

Martial Unity 1451

Chapter 1451: Demonstrations

"You think I'm not using my mental talent properly?" Rui frowned.

"It's a good technique for an assassin, but assassins in the first place do not seek to maximize the application of any given affinity to its full potential in all aspects. They only care about killing. Thus they'd only apply things in order to aid covert killings. Mental techniques are capable of much much more than being a convenient tool for murder!"

"Right..." Rui considered.

"Going through all that effort to misdirect people so much only to then get them to ignore you is the most wasteful application of principles of mental techniques, but what more can you expect from assassins," He crinkled his nose. "Hypnosis, which is my chosen sub-specialty makes far greater use of the mind and misdirection."

"Hypnosis..."

"It is the art of manipulating the subconscious mind," He remarked. "In this case, anything that you have no control over consciously, normally speaking. Generally, speaking this includes memory manipulation, senses, and sabotage. Hypnosis isn't limited to Martial Artists. Normal humans can also hypnotize people. However, they are much more limited. For one, normal humans cannot hypnotize people against their will."

Rui nodded. Hypnosis was a proven phenomenon back on Earth, although it was not too very well understood. It was often used to aid with mental issues as a part of therapy.

"Not much can be said about the subconscious mind, but one thing about it is certain. It can be impacted, influenced, and even rewritten by external influences." The Master informed him. "There existed an extremely powerful barrier between consciousness and subconsciousness, which prevents the former from directly manipulating the latter. Furthermore, the conscious mind serves as a guard dog against external influences, preventing anything from impacting the subconscious mind. That is why normal humans cannot hypnotize their targets against their will."

Rui nodded. He was aware that Martial Artists were not nearly as helpless.

"Martial Artists can bypass this guard dog through multiple ways, but the most common way is through misdirection," The man explained. "We distract the guard dog with something. A toy or a treat. And while it is distracted we sneak past it and attack our target. Simply, isn't it?"

Rui had heard about this mechanism before, but he understood why the Master disliked his hypnotic technique.

"Your technique distracts the guard dog, but instead of actually going to the treasure room, you run away from the prize to ensure that the guard dog never saw you. What a waste!" The man snorted. "Instead of running away, you should go to the control room and do some real damage!"

Rui liked the sound of that. "That sounds very powerful. What are the most combat-relevant applications? Manipulating memories sounds fun, but it sounds like it is much less combat-applicable than some of the other applications."

"Hm, sensory sabotage, illusions, and involuntary sabotage might be right up your alley then," The man speculated. "Those are the most easily combat applicable principles. However, rather than learning the principles and constructing basic techniques, it would be best to attune the technique to your Martial Art. Perhaps even consider making it an integral part of your Martial Mind."

Rui had also considered that. The Martial Mind was categorically separate from mental techniques, but he could increase the scope for thought if he had more tools at his disposal.

Of course, just learning mental techniques would be in line with his Martial Art, since there surely were Martial Artists that were particularly weak towards mental techniques, allowing him to adapt to them better.

His Martial Art also relied on information a lot, so mental sensory techniques that supplied him with information were also something that he had his eyes on.

However, there were a lot of possible things he could do, and he had trouble choosing. He was firmly on the side of quality rather than quantity, so he didn't want to engage in more than three projects at once.

Rui shook his head. "Just hearing about it in a superficial explanation isn't enough to give me a good practical understanding of what is possible. Especially when mental techniques have such a bad framework. Can I get demonstrations of the several tentative categories of mental techniques and hypnosis to see what they look like in combat?"

He didn't think that he had a particular affinity for one over the other, if that were the case, then he was more inclined to see which field was more useful, and which field was more useful to his Martial Path.

These were the two parameters that he was focusing on when considering what kind of mental technique he ought to venture towards. Powerful but difficult to attune to adaptive evolution would be unfortunate. As would being easily attuned to adaptive evolution but not powerful in general.

Ideally, he would find something that was both powerful, and also highly relevant to mental techniques.

"Demonstrations hm?" The man stroked his beard. "Alright, I guess we'll have to go disturb Ieyasu. It would be better to demonstrate it on Martial Seniors."

Rui smirked. "Yes, I have lots of things that I would like you to demonstrate. That is why I want you to please demonstrate everything."

"As expected of my pupil, you're so motivated!"

The two of them quickly made their way to a meditating Ieyasu.

"Demonstrations on me?" The man coldly asked.

"It will be quick, I promise."

"I refuse."

"That's not fair, others have been used to demonstrate for you, you remember? All my students must be treated equally. You may leave if you disagree!"

"...In that case, I too would like some demonstrations."

"Hm? I thought you already knew all this stuff."

"My memory is failing me," Ieyasu replied. "I want you to demonstrate to me everything you to demonstrate to him."

"Hm, then so be it. Looks like you'll also have to help him out." He turned towards Rui who was glaring at Ieyasu.

"Alright then! Let us indulge in a session of studies of mental techniques as Master and pupils!" The Master declared.

Chapter 1452: Memory manipulation

Pettiness aside, Rui truly wanted to see everything the Hypnomaster had to offer. There were nuances that could be shown and not conveyed, furthermore, with how terrible Master Zeamer's explanations were, Rui did not trust him with accurate explanations of what was really happening.

"Alright then, let's begin," Master Zeamer stated. "Take a good look."

He stared at Ieyasu in the eyes while preparing a strike, much to Rui's surprise. The two Martial Seniors stiffened as a powerful Master-level wave of pressure crashed into them.

SNAP!

Ieyasu's eyes widened as a snapping sound reverberated in his ears all of a sudden overwhelming his auditory nerves painfully, drawing his attention for a moment. That was enough. Rui watched as the Hypnomaster's body moved in a way that seemed to speak to Ieyasu.

Listen to me, it told him.

The man's alertness and sharpness declined until his eyes became vacant.

"That..." Rui recognized what had happened. "...Non-verbal communication?"

"Correct," The man nodded. "Quite sharp of you to notice on your first watch. In ordinary hypnosis, practitioners get the target to voluntarily lower their guard and convey information to the subconscious through speech. In Martial hypnosis, we either misdirect, disorient, or overwhelm the consciousness in order to prevent it from preventing external influences access to the subconsciousness. Instead of verbal communication, we rely on non-verbal communication."

Rui's eyes lit up with fascination and enthusiasm. "That's incredible. Non-verbal communication, if done right, is much faster than verbal communication."

"Correct, it is more practical," The man nodded. "If I had to whisper to my opponents in the middle of a fight every time I wanted to hypnotize them, hypnosis would not be much of a viable technique. That is non-verbal communication is so important."

Rui nodded.

Studies on Earth had shown that an overwhelming majority of the communication between humans was done non-verbally. Many different experiments and studies concluded that anywhere between seventy to ninety-three percent of all communication was non-verbal.

This was not something that ordinary humans could harness in a fight, their minds were incapable of that. However, that didn't apply to Martial Artists, Rui had already mastered Fauna Flow which allowed him to rely on his superior observation as Martial Artists to indulge in this otherwise subconscious communication.

"To bypass the impeding conscious mind through misdirection, sensory overload, disorientation, pain, or poisoning, and then manipulate the subconsciousness instantly through non-verbal communication...that is the art of Martial hypnosis," The man said with pride. "What do you think? Quite impressive? Hm?"

Rui nodded with excitement and enthusiasm. he would be lying if he wasn't impressed with the profound power that the Hypnomaster had already demonstrated, let alone had yet to demonstrate.

"Anyways, let's get back to the topic," He said, turning back to Ieyasu. "This is the trance. It is a state of the victim where a channel to the subconsciousness has been created and secured. In this state, you may hypnotize the victim in any manner you want."

"If he's in a trance, then isn't he vulnerable to physical attacks?" Rui asked. "Isn't it better to just finish him off with a single lethal attack?"

"If he were a normal person, sure, but Martial Artists don't possess such limitations. Even if you put your target in a trance in the middle of a fight, he will still continue to fight you and try to kill you." The Hypnomaster said. "Why don't you try? Go ahead and use your Martial Heart even."

Rui glanced at Ieyasu. "You sure he'll be fine?"

"Just do it."

...BADUMP!

Rui's fist flew out as he launched a swift and powerful blow to the man's head.

BAM!

Ieyasu's arms flew into a guard as streaks of red glowing lines covered his entire body in just a moment as Rui's attack crashed into them.

"Did you really think you could get me that easily?" He narrowed his eyes.

"Wow," Rui murmured, impressed.

Before Ieyasu could even do anything, his body relaxed as his Martial Heart deactivated, and his eyes grew more vacant and hollow once more.

Rui furrowed his eyes as he turned back to the Hypnomaster, who had stood behind him. "Did you...?"

"Indeed, this time, I didn't need to misdirect as you had misdirected his attention away from me already," The man explained. "But as you can see, the trance does not make Martial Artists physically vulnerable. It is not as though their consciousness has been shut down, it is still active, the only difference is that we have managed to get it out of the way of subconsciousness. People in trances are fully capable of engaging in a variety of complex and delicate tasks, it is merely the state where the consciousness does not protect the subconsciousness."

Rui nodded, understanding. "So from here on out, we do the actual hypnosis."

"Correct," The man nodded. "Let us begin with memory manipulation. Now, I've already warned you that the core mechanics are... a little not well-understood, so bear with me. But memory essentially works by association. Memories are associated with sensory cues. Seeing the color red would induce a variety of thoughts and images in your mind that are associated with that color. Every memory is associated with sensory clues, generally related to the sensory information stored in the memory."

"I'm conjecturing that would need to you draw those memories around by conveying relevant sensory cues to the target. Like if you wanted to make someone forget about the sky? You would perhaps need to make them see blue?" Rui wondered.

"Indeed, you catch on fast. We resurface memories in this manner and then rely on non-verbal communication to convey to the subconsciousness that memories are invalid. Normal hypnotists do this by speech, but we Martial hypnotists, once again, use non-verbal communication."

"I see..." Rui murmured, immersed in his thoughts. "However, in order to generate relevant sensory cues, you need to be capable of manipulating light and air to a certain extent"

"Indeed," The man nodded. "That is the hard part and why memory manipulation is very difficult mid-combat."

Chapter 1453: Combat-relevant

Rui was fascinated by what he heard. Memory manipulation seemed incredibly powerful, but also extremely difficult, based on the information that the Hypnomaster had conveyed.

It was practically impossible to engage in sophisticated memory manipulation, certainly extraordinarily difficult to do so in the middle of a fight. He could see why the Hypnomaster hadn't included it in the middle of a fight.

"Can you use memory manipulation to make a Martial Artist forget their Martial Path?" Rui asked, curious.

"Yes, but it is extraordinarily difficult." The man sighed. "Even for me, erasing the Martial Path of a Martial Apprentice takes an enormous amount of effort. The already herculean task grows exponentially more difficult with each Realm. I can only damage the Martial Path of Martial Squires, and can only cause temporary setbacks for Martial Seniors."

"I see," Rui was relieved to a certain extent. He would rather die than allow his Martial Path to be erased, he was glad that it was not something that could be done easily. "What about things pertaining to muscle memory?"

"Those are just as hard." The man explained. "It would require much more effort to erase that."

"If someone could perfectly manipulate light and sound, would they be able to perfectly manipulate memories?" Rui asked, curious.

"Probably, but perfect manipulation of light and sound is not something I have heard or seen," The man shook his head.

"Interesting..." Rui murmured.

Memory manipulation had more applications and power than he had given it credit for, although it was still quite impractical for combat, perhaps Rui could work on a particularly long-term project for centered around mental techniques.

"Let's do one demonstration," The Master remarked. "You."

He put Rui in front of Ieyasu before his body shifted and twitched, moving in particular ways. Rui even understood what he was saying, he was speaking to Ieyasu the same way that human hypnotists would speak to their targets, trying to get them to forget something.

CLAP

The Master dispelled the trance. Ieyasu became more alert and conscious, glancing around.

"Ieyasu, do you know who this is?" Master Zeamer asked.

"I've never seen him in my life," Ieyasu replied with confidence and certainty.

"That's what I thought."

It wasn't long before Ieyasu had been brought back into a trance.

"That's so surreal," Rui murmured.

"Hahaha, mental techniques are among the most surreal techniques of them all," Master Zeamer snorted proudly. "However, let us move on to a more combat-practical application. Sensory manipulation."

"Illusions?" Rui asked.

"No, sensory manipulation. Illusions are a subset of sensory manipulation," Master Zeamer stated.

"Sensory manipulation includes illusion as well as things like sensory sabotage. This relies purely on non-verbal communication to convey and embed the manipulation and sabotage of a certain sense organ in the mind of the victim. However, how do you convey that? How do you convey the state of being having one's own sense sabotaged?"

Rui considered the matter deeply. Non-verbal communication worked differently from verbal communication. There were no rules of grammar, and no database of vocabulary stored in some dictionaries when it came to non-verbal communication.

If Rui wanted to consciously tell a person that their vision was messed up, then he simply needed to say 'Hey, your vision is messed up.'

But how was he supposed to non-verbally communicate such an inner experience to someone else's subconsciousness non-verbally?

"Since there is no defined set of rules for non-verbal communication and it is all based on common psychological associations, then..." Rui paused for a moment. "Then I'm guessing you have to subject yourself to the same experience through powerful imagination, tricking your own subconsciousness into believing it, causing your body to move in ways that it would if the imagination was real. this would undoubtedly cause the non-verbal communication to convey the experience."

It was a similar principle to the Phantomind Void technique. Except the purpose was to impact the subconsciousness, instead of misdirecting the consciousness.

"Correct," The man grinned. "You really do catch on quickly. However, it takes a lot of time to develop an image powerful enough. This principle is known as the imagination-embodiment process"

"Can the imagination-embodiment be used to manipulate memories in place of actually manipulating light and sound? Rather than manipulating light and sound to produce the sensory cues to draw out memories associated with those sensory cues, can I rely on non-verbal communication to convey memories and then erase them?" Rui asked.

"It's possible," The Master confirmed. "However, it is even more impractical than manipulating light and sound. Remember that imagination-embodiment requires an immense amount of training to generate a well-developed image that can allow you to embody it well enough to convey it through non-verbal communication. Which means for every memory you want to erase, you need to spend a lot of time training for it, almost like it is its own technique."

Rui narrowed his eyes. "What if there was someone who could rapidly generate these images without having to go through all the effort as a result of a powerful mind and imagination?"

Master Zeamer's eyebrows rose with interest. "I'd say such a person was blessed and ought to make use of their gifts to the fullest."

A smile emerged on Rui's face. "I do intend to."

"Hoho..." The man stroked his long flowing beard. "I sure look forward to that. I'm glad that what you have seen thus far has already motivated you to master the depths of the field of mind. Your Phantomind Void technique is powerful, but it hardly uses your talent for mind to its fullest."

Rui nodded. He had previously been skeptical of the Master's continuous insistence that the grade-ten technique he had been proud of did not harness his mind to produce the greatest results, but he could definitely understand where the man was coming from after seeing what was possible.

The Phantomind Void was a deliberately incomplete technique mostly because assassins did not manipulate the mind, they killed. They had no need for such techniques. However, now that Rui had come across them, he could not ignore them.

Chapter 1454: Limitations

"I would demonstrate sensory sabotage, but you have already experienced it multiple times recently, haven't you?" The Master asked.

Rui nodded. The Illusionary Dragon sabotaged almost all his senses, while Master Zeamer also sabotaged his sense of space and time multiple times.

"There are orders of difficulty when it comes to sensory sabotage," The man explained. "The five conventional senses are the easiest to sabotage. Most people are highly conscious of this and it is much easier to convey information about it. However, things like the sense of balance, the sense of space and time are far harder to sabotage, these senses are far more subconscious and detached from the consciousness."

Rui nodded, digesting everything that the Master conveyed. It was a lot to consider and think about, and he had yet to immediately come up with applications of these principles to develop a technique that truly resonated with his Martial Art and was truly attuned to adaptive evolution.

"You can have those considerations later, let us move on to principles that I have yet to demonstrate," The Master remarked, before turning to Ieyasu. He walked over to the man, yet that was not all he was doing. Rui could feel the shifts in his powerful mind as his body's non-verbal communication also shifted.

A lot of information, directives, and even instructions were being communicated to the subconscious centered around a single thing.

Apple.

SNAP

Master Zeamer dispelled the trance as he got rid of the misdirection, as Ieyasu's consciousness guarded his subconscious mind once he became aware of them.

"Tokugawa, what do I have in my right hand?" The man asked.

He held up an empty palm with nothing in it.

"An apple," The man replied with certainty.

"Are you sure?"

"Positive,"

"Good, oh what's that?" Master Zeamer pointed to the left, drawing his attention, before using a powerful misdirection technique to keep away his consciousness away while he put him in a trance.

"Incredible," Rui murmured. "He saw an apple where there wasn't any."

"That's right," Master Zeamer replied. "I embedded the existence of an apple in my hand into his subconsciousness, causing him to see one where there wasn't any."

"Wow..." Rui murmured.

Mental techniques were so radically different from anything he was accustomed to that he needed to spend some time forming a deeper understanding and familiarity with the field.

However, regardless of whether he was able to form perfectly attuned techniques to his Martial Art or not, the worst-case scenario was still extremely good. He would still be able to create menacing techniques that would allow him to wreak havoc against his opponents.

That was why he was quite optimistic about this phase of his training. The sheer things that were possible with illusions, sensory sabotage, and memory manipulation opened a whole new avenue of possibilities.

Plans, schemes, and strategies that were previously impossible would no longer be outside of the realm of possibility.

In fact, if he truly gained great proficiency within these fields, Chairman Deacon was almost no longer something to be wary of. If not for the fact that these techniques wouldn't extend to his family which remained a weakness, he would be able to stroll within the Shionel Confederation without any fear whatsoever.

Especially when he combined it with the techniques that he had learned from Master Reina.

"Now before we move on, let us look at some practical realities to temper your expectations," The Master remarked. "For one, the stronger your opponent, the harder it is to hypnotize them. The Martial Heart enhanced cognition, and that increases the difficulty. Your Martial Heart is the weakest that exists at the moment, so that will be a burden undoubtedly. Of course, your mind is disproportionately powerful, so it will not only compensate for that gap but do far more. Most Martial Seniors have much to fear against you if you fully realize your potential, but not all of them. Do not underestimate high-grade Martial Seniors."

Rui nodded thoughtfully. He didn't want to get too conceited because of the sheer potential he had to explore within the field of mind.

"There are limitations fundamental to hypnosis. For one, your mind is divided between constantly misdirecting the consciousness away from protecting the subconsciousness while you're hypnotizing it. if you stop misdirecting the consciousness midway, then it will return and shut your channel to the subconscious mind," Master Zeamer explained.

Rui nodded, this meant that he couldn't use the Greater Phantomind Void technique to misdirect the consciousness. The reason for that was because the Greater Phantomind Void technique used all his mental power, leaving no mental power for the actual hypnosis.

This was also another reason that the Hypnomaster chastised the technique.

'In that case, I might have to resort to a technique like the Lesser Phantomind Void.' Rui mused. 'I know that there isn't much that needs to be done for the misdirection part of hypnosis since I already have a technique that can be used for it. However, I will need to work hard to develop relevant imaginations for the actual manipulations of the target.'

"Moving on to the next tentative category of hypnosis," The Master remarked, drawing Rui out of his reverie. "Body sabotage. This is a form of hypnosis that affects the mind's control over the body. As I'm sure you're aware, the brain is the command center of the body. It sends signals of sorts across nerves to control muscles and that sort of thing. That is what we will be using hypnosis to disrupt. The foundation of the mechanics remains the same as the other principles. We communicate with the subconsciousness using imagination embodiment and embed that into the subconscious. Causing the mind to lose control over the body to a certain extent. Masters like myself can even induce all-out paralysis of the technique."

Rui's eyes widened with surprise. "That's extreme."

"It is also extremely difficult," He remarked. "It is also overkill and unnecessary usually. One can win battles with much less."

Chapter 1455: Projects

"Now then, time for a demonstration." The Master declared before executing another imagination-embodiment non-verbal communication against Ieyasu.

CLAP

Ieyasu broke out of his trance startled.

"Can you move your right arm, Tokugawa?" Master Zeamer asked.

"Not at all," Ieyasu frowned.

"And there you go," Master Zeamer gestured. "I'm sure I don't need to explain to you at this point."

Rui nodded. "I've understood everything that I need to."

"Good," Master Zeamer clapped, undoing the technique and allowing Ieyasu to move his arm once more. "That brings us to an end. I suppose it's your turn now for Ieyasu's sake."

Ieyasu paused for a moment, before heaving a tired sigh and shaking his head. "Go away. I have more important priorities."

Rui raised an eyebrow as an amicable smile rose on his face. "Appreciate the help, by the way. Good luck with your training."

The two of them parted ways as Rui left to get more food for thought. He didn't need much more of an input from the Hypnomaster after everything that he had seen. But unfortunately, he had yet to have a brilliant spark of an idea that would help him with creating a new technique.

'The goal is to create a technique that is powerful and attuned to my Martial Path.' Rui heaved a sigh, reminding himself. Perhaps it was because there was so much potential, but he actually had a lot of trouble coming up with a good technique. It was easier for him to identify the best choice when there was little potential to be unearthed.

However, he did have some ideas.

'I can perfect the Godspeed technique.' Rui noted. 'If I can learn to hypnotize myself and slow down my own sense of time.'

Previously, he didn't have any ideas of how to perfect the imperfect technique. But now, he had a way to fix it. He just needed to self-hypnotize himself to slow down his perception of time.

'Induced tachypsychia.' Rui mused. 'Intriguing.'

That was definitely worth putting on the table, as it meant that he didn't have any weakness in that technique any more. He wouldn't need to wait to develop a VOID algorithm until he used the technique.

'Speaking of which, that's something I should focus on in general.' Rui mused. If there was one weakness that the VOID algorithm had, it was the time that it took to create a predictive model. It was especially a heavy weakness because he used the Metabody System after the predictive model was developed.

Which meant that he could not use a good chunk of his power until after he developed the VOID algorithm.

'Then why don't I focus on shoring this weakness?' Rui wondered with a hint of interest.

Being compatible with adaptive evolution also included compensating for its weaknesses. That was why creating mental techniques to shore up his power before he fully adapted to someone was not a bad idea.

'That's definitely worth leaving as at least one of the ideas for a mental technique.'

That meant upgrading the Godspeed technique and creating something to engage the opponent before he completely adapted were two projects that he could undertake here.

Then that left space for one, at most two, projects for techniques that aided with actual adaptive evolution.

In such a case, at least one offensive mental technique would be fine as well. There were undoubtedly going to be opponents that he would run into that were too physically tough to hurt with physical attacks alone, in such a case, an offensive mental technique would be quite useful.

'Actually, different kinds of offensive mental techniques are suited to different kinds of opponents.' Rui noted.

An offensive Martial Artist was probably going to suffer most from sabotage of control over their power. A defensive Martial Artist would probably be best suited to have their pain significantly enhanced. A maneuvering Martial Artist would best be helped with sabotage to their sense of space and time.

Unfortunately, he wasn't going to stay here for too long.

'I can set the specialized techniques as super-long-term techniques, probably best to stick with a simple offensive mental technique for now.' Rui figured before his eyebrow rose with an idea.

'Actually, what if I fuse the pre-predictive model technique project with the offensive technique project?' Rui wondered. 'I could kill two birds with one stone.'

Perhaps he could cover for his relatively lower power level before adapting with mental techniques that were perfectly suited for his opponent.

'It will take time to develop that diversity...' Rui tutted. 'Such a shame, honestly.'

He needed to come up with a better plan that ensured that they wouldn't be getting all that trampled over.

He heaved a sigh as he considered the pros and cons of the multiple ideas. Although he had conceived of some plans, it was still up in the air for the most part.

It was definitely a good idea to rely on mental techniques to bolster his strength before he fully adapted, it was also a good idea to have a technique that was best suited for Martial Artists with a greater affinity towards one of the fundamental fields of combat.

Since almost all Martial Artists were more attuned towards one of three; offense, defense, and maneuvering, he could pick and choose which technique to employ versus whom.

Rui actually found this idea more palatable. The reason for this was that it was applicable to both pre and post-predictive model parts of the fight equally, serving two roles at once.

"Alright, that's fine for now. Let's begin with that." Rui decided. "Four projects, one for upgrading the Godspeed technique, and the other three for having mental techniques suited to adapting to my opponent. By the time I'm done, nobody will be able to escape the power of my mind."

Phantomind Void was a good example of what could be accomplished when he put his mind to good use. However, he needed a technique that was capable of harnessing his mind, ordinary techniques would not be enough.

Chapter 1456: Choice

Offense, defense, and maneuvering-oriented Martial Artists. He was going to create a technique for each of them. However, he could not even get into the specifics of the technique, there were some basic rules that could be established about the techniques that he was creating before he could create them.

'The first basic necessity is that the ease of landing them on the opponent is high. It must have a very high probability of success in actually impacting the opponent's subconsciousness.' Rui established.

The reason for this was simple. The VOID algorithm was his most powerful technique, but it had shortcomings such as difficulty of activation. It took a lot of time and brainpower to create a predictive model and use the most powerful system within the VOID algorithm; the pattern recognition system.

He was trying to compensate for the activation difficulty of the VOID algorithm, so what was the point of trying to compensate for high activation difficulty with a technique that also had high activation difficulty?

It made no sense. He would simply be trying to activate two techniques with high activation difficulty, and there would be nothing that was actually trying to compensate for the time period while he was preparing for the VOID algorithm.

Thus he needed a technique that could be used easily, that was guaranteed to succeed in its hypnotic attempt no matter what to help with ensuring that he didn't lose while preparing the predictive mode.

Thus, each of the three techniques needed to be a low-difficulty technique with as powerful an outcome as such a technique permitted.

'In that case, the Greater Phantomind Void technique is not suited.' Rui mused. 'Or at the very least, I should create lesser and greater versions of all three techniques.'

That way, he could use the lesser versions prior to adapting to ensure that the probability of success was high even if came at the cost of a lower impact. Once he completed the predictive model on his opponent, then he could go to higher difficulty techniques that also produced greater effects.

With those conditions established in mind, it was time to get down to the specifics of each technique.

'First; offense,' Rui mused. 'I need a mental technique that is particularly useful against powerful offenses.'

Rui considered offensive Martial Artists. They usually relied on a lot of power, barring exceptions like poisons and mental techniques. Thus it would make sense to develop a technique that targeted this and sabotaged it.

'Body sabotage makes the most sense, as I'd concluded earlier.' Rui nodded.

If he could sabotage their bodies somehow, then he would be able to negate their offense significantly.

However, the biggest issue was the fact different Martial Artists used their power differently and employed it offensively quite differently as well. What that meant was that he needed to find something all Martial Artists used in order to sabotage that above all else.

Having too many targets would weaken the potency of the sabotage too much if also wanted to reduce the difficulty of the feat significantly.

'In that case, a singular target something to sabotage is...' Rui's eyes narrowed as his mind processed all possibilities before stumbling on to the perfect outcome. '...Breathing.'

Breathing was something that every human did.

Something that every human needed. Martial Artists were not exempt from this absolute rule either. In fact, an overwhelming majority of Martial Artists used breathing techniques to improve their combat.

Thus, if he could sabotage their breathing, he ought to be able to sabotage their generation of power. This was a safe universal organ to sabotage for guaranteed results.

'Furthermore...I don't even need to train too hard to generate an image through imagination for breathing sabotage...'

After all, in his previous life, Rui was terminally asthmatic and grappled with struggling with breathing his entire life. Although it had been over twenty-six years in this world, he could still remember the suffering he underwent like it was yesterday.

In hindsight, it truly was horrible.

He was partly able to power through his condition in his previous life thanks to the fact that he didn't know just how bad he had it. But in this life, he knew what it felt to breathe fully and deeply, he could even use breathing techniques to augment himself significantly.

'My opponents will experience my pain.' Rui declared. 'My suffering was not in vain. My suffering will become my strength.'

He was sure that he would be able to create an extraordinary as long as he relied on the countless memories of suffering that he had. He would be able to generate a powerful illusion that he could embody to adjust his body language such that he could convey and embed that same suffering into the subconscious mind, causing the target to be unable to breathe.

Not only breathing techniques but breathing in general will be hampered. Rui wondered if he would be able to get a target to suffocate and choke due to a lack of oxygen.

Regardless, he would find out eventually as long as he succeeded in the training project, which he intended to. he would be able to find out personally as long as he kept at it. The personal affinity for this technique would allow him to overcome the barriers to realizing this technique quite well in his opinion.

Furthermore, that was stacked on top of his already high affinity for mental techniques. No one could say just how powerful this technique would end up being, not even Master Zeamer could possibly understand the limits of this technique that well. That was why he was actually quite looking forward to the outcome of the project, maybe even a little too much.

"Hehehe..." Rui smirked, as some ideas centered around the powerful technique. he couldn't help but grow extremely excited about the end outcome, even if the training contained hardships, he did look forward to seeing just how his own suffering could translate into development of his Martial Path.

Chapter 1457: Hypnomatrix

With the offensive project decided, he still had defensive and maneuvering projects left. He quickly thought about it as many ideas flashed through his head, evaluating them with a lot of time on his hands.

'For maneuvering,' Rui mused. 'Hm...'

Frankly, sabotaging the breathing of maneuvering Martial Artists would certainly be an effective clamp on their power. The reason for this was that they too needed breathing and breathing techniques.

However, that didn't mean that this was the optimal manner to deal with them.

'More than power, maneuvering Martial Artists needed congruence between mind and body. It's the problem I currently face with Godspeed, being unable to keep up with the speed of my body.' Rui mused.

By speeding the rate of perception of time, causing time to pass faster in their perception, he could cause their own movements to be too fast to them. This way he could force them to slow down physically, negating their greatest advantage significantly.

'Furthermore, I actually have experience with the relevant image as well.' Rui mused.

He struggled with Godspeed when it came to trying to keep up with it with his reaction speed. The sensation of having one's physical speed be far superior to one's reaction and processing speed was something he was quite familiar with.

This also helped with cultivating the right image. He would be able to curb their speed quite well by using sensory-sabotage hypnosis manipulating their sense of time.

'That covers offense and maneuvering, what about defense?'

This was a little bit more troubling to discern. He could rely on sensory sabotage to greatly augment pain, and that would certainly help, but that alone was probably not enough.

'Hm, pain can work, but it doesn't actually deal damage.' Rui tutted. 'It doesn't bypass defense. Especially passive defenses.'

However, it did make the target feel as though their defenses were not working. Which perhaps was good enough?

'Hm, I'll have to revisit, maybe consult Master Zeamer.'

However, the more important part was the remarkable adaptation to his opponent using mental techniques alone. He was already able to adapt to his opponents by predicting and countering their moves, then he obtained the ability to adapt his body to his opponents, and now he possessed the ability to sabotage them by specifically using mental techniques to sabotage their strengths.

He was adapting mind, body, and Art to take down his opponent.

'It's bringing me closer to fulfilling Project Water.' Rui's eyes lit up with excitement and enthusiasm.

The degree to which he could adaptively evolve to his opponents was extreme. He had added a new layer of adaptive evolution purely based on mental techniques alone.

'I'm so glad that I decided to come here.' Rui sighed. Although he valued what he learned from Master Reina, they weren't nearly as compatible, specialty-wise. However, Master Zeamer and Rui possessed immense compatibility with each other. That was why he knew that there was little to lose by learning from him, and everything to gain.

And he was right. His affinity was so high, that it was possible to upgrade the VOID algorithm with just the sheer quality of his mental techniques.

'It is possible to create a hypnotic matrix, a hypnomatrix, that outputs the best hypnotic technique to be used against a given opponent based on their Martial Art.' Rui realized.

In a sense, he had already created a hypnomatrix that outputted the best hypnotic technique to counter a given opponent. Body-sabotage for offensive, sensory-sabotage techniques for maneuvering and defense.

Of course, this was a highly elementary matrix at the moment. But it was possible to grow the hypnomatrix until it became a complex program that inputted several variables and outputted the most perfect hypnotic technique to counter his opponent.

'This will be my first step towards the Martial Mind.' A grin sprung up on his face as he clenched his fist. 'First step since becoming a Martial Senior, anyway.'

He could hardly contain his excitement. By adding a hypnomatrix to the VOID algorithm, he would be concretely increasing the amount of thought inside it, and thus his Martial Mind.

Given his sheer ability to master hypnotic techniques, he was sure that the hypnotic matrix would grow large due to his ability to create and master more hypnotic techniques. Thus there was no concern about it not being a significant addition to his Martial Mind.

'Furthermore, that doesn't even include the manipulations of my own mind.' Rui realized. 'Adapted attacks to my opponent's minds are one thing, but adapting my own mind to suit my opponent is another.'

Rui would need to inquire more from the Hypnomaster about self-hypnosis and manipulation. Was it possible to alter his mind to be more suited towards maneuvering-oriented Martial Artists? or towards offensive or defensive Martial Artists?

He didn't know yet. He had just been introduced to mental techniques recently. On top of that, the fundamentals of the fields were not understood due to scientific limitations.

However, that was not the case for someone like him who had a much better and deeper understanding of the brain and the mind. There was always a very real possibility that he would be able to come up with some truly powerful and extraordinary as long as he applied his brains wisely, and literally.

If that were to happen, he was sure that he would be able to gather his Martial Mind over time. Although he didn't know how much empty space there was left to be filled with the Martial Mind, it was things like the brand-new Hypnotrix Project that made him certain that he was probably progressing at a rate that was nigh unprecedented. How many people came up with Martial Minds so easily and began implementing them as early as Rui was doing so?

After all, it had looked as though Ieyasu had spent the past two years working on his Martial mind, he frankly did not feel like Ieyasu had made too much progress when it came to this matter.

Chapter 1458: Martial Embodiment

In general, Rui was sure that he was probably one of the few Martial Artists who could make progress in the Senior Realm with much less difficulty than his peers.

'Or at least, progress towards the Master Realm,' Rui mused. 'I can imagine other Martial Seniors rely on techniques bringing the best out of their Martial Body and, by extension, Heart because that is a much easier solution than developing the Martial Mind.'

Developing a system of thought that was so sophisticated and complex, yet pertinently accurate in its directives that it filled up an entire section of their brain that there was untapped potential?

An overwhelming Martial Seniors did not know where to start. The Martial Mind was an intellectual feat that was no different from long-term research and development projects conducted by scholars and researchers. Most Martial Seniors felt intimidated by the challenges that beset them in their journey to a higher Realm.

But not Rui. Of course, that did not mean he found it easy. He was very sober of the reality that his journey was much more difficult than the others. The only silver lining was the fact that he had made substantial progress with things like the VOID algorithm and the ODA System. Another boon was the greater ease with which he made progress.

These two facts allowed him to be more confident in the face of the particularly overwhelming challenges that only he was subject to.

'Alright, back to the topic,' Rui sighed. 'Ordinary hypnosis is more nuanced and delicate than the more monolithic misdirection that Master Reina taught me.'

With Master Reina's philosophy and application of mind, he simply needed to pour all his mind and effort into misdirecting attention away from him. However, Master Zeamer detested such a simplistic application of it.

Of course, he did not think one was right or wrong. Master Reina was an assassin, and every technique she developed was designed to be most efficient for assassinations. Mental techniques were extremely diverse, but she only cared about its applications in assassination and nothing else.

While Rui respected her capacity to kill, he was not an assassin. He preferred Master Zeamer's diverse but more full-fledged application of the mind.

'However, because Master Zeamer's hypnosis is multi-fold, I need to be careful about the structure of the technique.'

Master Reina simply had him misdirect, but Master Zeamer's techniques required him to misdirect and impress on the subconscious mind of the target. Both of those required mind and both of those were done simultaneously, which means that Rui needed to ration his mental power and make sure he split it in the best manner possible.

'In general, the more extensive my manipulation of the mind is, the greater the misdirection needs to be.'

In order to reach deeper, he needed to move the guard as far away as possible. Thus any extensive manipulation required even more powerful misdirection.

'If I have to divide my mental power between misdirection and manipulation of the mind, then my hypnotic techniques will have misdirection weaker than the Greater Phantomind Void.' Rui realized.

The Greater Phantomind Void dedicated all of Rui's mental power to misdirection. Hypnotic techniques split mental power between misdirection and manipulation thus his hypnotic techniques would need to have weaker misdirection compared to the Phantomind Void.

'A fifty-fifty split should work fine. Now then, it's time to get started.' Rui found himself at the entrance of the meditation center where Ieyasu himself was training. It was a place that placed Martial Artists in chambers that isolated Martial Artists from any distractions, allowing them to fully be immersed in their own minds.

It wasn't long before the staff at the meditation center had arranged for a meditation chamber for Rui as well where he secluded himself in peace.

'Now then, each of the three hypnotic techniques requires misdirection. In this case, should I stick to Master Uma? Hmm...' Rui wondered as an interesting thought popped into his head. 'Wait, if I am to use a Martial Master, then wouldn't Master Zeamer be better?'

He wasn't certain, but both Master Reina and Master Zeamer struck him to be at a much higher level than Master Uma or Master Carian. It was quite amazing because the latter was supposed to be quite impressive and powerful in their own right, above more ordinary Martial Masters like Master Deivon.

Furthermore, Master Zeamer was perhaps the most suited to be used as the distraction in his technique because of his special form. The form that all Martial Masters seemed to have was related to their Martial Path or Martial Art.

Rui recalled the profound hypnotic spiral of black and white that Master Zeamer's form shifted to. It was as though Rui could immerse himself in it, submerging his mind in it forever.

'It's way more distracting and drawing than Master Uma's blade of winds.' Rui realized. 'It would be much more suited as the image of my misdirection technique.'

It was a shame to leave so quickly after he had arrived, but this was something that he needed to get done as soon as possible. He quickly got up, scampering across Cloudia as he searched for Master Zeamer.

"My what?" Master Zeamer sipped a cup of tea.

"Your hypnotic spiral form," Rui repeated.

"As, you mean my Martial Embodiment," Master Zeamer mused.

"It has a name?" Rui's eyes lit up with interest.

"Well, of course, it's a phenomenon that occurs with the activation of the Martial Mind," Master Zeamer replied. "It's one of the reasons that the Master Council of the Panamic Martial Federation discourages Martial Masters from fighting before mortals, among other reasons."

"Wait, it does?" Rui frowned. "That seems... limiting."

Rui wondered if that was the reason Master Uma attacked their carriage when they were in the middle of nowhere, among other reasons, so that she could deal with Master Deivon without having to hold back.

"It's not a prohibition," Master Zeamer explained. "More of an agreement and consensus between Martial Masters of the Master Council of the Panamic Martial Federation. The Martial Embodiment has an adverse effect on the minds of mortals. Crippling effects, PTSD, comas, that sort of thing. It has even caused death. Long ago, two Martial Masters actually caused the destruction of an entire nation because of mass mental damage across the entire nation. Killing some, permanently crippling many, and causing damage to all. That is the power of the Martial Embodiment."

"What is the Martial Embodiment?" Rui wondered with awe.

Chapter 1459: Control

"Other Martial Masters take a lot of pride in it. It's a sign of the ascended. The hallmark of the Master Realm...But if you ask me, it ain't that big a deal," Master Zeamer snorted. "It's just a passive hypnotic effect on the minds of lesser beings. It works the same as an illusionary hypnotic technique that I showed you, but passively, and only on Martial Artists of the Lower Realms."

"A passive illusion?" Rui's eyes narrowed as his mind flashed into action processing the new and old information he had. "I see. I understand the truth."

"Sharp as always," Master Zeamer chuckled.

"Illusionary techniques work by misdirecting the consciousness, and then using non-verbal communication to manipulate the subconscious mind which is extremely susceptible to external suggestions," Rui's eyes swum around, immersed in thought. "If Martial Masters are able to generate illusions in the minds of the beholder, then that means that they are going through the same process. A number of inferences can be made."

"You said it was passive and caused by the Martial Mind," Rui mused. "That means that the Martial Mind is impacting the body's non-verbal communication in the same way that image embodiment impacts non-verbal communication in a hypnotic technique. The Martial Mind impacts the subconsciousness in the same image embodiment does. That's why it generated the necessary non-verbal communication to manipulate the senses into seeing an illusion. But in order for that to happen..."

Rui's eyes narrowed.

"Go on," Master Zeamer encouraged with an amused smile.

"For that to happen, it would mean that the Martial Art of Martial Masters is so captivating and eye-drawing that it distracts the conscious mind so much that it leaves the unconscious mind open to manipulation to the non-verbal communication caused by the Martial Mind. But that's just absurd."

"Is it?" Master Zeamer asked. "It's just the natural progression. The Martial Art of the Upper Realms is truly far beyond human limits, both mentally and physically. They are said to have ascended humanity. That is why such a thing is possible."

Rui raised an eyebrow of skepticism. "I see."

"You said you came here to use my Martial Embodiment as the image embodiment of your misdirection techniques, correct?" Master Zeamer thoughtfully considered it. "That's actually quite the genius idea. My Martial Embodiment is suited for such a purpose."

"Then..."

Master Zeamer glanced at Rui for a moment, sipping his tea.

One moment, he was just an old man sipping some tea peacefully.

The very next moment, his very existence seemed to shift.

Rui gritted his teeth as an enormous wave of pressure crashed into his mind with an oppressive dominance. The weight of the Master Realm pushed down on him. He needed to struggle just to maintain his attention on the hypnotic spiral that had bloomed out of Master Zeamer's figure. So much so that he even activated his Martial Heart to help.

He could understand why Martial Masters avoided going all out against their peers in the public eye. If he was struggling so much to resist its mental effects, then the average person would definitely suffer brain damage or something.

While the Martial Heart enhanced his brain enough to help him focus, he quickly recorded every single detail of the illusion that he was experiencing.

The radius and diameter of the hypnotic circle, the number of spiraling lines, and even the exact colors of the illusion. He also made sure to accurately record the angular velocity and the spiral so that he could replicate its motion accurately.

It wasn't too long before he was done.

"Man..." Rui huffed as he sat down. "That was stressful."

"Hahaha!" Master Zeamer laughed at his expense. "You sure did well to resist my Martial Embodiment."

"It's no wonder you Martial Masters are not allowed to fight seriously in front of people," Rui voiced his thoughts. "In addition to having incredible destructive power."

"The latter is actually not a reason," Master Zeamer remarked. "Martial Master fights are actually no more destructive than the fights between normal humans. Though this isn't universal as some Martial Art inherently have wide-scale destruction."

Rui's eyes widened. "What?!"

"It's the truth..." Master Zeamer remarked as he sipped his tea. "The control that the cognition of the Martial Mind grants us is beyond what you can experience."

"But... I once saw a fight between Martial Masters escalate to large environmental damage. And I don't think either of them was particularly scale-oriented," Rui frowned.

Master Zeamer narrowed his eyes, as a knowing glint flashed in his eyes. "Then one of them must have been actively trying to cause environmental destruction on purpose."

Rui frowned his eyes swum around, immersed in thought. "But which one... and why?"

The Master shrugged. "That's for you to figure out. Do you need anything else from me?"

"No."

"Then scatter, from here on out, I must seclude myself in my grand bedroom for some...domestic matters." The man couldn't hide a lewd smile arising on his face.

Rui heaved a sigh, facepalming. "I didn't need to know that."

He bade the Master goodbye as quickly as possible before returning to his meditation chamber.

'Alright, let's revisit the juicy data I collected.' Rui accessed his Mind Palace excitedly as he gathered the distributed pixel data, creating a video of the Martial Embodiment of Master Zeamer.

The sheer weight of a Martial Master as powerful as Master Zeamer allowed the image embodiment to pressure Rui's mind a lot more than Master Uma's blade of wind ever had. It confirmed to Rui the sheer superiority of Martial Masters like Master Zeamer.

'It's a shame that I never got to see Master Reina's Martial Embodiment,' Rui realized. 'It was just never relevant.'

Considering that the Martial Embodiment reflected the Martial Path, her Martial embodiment would probably not be flashy at all.

'In fact, it might draw attention further away from her, rather than to her. After all, a flashy Martial Embodiment is a liability to an assassin.' Rui mused.

She would be an incompetent assassin if she draw massive attention each time she used her full power.

Chapter 1460: Efficiency and Potential

Rui immediately got to work with the three Hypnomatrix projects. He excitedly accessed all the stored data in the Mind Palace.

This was the first Martial Embodiment that he had seen since becoming a Martial Senior. And the enhanced senses of the Senior Realm allowed him to understand the illusion better, even if it was inside his mind.

It affected all of his senses. He could see, hear, feel, smell, and even taste the Martial Embodiment. Furthermore, it extended to his sensory techniques as well.

Seismic Mapping detected an Earthquake of Richter ten magnitude.

Tempestuous Feel detected a hurricane that swallowed a small country.

Primordial Instinct had rung alarm bells through a megaphone in his mind, constantly screaming at him about the danger.

Much to his surprise, not even Riemannian Echo was immune to such an effect, a passive illusion so powerful that it could affect an indirect sense of space was quite impressive.

He quickly built up the image of the Martial Embodiment as he began refining the image that he had built in his mind. He could already tell that it would do well to replace the image of Master Uma that he had developed. It was just that much more eye-drawing, and thus easier to use to misdirect.

Just based on the weight that he had experienced from the two Martial Masters left him in awe. The output that Martial Masters was so high that they dwarfed even the sheer destructive power of Martial Seniors, who in turn had the power to alter terrain to a small extent, and even sink small isles.

He had gained more clues into the nature of the Master Realm in his conversations with Master Reina and Master Zeamer. They did not possess an additional source of physical power like the Martial Heart, so one would not expect the output of the Master Realm to exceed the Senior Realm.

And yet, it did. Not by a small margin either. It was something that Rui hadn't entirely understood until his conversation with Master Zeamer.

'Far greater output than Martial Seniors, yet no environmental damage under normal circumstances due to sheer control over their power.' Rui narrowed his eyes. 'Furthermore, the Master Realm is the evolved version of the Apprentice Realm in principle.'

Everything clicked.

'I see, it's control and efficiency.' Rui realized. 'The reason that Martial Apprentices are extremely superhuman despite physiologically being human, they maximize the potential of normal physical human power.'

The human body generated hundreds of joules of energy at its highest output. Mechanically, this was enough to shatter rocks, on paper at least. Yet due to mechanical and thermodynamic inefficiency, as

well as structural deficiencies, humans were unable to shatter rocks. Only one percent of the total power generated by the human body actually made it to the target of their strikes.

Martial Apprentices gained superhuman control over their bodies with the extra cognition from the untapped potential in the brain, allowing them to not only be more efficient with their movements but also develop much greater muscle memory than before. Furthermore, conditioning training which could only produce humble results in normal humans, produced incredible results in Martial Apprentices due to a much superior neuro-endocrinological response to conditioning from the superhuman brain.

In short, it allowed Martial Apprentices to squeeze every ounce of potential generated by the human body on a regular basis, and use it for, and only for, power, ensuring nothing went to waste.

'And Martial Masters must be doing the exact same thing with the Martial Heart!' Rui realized. 'It's the Upper Realm version of the Apprentice Realm, thus Martial Masters do for the Martial Heart and the Martial Body what Martial Apprentices did with the human body.'

That would explain why their output far surpassed Martial Seniors. They made astronomically better use of the same power than Martial Masters did. Rui recalled what Master Zeamer had told them.

'Even the feeblest of elders and the frailest of infants may split heaven and earth asunder should their bodies, minds, and souls harmonize with the flow of the universe.' Rui mused. 'He had demonstrated just how efficient his power is by generating a huge crater with just a tap.'

It was a Realm of technique and skill that Rui was far away from. And yet it was only the first step within the Upper Realms. Just how much further could one go? He didn't know. He didn't even under what there was beyond the Master Realm.

'One step at a time. Let's get these projects up and running first.' He put aside superfluous thoughts as he focused on the projects that he was working on. Master Zeamer's Martial Embodiment would serve as the basis of his misdirection. Thus needed to make sure that it was not only powerful but also easy to use. He didn't need mentally draining techniques like the Phantomind Void for his Hypnomatrix.

The Hypnomatrix was something that was designed to be used while the predictive model was being created. Which meant that it was something he had to use while his mind was gathering and processing

that data. Meaning that his mind would be quite consumed with the burden of creating a predictive model.

'I can't add another big burden on top of that, that's why it's best to ensure that the Hypnomatrix is not as mentally taxing. I should avoid creating an extravagant three-dimensional video.' Rui mused as he considered the parameters. 'A video is still prudent since Master Zeamer's Martial Embodiment rotates. However, let it be two-dimensional rather than three-dimensional. This will be far easier to execute than the Phantomind Void.'

In the first place, Martial Zeamer's Martial Embodiment was two-dimensional fundamentally. It did not extend to three dimensions the way that Master Unma's blade of winds, or Master Deivon's fortress did.

That made it much more convenient for Rui to use it as the basis of his misdirection.

Time passed in Cloudia as Rui rigorously worked on creating the most refined two-dimensional GIF that he could. The more refined it was, the less energy it would take to output a better result.