

Martial Unity 1511

Chapter 1511: Reality

"It'll take quite some time for us to resume our operations," Executive Ferm remarked. "An enormous proportion of our staff is dead or crippled. It won't be easy returning to our normal functioning. Therefore, you can choose to wait for a few weeks if you want, or you can go to the Shionel Confederation and procure the commission that you made."

"You want me to go to the Shionel Confederation to procure the commission?"

"It is in the Shionel Confederation. If our operations were functioning smoothly, we could have procured it via a remote transmission, but unfortunately it will take some to get back our remote transmission communication systems back to speed," He replied blandly. "Therefore, you can shorten that time by directly going to the Shionel Confederation to procure the information that you need. An assassin of your caliber should be able to infiltrate it with ease."

Rui heaved a sigh, considering the proposal. He had regarded the Shionel Confederation as a lion's den. However, he had reached a level of power capability that he no longer had any reason to look at it with such fear and regard.

'Besides, I'll probably have to go there if I want to kill Chairman Deacon,' Rui heaved a sigh. 'No point in dilly-dallying, I need that intelligence ASAP.'

"Alright, I'll do that. I believe that concludes our business here," Rui remarked, taking the paper. "I appreciate your services."

Rui got up, heading towards the door, before pausing and heaving a sigh. "One last thing."

He turned towards Executive Ferm. "This isn't going to change anything, but for what it's worth... I am sorry about the damages that the Beggar's Sect has incurred. I know I did not directly and intentionally cause such an outcome, nor did my negligence or shortcomings cause such an outcome. But I am sorry nonetheless."

Executive Ferm smiled bitterly. "It's fine. I have long gotten used to this. In the Age of Martial Art, Martial Artists are the most dominant force among humans. We normal humans are subject to the whims and fancies of Martial Artists like yourself. The death toll of unintentional and negligent collateral damage deaths caused by Martial Artists is estimated in the hundreds of millions annually across the continent, on average. This is simply the reality that we live in."

He hid it perfectly well, but Rui could sense deep resentment and hatred within the man's eyes. Yet he put his duties and professionalism first, never once letting it affect his interactions with Rui.

Rui couldn't think of anything to say. What was their to say? He had long lost count of how many people he had killed. Even if he limited his targets to those who caused human suffering, he knew that it was practically impossible to not hurt innocent people even if he did his very best to be careful about those he hurt.

All the people that he hurt in the Gereign base and the Derschek Region, most of them were drug traffickers that ruined people's lives, or assassin contractors that spread death. However, was each and every single one of those humans scumbags who deserved to die?

Realistically, no. There were probably some mostly innocent people mixed among them.

Just as Ferm said, Rui viewed them as collateral damage. If he ever ran into an innocent man he crippled, he would apologize and perhaps even reimburse them. But he would not change. He could not afford to hamper himself by caring for every possible individual person..

He didn't feel good about it. But he certainly did not want to spout some hypocritical moral platitudes to the man. "...Goodbye," Rui turned around, leaving the office with the statement of acknowledgment in hand. His next destination was the Shionel Confederation. It was a few weeks away at sustainable jogging speeds. Martial Senior-without-Martial-Heart jogging speeds, that was.

Once he got there, he would finally acquire the information he had purchased, after that, it was forming an appropriate strategy and then killing Chairman Deacon. 'Wait, I recall that he was establishing a base in the Kandrian Empire, which probably means that there is a good chance that he is in the Kandrian Empire rather than the Shionel Confederation,' Rui narrowed his eyes. In which case, the danger of being in the Shionel Confederation was even less. Rui had his disguise technique that he had learned from Master Reina, so he wasn't particularly worried either way.

Even if Deacon had set-up a facial recognition kind of protocol to apprehend suspects with the features that matched Rui, he could look completely different from his original appearance. As long as he restricted his aura with Mind Mask, he would be fine.

'Hell, I could just waltz past the transit port with Phantomind Void.'

He immediately left the Gereign Region without further ado, heading in the direction of the Shionel Confederation which was towards the east of the continent. It had been a long time since he had been to the east of the continent, thus he did look forward to returning.

"It's been nearly eight years..." Rui heaved a sigh as he jogged at blindingly fast speeds. Eight years ago, he had fled the Shionel Confederation as a measly mid-to-high grade Martial Squire, and now he was returning as a high-grade Martial Senior. The Shionel Confederation didn't have as many Martial Seniors as the Kandrian Empire, less than a tenth, in fact. That naturally meant that there were at most ten high-grade Martial Seniors, realistically less than ten.

Of course, there were also several Martial Masters and a single Martial Sage, but he was not going to need to face them unless Chairman Deacon had taken some insane measures to protect his life.

But that was not a viable strategy. As far Chairman Deacon knew, Rui was simply running away. A measly Martial Squire could not even dare to think about assassinating Chairman Deacon.

There was no way Rui could be a Martial Senior from his perspective either, after all, Rui would be shattering the second-to-last record for the Senior Realm by eight years even if he broke through yesterday.

Chairman Deacon's lack of understanding of Rui's current power was key to his downfall, as far as Rui was concerned.

Chapter 1512: Procured

1512 Procured

It took quite some time of travel for Rui to reach the Shionel Confederation. After a few weeks of travel through all kinds of topographies and even an inland ocean, however, he eventually arrived at his destination.

"At long last...the Shionel Confederation," Rui heaved a deep sigh when he took a good look at the nation from a distant mountain. "Man, it's been a while."

A complex set of emotions arose when he thought about his time in the Shionel Confederation. On one hand, most of the time he spent in the nation had been just fine. He dominated the dungeon raiding and even made an enormous profit of which he retained fifty percent.

On the other hand, he had been turned into a traveling vagabond for more than seven years because of the events that happened by the end of his time in the country.

But it had been seven years, those events already failed to make any impact on his mood. He quickly traveled, reaching the transit port. 'There isn't as much traffic as last time,' Rui noted.

The last time he had come here, the dungeon raids were still in their prime and glory. There was an enormous influx into the nation back then of people who wanted to partake in the massive gold rush of the nation at the time.

Now, however, the hype around the Shionel Dungeon was a lot lower than it used to be. Of course, the real estate of the Shionel Dungeon was still a highly attractive affair, but that was old news by now.

More than seven years had passed since the dungeon had been raided, it was obviously not going to maintain such a craze over such periods of time.

He smoothly passed the transit port protocols without being arrested or apprehended by the agents that Deacon had certainly planted in the Shionel Transit Bureau to keep an eye out for Rui.

There was no way they could see through his disguise technique, not to mention his Master-level detection-blocking mask.

Traveling through the nation felt surreal, he had memorized the entire map of the nation long ago, so he hadn't needed help navigating. It wasn't long before he found himself at the Shionel Dungeon.

"Man..." Rui chuckled when he stood before the dungeon. "It's been a while... This place has changed."

The entire area had been completely commercialized. There used to be a lockdown zone between the dungeon and the rest of the nation, to prevent monsters from gaining direct exposure to the rest of the nation, but that had gone and been replaced with a commercial district around the dungeon selling all kinds of things.

He was hardly surprised that the dungeon was being commercialized in this manner. He expected nothing less from the merchants of the Shionel Dungeon.

'As for the dungeon itself...' Rui turned towards the dungeon, spreading his senses through the place.

He could sense it had undergone some renovation. The tunnels had been widened and tarred, as well as set with tracks resembling train tracks and laden with steps.

In addition, there were various pulley systems that transported goods through certain tunnels.

Many of the other tunnels had been blocked with rubble to prevent people from going down the wrong path and getting lost.

The biggest difference was the fact that he could sense through it even without Riemannian Echo. He could use his normal senses and sense the internal layout of the dungeon with just those alone.

He was curious about what was done to the unrefined mines at the bottom of the dungeon that had given rise to the dungeon in the first place, but it was too far to sense from where he was and he didn't want to actually enter it.

'A Martial Master is probably assigned to oversee and protect this dungeon,' Rui heaved a sigh, turning away.

He didn't want to do anything to capture the attention of Martial Masters. Time and time they had proven that their insights into other people were incredibly high, although he did have a mask capable of blocking their sensing, he did not want to use it, he didn't want them to notice either.

Anyone who went that far had a reason to go that far.

Rui simply turned around before taking the badge that Sian had given him and putting it on.

It wasn't long before he was hawked at by a newspaper seller.

"Consider purchasing from us, sir!" The man hawked at Rui. "I believe you'll find what you need."

The man gave Rui a knowing look. Rui followed inside his little shack, taking a set amidst piles of newspapers.

"Now then, we have your commission ready," The man remarked. "It is being procured as we speak."

"You're not going to set up anti-sensory measures?" Rui asked.

"Those would only draw more attention to us," The man replied. "This place is among the most bustling places in the country. It is almost impossible to single out any one conversation from afar, even for Martial Artists, we ensure that that is always the case. Just ensure you don't mention anything sensitive.""

Rui raised an eyebrow. That most likely meant that they ensured that the population density remained high enough to serve as a natural anti-sensory field.bender

"Impressive," Rui muttered.

"We make do with what we can," The man replied.

It wasn't long before a woman walked in with a thick package. The man unsealed it, pulling out the contents.

Out came several newspapers with many pages.

'Disguising the information commission as a newspaper to avoid anything that seems unnatural, they're careful as always, Rui accepted the newspapers.

At long last, he had finally achieved his goal.

"They're water proof and impossible tear by human strength," The man remarked. "Make sure you destroy them when you're done with them."

Rui nodded, getting up as he left the little shack.

"Thank you for your patronage!" The man returned to his customer-pleasing commercial demeanor.

"Please visit again!"

Chapter 1513: Information

Rui booked an inn for a day, secluding him in peace. He didn't feel the need to take any extravagant measures to secure his privacy, most of those would only draw attention. He simply locked his room.

"Huff..." Rui heaved a sigh as he stared at the three newspapers before him. "Finally..."

It had not been easy, but he had finally gotten his hands on the intelligence that he needed to endeavor to kill Chairman Deacon. Four years of missions and operations, and training for those missions and operations had culminated into the bunch of newspapers before him.

The cover and end pages contained mundane news local to the confederation. However, the moment he opened them up, gone was the collage format of a newspaper. The information on him had immediately begun.

The first page contained a profile and some basic foundational information. It detailed his history, his field, and his financial and business state. There was a solid section dedicated to his personality and character profile.

There was another section dedicated to his closest relatives, friends, and associates.

However, this was not what he was interested in. 'Moving on...' Rui shifted past the basic information to more pertinent matters.

"Oh...?" His eyes rose up in interest. An extremely detailed set of sections dedicated to his schedule, time allocation, activity duration, and location visits.

The Beggar's Sect had not only collected extremely detailed and precise data on the man's daily lives right down to the minute for the past four years. Every day in his life was observed, recorded, and documented from the day he woke up to the moment he fell asleep. Where he was, for how long he was, and as much as possible, exactly what he was doing.

Rui grew flustered when he saw that the information detailed even the very second that activities had begun or ended.

They had naturally supplied him with that raw information, however, they had taken the liberty to organize and process that large amount of data to make it easier to understand.

There were pie charts that conveyed activity time allocation, bar graphs that represented location time duration, a general time schedule that gave a rough and general idea of what it was like, and two different daily schedule models that evaluated the probability of how Chairman Deacon was going to spend his day based on variables like location.

There were even graphs that plotted the change over time in how and where he spent his time doing what. "Wow..." Rui's eyes widened as he was momentarily taken aback by the sheer flood of data. 'Not

only do they have an immense amount of precision in their raw data gathering ability, but they also have a lot of diversity. On top of that, they've done a good job organizing, processing, and assimilating all this information to detect and convey patterns, trends, extrapolations, and probabilities really well.'

The level of statistical knowledge that he was seeing was high school or perhaps college entrance exam level, but they were extremely thorough. In this world, even that level of mathematics was probably the peak, or close to the peak.

Naturally, they did not display any higher-level statistical knowledge that would be considered bread and butter back on Earth for any statistician or data scientist worth their salt, that was fine, he could easily handle that part himself. Still, they did make his job easier.

'He's been spending more time in the Kandrian Empire in the past seven years...' Rui narrowed his eyes. It wasn't possible for him to just drop everything in the Shionel Confederation and simply shift to the Kandrian Empire permanently then and there. He had countless partners, dependants, and benefactors that he couldn't just cut ties with, at least, not without suffering tremendous losses and losing all the credibility he had built as a businessman.

Major changes took time, and even after seven years, he still needed to spend a good amount of his time in the Shionel Confederation.

The graph for the time he spent in the Kandrian Empire escalated as time passed. While the graph for the time spent in the Shionel Confederation decreased as time passed.

'Hm, he's planning to make the permanent switch in a few years, probably two or three,' Rui narrowed his eyes. 'I have to kill him before he grows more entrenched in the Kandrian Empire.'

The more he grew entrenched in the Kandrian Empire, the greater the political ramifications Rui would face for killing him. Even though Chairman Deacon had lost much seven years ago, he had actually gained much right more before that. The sheer amount of wealth he had, made even the profits that Rui got from Esosale Suppliers look humble.

He most certainly used that wealth to form many partnerships in the Kandrian Empire. Rui would be pissing off all the friends he made in the Kandrian Empire by killing Chairman Deacon.

'Starting with Charles DiViliers,' Rui narrowed his eyes. He knew that Charles DiViliers was connected to the Underworld, and he knew that Chairman Deacon was one of the first and firmest partners of Charles. Thus it stood to reason that Chairman Deacon was going to further his ties to the Underworld.

Thus, if Rui killed him too late, he could incur the Underworld's wrath once more. That's why Chairman Deacon needed to die before he transitioned his base of power from the Shionel Confederation to the Kandrian Empire. Even if he was a high-grade Martial Senior, there were forces higher up that he could not afford to provoke. Rui returned his attention back to the intelligence reports and summaries. At the moment, he spent sixty-five percent of his time in the Shionel Confederation and twenty-five percent of his time in the Kandrian Empire. That reflected that Rui had made it in time. Most likely they had not deepened their business partnerships and transactions.

'Well, I'm sure this information package will cover that deeply in another section,' Rui shook his head. 'I need to focus on the parts relevant to the actual assassination itself first, and the ramifications after.'

Chapter 1514: Bloodhound

Rui deeply read through the newspaper that had dedicated itself to going into the whens, wheres, and whats of Chairman Deacon's daily life.

On average, forty percent of his day was spent in an office in one of his branches, usually going through some paperwork, addressing reports from his various subordinates, and communicating with his various partners, associates, and allies over a multitude of matters.

He spent seven percent of his day traveling, on average. He had many branches across the Shionel Confederation handling local matters in that region that he often needed to travel to for important decision-making matters.

He also traveled internationally through high-speed motorized carriages that could travel at incredible speeds, allowing him to cover the vast expanses of the continent in relatively short amounts of time. He would often meet with international partners, governments, rulers, and even Martial Artists of the Upper Realms for a variety of important matters that required his personal intervention.

Within the Kandrian Empire, he would spent time at his recently expanded branches in the nation. He had always conducted business in the Kandrian Empire, however, what he was doing now was much, much more committal than what he did in other nations.

'In terms of when it is most optimal to attack him, that honestly depends on this particular section...' Rui narrowed his eyes as he arrived at the security measures section.

It was large enough that it had its own newspaper, the thickest one of the bunch with dozens of large pages.

'Just how much security does this man have?' Rui frowned as he opened up the newspaper.

The very first page was a section that talked about Chairman Deacon's security expenditure and its trends.

Rui's eyes widened at the sheer amount this man spent in order to secure his life or make the life of his assailant miserable.

Not only did the man spend an atrocious amount of money on security, but that amount had been increasing across the past seven years despite having plateaued prior to that.

'So as soon as he discovered my identity and realized I escaped seven years ago, he began beefing up his own personal protection...' Rui realized. 'He's been waiting for an assassination for the past seven years. But surely even he would come to think that it's never coming after seven years of searching.'

Apparently not, considering that the budget he spent this year was larger than any that he had ever spent in his entire life. Rui continued on as he arrived at the actual measures that Chairman Deacon had taken, themselves.

It had roughly been divided into preventive and protective. The former were measures that Chairman Deacon had taken to ensure that an attack would not happen at all, for whatever reasons.

Either due to the hundred million Shionel gold that he spent on surveillance measures that were meant to root out any assassins that were planning to ambush him, or the forces that would be pissed off if Chairman Deacon was assassinated, or the measures taken to ensure that anyone who did dare to even try assassinating the man would most certainly be trapped by the measures that Chairman Deacon publicly put in place to deter assailants.

Protective measures included a powerful armor that could protect the user from a lot of punishment.

Martial Senior bodyguards were highly qualified and trained in guarding protocols in addition to their Martial Art.

Powerful defensive measures whether they were fortified offices or fortified carriages. "Man..." Rui heaved a deep sigh. "He's paranoid that I'm going to try and kill him."

Then again, it wasn't paranoia since Rui had always planned to eliminate him. Still, such extensive protection did complicate things. Rui was grateful that he had yet to procure any protection from a Martial Master, that would make the assassination impossible unless he relied on indirect assassinations like Master Reina taught him.

Of course, Rui was sure that he thought he was on the safe side with all these preparations. He still thought that Rui was a Martial Squire and that these measures, while perhaps overkill for a Martial Squire, were worth it just to be safe. He couldn't have possibly imagined that Rui was already a high-grade Martial Senior. And not just any high-grade Martial Senior, but a high-grade Martial Senior that had received the tutelage of one of the greatest Martial Master assassins ever. With techniques like the Phantomind Void, Death's Sympathy, and Sympathetic Death lance, he had become a formidable force to make an enemy out of.

'Still...' Rui scratched his head. 'I've never undertaken an assassination this difficult.'

Rui hadn't even gotten to the end of the security section and he already felt that it was quite difficult. How difficult would it be by the time he finished reading through all of the security measures?

His expression only grew more grave before growing shocked as he read through.

'He had a quasi-Master-level explosive surgically inserted into his body, meant to explode the moment his heart stops beating?'

According to the Beggar's Sect, the bomb was meant to be powerful enough to kill even Martial Seniors, let alone Martial Squires. Chairman Deacon was determined to take whosoever killed him down with him.

'He's insane. Completely insane!' Rui was almost impressed at how vindictive this man was against those who came to claim his life. He was almost more willing to take him down with them rather than try to actually survive any attempt on his life.

Just the idea that he was willing to go so far to try and kill Rui, even at the cost of his own life, showed just how much venomous intensity he detested and hated Rui from the bottom of his heart. Had Rui not commissioned the Beggar's Sect for intelligence, he may very well have not found out and would have undoubtedly died at the man's hands.

There was a reason the man had come to be known as the Bloodhound. He would chase and chase and chase, bite, and never let go even if it meant going to hell.

Chapter 1515: Secretaries

The bomb was made out of a small amount of a Master-level esoteric with a known tendency to explode if it ever experienced inertia for more than a certain amount of time. The esoteric had been attached to his heart, such that if his heart stopped beating, the esoteric mass would stop, experiencing inertia for enough time, causing it to explode.

As a result, it would yield an explosion that would vaporize everything within a radius of ten kilometers from the epicenter.

'That's insane,' Rui heaved a sigh. 'I can't survive that kind of firepower, especially if I'm up close.'

He knew that Masters were powerful, but the fact that such an enormously powerful explosion could be considered only quasi-Master-level was hard to parse. 'I'm glad that Martial Masters have perfect

control over their raw power,' Rui heaved a sigh. 'Otherwise, I might have died in the battle between Master Haishi and Master Zeamer.'

Regardless, this greatly restricted Rui's options for a direct assassin. He couldn't just walk up to Chairman Deacon and lop the man's head off, even if the guards weren't there. 'Hm, then maybe I will have to settle for indirect assassinations,' Rui considered the option.

Unfortunately, it appeared that Chairman Deacon was just as paranoid about getting poisoned as he was about getting murdered up close. The man had a dedicated anti-poisoning team that would not only test food but also taste a portion of every single thing that Chairman Deacon was to put in his mouth.

That included all manners of food, beverages, and even water. Furthermore, Chairman Deacon would personally oversee the poison testing part himself, for he was too paranoid to let it happen outside of his personal supervision.

The poison testing team included a poison-oriented Martial Senior with a hundred and fifty years of experience with poison.

'In other words, I can forget about poisoning his food,' Rui heaved a sigh. Although he had gained a foundational understanding of indirect assassinations from Master Reina, he didn't have any experience with them. All of his assassinations thus far had been direct assassinations that he himself had completed.

Trying to successfully pull off an indirect assassination against someone like Chairman Deacon and the highly competent security personnel and the extravagant measures he had taken was not worth it.

'Unless I find some specific solution that has a particularly high probability of succeeding, I should probably forget about trying to kill him indirectly,' Rui concluded. 'As for the explosive, I need to ensure that I'm well out of range by the time he dies. That would be much easier to do in an indirect assassination, but it is possible even with a direct assassination.'

One thing that he did note was the assassination history that Chairman Deacon had gone through.

'The man has been attempted an assassination on nearly fifty times in the past seven years,' Rui noted. 'Which means that this is nothing new to him.'

Furthermore, according to the report, there have been instances where he came close to death. However, in none of these instances did he take suicidal measures to try and take his assassins with him by triggering the bomb.

On top of that, the fact that the explosive had been surgically implanted into his body was a secret that was supposed to be known only to four people indicated that Chairman Deacon had worked very hard to keep it a secret.

'There are several things to be inferred about his intentions from this,' Rui's analytical mind kicked into action. 'First, the purpose of the bomb is not deterrence. A deterrence only works if people know about it. This bomb isn't a deterrence... it's a trump card.'

Chairman Deacon could have very easily deterred assassins from going anywhere near him had he spread the news about this particular survival measure. After all, what assassin would dare to assassinate him if it meant being vaporized by an explosion that would stretch a radius of ten kilometers?

Yet he had taken a lot of measures to keep it a secret. In fact, the only reason Rui had learned about it was because the Beggar's Sect was good at what it did. Once more, Rui thanked his old self for deciding to be prudent and purchasing intelligence on Chairman Deacon from them. Things could have gone very wrong if he didn't.

'The reason he even got the bomb was to kill me, considering the timing...' Rui ascertained. 'Does that mean he fears my ability to kill him?'

Not necessarily, it could also have meant that he didn't think he could kill Rui any other way.

'However, the fact that dozens of assassinations have been attempted on him in the past seven years and he hasn't killed himself even when they got close, indicates that even if I attempt a direct assassination, it is highly unlikely that he'll trigger the bomb to kill me by killing himself,' Rui noted. 'That gives me some relief. I probably don't have to worry about the bomb too much outside of ensuring I don't kill him by accident or make him desperate enough to kill himself.'

That meant that eliminating his bodyguards was something that he needed to do swiftly and decisively. He needed to reach Chairman Deacon before the man realized he was going to die. The bomb wasn't the only trump card that the man had prepared. In addition to the four Senior-level bodyguards, the man had two excellent secretaries that had glowing resumes and had graduated from the highest institutes of management.

In reality, however, both those secretaries were disguised Martial Seniors that had been retroactively trained within Deacon Industries to be secretaries.

Of course, the Beggar's Sect had discovered the truth and had highlighted in the report to Rui. Unfortunately, they were unable to acquire information regarding their true identities and more importantly, their grades or their Martial Art.

'That's a shame, but just knowing that his true secretaries are Martial Seniors is a boon that would have screwed my plans had I not known...'

Chapter 1516: Travel

The two Martial Seniors in disguise serving as secretaries were probably the reason that Chairman Deacon survived past assassinations based on what Rui could see. Intelligence concealing, especially if the intelligence was important and impactful, was one of the most subtle and passive ways of sabotaging assassins.

An assassin that had prepared to take down four Martial Seniors would most likely fail in their assassination if they ran into an additional two Martial Seniors. It was the best way to sabotage all assassinations in general.

Now that Rui knew about this, however, he didn't intend to let it get in the way.

'If the Beggar's Sect is unable to supply me information on them, then I'll just have to find out myself,' Rui mused. 'Well, I'll have to do that for all six Martial Seniors protecting him regardless.'

He was definitely going to need to formulate rigorous predictive models on all of them. There was no question about that. This was not a head-on fight where his main goal was to push himself by fighting fairly.

His main goal was to succeed, by any means necessary. He didn't have any bottom lines, aside from making sure innocent people didn't get hurt.

'I definitely can't let Chairman Deacon die inside the Shionel Confederation,' Rui noted.

If he did, the death of millions of people would be on him. As much as Rui wanted to kill Chairman Deacon, he was unwilling to sacrifice millions of innocent people. 'It's a shame that this isn't the Gereign Region. If these were people who profited by spreading human suffering, I would have much less of a problem killing all of them,' Rui heaved a sigh, shaking his head.

That instantly ruled out the Shionel Confederation and most certainly the Kandrian Empire when it came to killing him. It ruled out any population center for that matter.

'That leaves only one option. I need to kill him while he's traveling.' Rui concluded. 'It's easier to kill him if he's outside his highly fortified bases and branches. A carriage, as good as it is, simply cannot compensate for all that.'

According to the intelligence supplied by the Beggar's Sect, Chairman Deacon is always accompanied by a security detail and convoy when traveling. Consisting of eight Martial Seniors, including the secretaries, seventy-four Martial Squires, and two-hundred and fifty Martial Apprentices.

'What's the point of having the Martial Squires and especially the Martial Apprentices?' He scratched his head. 'I suppose it does avoid dragging Martial Seniors away from Chairman Deacon. It would be possible to pull them away from his side by sending some weak Martial Artists. So the Martial Squires and Apprentices exist merely to ensure that the Martial Seniors aren't bothered.'

'Hmmm...Normally, I would just use Death's Sympathy to snipe a target from a huge distance away, but in this case, Chairman Deacon has protected himself too well,' Rui noted. Not only was the carriage, that he never stepped out of until the destination had been reached, highly fortified, but he donned attires that actually served as armor and even had invisible protective measures around exposed parts of his body thanks to some rare but powerful esoteric substances.

Death's Sympathy was extremely powerful when it came to assassinations, but it required unbarred access to his target's head. That was its one and only flaw. That wasn't a problem most of the time, but against someone as paranoid as Chairman Deacon, it was going to prove to be not viable.

'That means I'll need to kill him up close, or knock him out up close and then kill him away from a distance,' Rui sighed. 'Direct up-close assassination while he's away from a population center. Looks like I'm going to have to prepare an ambush for the carriage.'

For the most part, he had narrowed down on what manner of assassination he wanted to go through with. Had he been more adept and experienced with indirect assassinations and poison he might have been able to accomplish something with that, but all of his assassination experience was in the field of direct assassinations.

'What are the conditions for a successful assassination in such circumstances?' Rui asked himself.

First, he needed to not die, either to the Martial Senior guards or to a desperate suicide by Chairman Deacon.

For the Martial Senior guards, there was only one solution and it was a proven tried, and tested solution. He needed to form thorough predictive models on all of them and find their resonance frequencies.

With those two weapons, he could operate at a level of combat that far exceeded his standard. Even six Martial Seniors, an ordinarily overwhelming barrier, could be overcome easily. His covert prowess had increased significantly since his training under Master Reina and Master Zeamer.

However, it needed to be executed quickly and swiftly. It needed to be over before Chairman Deacon could realize that he was going to die. If Chairman Deacon realized his eminent death before Rui reached him, then he would undoubtedly kill himself and take his assassins down with him. Thus not only did Rui need to display an overwhelming dominance when it came to taking out the man's guards, he needed to do it with finesse that made it difficult for someone inside the carriage to realize of his impending doom.

That was much harder than just killing them. 'The predictive models need to be immaculate. In fact, just watching them walk and do ordinary tasks is not going to be enough, I need to see them fight,' Rui

tutted. Usually just observing them allowed him to make great partial progress when it came forming predictive models on his targets, but this time he needed to actively intervene in some way to witness their Martial prowess.

The preparation phase of this assassination could possibly be harder than the actual execution phase of the assassination. Thankfully, he had the tools to be confident of his own success when it came to ensuring he had everything he needed.

Chapter 1517: Bloodhound Hunter

Rui began forming the skeleton of a plan, though he was still far from fleshing out the details. Several facts had been established. He was going for an active and direct assassination, not an indirect one. Chairman Deacon was highly prepared for both, thus it made more sense to go for the kind of assassination he was greatly competent at.

He also had to admit, a small part of the reason for this decision was that he wanted to do the deed in person.

He also decided on a close-range assassination rather than a long-range one. Chairman Deacon had taken more than the necessary protective measures to make sniping him with Death's Sympathy unviable.

Another decision he had made was that the assassination needed to be carried out away from a population center. He was unwilling to kill millions of innocent people to get rid of Chairman Deacon, especially when he knew it could be done otherwise.

The end decision was to go for a close-range direct assassination ambush while the man was traveling outside of the Shionel Confederation. This was the best way to kill him considering the circumstances and his own capabilities.

Naturally, it was not going to be easy. Predictive model or not, killing eight Martial Seniors was going to be exceedingly difficult. Furthermore, he was unable to use the Greater Phantomind Void and the VOID algorithm simultaneously. And for this assassination, he almost certainly needed both.

'First, I need to look through some more information,' Rui noted. 'The Beggar's Sect gives me as much information as there is on the Martial Seniors, but it's nowhere near enough for a predictive model, so I'll need to handle that myself. In addition, I need to ascertain his travel plans well in advance in order to plan this out. Thankfully, both of these are possible.'

The Beggar's Sect's information package contained his general travel schedule, but it was best for Rui to verify the fact of the man's travel plans surrounding the particular traveling journey during which Rui planned to kill him.

Ideally, it was best for him to pick an isolated spot along the journey just to minimize the variable of human interference screwing his plan up.

Once he found a good spot along a common travel route that Chairman Deacon frequented, and also finished the predictive models for each of the Senior bodyguards, then it would finally be time to execute the assassination and be done with this matter forever.

'Thankfully, figuring out a good travel journey is easy. The man travels to the Kandrian Empire regularly, there is a huge distance between the two nations and I'm sure I can find plenty of spots,' Rui noted.

He scoured through the rest of the information package, taking note of other important things that he needed to be wary of. One particularly important thing that he needed to keep in mind was the scout unit that accompanied Chairman Deacon's travel convoy each time. This was a unit of sensory Martial Artists who were dedicated to ensuring that there were no traps or ambushes waiting for Chairman Deacon.

It was a unit that consisted of many Martial Squires with highly developed senses. Of course, Rui was not too concerned about this. Not even Senior Nereau, a Martial Senior with two grade-ten sensory techniques had been able to glean past his Greater Phantomind Void.

Rui's affinity for mental techniques was of the same caliber as Kane's affinity for maneuvering techniques. He estimated that he was likely above even highly talented mind-oriented Martial Seniors whose entire Squire breakthrough evolution process was greatly centered around the brain. This was because the natural and organic evolution of the mind from birth to adulthood was superior to even the artificial evolution process of the Squire breakthrough procedure.

The probability of a Martial Squire detecting him was precisely zero.

'I have a pretty decent plan, but very preparation-heavy. Chairman Deacon has a platoon of bodyguards that he rotates through. About twelve of them, I need to form predictive models on all of them just to be sure, not to mention learning their resonant frequencies. This is going to take some time,' Rui heaved a sigh.

Of course, he could definitely minimize that getting the resonant frequencies and predictive models for only the Martial Seniors who would participate as bodyguards on the day of the assassination, but he would need to calculate that based on their shifts and the date. Furthermore, if there was a hiccup, then he would be screwed.

'I need to be meticulous and immaculate. And patient more than anything,' Rui decided. 'I've waited more than seven years for this. If it takes a few more weeks of preparation or more, then so be it. There's no point in fucking up and possibly letting those seven years go to waste.'

He took a deep breath as he resolved himself. He would probably require the Beggar's Sect's aid just a little more, but he didn't have time to fulfill large time-consuming operations for them anymore. 'Maybe a few small operations here and there, at most,' Rui knew. After all, hiring a musician to play all kinds of notes around his targets was easy. As a Martial Senior, even a minute of his time was exponentially more valuable than an entire day's worth of time of a musician. Such was the value that a living tactical nuclear missile represented. "Time to get started with Operation Bloodhound Hunter."

And get started he did. Unfortunately, it had taken him longer than he had expected. From negotiating a few short bodyguard operations for the Beggar's Sect for their cooperation regarding certain matters, to stalking the bodyguards of Chairman Deacon when they were off-duty with Phantomind Void, to scouting locations across his travel route from the Shionel Confederation to the Kandrian Empire that were fit for the assassination, to running simulations of the battle in his head and computing probability of success.

It took him a whopping three months before he was finally ready.

In the past three months, Rui had done much. He spent most of his time stalking each of the bodyguards of Deacon Industries with Greater Phantomind Void. Building predictive models and finding the resonant frequencies of the various targets took a week per target, when considering how many there were, three months of preparation made sense.

Rui didn't shirk his duties either. The probability of him killing Chairman Deacon was reduced substantially if he didn't create a complete predictive model and resonant frequency profile on each of the Martial Senior bodyguards.

There was even one high-grade Martial Senior, this one was the reason that Rui needed Death's Sympathy available to him.

He was confident of taking on a grade-thirteen Martial Senior. But could he do so while fighting five other Martial Seniors?

Certainly not, he hadn't reached that level.

Not yet, at least.

He intended to make Death's Sympathy and the VOID algorithm among the advantages he had. However, he did have other advantages that he intended to leverage.

In order to build complete predictive models on all of them, Rui even went as far as leaving the country and hiring Martial Seniors to get into a serious fight with each of the Martial Senior bodyguards under various pretexts.

Whether it be false pretenses or spontaneous escalation, he made sure that he saw how they fought.

Across three months, he gained a deep understanding of Chairman Deacon's Martial Seniors. Simultaneously, he also finalized the location of the deed. This was much easier. After all, there was one main large path constructed between the Shionel Confederation and the Kandrian Empire by the East Panamic Transport Association. Chairman Deacon naturally made way of this infrastructure when traveling from the Shionel Confederation to the Kandrian Empire, especially when it was designed to

facilitate smooth high-speed travel between the great distance between the Kandrian Empire and the Shionel Confederation.

Rui had spent an entire ten days walking across the path looking for the perfect location.

Until he eventually found it. "This will do," Rui mused as he stood in a barren desert. There were deserted regions between the Kandrian Empire and the Shionel Confederation.

He needed deserted regions because he intended to kill Chairman Deacon, which meant that the bomb was undoubtedly to go off. This meant that he needed an entirely deserted region to ensure that nobody got hurt. It also meant that the probability of interference was low. Rui had gone on to do his research on the entire region just to make sure. However, the region only had a few villages and settlements a few hundred kilometers away from the travel route. Furthermore, they only had Martial Apprentices, so Rui had nothing to worry about.

He just needed to make sure the bomb didn't go off anywhere near them.

He had actually completed major preparation two weeks before the actual assassination. He spent those days simply refining his preparations and fine-tuning to make sure that there was absolutely nothing wrong.

He suspected that he probably only had one shot. Once Chairman Deacon realized how lethal Death's Sympathy was, he would undoubtedly take measures to ensure that this trump card was sealed.

Outside of special circumstances with immense preparation, Rui had no business fighting six Martial Seniors at once. It was simply impossible. It was unlikely he would make another successful attempt within the time period of the protection his family had.

Especially when the reports of the Beggar's Sect went in-depth into Chairman Deacon's search for Rui Quarrier.

Two years ago, the man concluded that Rui wasn't in the Kandrian Empire. At the same time, Rui learned that Kane and Senior Xanarn had arrived from the Kandrian Empire during the same time. This had

sparked more investigation from the man, but thankfully, Rui's measures and instructions had been prudent enough to prevent them from learning too much.

Rui was actually surprised. The Beggar's Sect had supplied an unnaturally amount of information on Chairman Deacon's investigation into Rui Quarrier. This information wasn't relevant to the information that Rui had requested for the assassination.

'Looks like they strongly suspect or know that I am Rui Quarrier,' Rui mused. Back in the Kandrian Empire, the upper echelons had already come to learn the identity of the infamous Volder from seven years ago. It was inevitable, given how furiously Chairman Deacon searched for the Volder and Rui Quarrier.

It was just that that information had lost its value the moment the Shionel Dungeon had been squeezed of all its resources. The only person who still clung to the past was Chairman Deacon. Rui could go home without worries as long as he got rid of Chairman Deacon.

The day neared as Rui prepared the necessary utilities for various possible circumstances and scenarios. He spared no measure, going as far as he could.

Yet he felt an uncomfortable tingling sensation in his heart, one he was no longer accustomed to.

'...I'm nervous,' Rui heaved a sigh as he placed his hand on his heart. He hadn't even been this nervous in fights where he nearly died, usually because he tended to enjoy those fights too much. But this was not a fight. There was nothing enjoyable about this fight. He was going to ambush Chairman Deacon, get rid of everything that stood in the way, and then kill him.

Plain and simple.

The day had arrived.

In the Shionel Confederation, Chairman Deacon got into his personal carriage. A highly fortified carriage that could withstand plenty of punishment while keeping its occupants safe, he didn't feel safe unless he traveled in such a carriage of his own corporation's creation.

"I presume everything is in order?" Chairman Deacon asked as he inspected the security detail of his travel convoy.

"We have ensured as much, sir," One of his secretaries replied. "The travel convoy is ready to go."

"Rest assured we have taken all security measures and protocols," His other secretary added.

"Hmmm..." The man glanced out of the window to the sky.

"Not a single cloud...I suppose that's a good omen."

Chapter 1519: Commence

Rui waited in position, standing some distance away from the path. Flashes of carriage traveling at truly remarkable speeds went in either direction on the road. The sun mercilessly baked anything unfortunate enough to be within its direct exposure.

Of course, Rui was unbothered by this. Not only was he a Martial Senior, but he had also prepared himself physically and mentally for this for quite some time. Physically, he had ensured that he had gotten plenty of sleep before he undertook this mission. He didn't want to perform sub-optimally since his combat and assassination prowess greatly depended on his mind.

He had been meticulous with his nutrition, making sure he was fed and just lightly full enough where he wouldn't feel uncomfortable with great physical exertion. He had also mentally prepared himself for this day for quite some time, subjecting himself to a lot of meditation and mental conditioning.

Today, he was different from other days.

He seemed to ooze peril, much unlike his normal day-to-day impression. His eyes were sharp, devoid of the warmth that they normally possessed.

His senses were active, directed towards the carriages that arrived from the direction of the Shionel Confederation.

His eyes widened as they pricked, detecting the approach of the travel convoy from Deacon Industries. He quickly used Riemannian Echo to pierce through the anti-sensory measures of the central convoy.

His expression crumpled with cold fury. 'He's here.'

Rui had no interest in attacking his convoy if the man himself wasn't here. It would be a disaster if he attacked the convoy to kill Deacon only to find the man's butler or subordinate.

But he was here. He had aged a lot in the past seven years, but Rui couldn't possibly fail to recognize him.

The time had come. Although the carriage moved at extremely high speeds from the perspective of normal humans to Rui, it may as well have been nigh-stationary, especially when he activated his Martial Heart.

'First step; cripple the carriage,' Rui fired off a Squire-level Mighty Roar Flash Blast, having activated the Pathfinder technique, that was just weak enough such that it would pass below the senses of the Martial Seniors within the carriage. This ability was the reason he had been able to assassinate the Martial Seniors of the Shadow Isles. BAM!

CRACK!

One of the wheels of the carriage broke off after the attack hit a crucial component of the axel. In the past three months, he had studied the model of the carriage that Chairman Deacon traveled by, thoroughly familiarizing himself with its engineering, so that he could identify the cleanest way to cripple the carriage as quick as possible.

'Next step; draw out the Martial Seniors,' Rui inhaled deeply as he activated Hypertrophic Surge.

THWOOM!!

A powerful tier-five Transverse Resonance attack surged as five attacks merged into one, flying straight towards the carriage.

Yet, it never reached.

Four figures flashed out as the doors burst open violently, before swiftly shutting.

BOOM!!!

They combined their power as they ensured that not only had the attack been defended, but its power had been dispelled. The one advantage that they had in addition to their numbers was their teamwork. Each team of bodyguards was highly trained in their coordination when it came to attacks that came out of nowhere, allowing them to smoothly dispel the threat.

They were prepared for precisely such circumstances.

What they weren't prepared for, however, was one of the four of them collapsing on the spot, dying then and there. It was as though someone had cut off the strings of a puppet, causing her to collapse lifelessly.

THUD

Their eyes widened with shock.

They couldn't even sense the enemy, had one of their Martial Seniors spontaneously experienced a lethal heart attack?!

They weren't prepared for this. That was why it happened again.

TAP!

Rui knocked on the skull of the closest Martial Seniors, causing his eyes to roll back as he too collapsed lifelessly. He surged forward at blinding speeds, hoping to get another if he could, but alas...

It was not to be.

BAM!

A wide-area shockwave flung him away, dispelling Greater Phantomind Void as two more Martial Seniors appeared from within the carriage with severe expressions. Many an assassination had been attempted, yet this was the first time that two of the Senior-level bodyguards had collapsed so quickly.

The two Martial Seniors in secretary disguise had decided that it was not prudent to allow only two Martial Senior bodyguards to fight such a fiendish assassin. They hoped that the sight of two more Martial Seniors who weren't supposed to be there would cause the assassin to withdraw from the assassination attempt.

Unfortunately, it was not to be.

Not only did he not withdraw, he looked as though he had been waiting for them.

The two long-range wide-scale defensive Martial Artists immediately prepared their wide-scale techniques with grim and severe expressions. If their opponent possessed such lethal stealth that he could kill two of their comrades right beside them without them even sensing it, then he could not be allowed to approach.

Each of them knew with grave certainty that such an absurd level of stealth was extremely scary to deal with. They could die at any moment, and they would never know. It had already happened twice.

Yet, the assassin never employed his stealth a second time.

In fact, not only did he not employ his stealth, he charged straightforwardly at them!

All four Martial Senior bodyguards widened their eyes with shock as they realized that the assassin was meant to fight them head-on. 'Four-on-one in an assassination attempt? Is he insane?'

"Focus!!" The captain of the team bellowed. "We don't know what he has up his sleeve!"

Yet Rui simply surged forward at a blinding speed that surpassed even their alerted senses.

WHOOSH!

TAP!

In less than the blink of an eye, he had already arrived, and in the next blink, his knuckles had already surged forward, striking the temple of one of the bodyguards.

THUD!

Not even a minute had passed, yet three Martial Seniors had already died.

Chapter 1520: Countdown

Rui's strategy was simple. Catch them off-guard with Greater Phantomind Void and Death's Sympathy soon after he drew them out with the tier-five Transverse Resonance, and take out as many as possible.

He had hoped to take out three of them before he was booted out, but he knew that that was pushing it. Contrary to their expectations, he never intended to use Greater Phantomind Void throughout the entirety of his fight. For one, it consumed most of his attention, making his reactions to attacks slower.

On top of that, they had two wide-scale Martial Seniors who could cover a lot of area with their attacks, Greater Phantomind Void was useless against such attacks, since they swept through a lot of area, hitting him regardless of whether they could sense him or not.

In a prolonged fight, he would probably still come out on top since spamming wide-scale attacks was a good way to burn through stamina, but there was only one problem.

This wasn't a duel.

This was an assassination.

The longer this fight went on, the greater the probability of failure. He knew that reinforcements had already been dispatched from the bases of Deacon Industries based on the protocols for assassinations during transit.

He couldn't take his own comfortable time with wearing them out before taking his time to kill them.

That was why he abandoned Phantomind Void after the first two kills. It had served its purpose.

Instead, he used Neo Godspeed. Time had slowed down to a crawl in his vision as he surged forward at top speed with Gale Force Breathing and Outer Convergence.

WHOOSH!

He had crossed the distance between them in just a split second, racing forward at incredible speeds, the sheer friction of which set ablaze an inferno that could burn down a town.

TAP!

He had caught them off-guard a third time, taking down a third target. The surprise from his stealth and the surprise from his incredible speed caught them off-guard multiple times.

It cost them three of their comrades.

'Three left, three to go,' Rui coldly tallied. 'Unfortunately, I have already finished all the low-hanging fruits.'

From here on out, he wouldn't be able to devastate them by exploiting just a moment of weakness.

They had gotten used to his long-range power.

They had gotten used to his stealth.

And his terrifying ability to cause death with just a tap.

As well as his speed.

This was the hard part. The distance between the Kandrian Empire and the Shionel Confederation was more than ten thousand kilometers. One would think that such a distance meant that help was far out of reach.

Unfortunately, this did not apply to Martial Seniors.

Especially if those Martial Seniors were desperate enough to use their Martial Hearts to travel.

And, unfortunately, they were. 'I have no more than fifteen minutes, tops,' Rui gritted his teeth.

That's how fast Martial Seniors were when they abandoned all reserve and used their Martial Heart to travel. This was something that Senior Sarak had warned against since it left one more vulnerable due to less stamina for their Heart, but that was not enough to stop the reinforcements in a time of emergency.

That was why the three remaining Martial Seniors retained their composure despite losing three comrades rather swiftly. The odds were stacked in their favor. Unless Rui had some massive surprises that none of them could possibly account for, there was absolutely no way he could overcome them this quickly.

Two of them were grade twelve, while the remaining one was grade eleven. Not even a high-grade Martial Senior would be able to kill all of them within fifteen minutes.

Unfortunately, they had underestimated Rui yet again.

WHOOSH!

Rui sped forward at blinding speeds. This time, they resolutely pushed back in time, having adjusted their timing. A myriad of wind-based techniques flew forward, flying towards Rui. Although their raw power was below that of a high-grade offensive Martial Senior individually, together, their onslaught was formidable.

Yet, it may as well have not existed to Rui.

WHOOSH WHOOSH WHOOSH!

The three Martial Seniors watched with unadulterated shock as Rui weaved through their offensive onslaught in a manner that they never thought was possible. Every maneuver, every step, every shift...every move that he made seemed like it was choreographed ahead of time.

Almost as if he had seen the future.

Such was the power of the VOID algorithm and Neo Godspeed when used in conjunction. Out of all Metabody techniques, the speed metabody had always harmonized with the pattern recognition system in a way that the others didn't.

When the predictive was complete, Neo Godspeed shined in a way that was hard to comprehend. Not only was time slowed in his point of view thanks to the induced tachypsychia, but it also allowed his predictions to grow more precise, accurate, and deeper.

Dozens, if not hundreds of speedy attacks converged on him with the sole intention of keeping him away, more than anything.

Yet they all failed.

Their eyes widened as weaved past every single attack with incredible smoothness, surging toward his next target.

BOOM!!

An incredibly powerful wide-range shockwave emerged from one of them with remarkable power and speed, forcing Rui to defend as it flung him away. Yet the attack didn't discriminate.

It couldn't. It had also struck the user's comrades in addition to Rui, hurting them along with him.

"Sorry..." The man gasped. "But I couldn't allow him to-"

"You made the right decision," Another remarked, grimacing as they swiftly got back into position.

"Wounds can be healed but..."

He glanced at the corpses of his comrades who had all died from a single touch from Rui, quickly turning back to Rui.

"Just twelve more minutes," He whispered. "We just need to hold out long enough for reinforcements to arrive. We don't need to win. We don't need to hurt him. We don't even need to look good. We just need to ensure that we and the boss don't die."