

Martial Unity 1131

Chapter 1131: Voidspeed

('Tsk, he has too much power,') Rui tutted.

That statement was true in many ways.

Not only was guardian Tokugawa stronger than he had expected, but he also probably had a lot of power and influence within the Floating Sect.

Being the strongest guardian meant that he did have a lot of influence within the sect, second to only the three Martial Seniors.

Furthermore, the Floating Sect was in a state of absolute war, people like Tokugawa Ieyasu were absolute treasures whose value was second only to, again, the Martial Seniors of the sect.

That was why Rui knew that he could probably get away with killing Kane if he wanted to. The Floating Sect was not going to punish the only individual Martial Squire that was a threat to Martial Seniors without their Martial Heart during the war.

This was the kind of influence he gained from being that strong.

And strong he was, Rui had to admit. The man was able to outpace someone as powerful as Kane in maneuvering while clearly not going all out even when it came to maneuvering. If he was even remotely as powerful when it came to offense and defense as he was with maneuvering, then his true full power was far beyond any Martial Squire that Rui had ever seen. The man's power was era-defining.

Regardless, it wasn't enough to deter Rui. He immediately got to the edge of the arena.

If he saw anything that indicated that the man was going to move in to kill Kane, he absolutely would intervene without any doubt. There was no way that he was going to just stand by and watch his best friend die, regardless of what the rules were.

It appeared that Kane was unwilling to resign since it was clear that guardian Tokugawa Ieyasu was clearly not done with whatever it was that he wanted from Kane. If Kane resigned, it was unlikely that he would give up so easily. He would most likely challenge Kane again, and they would be back to square one.

He nodded in approval when Kane deactivated Fulminata.

He could not use Fulminata and Void Step simultaneously, unfortunately. The reason for that was that the Fulminata technique ran on reflexes while the Void Step technique required conscious thought.

Kane immediately leaped into action, disappearing into thin air.

That earned a reaction from all the guardians. Each of them had decently powerful senses, and many of them had particularly powerful senses.

Yet none of them were able to sense Kane, barring two of them.

CLASP!

Tokugawa caught Kane's attack, forcing him to stop maneuvering as he didn't let go of his attack.

POW!

He smashed Kane away without inflicting too much force on him.

Kane grimaced as he retreated. Yet, rather than simply returning to the normal Void Step stance, he paused, crouching as he took a sprinting stance.

Rui immediately realized what he was going for.

('He's using the original Godspeed technique.')

He actually approved of the choice. The Fulminata technique allowed him to control the speed of Godspeed to a far greater degree than he could without it. However, it was far slower than Godspeed as a result.

He had already used it extensively against Tokugawa, and it most certainly wasn't enough.

In fact, Rui highly doubted that the original Godspeed technique was enough to even possibly have a shot against someone of the caliber of Tokugawa.

However, these three techniques weren't the only powerful techniques that Kane had. Rui knew that he had one more technique. The technique that had given him enough individuality to allow him to become a Squire candidate.

It was a technique that he had worked hard on, yet one that wasn't used nearly as ubiquitously due to how limiting it was.

Yet it was also the most powerful technique in his arsenal.

"Fuuu..." He exhaled deeply, going all out as he activated Godspeed at its absolute maximum.

A profound sense of pressure exuded from him, stirring even his opponent

Just the briefest whisper escaped his lips subconsciously.

"Voidspeed."

He disappeared.

The technique was the only place where he could combine the power of Void Step and Godspeed for just the briefest of moments through trained pre-programmed movements.

He would disappear in the senses of everyone around him, while also using Godspeed to cross the distance between them.

Yet...

THWACK!

...It wasn't enough.

Kane appeared ten meters behind Ieyasu, motionless for a moment.

THUD

He collapsed to the ground, unconscious.

For several seconds, no one said a word.

No one had even understood what had happened. Only Rui and Ieyasu possessed a full awareness of what had transpired.

Kane had crossed the distance between them with Godspeed and Void Step, yet before he could even launch an attack, Ieyasu struck him hard on the neck, knocking him out.

He didn't stop as a result, only collapsing after he fully lost consciousness.

The fight was over.

Rui heaved a sigh of relief. He could hear that Kane was just fine when he examined him with Seismic Mapping and Tempestuous Feel. His heart was beating, and he was breathing just fine.

He turned his attention back to Ieyasu with narrowed eyes.

('The fact that he knocked Kane out... He got what he came for.') Rui tutted inwardly.

He didn't know if Ieyasu had already mastered the technique, or had simply gotten everything he needed from Kane to master the technique however he wanted.

He suspected that the truth was probably closer to the latter than the former. It was too absurd to be able to skip months of training just because his Martial Art was an imitative evolution.

It made more sense that he needed time to digest and improve what he saw, to varying degrees.

('Or perhaps easier Martial Art can be replicated quickly, while harder ones take longer?')

Rui didn't know what his limits were, but whatever they were, it did not take away from the fact that he was extremely powerful as a Martial Artist.

Chapter 1132: Considerations

"Urgh..." Kane groaned as he woke up on a bed in the medical bay.

"You feeling ok?" Rui asked.

"Hm?" Kane blinked a few times before he recognized Rui. "What... happened?"

"You tried Voidspeed and he shut it down, knocking you out in the process." Rui briefly explained.

"...Oh yeah," Kane sighed. "Well, I knew I couldn't beat him."

"You probably did far better than an overwhelming majority of guardians though." Rui offered, aiming to console him.

Kane shrugged. "He's not someone that can be taken down very easily, not even by you honestly."

Rui couldn't disagree. He needed to grow stronger, that was for sure.

"Still," Kane sighed. "It's not fun being beaten, but for some reason, I'm always running into the greatest Martial Artists of my generation, and of my Realm."

He referred to Rui in the former, and Ieyasu in the latter.

The latter was far older than both of them, he was a middle-aged man who was far older than both of them combined.

Physically, at least.

That meant that he had spent decades as a Martial Artist, compared to Rui's nine years. In that respect, Rui and Kane were definitely ahead. The two of them had far more potential as Martial Artists.

Rui, his rate of growth after becoming a Martial Artist was unprecedented. He had started off later than average, but he had become a Martial Squire extremely quickly after becoming a Martial Apprentice. Though he wasn't the youngest Martial Squire, he was one of the fastest growers when it came to his growth from the Apprentice Realm to the Squire Realm.

At the rate that he was going, Kane had a sinking feeling that he might break a record for the youngest Martial Senior in history.

Martial Seniors were not young, the youngest one became a Martial Senior at the age of thirty.

It couldn't be helped, forging an immense amount of individuality into one's Martial Art was extremely difficult and was not something that was very practical to be able to complete in the span of years.

This was something that could be forgotten when one spent too much time beside Rui, who was overflowing with seemingly limitless individuality. However, Kane was far slower than him when it came to innovating and developing new techniques from scratch or from other techniques.

And yet, he knew that he was far better than the average Martial Artist, largely thanks to Rui's influence on his thought process when it came to growing stronger.

The average Martial Squire struggled with individuality, largely because they didn't have the necessary life experience, both in regards to quality and quantity, to be able to apply themselves to create individualistic techniques.

Yet Rui just rolled past them and developed his Martial Art like it was an ordinary task and not something that most Martial Artists struggled with and it was the reason that most Martial Artists did not make it to higher Realms.

"Do you plan on challenging him at any point?" Kane asked.

Rui considered the question for a moment, before nodding. "He's a good standard to hold myself to. The more I push myself, the stronger I'll become. He also has an extremely exciting Martial Path."

Rui turned towards Kane. "Also, I now have the incentive of avenging you."

Kane snorted as he got up, cracking his neck. "I'm not dead, y'know."

The two of them returned back to their chambers after bantering for a bit.

Rui urgently wanted to return to his training and research. He was even more motivated to find options for the offensive Martial Body.

However, at the moment, he hadn't made any headway, which was rather disappointing. However, he realized that he had gotten pretty lucky with Forestep, Hungry Pain, and Weaving Blood.

He realized that Project Metabody was probably not going to be something that he could speedrun if he simply singlemindedly dedicated himself to the matter. It might even turn into a long-term project the way Project Water did.

This did not sit well with him. He did hope to finish it sooner than later, not only because he wanted to gain the power to beat guardian Tokugawa, but at the end of the day, he also had not forgotten the broader goals that he had in mind.

The long-term goal of gaining enough power within ten years to be able to protect his family, the sub-goal of becoming a Martial Senior well within this period, and then further sub-goals like Project Metabody came after that.

However, it was important nonetheless. He did think that Project Metabody would give his Martial Art the necessary individuality to be able to unearth his Martial Heart. With enough time, he would have achieved a body that could handle the power of his Martial Heart.

He shook his head sighing. He still had some ways to go before he finally got to that stage. For the moment, he just needed to focus on individuality and his body, everything else came second.

However, he considered taking a break from Project Metabody if it stalled too much. Unlike normal techniques, Project Metabody was not something that he could finish in a short amount of time, especially when he was restricted to a particular location that did not have the best learning resources when it came to things like esoteric substances or any of the other avenues of research that he had been looking into for a solution to be able to manipulate his body the way that he was hoping for.

('Maybe I'm not thinking far and wide enough,') Rui considered.

There was more to the world, especially this world, that he didn't know about. Part of the issue was that he was stuck on the island unable to leave it or go further beyond the information that he had.

It was a shame that the war hampered his ability to leave the island. Even if the Kaddar nations allowed people to leave, they would not allow them to rejoin.

Chapter 1133: Virus

The search for a solution was actually harder than Rui expected. The Floating Sect's library wasn't bad, not at all. Because they were so isolated from human civilization, they had grown to become developed in all fields beyond what a normal sect would.

This included having a decently flourished library with information on various topics. If they ever happened to be in need of information and needed to scour through the literature of any field, they could do so with better ease.

This specifically applied to the various professionals of the Floating Sect that had important occupations that weren't centered around Martial Art. Thus there was just enough literature for him to not be dissatisfied.

However, the library had a greater breadth as opposed to depth.

It contained literature from many fields but did not go too deep in each field.

In fact, Rui had already gone through all the literature on esoteric material science, but he had recently realized that the depth of the literature of the Floating Sect was not enough for him to find a solution to all of his problems.

That did not mean that there was no solution to the problem anywhere in the field of esoteric material science. It was an incredibly broad field with many seemingly fantastical solutions.

It took about a month of digging to realize that the literature on esoteric material science in the Floating Sect library was not going to lead him wherever he wanted to be.

"Does whatever you're looking for have to be in esoteric material science?" Kane asked after Rui told him about his recent problems.

It was an interesting question.

"Of course not," Rui replied. "In fact, I've been going through considering symbiotic Martial Art techniques as well."

"You haven't had that much success there either, right?" Kane asked.

"No, unfortunately."

"Then maybe you should just look elsewhere," Kane replied. "Like, just go through the entire library. It would be impossible for anybody else, but for you, it would actually be quite feasible. Who knows, you might find something."

That was actually not a completely bad suggestion.

While it was true that he did expect to find his offensive Martial Body in the esoteric material science fields, he ought not to hold on to those expectations very strongly. Especially now that he had already confirmed that the extent of the literature on those two fields had not yielded the results that he wanted.

It was better than nothing, even if the probability of finding a solution was lower.

Still, he wasn't even sure how far he ought to take that. He definitely did not think reading the entire library was an idea worth spending time on, but stepping out of the two primary fields that he had focused on was worth considering.

At the moment, it was the only thing he could do, he could not leave the Floating for the time being, so he didn't have access to any other avenue of information. He could only work with what he had.

However, he was not going to read an entire library, that was simply not worth the time that would go with

"I'll do just that, I suppose," He sighed. "Appreciate the advice."

He began with esoteric medicine, just because it was closest when it came to the human body. He went into it with very little to no expectations about whether it could possibly help him or not.

His expectations were overturned.

A month into the research, he came across something truly fascinating.

[Herenal Disease]

This was a strange and rare disease where the patient was afflicted with a herenal bacterial infection. This virus triggers rapid muscle hypertrophy, causing them to grow larger and more dense, disproportionately increasing the energy consumption of the body, causing weakness due to lack of nutrition, and causing the afflicted organism to eventually die.

Rui grew more interested based on his initial impression.

Just based on the first paragraph describing the disease, it was weird, but there was potential there strangely enough.

The bacteria was speculated to consume some of the products produced by muscles. Thus organisms with larger and more powerful muscles were ideal for the virus, that was why it had evolved to cause temporary muscle hypertrophy in patients afflicted by the bacteria in the first place.

It was simply a way to generate more sustenance for the bacteria in the first place.

Rui read on as he grew increasingly fascinated by the matter. Yet in his head, the idea of employing a bacterial infection to allow him to partially achieve the offensive Martial Body was something that was not possible.

However, it was only then that he began putting aside his bias and considering the prospect of a virus being the solution to his problem.

That was the wildest part of all of this. As insane as the idea sounded, he was not able to see a particularly strong logical argument for why this would necessarily be a bad idea.

There was the possibility that this disease could affect him severely, but according to the data that he came across, it primarily affected normal humans, and Martial Squires was an extremely upgraded version of normal humans.

In fact, there was a realistic possibility that his immune system would just annihilate the virus. That was not something that he desired, and he needed to make sure that this truly was a viable option rather than just a pipe dream.

That meant that he had a lot of studying and researching to do. It was no different from jumping into a brand-new field since that was what was happening.

('I can also consult experts in the field.') He knew that the Floating Sect had a robust and rigorous medical department with professionals that could be of aid to him in his endeavor to potentially weaponize this disease and make it a part of his Martial Art. He was going to need all the qualified help that he could get, that was for sure.

Chapter 1134: Escalate

"I'm sorry, did you say that you wished to weaponize the Martial Art and make it a part of your technique?" The man before Rui stared at him with a bewildered expression. After all, it wasn't every day that a Martial Squire approached him looking for aid on how to turn the Herenal's Disease into a weapon for himself.

"It's technically possible, correct?" Rui asked him.

The man reluctantly nodded. "It is technically possible based on the plan that you have brought forth. However, the probability of success is rather low. Unfortunately, the Martial Body is just too strong and very difficult to harm with diseases that harm normal humans."

"However, an increased dose, one that would be lethal to humans, would induce the same effect in Martial Squires that normal doses in humans do, correct?"

"Yes..." The man hesitated once more.

Rui couldn't blame him for his reluctance or his compunctions.

He had probably never heard of a Martial Art technique that involved willingly becoming diseased.

Neither had Rui.

That was why he was also skeptical of it.

The fact of the matter was that this wasn't even a symbiote that evolved with the purpose of cooperating.

This was a disease, it evolved to harm the body for its own sustenance. There was no question that if he did something wrong, the virus would do what it was supposed to and would either harm him a lot or potentially even death in the worst-case scenario.

('Then again, I inserted a poison that causes literal cell death, into my body.') He mused.

How much worse could it get?

That did not mean he was willing to try it out no matter what.

What he needed was more data and information on the virus and its effects on Martial Bodies for him to be absolutely certain.

Unfortunately, such data was almost certainly available at the Floating Sect. There was absolutely no way that they had any literature on such a niche topic. That was why he needed to go to a place that would have a more in-depth on the matter.

('Tsk, it's a shame that I didn't make these breakthroughs in Crexeet Town.') Rui tutted.

He was quite certain that place would have the research that he was looking for.

Of course, he was aware that he would not have made the breakthroughs in Crexeet Town had he spent all this time there than on Floating Sect.

The latter exposed him to a large community of elite high-grade Martial Squires, it pushed him forward in ways that Crexeet Town simply couldn't. The pressure that he experienced in Crexeet Town was non-existent.

The conflicts that he and Kane were obligated to partake in were rather inconsequential to Rui, especially compared to the conflict between the Floating Sect and the Kaddar Treaty Organization.

He and Kane could nearly singlehandedly mop up the entirety of their opposition in that it was insignificant, compared to the both of them.

Ultimately, humans were creatures that conformed to pressure, and it appeared that not even Martial Squires were exempt from this.

In recent times, his growth rate had been greater due to the fact that he had been subjecting himself to a lot of pressure. The Shionel Confederation and the Shionel Dungeon had made him grow stronger unlike anything else did.

His growth rate during the time when he was simply fulfilling missions as he tried to garner some experience and cash. He made decent progress, but it simply wasn't enough nonetheless.

('I would have never arrived at Project Metabody had I continued leading that kind of life.') Rui tutted as he roasted his previous lifestyle. ('But in exchange, I can't see my family until I become not just a Martial Senior, but also a strong one at that.')

He also would have never stumbled open the need to introduce a disease into his body voluntarily. That didn't mean it was either or bad.

It all depended on what the data said.

('Again, Crexeet Town,')

He might revisit the place once the war ended briefly, just to get the information that he needed, before getting back.

However, just information wasn't enough, that means he needed to actually get his hands on the disease. That was one of the reasons that this would be very difficult even if everything worked out and was possible. After all, if a disease was rare, that meant actually getting hands on the actual disease was not going to be easy.

What he needed was a swift way to not only get his hands on it but also ensure that qualified professionals handled the procedure.

However, that couldn't happen for as long as the war between the Floating Sect and the Kaddar Region raged on. As long as it raged on, he wouldn't be able to leave Ajanta Island.

That was frustrating.

It was frustrating because the war did not seem to be ending too soon.

There were too many Martial Squires, and neither side deployed enough to be able to speed up the process of the Squire-level combat, but not good enough for Rui.

Unfortunately, there was simply nothing that he could do about it at the moment. That was the biggest issue.

('Time to fight harder.')

He narrowed his eyes.

He wasn't sure how much help it would be, but as long as he fought harder for the Floating Sect he could marginally impact the rate at which the Squire-level combat phase of the war could speed up so that there were little to no ways that he could possibly be stalled for any longer than even a single second.

Literally too, because Martial Artists possessed far superior combat cognitive speeds. They were not going to miss that gap even with martial Artists. One of the things that Rui knew was that there was little to no way he wasn't going to do everything in his power to ensure that he could to Crexet Town as early as possible, and get everything that he needed.

Chapter 1135: Change

Unfortunately, the war raged on for longer than he had hoped. Month after month, a few dozen Martial Squires would die inevitably.

Given that the scale of combat was rather large, it was actually a small number that was lower than predicted.

The reason that it was lower than normal was because the duration of the battle was shorter.

The reason for that was that the weapon that the Kaddar Treaty Organization used actually appeared to have a time limit. It could not be used continuously without any limitations whatsoever or anything like that.

The weapon's time limit had long been measured by the Kaddar Treaty Organization. That was the reason that each conflict between the Floating Sect and the Kaddar Treaty Organisation did not reach its true natural conclusions, and was in a way cut short before they could reach their proper climax.

This was probably something that frustrated both sides, but was also probably not something that either side could possibly deal with with ease. That was the reason that the clashes were so frequent.

If each clash lasted as long as they would organically have lasted had it been a normal war. And many Martial Squires would have passed away with each battle, that was the trade away. It would also finish quickly.

At the rate that things were moving, it would take quite some time before both sides had bled enough.

Regardless, he continued to fight in the war, fighting like a demon as he defended his current temporary training place.

Rui's performance was eye-drawing. While it wasn't nearly as overwhelming as Squire Tokugawa Ieyasu, he was still performing extremely well.

That was one of the reasons that Rui's fame in the Floating Sect continued to escalate.

It was often the case that he would take down the most powerful Martial Squires standing on the field. Rather than taking down many smaller fries, he focused on taking out the heavy hitters of the Kaddar Treaty Organization. That was why Rui knew that the best way to contribute to the war was by taking down the peak of what they had to offer.

Furthermore, fighting powerful grade-nine and grade-ten Martial Squires was a good exercise for him.

Every once in a while he would end up fighting a Martial Artist whose Martial Art was just perfect to get countered by one of the three Martial Bodies that Rui had created.

That on top of the pattern recognition system meant that every time Rui managed to nail the Martial Body, he would be able to counter them to a degree that not even he had seen before.

After all, these instances were quite endearing and made the weight of the battle lighten up for him, allowing him to make the most of the battle with a calm and relaxed mind.

Floating Sect had always had a small advantage, but it was as though that small advantage had been magnified by the very existence of Rui going all out during battles.

He even volunteered for these defenses against the Kaddar Treaty Organization every time because that was what would help speed up the war.

That was why Rui was shocked that the Kaddar Treaty Organization made an announcement.

It announced that it was going to be deploying Senior-level military assets in the physical conflict between the Floating Sect and the Kadar Treaty organization.

This came as a shock to everybody. The Kaddar Region had been hesitating about deploying Martial Seniors because the nations that deployed them would be weakened, and the nations of the Martial Seniors that passed away in combat, would be completely devastated.

In a region where the peak of Martial Art was Martial Seniors, each and every Martial Senior was nothing short of a national treasure.

No nation wanted to be the one that prematurely was parted from their Martial Seniors, and worse, be the ones that lost them permanently.

That was why Rui was shocked that the Kaddar Treaty organization had finally managed to get its shit together and actually present a proper united front when it came to Senior-level combat against the Floating Sect.

That meant that the three Martial Seniors of the Floating Sect were finally in turn to do their part in the battle against the Kaddar Treaty Organization.

Though many people probably found it stupid that the Kaddar Treaty Organization went out of announcing the fact that they were deploying Martial Seniors, Rui actually understood why they had done so.

The war was taking a toll on their economies and their societies. This was one avenue where the Floating Sect had an advantage over the Kaddar Region. The Floating Sect was a singular group with a very direct chain of command, and its members were employees who were all coerced into being a part of the group and remaining a part of the group. The guardians were Martial Squires who were aware of the incentives and disincentives and still chose to be a part of the Floating Sect despite that because the benefits outweighed the detriment.

That meant that the Floating Sect did not have an economy or a society that could be dissuaded from remaining there just because of a war.

The same could not be said for the civilian populations of the Kaddar Region, that meant that had the war dragged on too much, then many civilians would have simply gotten sick of the war and moved house from the Kaddar Region to another Region outside it.

A mass emigration of those exiting the country was not something that any of the governments of the nations of the Kaddar Region wanted.

That was why the Kaddar Treaty Organization had announced that the dire situation had forced several key members into finally acquiescing and partaking in the war against the Floating Sect much more wholeheartedly.

The announcement of the Martial Seniors assault was something that greatly reassured the citizens of the Kaddar Region that the war was going to come to an end, one way or another.

Chapter 1136: Summon

The announcement came as a shock to the Floating Sect, many of the guardians were rather startled by this. Given that for more than half a year, the conflict had been restricted to the Squire Realm, the prospect that the war would escalate to the Senior Realm seemed low.

Yet, the Kaddar Treaty Organization had decided that enough was enough and that it was time to finish this once and for all.

This was unnerving to all of the guardians of the Floating Sect because it meant that they were now part of a conflict where their strength was no longer going to be deciding the outcome.

Of course, given that the strongest forces of both sides of the war were at the Senior Realm, it could be said that they never truly were the deciding outcome.

Of course, Rui had not come to learn that Martial Squires was not as irrelevant in battles pertaining to the Senior Realm as he had expected.

The reason for that was because the Martial Heart was the thing that truly separated Martial Seniors from Martial Squires. Without the Martial Heart, their combat prowess would fall off from the Senior Realm and plummet well below.

It was possible for large groups of powerful Martial Squires to make a difference in the outcomes between Martial Seniors.

Or one extremely powerful Martial Squire.

Regardless, it would explain why the Kaddar nations would have liked to mow down the guardians of the Floating Sect.

And it wasn't as though they hadn't been successful about that whatsoever, it was just that although they had mowed down a lot of guardians, they had suffered an even greater loss in exchange. They had suffered tremendously in their efforts to kill the Martial Squires of the Floating Sect.

The Martial Squires of the Floating Sect were special, they were the cream of the crop. Not only were they powerful Martial Artists, but their mental qualities were also very high.

They had overcome many life-threatening obstacles to reach where they had gotten to, and to maintain where they had gotten to required a strong mentality that could not be found in the average Martial Squire.

Even if the Kaddar Treaty Organization did its best to gather the best of the best that it could, it simply couldn't beat the years of filtering initiatives and the refining of guardians. On average, the Floating Sect simply had a higher quality of Martial Artists.

The Kaddar Treaty Organization compensated for the gap in quality with sheer quantity, throwing seemingly endless waves of Martial Artists at the Floating Sect.

This led to an extremely costly expenditure on maintaining the war effort. The Floating Sect did not have such expenditure, and that was one of the advantages that it had over the Kaddar nations.

All of the guardians fighting for the Floating Sect fought in exchange for the privilege of training at the Floating Sect. The Floating Sect did not have to go above and beyond to bring them over only for them to die, it had already amassed highly elite defenders.

That was probably one of the reasons that the Kaddar Treaty Organization eventually relented.

Trying to win the war in the Squire Realm was untenable.

The same could not be said for Martial Seniors. The Martial Seniors of the Floating Sect were most certainly not at the peak of the Senior Realm the way that the guardians of the Floating Sect were.

However, they did have the home-court advantage. It meant that as long as they fought anywhere above-board the island, the Martial Seniors of the Kaddar Region were going to have to struggle even if they arrived with a numerical advantage.

However, this did not mean that the situation was comforting for a lot of the guardians because it meant that they would have to be too close to Senior-level combat. While all of the guardians were confident about fighting against their peers, it was an entirely different matter when Martial Artists of higher Realms were involved.

Regardless, it meant that things were changing, but not necessarily for the better.

As soon as Rui had learned that the war had escalated to the Senior Realm, he knew that he would probably be called by the three Martial Seniors

He also predicted that Kane and Ieyasu would also be called.

And he was right.

Shortly after the sect spread the message about Martial Seniors, both he and Kane were instructed to meet the three Martial Seniors of the sect in the main office.

"Do you think we're in trouble?" Kane asked as the two of them walked towards the main office.

"Probably the opposite," Rui replied, before pausing to reconsider his words. "Well, actually, we might be thrown into troubling circumstances."

Kane was surprised to see Tokugawa Ieyasu already standing in the office.

In front of him were the three Martial Seniors of the Floating Sect. The three of them were not actively flexing their aura, but the pressure that they exerted on the three Martial Squires was not little. It was pressure that came with a whole other Realm of power.

"You're finally here," Senior Xanarn let out a small smile.

"We were instructed to come here to meet with you," Rui replied.

The office was quite raw and bare for a main office. The three Martial Seniors were seated on the other side of the table.

"Now that all of you are here, we can begin," Senior Sarak stated with a composed tone.

He was seated in the middle, between Senior Xanarn and Senior Leonil.

Rui's senses told him that he was the most powerful Martial Artist in the room.

"As was announced earlier today, the Kaddar Region had decided to cease holding back," Senior Sarak began. "The battle has escalated, and while the Kaddar Treaty Organization will not cease deploying Martial Squires, the focus of the battle will soon be on the battles between Martial Seniors like ourselves. The three of us will have to take our part in the war."

Chapter 1137: Qualified

"How are you going to win if there are only the three of you?" Kane asked out of the blue. It was a refreshingly straightforward question.

"We have our ways," Senior Leonil snorted, knitting his eyebrows. "The numerical advantage is indeed insurmountable had we been fighting outside of Ajanta Island, but there is a reason that the three of us have dedicated many years to the sect atop this island."

Rui remained silent, but he already knew what he was referring to. He knew that of the three of them, Senior Xanarn had a Martial Art centered around sound and had inferred that one of the other two had a Martial Art centered around breathing techniques.

Their Martial Art greatly benefited from the environment, and he was certain that this was one of the reasons that they chose to reside on an island like Ajanta Island.

Otherwise, their decision to stick so strongly with Ajanta Island did not make much sense. Why would three Martial Artists spend so much time and energy on maintaining their stronghold over an isolated piece of land that floated in the sky, isolated from the rest of human civilization that could only be reached and survived by Martial Squires and above?

It made no sense unless the boost that their power got made it was vastly greater atop the island than on the ground.

He understood their motivations, but he did not feel the same way.

In a way, the three of them had essentially fallen into the same trap that Kane had been compelled to in the Thundering Valley. His newest technique greatly benefited from the environment of that place, so much so that even Kane felt tempted to never leave that place due to how powerful he felt there.

In there, not even Tokugawa Ieyasu would be able to take him down easily with how powerful the Fulminata technique was in that environment.

Regardless, this boost in power was definitely the reason that the three of them were confident enough to take on the Martial Seniors of the Kaddar Region.

"Furthermore, we do not need to gain a decisive dominant victory," Senior Sarak continued. "We simply need to demonstrate enough power to serve as a powerful deterrent. As long as we demonstrate that we are powerful enough such that the cost of killing us and taking over the island will not be worth the price, we can force this war to end."

Rui was glad that Senior Sarak seemed like a particularly rational and logical man. He did not hold any unrealistic expectations of being able to defeat all of them in some epic clash. He had a very down-to-earth idea of how to get the war to end without a loss for the Floating Sect.

"Oh..." Kane briefly shrugged.

"May we know why you've called us here?" Ieyasu calmly asked.

"We've called the three of you because... We believe that the three of you are qualified to partake in the battle against the Martial Seniors of the Floating Sect.

Both Ieyasu and Kane expressed surprise, only Rui had been able to predict what the man was about to say.

"What?" Kane frowned, glancing at Rui. "How are we relevant to the battle against Martial Artists who are a whole Realm above us?"

"You have already defeated Martial Artists a whole Realm above you, haven't you?" Senior Leonil asked, throwing a playful expression at Senior Xanarn.

"She was not using her Martial Heart," Ieyasu replied. "Not even I can hold a candle to a proper Martial Senior using their power properly."

"We do not expect you to fight against a Martial Senior at their most powerful," Senior Xanarn replied. "What we do need is to be able to take them down after their Martial Heart is drained, and after they have lost the source of the power that makes them Martial Seniors."

Both Kane and Ieyasu quickly caught up to what the Martial Seniors were proposing.

Kane looked uncertain while Ieyasu appeared to be a lot less hesitant to take part in such an operation. Although he, rightfully, was concerned at the prospect of fighting Martial Seniors without any caveats, he was not too concerned about fighting them without their Martial Hearts, all because he was too strong.

"I don't know... This sounds a bit too much." Kan scratched his head.

"Did you not defeat Senior Xanarn head-on in conjunction with your friend here, managing to force her to use her full power?"

"Yeah, but that was just a spar," Kane complained. "This is the real thing."

"It may even be easier than when you faced off against Senior Xanarn, since you'd only be deployed when the Martial Seniors will have emptied out during the entirety of the fight," Senior Sarak said. "Thus you do not have to worry about facing some Senior-level combat threat, that is not realistic at all."

The fact that they would be deployed only after the Martial Seniors had exhausted their Martial Heart meant that they were not going to deal with these Martial Seniors while these Martial Artists were particularly at the peak of their power, was reassuring.

Even Kane was less unwilling to partake in such an operation.

Still, there were some unanswered questions left surrounding the matter.

"Why not bring in the other peak experts among the guardians?" Ieyasu asked.

"They're not good enough," Senior Sarak shook his head. "We have considered numerous candidates, however, only the three of you were able to take down a Martial Senior without a Martial Heart."

This seemed to surprise Tokugawa Ieyasu a bit. Yet he did seem to understand nonetheless. The rest of the conversation seemed to pass on without too much more of a broader contention of disagreement. There was a lot to execute such an operation lightly, there were tons of reasons that it could easily have gone wrong if the rules and guidelines were not fully explained without going in-depth into the matter and ensuring that everyone was on the same page.

Chapter 1138: Impacts

The plans that the military department came up with a strategy were centered around an endurance-based battle. One of the issues that the Floating Sect was facing was that if the three Martial Seniors of the sect fought the Martial Seniors anywhere except Ajanta Island, then the loss would come very quickly.

The only way that this could possibly be even competitive at all was on Ajanta Island where they could capitalize off of the advantages that they had.

However, fighting on the island could easily mean that the infrastructure was under grave threat due to the battle of the Martial Seniors occurring in super-close proximity. The chambers, among other things, were at risk.

Thankfully, Senior Xanarn reassured him that she was going to be on rigorous defense. Due to the sheer range of her technique, she had the ability to protect the things on the island as well as the island itself for the duration of the fight.

One thing that definitely came in handy this time was the fact that their time limitations also opposed themselves and hurt them more than it hurt the Floating Sect.

It meant that they had a limited amount of time before they could take down the Martial Seniors of the Floating Sect and win the war. This was no doubt an infuriating factor for the Kaddar region.

However, the bad news was the fact that the Kaddar Region was compensating for the lack of time by sending in as many as they could. The greater number almost certainly gave them a realistic chance that they could take them down.

However, the Martial Seniors of the Floating Sect were not just going to defend against the invaders, although they were going to fight conservatively, their goal was to drain the Martial Hearts of their opponents so that they could deploy their peak martial Squires like Ieyasu and Rui.

As for the matchups, the three of them were expected to team up and fight a single Martial Senior if it was necessary.

Of course, Rui did not think that was a good idea. Rui and Kane worked extremely well together but that was because they were quite familiar with each other.

Especially Rui when it came to Kane, he had the most robust and sophisticated understanding of Kane's fighting style among other things. He did not have that understanding when it was Ieyasu for obvious reasons.

Furthermore, Rui needed to have a good understanding of not just his teammate, but also his opponent.

He had studied Senior Xanarn for quite some time before they actually sparred, allowing him to fight against her far better than he would have had he fought against her without any of those preparations.

Without those preparations, he would have been weaker, he may not have been able to defeat her.

Still, he did have time to build predictive models on the Martial Seniors, but not nearly as much as he would have liked, but he was to only intervene after the three Martial Seniors of the Floating Sect were done fighting them with their Martial Hearts. He could use that time to thoroughly analyze them.

Furthermore, he had gotten substantially stronger since his fight with Senior Xanarn given that he effectively had three different kinds of Martial Bodies under Project Metabody. If he ran into a Martial Artist whose Martial Art was best countered by one of those Martial Bodies, then he would do extremely well.

It took him a while to convey all of that nuance to the three Martial Seniors.

"Hmm..." Senior Leonil narrowed his eyes as he considered Rui's words. "In that case, it is best that we don't initiate this plan immediately. We want to introduce you as a variable that can potentially lead to the takedown of one or two Martial Seniors."

Personally, Rui found the idea of fighting against Martial Seniors to be quite exciting. That was the reason that he was actually quite inclined to partake in this operation. Fighting against Martial Seniors, even if they were exhausted and without the Martial Heart, was more stimulating than fighting any Martial Squire.

('Well, almost any Martial Squire,') Rui glanced briefly at Ieyasu.

There was no doubt that that man was also more than capable of making an impact on a battle between even Martial Seniors at the latest stages of the battle when one has already exhausted all of their Martial Heart.

Rui was eager not to fall behind. It was a shame that the war limited his ability to develop Project Metabody any further due to the lack of the necessary learning and training resources. However, he still intended to make the very best of what he had.

Rui had advantages that only he could bring to the table. He intended to employ the VOID algorithm to make as many predictive models on as many relevant people as possible, including both allies and enemies.

In fact, he suspected that he could play a broader role in aiding the Martial Seniors taking down their counterparts across the entire battlefield. Rather than fighting hard against one person, it was possible that Rui was taking a more general form of aid that would allow him to disrupt the battlefield at opportune times, intervening mildly in different fights at different times.

This was something that he doubted Tokugawa Ieyasu would be able to do nearly as well as him for the most part.

Regardless of what role Rui played, just the fact that a Martial Squire like himself was able to partake in a battle of a higher Realm was probably unheard of.

After all, the level of power that he could effectively observe when he had preparations and was able to achieve a level of teamwork that produced a result that was far greater than the sum of parts when the parts alone were so incredibly powerful. Tokugawa Ieyasu was also of the same kind, and they were among the few Martial Squires that did not lose their relevance even in higher Realms.

Chapter 1139: Pointers

Yet the Martial Seniors frowned when Rui voiced his thoughts about his limitations and conditions.

"Requiring firsthand data on them ahead of time is troubling but not too hard to accommodate," Senior Xanarn murmured. "But the idea that you can partake in many battles at once is one that I find troubling to accept and allow. It is already pushing it to allow you three to take on Martial Seniors once their Martial Hearts have been burned out."

Rui shrugged. "It was just a suggestion. It would be easier for me to partake in a single battle at a time, so I don't necessarily mind going this route."

Rui was happy that they found him qualified to partake in Senior-level battles, even if there were heavy caveats.

None of the other guardians had been treated this way barring the ones in the room. It meant that the Martial Seniors were put the three of them above the rest.

Of course, in the case of Rui and Kane, it was partly because of how overpowered the teamwork that they demonstrated against Senior Xanarn was.

In the case of Ieyasu, he was powerful enough in his own right.

"We will require you to be on standby, available at any moment to jump into the battle." Senior Leonil added. "We can't afford to send a signal to you while we're in the middle of combat, you'll have to use

your own judgments about when it is most apt to jump into the fights, but it definitely has to be after we have drained the Martial Hearts of all the Martial Seniors at hand."

This definitely made sense, given how intense the battles were going to be. The three Martial Seniors were going to be completely consumed with fighting against their enemies. They could not dedicate any attention to coordinating the attacks of three Martial Squires.

"One thing that you ought to know about Martial Seniors and Martial Hearts is that it isn't as though the Martial Heart switches on and off like a switch, it isn't binary." Senior Sarak explained. "The Martial Heart slowly declines in power across time, much like how one's normal combat power declines over time as one continues exerting one's self and draining one's stamina."

That made sense. The physical power of any Martial Artist, or any human or beast naturally declined over time due to continuous exertion in a fight, it was never a sharp decline, and it made sense the same would be true for the Martial Heart, as the Martial Heart was merely a hidden and locked extension of the full power of the Martial Body.

"Pay attention to the physical indications of the Martial Heart," Senior Xanarn told them. "The glowing blood vessels are one thing for sure, the Martial Heart cannot be used without such a thing happening. Furthermore, once the combat speed of the fights is something you can keep up with, then you can be sure that all parties have completely exhausted their Martial Hearts at that point."

This was also a good pointer.

Martial Seniors were far too fast for any individual Martial Squire to keep up with when they were operating with their Martial Hearts, once the three of them could actually keep up with the Martial Seniors, then that was a good sign that the two of them.

"Given that two of you have Martial Art that grows stronger in battle with time, it is best that you only observe the first battle between us and the Martial Seniors of the Kaddar Treaty Organization." Senior Leonil commented.

Immediately, Rui and Ieyasu exchanged a glance.

Both of them knew that Kane was not included in that statement, and they immediately learned more information about each other.

('Well, I always figured that his copying took time,') Rui mused.

There was no way that he could do it instantly at the start of the battle, that would be absurd.

('But can't he just use other Martial Art that he has copied in the past?') Rui wondered.

After all, he fought Senior Xanarn and copied and even evolved her Martial Art, couldn't he just use that Martial Art in the battle against the Martial Seniors?

The fact that Senior Leon stated that he required time most likely meant that for some reason he could not, since that wouldn't have required any time.

If so, that was a limitation that Rui hadn't expected. It was interesting to know that his imitative evolution wasn't flawless and perfect.

This made Rui a little more confident about beating him in the future once he trained enough and became strong enough to.

Regardless, that wasn't on his mind at the moment.

He had just been asked to fight Martial Seniors, as a Martial Squire. Martial Artists who were all an entire Realm above him were going to attack and try and kill him, yet he didn't feel despair.

If anything, he actually felt excited. Testing his adaptive evolution against the very limits of what he could possibly handle was definitely something he felt a great amount of anticipation for. It was a testament to how powerful his Martial Art was at the end of the day. Just the fact that he had been called in for consideration in regards to how he could impact battles that were a Realm above him at this point in time was a testament to the power of his Martial Heart.

The same was true for the Martial Art of Kane and Ieyasu, the two of them were most certainly quite powerful too.

"The attack will be coming soon," Senior Sarak warned them. "We have begun evacuation protocols of the staff members, and cautionary guidelines for the guardians. Use this opportunity to get a good understanding of the Senior Realm as well as your opponents so that you can take them down when the time comes. The key is to utilize the element of surprise that will come with your initial participation in a Senior-level battle.

Chapter 1140: Considerations

Rui and Kane were long thinking about the words that the Martial Seniors shared with them long after the two of them had been dismissed. Squire Ieyasu went his own way immediately after, seemingly uninclined to speak with either of them.

"Oh man," Kane sighed. "This might be our toughest battle yet."

Rui nodded. "This is going to be harder than my battle against the Root because I'm not dealing with a mindless drone, I'm dealing with a sentient being. Not just any sentient being, but expert Martial Artists who are extremely skilled and have decades of experience as Martial Artists."

While Kane couldn't help but feel anxious about what was to come, Rui simply smiled as he thought back to the discussion that he had with the Martial Seniors.

For the first battle, they only needed to observe, it was only in the second battle that they would participate.

Rui understood that they were hoping that sudden additional elements into the fight could throw the Martial Seniors of the Kaddar Nation off, and potentially even cause a few casualties and yield a highly desirable outcome.

Rui wasn't sure whether he would be able to produce the desired result, but he did intend to do his best. The debut mattered the most since it was the only time that they would be able to catch the Martial Seniors off-guard.

After the first time, the Martial Seniors would be prepared for the three of them, and there would be a lot less that they would be able to accomplish. Simply being aware of an incoming threat and being prepared for it could cause a radical change in the outcomes.

Rui had many thoughts on how to make the most of how to make the most of his debut, for one, he was convinced that he needed to pick his targets appropriately.

He only had Martial Bodies for healing, stamina, and maneuvering, thus he only ought to pick Martial Seniors against whom these spec configurations would be the most effective.

"Martial Seniors are extremely fast, right?" Kane asked out of the blue, drawing Rui's attention to him. "They would be able to cross the distance between the land and this island rather quickly. We won't be able to do everything in time if they cross the distance quickly and attack us swiftly, right?"

Rui shook his head. "The Floating Sect definitely has eyes and ears everywhere in the Kaddar Region, and it is particularly difficult to hide the movements of high-profile Martial Seniors, it simply cannot be done."

"So they predict the timing of the attack by looking at the movements of the Martial Seniors of the Kaddar Region?"

"Yes, and they take precautions well ahead of time to make sure to account for margins of error in the prediction of the timing of the attacks," Rui explained. "Thus we'll know well ahead of time when the attack is in-bound. Considering that the Martial Seniors called us and did mention an incoming attack, it is likely that they have already gotten the intelligence indicating that the attack would be coming soon. I predict that the civilian members will soon be evacuated to the underground shelters that are deep within the island."

"Will they be safe there?" Kane wondered. "It is Martial Seniors who are attacking after all."

"Yes, but don't forget the gravitational reinforcing weapon that the Kaddar Region is employing to reinforce the island to be able to withstand the rigors of even Senior-level combat," Rui replied. "Given that the Kaddar nations are soon going to dispatch Martial Seniors, we can be certain that whatever that

the Kingdom of Graheria purchased is probably a Senior-level weapon that can allow the island to endure Senior-level combat in its vicinity."

"I dunno, that sounds rather extreme for a single machine," Kane remarked.

"Don't underestimate the power of science and technology," Rui replied. "They can accomplish wonders. In this case, the Kaddar nations would not have even started the war if their weapon could not cover Senior-level combat. The fact that they even decided to wage war in the first place means that they were certain that the island would be reinforced enough to handle the rigors."

The Kaddar Treaty Organization was not stupid. They would not wage a war that could directly result in a catastrophe that wipes out most like in the Kaddar Region.

Furthermore, it wasn't as though the device that they would be using would be the only thing protecting the island.

The Martial Seniors of the Floating Sect were undoubtedly going to fight a defensive game, they could not afford to be hyper-aggressive. Their goals were to have a drawn-out stalemate where they were able to maintain a stable defense to ensure that there was as little of a loss as possible.

Although ensuring that there was no loss was probably impossible, they could do their best to ensure that nothing was damaged and no lives or lost, but that was unrealistic.

Especially because the Martial Seniors of the Kaddar Region were going to be aggressively on the offense. There was no doubt that they would be lashing out to kill the Martial Seniors of the Floating Sect with everything that they had.

Each of them had limited windows of opportunity to root out the looming threat of Ajanta Island forever, they were not going to let up so easily. As residents of the Kaddar Region that had grown up with the threat of Ajanta Island terrorizing them and their loved ones, Rui was certain that each of the Kaddar Martial Seniors had a bone to pick with the Floating Sect, they were going to vent their grudges on the three Martial Seniors of the sect.

One side was going to be absolutely defensive for the most part, while the other side was going to be absolutely offensive.

Just as Rui concluded his thoughts, an alarm rang across the entire island.

Evacuation protocols were underway.

An attack was inbound very soon.