolve his stamina less than his other parameters because his stamina was already high, and disproportionately higher than the rest of his body. Thus by evolving his stamina, he could achieve the perfectly balanced Martial body that he had at the moment.

If not for Hungry Pain, he would actually be weak in stamina, so that meant that if he wanted to use Hungry Pain for something aside from stamina, it would cause his stamina to plummet.

Thus every time he wanted to accelerate his healing, he was greatly hampering his stamina.

That was something that he needed to keep in mind. He wouldn't be able to last too long if he healed too much since his normal stamina simply was not up to par whatsoever without the Hungry Pain technique.

He immediately headed to the breathing technique section of the Floating Sect's Martial library as he began searching for what he wanted.

It was at times like these where he could truly appreciate the Martial Union for its scrupulous order and organization.

The Floating Sect's sections were more chaotic. Sections covered random and arbitrary fields, or multiple fields rounded into each other.

Yet, in this case, it wasn't too hard to find the breathing technique section.

It was one of the largest section techniques of the entire library.

That was what surprised him, although breathing techniques were extremely important and foundational. It was only one specific field as opposed to broader fields that were based on the fundamental aspects of combat like offense and defense.

In fact, another field that was nearly as large was the section containing sound techniques. That was strange too, but then Rui recalled that Senior Xanarn was a sound-oriented Martial Artist.

('One of the Martial Seniors must be a breathing-oriented Martial Artist,')

That would explain why there were so many breathing-oriented Martial Art techniques compared to Martial Art techniques of other fields.

Regardless, he wasn't complaining. More options meant that there was a higher likelihood that he would be able to find what he was looking for.

Even if he needed to go through every single, he was more than willing to do so.

One good thing about the Floating Sect was that it allowed him to go through all of the techniques free of cost. That was quite the incentive for Martial Artists to remain on the island and train.

After all, training chambers were all well and good. But it was Martial Art techniques that really made them stay. After all these techniques served to help guardians grow stronger in the Floating precisely for times like these.

Rui immediately began searching thoroughly going through multiple techniques.

Many of them were supplementary in nature, after all, breathing techniques were quite conducive to supplementing life.

It didn't take too long to realize that he was not going to find a single solution that was going to be able to fulfill what he wanted. The very concept of what he was looking for was unknown to the existing paradigms.

That was why Rui was starting to suspect that he wasn't going to be able to find what he was looking for in one wrapped-up gift.

However, there were still ways he could naturally meet expectations. He knew what he was looking for. He wanted a powerful breathing technique that was powerful enough to inhale great a amount of oxygen.

There were several techniques that came close to finding ways for Rui to achieve this, and he had a particular interest in them.

[Whirlpool Breathing]

A breathing technique that focuses on increasing the flexibility of the diaphragm, allowing it to expand even further than it could normally do so. This resulted in deeper breaths that allowed for an even greater amount of oxygen to enter the blood.

[Elephant Breathing]

This breathing technique strengthened the diaphragm's natural strength and evolved the skeletal muscular system that way.

('Why not both?')

Rui realized that because the two of them worked by principles that did not intervene or overlap with each other, it would not be problematic for him to master both of them. As for whether that would be enough for him to inhale enough air to be able to get the energy and nutrients of Hungry Pain from the cells and into the bloodstream remained to be seen.

Unfortunately, it was not possible for him to know the end result before he actually mastered those techniques.

Still, he was definitely on the right path.

Even if these two weren't enough, he simply needed to master enough breathing and supplementary techniques that would allow him to inhale enough quantity of air very rapidly.

He immediately got to work as he procured copies of the two techniques from the library counter.

He immediately went through both of them one by one, examining the training methodologies and the necessary equipment to master the two techniques. One good thing about the Floating Sect was that the chamber contained all of the necessary training resources. He simply needed to return back to his chamber and he could immediately begin training.

('Hopefully, I'll get to test this technique in the war once I'm done with it,')

He was confident that he would get plenty of opportunity to test the limits of his new technique in the war against the Kaddar Region, it was not going away any time soon.

Chapter 1105: Unsure

Unlike a one-time battle, a war dragged on for quite some time. In this case, Rui did not expect any quick development in the war. It was simply too slow, long, and grueling. It was a contest of attrition versus the commitment of the Kaddar Region.

The war had entered into a stage of monotony to a certain extent. After all, the conditions were rather simple for the Kaddar nations and the Floating Sect. The Floating Sect simply wanted to survive and put up a stiff resistance.

The Kaddar nations were not content letting the island stick around, thus their assaults had been regular.

The Floating Sect grew accustomed to the alarms of war. After a while, it became increasingly normal for all guardians to get involved with the war due to their obligation to the Floating Sect, but aside from that, the guardians' day-to-day life had not changed too much.

In fact, the war completely escaped Rui's mind when he wasn't participating in it. He had stopped caring about it after the first battle.

He was too engrossed in training with the Whirlpool Breathing and Elephant Breathing techniques.

After all, the two techniques were the most relevant matter to his Martial Art, he trained diligently to get to the level that he wanted.

And he was making progress.

The training plan for the Whirlpool technique had Rui engage in all kinds of inhumane stressing and stretching training to loosen up his diaphragm. Lack of flexibility usually means the presence of fascia, a form of connective tissue that is meant to hold down the muscle system.

He felt the training allowed him to breathe deeper than he would normally be able to do so, making every effort to maximize utility.

The Elephant Breathing technique was a good old-fashioned and straightforward training technique. It tortured his diaphragm, he got stronger.

He did not do anything other than train rigorously and endlessly, and he was fine with that. Project Metabody was so ambitious and alluring that Rui did not mind a tedious and boring time outside of his technique in regard to that.

His mind was constantly filled with possibility in regard to that. He wanted to know how he was going to realize the rest of Project Metabody.

He also spent time looking into esoteric substances that, while not necessarily optimal, could help him point in the right direction, to begin with, and thus less time would be wasted in general.

He completely detached from reality at one point as he furiously spent nearly every second of his time thinking about going about how he could get closer to fulfilling Project Metabody.

It was addicting, almost. He couldn't help it, it was the first time that he had gotten this excited about a project since Project Water itself.

Much to Rui's surprise, the training was progressing far quicker than he had expected. The reason for that was that he knew that having undergone conditioning of his diaphragm and lungs before made it easier for him.

He had undergone pretty rigorous training on the Might Roar Flash Blast technique and had trained his diaphragm in quite a novel manner that one would suspect that he already had.

The Mighty Roar Flash Blast technique had a very real possibility of being the most dangerous Martial Art technique that he had ever been subject to. He was literally on the verge of death many times during that bit of training on Vilun Island, all so that he could gain the technique that served as the basis of Transverse Resonance.

That gave him a much lower bar for him to cross because he had already crossed a lot of it. One of the challenges however was how different the training methodologies were, and why a lot of the gains he made on Vilun Island were not one-to-one comparisons to the training technique of the movement.

After all, human bodies were far too diverse and nuanced for there to be only one aspect of a muscle to be treated, although there wasn't any overlap, there was still not enough of an overlap for him to rely on the training he did on Vilun Island to be enough, it definitely helped.

As time passed, his diaphragm grew stronger and stronger, and its ability to expand grew far greater than it ever used to be. He could that this not only would potentially help him realize his goal, but at the bare minimum, it would strengthen all his long-range techniques for good, his long-range offense would be even more lethal than it used to be.

He could also feel that this would definitely have improved a lot of his other breathing techniques such as Gale Force Breathing, Wind Breathing, and Final Breathing.

Thus even if this avenue of exploration did not succeed, Rui had to admit that he definitely would have made enough gains from his training such that it would have been worth it. On the other hand, the benefits that he got from the nourishing atmosphere of the Floating Sect also increased naturally, since he could inhale a greater amount of air, his body received a greater amount of it.

There were times when he simply did not leave his chamber except for when he had to be deployed, and the fights against the Martial Squires of the Kaddar Region allowed him to have a good gauge for how much stronger he had become.

Though unlike with other techniques, he did not know exactly where he ought to stop because he was mastering them often for the sake of others. Yet he wasn't sure if it was enough to do what he wanted. Thankfully, there were ways to test whether it was ready or not.

After merely two months of training, he had completed the technique, and now it was time to check the results. Had he gained the ability to flesh cells of their excess energy and nutrients so that they could be used for accelerated healing?

He intended to find out.

Chapter 1106: Outcome

He activated Whirlpool and Elephant Breathing. His lungs expanded farther than they ever had, swifter than they ever had. The abrupt and powerful expansion created a great pressure difference between his surroundings and the contents of his lungs, and a powerful wind draft entered into his lungs momentarily creating an extremely dense breath that diffused into his blood.

SPLAT

He cut himself with a swift and sharp swing, cutting open a deep gash on his body. Having not defended against it made it easier for him to succeed.

His eyes widened as the wound began closing up at a speed that was visible to the eye. Within seconds, the wound had been closed!

"Nice!" Rui grinned.

This was definitely a great first step forward in realizing Project Metabody. He didn't have any complaints about the end outcome of the project.

Given the speed at which he recovered, he was matching Martial Artists whose bodies were entirely specialized to heal. The fact that he could do it with just a few techniques was rather impressive.

However, that did not mean that there were no shortcomings or downsides. In addition to burning through stamina much quicker, he could not always use his healing technique very easily.

The reason for that was simple, it required a breathing technique to be used while he was breathing.

This meant that he could not use Wind Breathing, or Gale Force Breathing while he was healing himself, because he could not breathe two different ways at the same time. It simply was not possible.

In the same vein, he could not use Final Breathing for all that long because it simply could not be used simultaneously with Whirlpool Breathing, and Elephant Breathing.

That meant that every time he wanted to heal, he could not use his speed as much. He also could not use long-range techniques, or at the very least, it would be too difficult to use his sound-based techniques rapidly.

He had expected this. The point of Project Metabody was to be able to distribute the resources of the body across the body to be able to best adapt to his opponent. That necessarily meant that he could not do everything at once.

Still, it meant that he would need to be careful about what he used when. This was something that was actually quite important to adapting his Martial body to his opponent.

Just like techniques, he needed to apply the right body at the right time. The VOID algorithm had been created with a system to know what motion to use based on the predictions of the predictive model, however, it did not include how he should adapt his body.

After all, bodies could not change to adapt to their opponent back on Earth. What Rui needed to do was create a new system that allowed him to pick the perfect body to adapt to his opponent each time.

This was not going to be easy.

He had put this off momentarily since he didn't see the point in trying to create such a system when he hadn't even succeeded in altering his spec configuration. The system for changing his body just right to adapt to his opponent was something that needed to cater to the results of Project Metabody.

If Project Metabody was a perfect success, then he could be more ambitious with the resulting system for choosing what kind of body change to make to adapt to his opponent. If it was a partial success, then the resulting system also needed to reflect that.

('I can actually begin building it now that I have taken the first step towards realizing Project Metabody.') Rui mused.

For the time being, he could focus on the progress that he had made thus far. He had already developed a 'healing mode' for his body where the spec configuration of his body leaned towards healing at the expense of stamina.

Thus, it would help him if he set up a system where he inputted variables about his opponent's Martial body and the predictive model, and it would output what kind of body Rui ought to change to. Given that he had only figured out the healing body option, he could begin with that.

('Under what circumstances would a body that heals very well at the cost of other parameters be the most optimal kind of body to have?') Rui wondered.

It would, almost by definition, need to be circumstances where strength, speed, durability, and, stamina weren't all that important while healing was.

Rui immediately arrived at the fundamental condition for such a circumstance. ('When your opponent's lethality exceeds your ability to prevent yourself from enduring damage.')

Hyper-offensive Martial Artists inflicted damage in ways or forms that were extremely difficult to prevent. If he ran across a Martial Artist with an extremely potent wide-range piercing offense that made it extremely difficult to evade, or defend, then he would rather spend his energy healing from the damage than defend against it.

In such a circumstance, his opponent's range would not matter. Furthermore, if his opponent was completely focused on offense, then Rui probably did not need much offense to crack the man's defense, or much maneuvering or speed to keep up with the Martial Artist who was not specialized in those fields.

This was the core condition, but that was only the first step.

At the end of the day, what he was hoping for was a rigorous system that would allow him to arrive at the perfect body adaptation with just simple inputs. He did not want to have to be distracted by too many thought processes on stuff that he could potentially automate.

Rui continued to sharpen his timing with the breathing and the healing and making sure that he timed it just right relative to enduring an injury.

He found that it was actually much better to begin the breathing technique before he even endured the wound at all, doing that made sure that the healing seamlessly began the moment he endured the wound.

Chapter 1107: Incompatibility

This meant that the pattern recognition system of the VOID algorithm was also relevant to him timing of the healing technique. As long as he made sure that the energy and nutrients produced by autophagy were already in the bloodstream before the wound was inflicted.

While Rui was quite enlightened by his training and tests on his new technique, he was not content with such tame experiments.

('I want to test it out in a proper battle,')

That was the best way to test the effectiveness of any new technique. To actually apply it in combat, particularly against a strong foe. Other forms of testing were not necessarily bad, but real-life verification was most certainly the best way to go about things.

There was something else entirely about an opponent that actually struggled with everything they had to fight back that could not be replicated by testing in more controlled formats and environments.

However, in this case, it was a bit more tricky.

He needed the right opponent. If he just picked any opponent, he would not even use it against them because it was not the most optimal solution. He needed to find a guardian with a dominating lethal offense that was nearly difficult to avoid.

('Looks like I'm going to have to do some scouting.')

And so he did. However, it was not the way one would have expected him to. The Floating Sect did not publicize details surrounding the Martial Art of the various guardians. Thus Rui had only three ways to gain such information.

The first was through second-hand testimony from other guardians. He could ask around since many of them knew many of them for quite some time. The guardians at the bottom classes of the Floating Sect were generally in flux. Many came and many went.

The reason for this was that most initiate challengers challenged the weakest of guardians. However, once one went up the class, the less likely it was to be challenged.

Thus they were also less likely to die, as a result of failing.

Thankfully, duels between guardians were still allowed since battles between guardians did not require death as a win condition.

Another way that he could find out what he was looking for was by simply duels between guardians firsthand.

He was more favorable to this option. He did not want to rely on gossip, it was unreliable, and it felt wrong to do in the first place. Thus, he was inclined to get the information that he sought all by his own ability.

However, even that wasn't necessarily the best option.

He had a better option in mind, one that was quicker and more efficient.

('Scouting them when we defend the Floating Sect from an attack from the Kaddar Treaty Organization.') He mused with a mischievous grin.

Many Martial Squires would be partaking in protecting the Floating Sect from the Martial Squires that were aiming to weather down the guardians and whittle down their numbers. That meant that there was a good chance that Rui would find what he was looking for if he scouted for who he was looking for in war. That was the best part of the solution. He did not need to do much at all.

However, it did come with risks. He needed to scout while fighting off the attackers from the Kaddar Region.

('I'll have to make do with getting the most basic and easy details,') He sighed.

It was not possible for him to focus on his fellow guardians if he too was partaking in a life-or-death fight. He could not afford to make a single mistake, a single mistake could result in death.

Still, as long as he got the basic details needed to make the judgment he needed to make, he was actually quite satisfied.

('The best case scenario would be if my opponent also happens to be the type where my healing body turns out to be the best way to counter them,')

That would be perfect, but alas, it was not something that was very realistic. He needed an opponent that could push in just the right way for him to show the cards that he had just created.

The reason that he wanted to test the technique in a fight so much was because, unlike other techniques, this one was nearly as simple, he needed to make sure that it was practical and viable in a fight.

('The good thing about the new healing technique is that it can be halted the second I stop Whirlpool and Elephant Breathing,')

This was something that could not be said for the Godspeed technique. Once it started, he could not undo it. That was troubling because it meant that he needed to be extremely certain that that technique was the right choice for the circumstances that he was in.

If he made the wrong choice, it would be very bad.

('Also, I cannot use Godspeed and the healing technique in the same fight,') Rui tutted.

The reason for this was because a lot of the mass that was removed from his body through exhalation was, in part, dead cells that were used for the Hungry Pain technique. Thus if he used Godspeed in a given fight, he would not have the necessary dead cells left for recycling that could be used for his new healing technique.

That was a big issue that he needed to keep in mind whenever he was about to use either technique, just using them in a fight was committal, and he needed to make sure that he never came to regret it either way.

Of course, while using Godspeed made super-healing impossible, the other way around wasn't nearly as strict as long as he used it to a minor degree and did not drain as much as his recycled cell reserve.

('Ah, I ought to come up with a name for the new technique,') Rui mused, giving it some thought.

It wasn't long before he settled on one.

"Weaving Blood."

Chapter 1108: Opponent

It made sense because blood was the carrier of the energy and nutrition needed for the wounds to heal, from the rest of the body. He spent some more time estimating the limits of his healing.

Even before he got into the experimentation, he could already theoretically project some of the limits of his healing.

Given that his healing was limited by the amount of energy, compounds, and nutrition that was needed to build new cells.

('That's several kilograms of flesh,') Rui mused.

Martial bodies were much denser and heavier than normal human bodies, which was why the Weaving Blood and Godspeed technique could work for Martial Artists, and not for normal humans. However, even with increased mass, Rui estimated the limit for the amount of tissue that he could heal and regenerate was limited to several kilograms at most.

This was important because he needed to track how much his body had healed at all times. It could end up being a disaster if he somehow miscalculated how much more damage he could handle. That could up with him being severely damaged in a particular scenario but unable to heal because he thought his healing factor was still super-enhanced.

Rui conducted several tests to verify his limits in practice, and much to his surprise, he was actually capable of healing more than he had initially projected.

There was more to the body than just recycled cells, and he hadn't accounted for additional sources of energy and compounds.

Testing out Weaving Blood was an ordeal that took days, he did not want to miss a single detail. From healing volume to healing speed among other variables, he needed to ensure that he understood everything there was about the technique.

It was only after he was done that he volunteered for a deployment. The Floating Sect allowed guardians to volunteer for a defense deployment if they wanted to. There were many guardians who saw the war as an opportunity to forge themselves and grow stronger as a result.

Rui was not one of them, although he did not disagree with the idea, and would have been a part of them in different circumstances, he was too consumed with his newfound project to care about gaining more experience as a Martial Artist in war.

The only reason he was entering today was to find a Martial Artist that was suitable for him to challenge.

He did not intend to make a predictive model, of course. Nor could he, when he was focused on fighting his opponent.

"You're volunteering?" Kane frowned. "All because you wanna find a suitable opponent to challenge to test your new technique?"

"Yes,"

"That's some dedication alright. Why don't you ask around? It's easier and it doesn't require having to partake in a battle." Kane suggested.

"I already considered that," Rui replied as he began gearing up. The next attack was projected to appear any time soon, and he was expected to be on standby if he was going to partake in the war.

"Well, good luck. Have fun."

It wasn't long after he was waiting on standby. Alarms rang as another wave of Martial Squires was reported arriving from the Kaddar Region. Nobody panicked, and everybody went about responding calmly with the relevant and established protocol.

Rui and the many guardians on standby began dismounting from the island as they dove down. Although the enemies were able to secure the safety of the island with some sort of advanced esoteric technology that used the gravitation of the esoteric substances that caused the bind over the island to grow stronger temporarily making it harder to destroy and crumble to the ground, it was still best for the Floating Sect to distance the battle away from the island as much as possible.

Because it meant that the Martial Squires of the Kaddar Region no longer had any compunctions about wreaking havoc atop Ajanta Island.

('They're here,') Rui narrowed his eyes.

His instincts sharpened as he focused his mind, dedicating most of his concentration to the enemies, while also keeping a bit of an eye on his fellow guardians.

Soon enough, they entered range for distant artillery exchanges. Both sides rained the other side with long-range attacks.

Most Martial Squires simply spammed attacks from such a large range with the hopes of randomly hitting a few before the battle entered the mid and close-range quarters. T

Not Rui, he did not simply attack with the hopes of hitting an opponent.

He attacked with the knowledge that he was going to hit his opponents.

He masterfully applied the Pathfinder technique and Transverse Resonance tier five parallelly. The two grade-ten techniques worked wonders as he managed to kill a Martial Squire or two from just afar!

They didn't even know what hit them, literally.

However, once he got closer, they were able to sense the creation of the sound projectile even if it was hard to detect after it was launched.

Rui, however, was not entirely focused on his hapless victims. He momentarily paid attention to the progress and fighting styles of his peers at range.

There were several standouts, although he did not know who they were. But it did seem as though they had the qualities that he was looking for. Wide-range offense with a focus on lethality, because this was not an overly niche field, there were several guardians who appeared to possess the necessary traits in their Martial Art and style of combat that could be compatible for Rui to be able to use his Weaving Blood technique to the fullest when they returned to the Floating Sect where he would promptly challenge them to a duel.

BOOM BOOM BOOM!

Explosions and blasts rippled through the atmosphere as the two armies finally collided and countless battles between the guardians and Kaddar Martial Artists ensued. Rui was immediately confronted by a close-range Martial Squires with a blade in his hands.

('Oh...?') Rui's eyebrow rose. ('A swordsman... Interesting, interesting indeed.')

He did not back down.

Chapter 1109: Weapons

Rui had seldom fought against weapon-oriented Martial Artists in his life. The reason for that was that they were quite rare barring the right circumstances. It took an extreme amount of brainwashing and conditioning for it to become the Martial Path of a Martial Artist.

Not only that but there were logistical constraints to their emergence as well, especially for weapons centered around a blade or sharpness. It took an extremely durable substance to withstand the full power of a Martial Artist through the tiny edge of the blade without breaking, cracking, or being damaged significantly.

The reason that humans could wield swords without such a problem was that the high-carbon steel used for normal swords had a tensile strength that far exceeded what humans were able to break. That was

why there was no fear that such a blade would crumble in the middle of combat. Not even the strength of a thousand men could break such a tough alloy.

The same could not be said for Martial Artists.

For an alloy to be as overwhelmingly superior to a Martial Artist, it would have to, at a bare minimum be of a grade that corresponded to the Realm above the Martial Artist, sometimes even two Realms above the Martial Artist!

It was simply impractical, and had it been the norm, would pose serious hindrances to Martial Artists as they grew stronger.

Rui was aware that there were more philosophical reasons why the orthodox Martial Sects and communities around the world rejected weaponry.

That had to do with dependence and reliance on science and technology to provide them with apt weapons. That was something that many Martial Artists eschewed. Science and technology were not in their control as Martial Artists, it was usually in the control of the private sector and the governments to a certain extent.

Growing dependent on it would be no different from growing dependent on them. Many Martial Squires feared that an overdependence could cause the age of Martial Art to come to an end and return Martial Artists to an era where they were not weak enough to resist the power of the state.

It was bad enough to them that the Squire Realm was impossible without such technology, but Martial Artists had long since secured a stronghold over it to ensure that they would not grow dependent on non-Martial Artist sources.

Furthermore, the orthodox Martial Sects did not have much regard for unorthodox fields that involved external elements, like poison-oriented Martial Art, symbiotic Martial Art, or the weapon-oriented Martial Art.

Yet despite all of that, the power of weapons could not be disregarded.

Prior to the advent of Martial Art, humanity was exclusively a tool-wielding species. Even today, one of the biggest checks on Martial Art were big and powerful weapons that relied on size and powerful esoteric substances that allowed weapons to exert enormous power that could hurt and kill even Martial Artists.

While the weapons wielded by Martial Artists were not of the same nature as these super-weapons, the principle was still the same. Humans wielding tools were superior to humans without, and that principle did not diminish entirely when it came to Martial Artists wielding tools versus Martial Artists without tools.

That was why Rui did not underestimate the man before him wielding a blade that resembled a katana. Rui did not need another look at it to know that he could not afford to get hit by that blade even a single time.

He could handle normal piercing techniques that involved using the body as a blade. While those left open wounds and could be very dangerous if they hit a vital, they were not insurmountable when it came to defending against them.

Rui knew that that probably would not be the case when it came to sword techniques. He did not stand a chance at defending against a blade that was created to cut Martial Artists. If Rui tried to block a full-powered swing with both arms, then his arms would cleanly fall off before he even realized it.

This was the difference in the quality of the technique. He could almost certainly exert a level of lethality with every blow that made Rui envious.

In just the briefest of moments, while they approached each other, Rui analyzed him. The first thing he noticed was the man's profusely sharp sense of pressure. Just based on the peril that the man emitted to all those who beheld him, Rui could tell he was either a grade-ten Martial Artist or one who was extremely close to being considered one.

This meant that his fight was not going to be easy.

('Body mass to muscle mass ratio indicates a Martial Artist focused on speed rather than power,') Rui narrowed his eyes. ('The structure and shape of the blade, as well as the size of the hilt indicates a

single-handed blade. Thus it can be inferred his sword style is centered around speed rather than power.')

Rui froze on the spot, before immediately diving back. ('That means confronting him in close-quarters combat is highly ill-advised.')

He took a deep breath, sucking in an enormous amount of air.

THWOOM THWOOM THWOOM!!

The best part about having learned Whirlpool Breathing and Elephant Breathing was that they could be used to massively improve his long-range offense in addition to being the key to activating Weaving Blood.

The resulting sound projectiles he fired were enormously powerful and were reaching the quality of high-grade offensive Martial Artists!

Yet, Rui's jubilation withered when his opponent's sword flew out of its scabbard, cleaving every attack one by one with a single ordinary swing!

('What?') Rui's eyes widened.

He had underestimated the man's offensive power. A single swing was able to cleave and disperse his Mighty Roar Flash Blast technique. It appeared that he had profusely underestimated his opponent's ability to cope with long-range attacks.

However, his opponent was evidently not content with simply cutting Rui's long-range attacks either. His eyes narrowed as he rushed forward, looking to kill Rui in one shot.

Chapter 1110: Arrived

Rui watched as the man swung his blade against the empty air before him, before rushing forward at an incredible pace!

('His sword swing created a vacuum ahead of him, and a high-pressure zone behind him, allowing him to sky-walk at a faster pace than before!') Rui narrowed his eyes as he immediately launched more attacks to slow him down. ('This is a similar principle to my Gale Force Breathing, except that he applies it with sword swings instead of a breathing technique.')

Rui tutted as he watched the man cleave his Mighty Roar Flash Blast techniques before resuming rushing forward!

He could not allow the man to close the distance between them.

A wave of pressure exuded from Rui as he inhaled so powerfully, that he altered the wind patterns in the general area!

THWOOM THWOOM THWOOM THWOOM THWOOM!!!

He launched a barrage of attacks one by one.

Yet they rapidly merged into one single attack. Rui had used tier five Transverse Resonance as each of the five sound projectiles merged into one incredibly powerful blast toward his opponent.

The man's eyes widened as activated a powerful breathing technique, inhaling deeply. Just as the attack was about to reach him, his blade flashed into action. Six sword wings were executed nearly simultaneously in a strange pattern.

BOOM!

The attack was completely dismembered, yet the resulting explosion pushed him back a bit. He turned back to Rui with a murderous expression.

The two Martial Artists stared at each other for just the briefest of moments.

The pressure they exerted on each other may very well have wrung the air before them.

One moment they were motionless.

Yet the very next, they were fraught with struggle.

Rui's eyes narrowed as his mind furiously processed his circumstances. In just the briefest of moments, many considerations flew through his head.

('This... may not be viable,')

While the current clashes between them appeared to be able to reach a stalemate, he knew it did not mean that they were equal.

One of the disadvantages of long-range attacks in exchange for their great range and scope was their high energy consumption relative to their output compared to striking-based attacks. The reasons for this were straightforward. Long-range attacks required delivering power to media between them and their opponents, to in turn deliver an attack to their opponent. Striking-based attacks delivered attacks directly, this preserved a greater amount of the original output since there was no energy loss that naturally came with delivering power through different media.

Thus while Rui seemed to be able to hold him off with his long-range, he did not have faith in his ability to outlast his opponent.

In fact, without Hungry Pain, he would have zero chance whatsoever. It was not even a question.

However, even with Hungry Pain, the prospects of being able to outlast his opponent were slim. Rui truly found it hard to believe that the man consumed a greater proportion of his energy reserve than Rui did with his Transverse Resonance.

('But it doesn't matter if I cannot outlast him,') His eyes sharpened as he increased his output against his opponent. ('I just need to last long enough.')

He wasn't just mindlessly pummeling the man with his attacks, while he did that, his mind was observing.

Observing his opponent.

Yet he didn't just observe.

He saw. He could see the many patterns that governed the man's motions.

('His upper torso is always curled away from the direction that he's swinging to generate more torque,')

('Even while moving, all attacks occur only when his left foot is behind and acts as a crutch and a boost to his swinging power.')

('The trajectory of a swing decides whether there will be an ensuing swing as well as the trajectory of the follow-up swing.')

('All swings begin with the arm either completely stretched or completely folded.')

Rui's mind raced through various patterns as the construction of the predictive model was well underway, now, he only needed to ensure that he kept his opponent at bay with his long-range offense, while also using his long-range offense to probing him more and gathering more data on the man.

Eventually, the predictive model would be complete at this rate without any problems.

Yet the man was not willing to let that happen.

An ugly expression arose on his face at his inability to close the distance. Rui's eyes narrowed as his breathing pattern changed.

WHOOSH!

The man rapidly rushed forward, and Rui promptly reacted by launching several attacks at him. He expected the man to pause as he slashed at them, allowing Rui to get even more attacks underway.

Yet he did not pause.

SHWING!

He did swing his sword.

Yet it didn't hit his attack, instead, he abruptly dashed sideways avoiding the attack.

He swung once more, abruptly dashing forward towards Rui.

Rui launched a flurry of Mighty Roar Flash Blasts at the man, yet each time, even as the man rushed forward in the face of the attacks, he suddenly managed to sharply swerve out of the way at the last moment.

('He's killing his inertia with a combination of a breathing and sword technique.') Rui frowned. ('This allows him to abruptly stop, accelerate and change directions,')

This new technique made him extremely slippery! He was able to make rapid progress towards Rui even as many sound projectiles were fired at him.

His eyes fixed on Rui as he managed to reach the ten-meter mark!

At this range, pushing him back was going to be damn near impossible for Rui.

They both knew that.

He rushed forward as he prepared one of his most lethal techniques.

Rui, on the other hand, began firing attacks in a far more desperate manner. It appeared that he would do anything to open up the distance between himself and his opponent.

Yet it wasn't enough.

The swordsman resolutely used his sword-based maneuvering technique to weave past all of Rui's attacks.

Soon enough, he arrived right before Rui.