

Martial Unity 1111

Chapter 1111: Constrict

It should have been game over. After all, the swordsman's opponent was clearly a long-range Martial Artist.

There were long well-established paradigms and conditions for battles between close-range and long-range martial Artists.

The condition for victory in such a battle for close-range Martial Squires was simply being able to close the distance between themselves and their long-range opponent. In ninety-nine percent of cases, this meant death for long-range Martial Squires.

Conversely, being able to keep their close-range opponent at bay by inflicting damage from a distance was the win condition for long-range Martial Squires.

To the swordsman, it was clear to him that he was the one who had successfully fulfilled his conditions for victory.

That was why he resolutely used his most powerful technique aiming to cleave Rui in half so finely that even his own cells would take a moment to realize that they had been sliced in half. There was no way Rui was going to survive that attack.

Or so he thought.

SWING!!

An incredibly powerful attack rushed towards Rui. The sheer potency behind the swing was so great that it cleaved the clouds across the sky in half.

Yet when it hit Rui... It didn't.

Rui's retreating image that he cut simply faded.

His eyes widened.

It was a feint.

CLASP!

BZZZT!

Before the man could even react, Rui's limbs tangled across his own from seemingly nowhere!

His arms coiled around the man's neck, pressing down like a vice as though he wanted to crush it with his bare hands.

The man didn't even understand what happened!

He was supposed to have won.

He was supposed to have chopped Rui into a perfect half.

Yet not only did Rui somehow manage to perfectly time his dodge neither too late nor too early, but he also managed to feint just ahead of time, to trick his mind.

The Phantom Step technique that Rui had used was actually not that potent a technique. It was a good trick that could be a little challenging to handle at times, but any high-grade Martial Squire would eventually be able to handle them one way or another. It was far from invincible, and not a technique that was too significant at the highest echelons of the Squire Realm.

It was for that reason that Rui only used it at the most appropriate moments. He only used it to show people exactly what they wanted to see, what they expected to see.

And that was why they fell for it.

The man's expression was furious. He tried unwrapping himself out of Rui's grip, yet breaking out of a rear chokehold was too difficult if the two were in the same league of strength.

Yet, the man wasn't done. Even if his arms were bound by Rui's legs, his hands weren't. His wrist was free.

Including that of the hand that held his sword.

SPLAT!

He inflicted a deep gash on Rui's leg, causing him to begin bleeding profusely.

Yet Rui was prepared.

He quickly activated Weaving Blood, and instantly, the wound healed in just a second!

The man's eyes widened in shock!

He had thought that Rui was the average long-range Martial Squire, but then he not only managed to avoid his fastest technique, but he also feinted with such impeccable timing that he didn't notice until after the swing was complete.

Furthermore, he then grappled him, paralyzing him partially with some strange technique, weakening his resistance.

He then healed a deep dash on the spot with an absurdly impressive healing speed.

What long-range Martial Squire did that?

Regardless, he didn't ponder the matter at all. It didn't matter. The only thing that mattered surviving. As long as he survived, he would be happy.

He swung his hand as he could, hoping to cause as much pain and damage as he could to Rui to get him to come off.

But alas, Rui did not yield. Even without Weaving Blood healing the damage that the man inflicted with his sword, he would not be able to hurt Rui all that much in the short term.

The reason for that was that he could only use the muscles in his forearm to swing because the rest of his arm and body were too restricted.

He began panicking when his vision blurred, going red. But that only made it even worse.

And he lost consciousness before he even realized it.

Yet Rui didn't stop. He continued restricting blood flow to the brain for as much as he needed to without going out of his way to take any risks.

It wasn't long before the man's heart ceased beating.

Rui dropped him, allowing the corpse to plummet back to the Kaddar Region.

"Huff..." Rui sighed as he wiped away his sweat. "That was tiring."

Still, he was quite satisfied with the outcome of the fight, obviously. He was happy that he managed to beat such a powerful Martial Squires. He had inadvertently achieved his goal of using Weaving Blood in a real fight, and it had worked like a charm.

Still, he didn't use it as a Martial body to adapt to someone, he had only used it to heal some wounds at the end of the fight.

What he wanted to do was test the ability of Weaving Blood to serve as a way to adapt his body to a Martial body focused on healing. In this case, he didn't get to do that. Simply healing some wounds that frankly were not too much of a threat was not the same as adapting his body to permanently using Weaving Blood.

He had come across a powerful opponent, and he hadn't been able to fulfill his plan of scouting for powerful guardians whose Martial Art was such that Weaving Blood was the way to adapt to them. He had been far too busy with fighting to also be able to do that.

('No matter, I can do that now,') Rui expanded Riemannian Echo to encompass the entire battlefield.

Chapter 1112: Scan

The battlefield was huge. Martial Artists from both sides congregated over a large area. You could not squeeze two hundred Martial Squires fighting in a stadium, or even a small town.

Especially when they were all high-grade Martial Squires. Nothing short of a city-wide area was large enough to accommodate all these Martial Squires going all out.

Rui's Riemannian Echo was finally functional now that he was off Ajanta Island, he was able to sense everything that was happening within the entire area. It felt good to stretch his senses this far after quite some time.

Ajanta Island was his nemesis, and he was unable to have the kind of unperturbed range there as he did in the Shionel Dungeon.

Of course, his Tempestuous Feel was also a good sensory technique. Furthermore, it was a technique that experienced a boost on Ajanta Island.

Because the island's atmosphere was so dense, it became easier to sense through it compared to normal air.

Still, because it was a normal sense, it couldn't bypass anti-espionage technology the way that Riemannian Echo did.

Regardless, he was able to use the Riemannian Echo just fine outside of the island, and he did put it to good use.

He quickly scanned all the guardians briefly one-by-one categorizing their Martial Art based on the little information that he glimpsed in a hurry.

He did not want to miss out on anything by taking his time potentially missing a lot of action if fights ended before he got to them.

Thus he briefly made sure to get to know their Martial Art on a basic level so that he could have an easier time later verifying whether they could give him what he wanted in a duel.

With that out of the way, he began scanning through all of them in a more detailed manner. Specifically, the offense-oriented guardians.

Not that what he was looking for couldn't possibly be granted through any other kind of Martial Squire. But what he was looking for was an offense that inflicted wounds on him despite his defense and maneuvering.

It was possible for Martial Artists of different fields to be able to inflict damage by pursuing both their defense and maneuvering. But most Martial Artists that were capable of that would probably belong in the offense category.

That was why Rui began scanning the offensive ones to maximize the probability of running into one.

He was quite fascinated by the offense-oriented guardians of the Floating Sect, none of them were standard.

('Then again, you can't be a standard Martial Squire if you want to enter the sect,') Rui mused.

Even the most normal ones that were centered around more common kinds of striking-oriented Martial Art had very abnormal and non-standard elements to them that made them quite deviant.

Rui came across a grappling-oriented Martial Squire that relied on friction to increase her lethality.

('Oof,') Rui winced. ('I do not want to be on the receiving end of that,')

Much to his dismay, she was a good candidate to test out his Weaving Blood technique. Her strategy relied on inflicting as much damage by shearing off his flesh.

Yet he already knew that the experience was going to be excruciatingly painful.

('Well, to be fair, if I'm looking for a guardian that's going to inflict so many wounds on me that I'm going to have to rely on Weaving Blood to make it out, then it's going to be excruciatingly painful no matter what.') He sighed.

He had good pain tolerance, of course, every Martial Squire ended up getting superhuman pain tolerance after experiencing the horrendous nightmare that was the Squire evolution breakthrough.

Still, that did not mean that pain was fun or desirable. It still hurt as bad as ever.

Regardless, he added her to the list.

He continued scanning, hoping to find more Martial Squires that had an overabundant focus on lethality at the cost of everything else.

Thankfully, he was not too disappointed. Martial Artists that focused on lethality to such a great degree were not too uncommon.

Offense was one of the fundamental aspects of combat, and there were many who pursued it at the cost of everything else, obtaining a level of lethality that was simply overwhelming and could not be stopped barring the most defensive of Martial Artists.

He was able to add several more to the list.

A poison-oriented Martial Artist who caused cell death with a kind of poison that he transmitted both through airborne and contact means.

Rui was able to identify the poison because he recalled seeing something similar in one of his earliest projects where he tried creating a technique that employed poison.

Rui almost felt a little evil for choosing this man as a target. Weaving Blood was such an incredibly hard counter to this poison of his that it wasn't even funny.

After all, Weaving Blood employed Whirlpool Breathing and Elephant Breathing to flush out the assimilated energy, nutrients, and compounds out of cells and tissue and into the bloodstream where they would be absorbed by the cells near the wound that needed the supply.

Thus an attack that wounded tissue by killing cells only gave him the supply that he needed to recycle and heal the wound that had been inflicted with cell death.

It meant that against this particular guardian, Rui may as well have had limitless healing and regeneration. It was the most perfect counter that was so brutally perfect to taking down that poison, that it wasn't even funny.

While healing would work terribly for most kinds of poison, in this case, it was actually quite perfect. He most certainly could heal from the wound, and he could gain more energy thanks to his opponent's attack.

That was why Rui looked forward to this fight. He hadn't even created a predictive model to keep it fair, but even without that, he felt quite confident about taking these guardians on in a challenge and taking their chamber as a result to get a better place to train.

Chapter 1113: Weaken

The battle eventually ended in a somewhat unclear draw. The incoming invasion had been impeded and halted from entering Floating Island, but it had cost both sides a lot of Martial Squires.

A small proportion of the guardians of the Floating Sect had perished in battle.

Floating Sect had grown weaker. Every battle chipped away at its net strength. Although not many died, and although it would not be easy to deplete the guardians of the Floating Sect, it was still something that would take a toll on the sect.

Especially since the sect could not replenish the lost Martial Artists. Every Martial Squire lost was a permanent loss.

The reason for this, of course, was the heavy restriction from the Kaddar Treaty Organization. They had deterred Martial Squires from entering the island in the past, but it had never been an absolute barricade as it was this time.

In the past, there was no way to wage large-scale wars against the Floating Sect. The proximity of conflict near the island causing just enough damage to destabilize it and trigger a chain reaction that would lead to the island collapsing and plummeting was too high for the risk to be taken.

In that case, enacting a permanent restriction that prevented any Martial Squires from entering the island was not worth it because if they would need to maintain it forever since the island would be around forever since they could not do anything about it at the time.

However, things had changed.

Now, with a some long-range weapon that had been customized to employ the gravity of the core of the island to stabilize the island, they could not wage war against the sect without fear. In that case, the replenishment of guardians that the Floating Sect gained from the incoming Martial Squires was too great.

It would stall the way forever.

If they wanted the war to end, at all, they needed to prevent the Floating Sect from healing.

While it was true that the quality of Martial Squires of the Floating Sect was higher than arguably anywhere else, everything had a limit.

Waves after waves chipped away at the strength of the Floating Sect. They drained the power of the sect, and eventually, it would be over.

Of course, Rui was aware that what truly decided the outcome of the war was not the Martial Squires of the Floating Sect, but actually the Martial Seniors.

However, he also understood that as long as the Kaddar nations had not yet come to a consensus on exactly which nations' Martial Seniors would be deployed to counter the Martial Seniors of the Floating Sect, they would not escalate the level of conflict to that degree.

For the same reason that no nation on Earth would willingly give up its nukes for the sake of the continent with the risk of losing their nuclear weapons forever while their neighbors retained them, none of the nations of the Kaddar Region were willing to deploy their Martial Seniors on such an operation lightly.

This had originally been a little strange to Rui as these nations did not shy away from deploying them for other operations. After all, it wasn't as if these Martial Seniors whiled away their time doing nothing. They trained or worked in the field.

Yet there was a valid reason for why the nations of the Kaddar Region were reluctant to deploy them against the Floating Sect.

('The Senior guardians of the Floating Sect are too strong on the island,') Rui mused.

He already knew that Senior Xanarn was on her home turf in the environment of the island. She could at least take on two Martial Seniors on at the same time, potentially three if she fought extremely defensively.

Furthermore, he had inferred that another one of the Martial Seniors also had a huge home turf advantage because the library had an abundance of breathing techniques like it did sound, suggesting that one of the Martial Seniors was specialized in breathing techniques.

Which meant they too were most likely greatly empowered by the environment. If Rui assumed that the reason these three Martial Seniors of the sect, clung to it so tightly was because of how much it empowered their Martial Path, then the Kaddar Region would need anywhere from six to nine Martial Seniors just to match them.

They would need more if they wanted to win, and even more if they wanted a decisive victory.

Regardless of who won, it was a given fact that Martial Seniors on both sides were going to die.

Twelve Martial Seniors did not just go all out in a conflict that ended with not a single casualty.

This was what the Kaddar nations were afraid of.

Thus, until they made up their mind and resolved to send all Martial Seniors at once, they could not help but try and win the Squire-level battle first.

Especially when Rui had now learned that Martial Squires could potentially take down a Martial Senior if their Martial Heart burned out, returning them to their base forms. The Kaddar Region had already witnessed the supremely elite Martial Squires of the Floating Sect, especially monsters like Tokugawa Ieyasu.

Getting rid of them meant that the probability of losing a Martial Senior in battle was much lower.

Rui's attention returned to the battlefield as the battle between both sides came to an end as both sides retreated towards their respective bases, wary of anything funny from the other side.

Rui, too, followed suit as he retreated back along with the guardians of the Floating Sect with a satisfied grin on his face.

The Floating Sect had recently instated the policy of rewarding Martial Squires of taking down Kaddar Martial Squires. The stronger the Martial Squire, the greater the reward. Considering that Rui took down a Martial Squire that was definitely top hundred material when it came to the guardian rankings, he was sure that he earned more training time from the Martial Seniors.

Chapter 1114: Ego

He was not wrong.

Rui's contribution ended up being in the top ten percent of contributions, by taking down a powerful weapon-wielding Martial Artist down, he received much appreciation from the sect when he reported back.

However, he wasn't too interested in sparring with Senior Xanarn, it was not fun to fight the same person over and over, nor was it particularly beneficial to his growth as a Martial Artist.

It was actually the opposite. He needed to exercise his ability to execute the VOID algorithm, not grow content and be complacent with predictive models that he had already created in precious instances.

It's why he didn't go out of his way to spar or duel with Kane very often.

Of course, he wouldn't mind sparring against one of the other two Martial Seniors, he wondered if he had the ability to beat them in the manner that he beat Senior Xanarn with Kane's help.

That certainly would be interesting.

But he was more keen on victories that were won fair and square.

When they beat Senior Xanarn, she was already sufficiently drained enough against dozens of high-tier Martial Squires. That was why that victory did not mean too much to Rui. It was a cool accomplishment, but he didn't put too much stock against it.

What he was more focused on instead was beating his peers who were within the same Realm as him, and taking their chamber to better forge his body in a stronger environment within the Floating Sect.

He had already identified several candidates, and now he simply needed to pick one for his Weaving Blood in a more elaborate fashion. He had specifically chosen Martial Artists where he would certainly be forced to use it more extensively while adapting.

It would not only allow him to gain data on the actual effectiveness of the solution that he had created.

It was one thing for him to daydream about how powerful and effective it would be, it was another to actually have proof that would add weight to the speculation of how effective it was.

It was also important because it would set expectations for how much he could expect from Project Metabody.

That was also something he didn't have any idea of how to quantify. He had thought about it to no end, but at the end of the day, he had nothing. He had retained the approach of a scientist and a developer, which caused him to be skeptical of things until there was empirical data that suggested otherwise.

In this world, he could not conduct a research and development project with external test subjects in large sample sizes to verify things that he needed to know, he could only rely on his own experience since he was the only available test subject in the entire world.

That was why he was scouting multiple Martial Artists that he could gather data from. Now that he had done that, he was ready to conduct the actual test.

"Huh?" Squire Drekirole's eyebrow twitched. "You? You dare to challenge me?"

"That's right," Rui calmly replied.

He had not minded the insulted expression that the man had on his bearded face because he found it rather hilarious. He also somewhat understood where the man was coming from.

Rui was of the lowest class of guardians of the Floating Sect. While Squire Drekirole was of the fifth class, middling out among the classes and ranks in the Floating Sect.

He was decisively stronger than the Martial Squires of the lowest class.

"Ah... I remember you," The man growled. "You were the kid who beat Serokin. Did you really think you're qualified to beat me just because you took down that snake, and got in a few lucky hits against Senior Xanarn?"

Although many in the lowest class had seen Rui and Kane taking on and beating Senior Xanarn, many Martial Squires of the higher classes simply could not believe it. It simply was too hard to believe that two Martial Squires of the lowest class could possibly hurt her let alone beat her.

Even if they did believe it, they assumed it wasn't because of their merits but due to other factors. The cognitive dissonance that came with refusing to believe that someone who was supposed to be far below them was actually quite strong, was quite strong.

Senior Drekirole was an example of such a case.

Rui didn't care either way. He was not doing this for his pride or for respect.

"Do you accept the duel?" Rui ignored his question asking him again. "Might I remind you that the last duel to undertake was more than ten days ago, thus you are obligated to accept my duel."

"I'll accept your little duel, alright," He growled. "I'm going to skin you so badly you wouldn't even be able to resign. You're dead!"

"Then let's get going," Rui replied simply, turning around and heading to the colosseum.

"What... Now?" The man furrowed his eyebrows.

He couldn't understand why Rui was so eager to get his ass kicked by someone stronger than him.

Regardless, he was pissed off.

"Very well, if that's what you wish, then that's what I'll give. Don't blame me when you lose. I already warned you."

"Yes yes," Rui sighed.

He didn't understand how people had an ego that was bigger than their heads. Where did these people get such an immense amount of pride from?

He wasn't even as impressive in the Floating Sect, he was decisively average by their standards. Furthermore, he was of the Squire Realm, just like Rui was.

The Squire Realm was only the second of six Realms of power. How could someone remain so arrogant when confronted by the fact that they were not even in the upper Realms?

Hell, they weren't even at the top of the lower Realm. It was just a bizarre sight for someone like Rui. If he ever did gain such pride, it would certainly not be as a Martial Squire.

Chapter 1115: Bleed

While it was true that half of all nations, states, and groups of humans did not have access to a Martial Squire, or the Squire Realm. Thus from the perspective of humanity as a whole, Martial Squires were not abundant, and thus they were a precious resource to a certain extent.

Yet, to Rui, the Squire Realm was just one of the earliest and lowest checkpoints in his Martial Path and journey. He could never grow super prideful or arrogant on his current level of power when he knew

that Martial Seniors could squash him with ease, and Martial Masters were so powerful that they could probably blink him from existence.

He didn't even need to say anything about Martial Sages or Martial Transcendants.

The two of them quickly made their way to the colosseum. Rui focused himself as he ignored the bravado coming from Squire Drekirole.

"You're dead, dead, you hear me?" The man snarled.

"Why are you getting so worked up?" Rui sighed. "It's just a duel. The Floating Sect has prohibited killing, so I'll make sure not to cross that line, don't worry."

The man only barked back louder in response to that.

They finally reached a sparring colosseum that was not being occupied at the moment. The two of them quickly filled out the basic paperwork, and soon enough there was an official arbiter that presided over the match.

"Challenger; Guardian Falken!"

Rui stepped forward.

"Defender; Guardian Drekirole!"

The man stepped forward, eying Rui from top to bottom.

He was a lot older, like almost all Martial Squires were, and a lot taller. Yet he didn't look nearly as old as he was thanks to being a Martial Artist.

Yet he was still mentally younger than Rui was.

Psychologically, he was probably a child, given his juvenile mannerisms thus far.

"Take your stances," The arbiter instructed.

The man spread his arms, crouching a bit.

Rui, too crouched as he took an open arm position.

Squire Drekirole's eyes narrowed at the sight of that. "You bastard..."

Rui knew that Squire Drekirole was a grappler. He was a grappler whose offensive lethality came from the friction that his skin generated against his opponent.

Rui wasn't able to directly observe it since they were too small, but he strongly suspected that the man's skin was riddled with spikes that would tear into the skin of his opponents. Moving would instantly inflict wounds on his opponent's outer flesh.

Furthermore, the wound was such that it maximized bleeding. He could cause his opponent to bleed out very quickly, losing the fight.

He was not weak, he most certainly had earned his place as a guardian, and one that was as high-ranked as he was.

However, Rui ignored his barbs and threats and did not get personally involved.

He recalled Senior Xanarn's words. He could not cripple the Floating Sect in these circumstances by making one of their guardians an invalid.

That was why this was not personal to him, he simply did not invest himself in the fight. It was just a duel, it was an experiment to measure the effectiveness of Weaving Blood as a means to alter the spec configuration of his Martial body to adapt to a Martial Squire with high lethality.

"Begin!"

The two of them rushed forward, executing a shoot maneuver, immediately crashing into each other as they put their hands on their opponent's shoulders, trying to control their balance.

They immediately noticed each other's techniques.

Rui grimaced as he felt his skin peeling off at the points of contact with his opponent.

It appeared that he had underestimated how painful they would be. The man had straight up ripped up Rui's skin like it was nothing despite his Adamant Reforging conditioning technique.

It appeared that whatever training he had trained in making the lethality of skin far greater than what a single passive defensive technique that he had bought, not created, was capable of granting him.

Adamant Reforging was not a technique that he had great synergy with because it didn't contain the synergy with his Martial body and Path that techniques that he created naturally had.

Adamant Reforging was one of the first techniques that he had mastered in the Squire Realm back when had just broken through. It was a useful passive defensive technique that had served him well enough. But Rui today realized that it wasn't anywhere near enough at the highest echelons of the Squire Realm.

His passive defense was falling back.

Thankfully, Weaving Blood was quick to pick up the slack as it quickly began healing Rui's wounds even before they were fully inflicted.

They wrangled a bit before pushing each other away.

Squire Drekirole looked surprised at Rui, noticing that the wounds that he had inflicted were already disappearing.

His expression darkened. "Is this why you were so confident? You're an endurance-oriented Martial Squire eh? Well, let's see just how much you can endure."

He launched forward with another shoot maneuver, which Rui matched. The two engaged, as they began wrangling each other once more.

BZZZT!

The man frowned as he felt a portion of his power freezing.

CLASP!

Rui lunged in, gaining a good and dominant position against him, exploiting the opening. However, even that gesture caused him to lose some skin, bleeding instantly.

Yet he forged on, relying heavily on Weaving Blood to fix his wounds.

And it did.

However, Squire Dekriole was not satisfied with just playing a passive position. He quickly lunged back, bear-hugging Rui, hoping to rip off huge swathes of flesh with this gesture. It was one of his killers.

He employed many strength techniques, making it extremely difficult to escape.

TAP TAP TAP TAP!

His arms suddenly went limp momentarily as his eyes widened. Rui had simply struck at them lightly with his index finger, yet he felt as though they disappeared, becoming numb as they plummeted midair.

BAM!

Rui struck him in his gut with a flying knee kick, striking his diaphragm, and making it difficult to breathe.

Chapter 1116: Outcome

"Argh!" The man snarled as he lashed back at Rui, lunging at him.

WHOOSH!

It was a feint.

BAM!

Rui's foot flew, crashing straight into his jaw in a high back kick. He made it nearly impossible for the man to even get a good sense of his bearings.

Yet every time he attacked, he bled.

It didn't matter if Squire Dekriole did it with intention or not.

It simply was the case that every time Rui touched Squire Dekriole, he bled. Even if he was the one attacking Squire Dekriole, he got hurt.

Yet he kept going.

He wanted to see whether the rate at which he was getting hurt could be handled by Weaving Blood, and the initial results were quite promising.

Every wound that he gained from simply making rough contact with Squire Dekriole was promptly healed by Weaving Blood, even the most painful wounds quickly disappeared like magic as his cells worked overtime gaining the necessary energy and compounds that would serve as the building blocks for the new cells.

Despite the immense amount of damage he suffered with every strike that he landed on Squire Dekriole, his healing returned it back to its normal state.

POW POW POW!

SPLAT!

Rui blasted him in the face with a combo, yet his own hands started bleeding profusely before his healing factor kicked in.

Squire Dekriole, on the other hand, was frustrated. Although he was hurting Rui, Rui was outplaying him. He avoided his attacks cleanly before landing multiple attacks, and then healing the damage he took by making contact with his body.

Yet he didn't allow Squire Dekriole to get in a single attack.

With each passing second, he found that it became increasingly harder and harder to actually even touch Rui with his own attacks!

Of course, to a certain extent, this was his style, a counter-offensive style that caused anybody who even brushed against him to get hurt.

Yet that did not mean that he relied solely on these means to hurt his opponent. He also was a very aggressive striker who squeezed his opponent in a vice or whaled on them with heavy blows.

Yet in Rui's case, he wasn't even able to get decent hits in!

"Your patterns are so simple even a child could read them," Rui murmured at some point.

BAM BAM BAM BAM BAM!

He was bombarded with five heavy blows before he could even process those words. Those blows were so heavy that he ended up forgetting what Rui even said to him in the first place.

He glanced back at Rui, as his eyes widened with shock.

His clothes were in tatters, yet his skin and flesh were just perfect aside from being bathed in his own blood.

Squire Dekriole gritted his teeth as he snarled in bloodlust, launching himself forward hoping to take Rui out with the hopes that he would be able to get some kind of position where he would be able to leverage his raw power to rip Rui to shreds!

Although his Martial body was most certainly meant to be a tank that hurt others who even tried attacking it, Rui was not making it easy.

With Adamant Reforged fists, as well as Outer Convergence, and Reverberating Lance crashing into his abdomen, he felt like puking with every strike that he endured.

Normally, his opponents didn't really strike him that hard because it would cause them damage, causing their flesh to peel off and start profusely bleeding. Nobody wanted to deal with that, thus nobody would go that far.

Except Rui.

POW POW POW!

He pummeled Squire Drekirole with even more blows, yet at this point the man simply brought his guard up as he defended his gut, gritting his teeth.

He realized that the difference between them in skill was not even close, it wasn't even funny. He thought he was skilled, but compared to the surgical crackdown of Rui's offense, he struggled to maintain any foothold.

BAM!!!

A titanically heavy blow crashed into his guard, bruising them heavily with just a single blow. His arms parted for a moment as he shook them to deal with the pain.

POW!

A simple yet swift kick to the jaw rang his brain back and forth, the sheer impact from the strike triggered acute blunt force traumas, enough of it to not just feel dizzy but also lose consciousness.

THUD

The man collapsed to the ground, bleeding from some open wounds, collapsing unconscious.

It was a decisive and dominant victory.

Many of the spectators frowned. They had seen Rui fight before, yet he hadn't seen this sort of healing technique before.

Many couldn't help but feel as though Rui had some kind of healing potion tucked away in his pocket or attire somewhere.

To a lot of people, that was the only way he could have gained such a healing potion in a short amount of time.

Yet, of course, such a thing was not the case. Both fighters had been checked, and Rui hadn't inhaled anything other than air since the start of the fight.

Many had realized that Rui had either been holding back this ability all this time or had somehow recently gained it in the span of two months.

Many of the guardians of the lower classes were awestruck, while guardians of the higher classes regarded them with wariness.

The fact that Rui jumped from the tenth class to the fifth class showed them that Rui had no compunctions about wildly aiming above his class to get to better training chambers as opposed to going the traditional route of growing stronger to climb higher and higher bit by bit and using the better training conditions to further grow stronger.

No.

Rui had simply shot himself forward uncaring for such matters. Although it wasn't unheard of, he was one of the rare ones that arrived at the Floating Sect already able to tangle with stronger guardians of the sect.

People came to believe that he held back his true strength for some reason, and that had always been that strong.

Chapter 1117: Impatience

Yet little did they know that this boost came from just two months' worth of training.

"Winner: Squire Falken!"

Rui simply walked away from the arena, heading back towards his chamber. He needed to shift to his new chamber before he considered doing anything else.

"Honestly, should I just get them all out of the way?" Rui scratched his head.

He had been planning on rapidly challenging the few guardians that he had identified one after the other until he finished all of them.

He did not intend to lose.

Thus, would it not be better if he switched chambers after he beat all of them?

Otherwise, he would need to switch chambers after every fight, why do that when he could just do it after he beat everyone he planned on challenging?

('Makes sense, but I should see whether they're free first, they may have already accepted a challenge within the past ten days, in which case it is better I shift first.')

He approached guardian Herea, one of the guardians that he had identified to possess a Martial Art that was just apt for testing his Weaving Blood technique.

Unfortunately, what he feared came to pass.

"I already partook in a challenge three days ago," She replied to him with an intrigued expression.

"I guess I'll have to wait a week then." Rui sighed.

"Not unless I accept it voluntarily."

The ten-day rule only applied to being forced to accept a challenge. Guardians could accept one thousand challenges in a single day if they so pleased.

It appeared that guardian Herea was willing to take him on in a duel.

"You know, I've heard a lot about you," She said. "I look forward to battling you."

Rui was glad that not all guardians were egotistical jerks.

She accommodated his request to begin the challenge immediately too, much to his delight.

It wasn't long before the two of them were standing before each other in an arena. They had quickly handled all the paperwork to officiate it, and the sect had already sent an arbiter to oversee the fight.

"Challenger; guardian Falken."

Rui stepped forward.

"Defender; guardian Herea."

She stepped forward, as well.

"Take your stances." The arbiter instructed them.

Rui took a neutral stance at the moment. He didn't feel any need to particularly lean in any one direction.

She, on the other hand, unbandaged her arms and limbs, revealing green skin.

She was a poison user, the one that Rui identified as being able to cause rapid cell death.

She was one of the handful that Rui intended to challenge to test Weaving Blood against their lethal offense.

"Begin!"

She lashed out forward immediately, it was clear that she was a close-range fighter.

Ordinarily, Rui would be inclined to take on someone like her from range, but he decided against it even if it was a more optimal choice.

"Fuuuu..." She exhaled deeply by the time she reached Rui, exhaling a dark gas right near Rui's vicinity.

POW POW POW!

Rui blocked her attacks with a guard.

Her strikes were actually quite light, yet he knew that their danger did not come from the force she exerted.

Poison-oriented Martial Squires did not care about normal physical damage. They were one of the very few Martial Artists that didn't care about the conventional damage.

Most Martial Squires relied on the same principles of inflicted damage, collisions, and impacts that delivered enough concentrated force to cause damage to their body. This was the most fundamental means of inflicting damage on an opponent.

Martial Artists like poison-oriented Martial Artists strayed away from this paradigm greatly because they inflicted damage through many other principles. They integrated toxic and powerful substances into their body, while then applying those substances against their opponents' bodies to cause them to experience many detrimental symptoms as a result.

This method of inflicting damage and taking down their opponents bypassed all conventional defenses.

No passive defensive technique like Adamant Reforging, and certainly no active defensive technique like Flux Earther could protect Rui from poison. That was one of the greatest advantages that poison users had.

It was no different from being forced to withstand the attacks of a striking-oriented Martial Artist without any defenses whatsoever, with just the toughness of their Martial body.

Of course, poison-oriented Martial Artists were not entirely unrestrained like that. For one, poisons did not discriminate, they did not abstain from trying to wreck their host's body just because their host was a poison-oriented Martial Artist.

Even poison-oriented Martial Artists had to condition themselves hard if they wanted to be able to withstand their own poison and not succumb to it. That was a limitation that other Martial Artists didn't.

Furthermore, poison-oriented Martial Artists could not use poison defensively. Poison was fundamentally offensive and lethal, thus they needed to train their defense the normal way. However, because their Martial Path and Body did not have any affinity for normal defensive techniques, they often had difficulty in that regard. Techniques. They were not known for being tough.

BAM!!

Rui struck Squire Herea hard, pushing her back with a single attack. Outer Convergence and Reverberating Lance rattled her body quite heavily.

"Hm?" Rui frowned when he noticed that the color of his knuckles had changed.

He immediately activated Weaving Blood. He wanted the dying cells to immediately be assimilated and turned into energy, compounds, and nutrients for new cells before they underwent necrosis. This would also give his healing factor more fuel in the long run.

Rui's eyes widened as an interesting idea popped into his head.

('What if I use this poison on myself to increase the amount of fuel that my body has caused by the cell death?') Rui wondered with an incredulous expression.

In the middle of a duel, he had gotten an epiphany from his opponent!

"I am not so weak that you can afford to daydream in the middle of our battle," She glowered.

It appeared that Rui taking his eyes off her for just a moment had offended her.

Chapter 1118: Outcome

Even if she said that, and was angry, Rui was actually quite grateful. She had helped him come across an idea to strengthen his Weaving Blood technique, and he looked forward to actually trying it out.

Currently, he mostly sacrificed strength, speed, and stamina when using Weaving Blood for extra healing. Fundamentally he burned energy reserves, but burning energy reserves required him to reduce his energy consumption, which reduced his energy output in the form of lowered strength and speed.

However, his defense did not suffer all that much.

His passive defensive techniques like Adamant Reforging were completely unaffected by Weaving Blood. His active defensive techniques like Flux Earther and Inner Divergence did not suffer all that much because they were not super energy consumptive in the first place.

Thus his defense as a whole was barely affected by Weaving Blood.

However, with this poison, he could create a way to empower his Weaving Blood at the cost of defense and durability. He could apply small doses of the poison to his outer flesh, causing it to

Of course, this wasn't something that he would do every time, or even sometimes. However, if he ever came across a Martial Artists where he truly needed his healing and regeneration skills more than anything, then he had no problem using it in such circumstances.

More than anything, it helped him make his first step in fulfilling Project Metabody much more fulfilling. If he could tap into this idea, he could fully be able to acquire a Martial body centered around healing.

Rui glanced at Squire Herea with gratitude, confusing her.

"I apologize for that," He replied. "I am grateful, nonetheless."

Suddenly, his pressure and aura flared.

An immense amount of peril radiated from him, so much so that it seemed to grind the very atmosphere between them.

"Allow me to fight you with everything I have,"

Rui raised his hand, showing his knuckle to her.

Her eyes widened as she saw that the area that she had poisoned was already returning to its original skin tone!

Somehow, Rui was able to deal with the symptoms caused by her poison. It was an incredible achievement, but it was one that she didn't quite understand.

How was he doing that?

Did he somehow already have some amount of resistance to the poison that she was using?

That sounded too absurd. Martial Artists generally did not go out of their way to gain resistance and immunity to random poisons. There were far too many, and while it was possible to gain resistance against broader categories of poisons, that was even more difficult, a process that took years.

Yet, here Rui was, able to handle the main kind of poison that she employed in combat.

Yet Rui did not even give her any time to think about it. He rushed forward with a surge of energy.

BAM!!!

A powerful Flowing Canon, armed with the power of Outer Convergence and Reverberating Lance crashed into her guard!

CRACK!

She gritted her teeth as the sheer impact cracked her bone.

('Her defense is quite weak, I'm guessing she relies on her lethal offense ending the game against her opponent because they can cause too much damage against her.

In a way, an extremely lethal offense could serve as a powerful defense. Her poison techniques were powerful enough to either take her opponents down quickly or deter them from going anywhere near her.

POW POW POW!

Rui pummeled her with powerful blows, uncaring for his greening hands.

He was probably the first Martial Artist that she had ever met that made contact with her so carelessly, and didn't seem to suffer any consequences at all.

Each blow rattled her defense.

What was probably truly astonishing to her was that his Martial body seemed to be too overpowered.

His raw power and speed were high despite his incredible ability to heal from the damage caused by her poison.

Normally, Rui would have low power and speed when using Weaving Blood, but in this case, his energy reserves and stamina were being bolstered due to the fact that the autophagy activated with Hungry Pain was eating up the cells killed by the poison before quickly converting them into energy, compounds, and nutrition.

That was why he could employ his power and speed more unscrupulously in this battle compared to his normal battles.

However, his defense was weakened due to his passive durability being lowered due to the poison killing cells in his outer flesh.

Had she mounted any offense on him at that point in time, it would have been effective, but her problem was that that was her offense, she did not use anything other than poison, and that technique alone was supposed to be quite lethal to normal Martial Artists.

Unfortunately, it was ineffective against Rui, he simply could not be bested so easily.

That left her with simply no cards to play whatsoever. And while she tried, the battle ended much more abruptly than she had thought it would.

POW!

A swift kick to the jaw ended the fight, knocking her out unconscious.

"Winner; Guardian Falken!"

Rui nodded, before leaving the arena without paying her a second look. He had nothing else to do with her, after all.

Instead, he was more interested in the gains that he had made while fighting her. It wasn't very often that he made epiphanies in the middle of a battle but it appeared that each and every single one of them was quite valuable and significant.

In a way, the battle was a filter against bad ideas. After all, only the truly good ideas were so good that they could drag away your attention for just the briefest of moments. Rui intended to go all and fight all the Martial Squires that he had taken note of in the previous battle one by one, before setting out to explore this new idea that he had come up with.

('Ah...') He paused as he turned back. ('I should ask her for the details first.')

Chapter 1119: Rush

Rui did not stop there. He went on to challenge three more guardians in the following days.

He defeated all of them, but not a single one of them was able to defeat him.

Many of the sharper guardians that had been following his streak had managed to notice some patterns in these duels.

They noticed that he was indeed aiming for guardians with lethally offensive Martial Art, but also, he had also gained some new healing abilities that allowed him to heal from the lethal attacks that they dealt out.

Many put two and two together and realized that the reason that Rui had chosen them was merely to test something new, most likely.

That was even more surprising than if he just fought them to get to higher and higher chambers.

It showed that, unlike most guardians, Rui did not necessarily conform to the norms. He didn't make slow increments, increasing his rank bit by bit.

Rather, he seemed driven by progress in his Martial Path more than progress in aiming for higher chambers.

However, it became clear to many that Rui was holding back from the very start, it also corroborated the rumors that many had heard about him being one of the two guardians that had managed to beat Senior Xanarn in her base form.

It appeared that there was more to him than met the eye.

It was clear to everyone present that Rui would most likely become one of the top Martial Squires of the Floating Sect.

The feats that he had managed to pull off were so surprising and shocking that it really was hard to actually imagine how strong he was.

It also begged the question to many why Rui did not immediately aim for higher classes when he first arrived at the Floating Sect.

He had spent more than two months at the chamber that he had first won. Due to that, many had assumed that he simply did not have any confidence to go higher, nor the caliber.

Now, it was clear to everyone that they were wrong.

No one knew for sure how he would rise, but it was pretty clear to most people that he was at least going to end up in the first class of the sect eventually.

However, it appeared that Rui was satisfied after reaching the second class of chambers after defeating a total of five opponents very rapidly. He no longer challenged anyone and simply secluded himself in training.

Many frowned at this, it did not appear as though he had particularly struggled against any of his opponents. Instead, he had gone as far as to take them down rather decisively.

So why had he stopped?

Not only had he stopped, but he completely disappeared, seeming to have buried himself away inside his chamber.

Unbeknownst to them, Rui was exploring a new element to add to his most recent technique Weaving Blood.

Technically, the project wasn't over because he was still only testing the technique's effectiveness as a way to control his spec configuration to produce a configuration that was slanted toward healing.

This meant that he was still in the development phase after the initial testing phase. This was how he had conducted the original development of the VOID algorithm, thus he wasn't unfamiliar with the process at all.

It was rarely the case that a development project only had one testing phase. Usually, it required quite a lot of trial and error to eventually get to the end result. If anything, it was his other technique projects this time that had sailed by smoothly.

However, it appeared that Project Metabody was going to be a much more long-term project than he had expected.

While he certainly had always known that it would take quite some time to get there, he hadn't suspected that his progress would be this slow.

Weaving Blood was just one small piece of what he was trying to accomplish with Project Metabody.

However, he was quite satisfied with the progress he had made thus far. For instance, Weaving Blood was so good that he was able to beat his opponents quite soundly without even using a predictive model for several of them.

That was quite amazing to him. He was this strong without the predictive model, after all. Just how strong was he when he used Weaving Blood against the perfect opponent along with a predictive model?

The sheer quality of his adaptation would be way higher in such circumstances. Furthermore, once he finished Project Metabody, the end result would be truly beyond shocking. It would be as though Rui's very existence would adapt to his opponent's existence.

That was a profound thought to consider.

What would it look like if his very existence adapted to take down his opponent? Just the pattern recognition system alone was very powerful, he couldn't even imagine how devastating he would become if he could adapt everything about himself to defeat an opponent.

('Embodying your Martial Art...') Rui considered the idea. ('I wonder if that is one of the pre-requisites for the higher Realms.')

Rui recalled an epiphany that he had quite some time ago in the Shionel Confederation. A profound realization that his Martial Art was, in some sense, him, his life's work.

He thought about it for a few seconds before shrugging. ('Too abstract, let's get back to work.')

He had managed to procure the details of the poison that Squire Herea used, and now he was interested in seeing how he could integrate the poison into his body in some way to trigger the same kind of cell death that it did when she used it against him so that he could accelerate some cell death to give more fuel to his Weaving Blood, allowing it to grow stronger. It would mean that in a time where he truly needed Weaving Blood to save him, he would be able to empower as much as was needed, allowing him to survive what he would have otherwise not been able to.

Chapter 1120: Empower

"The poison is known as Reaper's Dew." Squire Herea told him. "It's black in its natural state, though your skin turns green when you condition your body to handle it."

"Interesting..." Rui narrowed his eyes. "And I can get that poison and that technique in the Floating Sect, right?"

"Certainly," She nodded. "I trained it further when I came here thanks to the abundant growth resources."

She turned towards Rui with a raised eyebrow. "Why are you interested in the technique, though? You aren't a poison-oriented Martial Artist, and you negated that poison like it was nothing so I don't expect you to care for it."

"I'm an all-rounder," Rui replied blandly. "I dip my toe in all fields, in theory, and principle anyway."

"You're no all-rounder," She furrowed her eyebrow at his words. "No all-rounder would have been able to handle my poison as well as you did. I don't how your healing countered Reaper's Dew so well, but that is not something an all-rounder can do. Furthermore, you were stronger and faster than me, but not to the degree an all-rounder of the same grade would have been. Your spec configuration would have been."

Rui smiled at her words. He had no intention of spreading around what his Martial Path actually was, not only would it perhaps give people an opportunity to counter him.

('Maybe that's a good thing,') Rui mused.

Perhaps if he spread the word about his Martial Art and made a bunch of the guardians work hard to find a solution should Rui ever challenge them, then he would find Martial Artists who spotted shortcomings or flaws in his Martial Art and worked hard to try and exploit them.

In doing so, he just very well might come across another avenue of improvement, one that he missed because he was unable to see the forest for the trees due to how closely involved he was.

In that case, he might be able to indirectly speed up the rate of growth of his Martial Art and gain strength in ways that he would never have been able to do so.

That was one positive. It was actually quite exciting for Rui.

('All my life, I've adapted to others to take them down, perhaps now it ought to be the other way around for once,') Rui mused.

The guardians above him will at least consider the matter and how they would go about handling his Martial Art.

The guardians below him will probably consider the matter for if they ever challenged him for his chamber.

Maybe he could have the entire Martial sect hyped to take down his exotic Martial Art.

On the other hand, he was afraid of Chairman Deacon somehow getting word of someone with Rui's Martial Art appearing out of nowhere and then sending someone to investigate the matter

Of course, this was particularly unlikely, especially given the circumstances that they were in.

The Floating Sect was essentially in complete lockdown martial law. There was basically zero flux of information between the Floating Sect and the outside world at the moment.

The probability that word would spread after the war was over was truly minuscule. There was essentially no way that Chairman Deacon could gain information on what was going on within the island.

That was why Rui seriously considered disclosing his Martial Path.

"My Martial Path is adaptive evolution," Rui casually revealed.

She frowned, turning towards him. "What?"

"Adaptive evolution is essentially the process of evolving and growing stronger by adapting to one's opponent," Rui simply replied. "So I am an all-rounder but not a static one. I change to adapt to my opponent."

Her eyes widened.

This was a Martial Art, unlike anything she had ever seen. But it also made sense when she recalled the ease with which he overcame her Martial Art.

Yet what she hadn't realized was that Rui hadn't even used the entirety of his Martial Art, he just used Weaving Blood alone.

('Would I have been able to beat her without the full scope of the pattern recognition, before I created Weaving Blood?') Rui pondered.

That was difficult to answer. But even if he could, he would not have done it as well as he did with Weaving Blood.

In essence, Weaving Blood almost allowed him to adapt to her as well as the pattern recognition system did.

That was an incredible discovery.

It meant that had he used the pattern recognition system and Weaving Blood simultaneously, he very well may have been able to adapt twice as much as he could have with just the pattern recognition system alone.

That was quite the breakthrough, it meant that he was right when he wondered whether Project Metabody had the potential to rival the pattern recognition system in terms of adaptive evolution. It was actually on par with it if all the other body adaptations were as perfectly suited to their opponent as Weaving Blood was against Squire Herea.

Furthermore, this was before Rui came up with the idea of improving his adapted Martial body of Weaving Blood with an element of poison.

('I wonder how the Martial Heart will interact with my Martial body,')

He knew that the Martial Heart empowered the body in a way that was best suited for the Martial Path because the body's spec configuration was already attuned to the Martial Art from the get-go, any empowerment to that would ultimately also be compatible with that.

However, how would it affect him now that he had the ability to change that spec configuration to a certain extent? Once he completed Project Metabody, how would the Martial Heart empower it?

Would it empower it in the manner of his original spec configuration, or his adapted one?

Rui preferred the latter, but it was possible that the former would occur.

('I should consult Senior Xanarn about it sometime,') He mused.

He put the matter aside for the time being and focused on the issue at hand.