

## Martial Unity 1621

Chapter 1621: Challenge

Rui's eyes widened with shock. "What?!"

He was unable to comprehend the story that Sage Arrancar alleged. Fear?

A Martial Transcendent? Beings that were an entire Realm of power above Martial Sages?

How could such beings even experience fear? What force in this world, aside from their peers, could evoke such an emotion from them?

He didn't know.

He was out of his depth to have any chance of remotely uncovering the truth.

"I don't understand..." Rui murmured. "Nobody does," Master Krakule heaved a sigh. "There are only thirteen Martial Transcendents across human civilization, and each of them possesses absolute power. The things that they have accomplished the scarce instances that these godly beings exercise their power...it's truly unbelievable that a single being is allowed to possess such absurd power. Their very existences are miracles."

He turned towards Rui. "And yet, they religiously detach from human civilization. Why do you think powerhouse Sage-level nations are not placed leagues below a Transcendent-level nation?"

His eyes narrowed. "It is precisely because they do not intervene in human affairs. Nobody knows why. Not even those most intimately familiar with Martial Transcendents know why. However, Martial Transcendents have gone far as to watch nations that they themselves built before they became Martial Transcendents crumble before their eyes, not lifting a finger to stop it. That is the stubbornness, if you can call it that, with which they abstain from intervening in human civilization."

Rui's eyes swum around at this revelation as he began considering this precious confidential knowledge regarding the absolute pinnacles of humanity and Martial Art alike.

Rui narrowed his eyes as an intense ferocity entered them. A faint pressure with endless peril buried within radiated from him. Deep force of mind washed over the skies that beheld them, wringing them taut.

"You should watch what you say." His words were chilling.

His eyes were piercing. An endless void emerged deep within them, threatening to consume everything he beheld.

The Martial Master's eyebrows rose as he felt profound power emerging from deep within Rui. He moved out of his militaristic stance as he brought his hands forward, straightening them into palms.

"You wish to challenge me, boy?" His deep voice reverberated through the skies. "You, a Martial Senior, will challenge a Martial Master?"

Rui didn't respond, staring the man down intensely.

"Let us dispense with waiting for a Martial Senior to be dispatched," He pulled a communication device typing and fiddling with it. "I shall personally register myself as your combat opponent. I solemnly swear on the great name of Kandria to not actively use my Martial Mind. I shall restrict myself to the power of the Lower Realms to make this a fair fight."

He stared at the Martial Master wordlessly.

"What's the matter, boy? Are you afraid you will lose?" The Martial Master taunted Rui with a ferocious grin.

Rui's eyes narrowed. He took a neutral stance, distributing his weight evenly across centered legs as his arms came before him, his hands balling into fists.

"Nah, I'd win."

## Chapter 1622: Commence

Rui wasn't stupid.

He knew there wasn't anything he could do against a Martial Master even if that Martial Master was implicitly threatening his family just by mentioning the effect of their disappearance on Rui.

Still, he couldn't help it. Perhaps it was because of the impact of the late Deacon on him, he was far more sensitive to that threat than he was before.

That's why he knew that accepting this little challenge was objectively not the best choice he could have made.

Still, he didn't care.

The battle began sooner than even he expected.

WHOOSH!

He inhaled powerfully, activating Gale Force Breathing, launching himself forward at incredible speeds.

POW POW POW!

An onslaught of blows crashed onto Master Krakule's guard.

BAM!!!

A powerful kick surged toward the Master's head with immense force.

WHOOSH!

Master Krakule evaded it, straightening his palms as several palm jabs curled forward towards Rui.

SPLAT SPLAT SPLAT!

Rui's eyes widened as many light gashes appeared across his entire body as Master Krakule's palms flew back, stained with Rui's blood at the finger tips.

Yet the elder Master wasn't done, his attacks curled in all kinds of trajectories at absurdly high speeds, rushing forward towards Rui.

Yet, something had changed.

SCRATCH

Master Krakule's eyes widened as Rui's flesh thickened, becoming seemingly impenetrable and darker, resisting his attacks. They couldn't even draw blood anymore!

Yet he didn't have any time to even consider the change.

BOOM!

A powerful attack crashed onto his guard, flinging him backward.

Yet the Master scoffed. "Is that all you can do, Rui Quarrier?!"

He activated a breathing technique, manipulating the air currents to drive his attacks forward at even greater speeds.

Attacks of much greater power surged forward.

Yet Rui didn't move.

He stared into Master Krakuke's eyes.

Yet he wasn't idle.

In his mind a hypnotic circle appeared some distance away, his body language reflected that, acting in a manner that convinced the subconscious of this illusion, causing Master Krakule's conscious awareness to be misdirected away from Rui, leaving his subconscious vulnerable to external influence.

'Temporal Disharmony. Breathing Crucifix.'

He activated two hypnotic techniques simultaneously, each at fifty-percent.

Master Krakule's eyes widened as the time itself seemed to speed up while his breathing grew strained.

Yet Rui didn't give him any room to breathe, literally.

WHOOSH!

He avoided his attacks, surging forward towards the momentarily stunned Martial Master.

BAM BAM BAM!!!

The Martial Master grimaced lightly as Rui's powerful blows crashed into his body one after the other.

Rui breathed in powerfully, relying on Wind Breathing to increase his agility and speed massively.

The difference was remarkable. The roaring blood dragon potion had truly enhanced Rui's breathing significantly, making his breathing techniques much superior than they ever had been before!

Yet the difference in their Martial Bodies was also immense, despite the Hungry Pain technique and the breathing potion, it was not enough to overwhelm a gap born from centuries' worth of honing, conditioning, training, and growth relative to Rui's fifteen years.

Master Krakule guarded against Rui's attack.

His defense never faltered.

He narrowed his eyes, waiting.

Rui pulled back his fist, winding up a powerful punch before launching it forward with great momentum.

SPLAT!

He coughed blood as his eyes widened with shock.

"You lack experience, boy." The Master coldly declared, his fingers buried into Rui's throat.

BAM!

Rui kicked at the man's jaw, forcing him to hastily defend and withdraw his jab.

He breathed through his lungs, closing the wound in his throat.

The battle mulled for a second as the two of them faced off against each other.

"You are intelligent and extremely sharp," The Master remarked. "While I am certainly nowhere near as intellectually endowed as you are, I have fought more than ten times as many battles as you have. There are things that only experience can give you, no amount of mindful thinking can compensate for the wisdom of experience. Now then, let us put an end to this spar before you bleed to dea-"

Yet his eyes widened Rui withdrew his hand to reveal a completely healed wound.

In fact, all of the cuts that he had inflicted on Rui prior also disappeared in moments.

Rui deactivated Weaving Blood, yet chose not to reactivate Nemean Blossom. "You talk too much."

Master Krakule's expression darkened as he felt his breathing clamping up once more, and his perception of time sped up, making it difficult for his consciousness to keep up.

Rui rushed forward, his eyes flashing with power. He pushed himself to the absolute limit, unloading an onslaught of Mighty Roar Flash Blasts against the Martial Master from a distance.

BOOM BOOM BOOM!!

Each Mighty Roar Flash Blast was much faster and stronger than they were before, the roaring dragon blood potion had greatly empowered the breathing that went into the technique.

BOOM BOOM BOOM!!

The Martial Master gritted his teeth as he worked furiously to slice them with his flowing palm jabs. The attacks moved far faster than they normally did because his perception of time had been sped up, making it difficult for him to react to all of them in time.

Yet Rui was not done.

He activated the third Metabody technique of the fight. A surge of hypertrophic muscle expansion inflated his muscular system, increasing the raw output of power significantly.

BOOM BOOM BOOM!!!

"Urgh!" The man grimaced as Rui pummeled him with attack after attack. He was a dynamic offensive Martial Artist with a focus on speed and power, which was why Breathing Crucifix and Temporal Disharmony were extremely effective against him.

Kane had managed to largely negate Temporal Disharmony with his Fulminata because it relied purely on reflex and not conscious perception, allowing him to land an attack on Rui despite the technique, but Master Krakule had no such technique.

The elder Martial Master narrowed his eyes, growing more intense. "Don't underestimate me, boy! Eat my Reckoning of One Thousand Palms!"

The man's body moved with blinding speed and muscle memory as not even the tiniest shred of thought held him back, allowing an exponentially higher frequency of attack.

BOOM!!!

## Chapter 1623: Escalation

Rui scoffed inwardly as the man yelled the name of his attack, announcing the exact number of attacks with its name, and giving more information for Rui to work with.

Why were there Martial Artists who yelled the names of their attacks?

Was it placebo effects? It made them feel better and thus they performed the attack better.

The scientist side of him would have grown curious about it and wanted to conduct a factor analysis and an experiment to verify the correlation.

But alas, he was faced with the alleged Reckoning of One Thousand Palms, thus it would have to wait.



BOOM!!!

The onslaught of sound attacks was overwhelmed by the even greater onslaught of palm chops.

An opening between himself and Rui emerged, and he didn't hesitate to capitalize on it, closing the distance between them in an instant with a maneuvering technique that involved his palm movements.

"Thirteen folds of Ruination!" He bellowed.

Rui barely managed to replace Hypertrophic Surge with Nemean Blossom in time.

BOOM!!!

In an instant, thirteen palm chops had already crashed into Rui's body almost simultaneously.

Rui's eyes widened as he barely managed to put up a guard to block them.

Yet, the Martial Master was not done.

"Twenty-six folds!"

"Fifty-two!"

"Hundred and four!"

BOOM BOOM BOOM!!!

Attacks that Rui could deal with before became vastly hard to deal with as they flowed faster. Rui could tell that each combo was extremely honed and refined right down to the very limit. His body knew exactly what to do, and raced to complete it without being slowed down by his mind, achieving extraordinary fluidity.

Many Martial Artists relied on the principle of honed muscle memory. Those were the foundations of the many flashy combos with extravagant names and numbers.

However, they were effective, not even Rui could deny that,

The performance boost was exceptionally high. It was comparable to the gap between an extremely fast typer and a slow typer. Advanced typists could type at about 80WPM while beginners were at about 20-30WPM.

Did that mean that advanced typists had three-to-four times the finger/muscle movement speed of beginners?

No, their fingers moved equally fast, but advanced typists could eliminate thought as a hurdle, allowing them to reach astonishing typing speeds.

That was effectively what many Martial Artists relied upon including Master Krakule. It was usually highly effective against an opponent since no one could effectively deal with all of the overwhelming combinations of movements.

Except Rui.

WHOOSH WHOOSH WHOOSH!

Master Krakule's eyes widened as Rui casually evaded a point-blank attack, moving out of the way of the attacks as they approached him.

'No...he moved before they approached him!' Master Krakule realized.

BOOM!

A powerful attack crashed cleanly into Master Krakule's body faster than his hampered perception could keep up with.

BOOM BOOM BOOM!

Rui deactivated Nemean Blossom, activating Neo Godspeed instead. His speed heightened, reaching extraordinary territories as he surged forward.

Yet Master Krakule maintained his composure.

He couldn't perceive the world properly, everything moved forward extremely fast, making it difficult for him to keep up. He closed his eyes as his instincts welled up. Instincts forged in wars across a lifetime. Born from the ocean of experience of a man who constantly threw himself in conflict.

His instincts came through.

'There!' He opened his eyes as he shifted to the side, cleanly evading a blindingly fast attack from Rui.

Yet his eyes widened when he realized that a kick had already arrived at his new location.

It had arrived even before he did.

BOOM!

"Ngg!" The Martial Master grimaced with shock. 'He saw through me?!'

He looked into the youngster's eyes, stunned. Within them reflected a powerful void that greedily lingered over him and his Martial Path.

Yet the Martial Master glowered. "You're still a hundred years too early to challenge me!"

BADUMP!

His Martial Heart blazed into fury as he accessed the power of the Senior Realm.

BADUMP!

A second Martial Heart blazed into power. The timely instinctive activation of the Martial Heart ensured that Rui did not get overwhelmed by the gap between the Senior and Squire Realm.

The Martial Master's Martial Heart was actually not as strong as Senior Zenshin's, which Rui found quite strange.

Yet despite that, he was far more powerful.

SPLAT SPLAT SPLAT!

His palms moved at extraordinary speeds, catching up to Neo Godspeed as he carved deep gashes into Rui's body. Rui rapidly adapted to the model to the new physical parameters of Martial Master desperately, yet he couldn't do it before the Martial Master wounded Rui with even more slicing palm attacks, doing as much damage as he could.

WHOOSH! BANG!

Rui evaded an attack before it even began, landing a heavy blow on the Martial Master's gut, flinging him backward.

But not for long.

"Hryah!" The Martial Master brought down a hail of slicing palms with the full power of Martial Body and Heart.

WHOOSH!

It crashed into an empty image. Master Krakule instinctively ducked, evading a swift kick to the head from the side.

And yet;

BAM!

He gravely blocked a powerful that had already arrived at the head, having predicted his dodging maneuver.

BAM BAM BAM!

Rui pummeled him with a swift onslaught of blows flinging him away. Yet Master Krakule patiently weathered them with a knowing look.

Rui was bleeding profusely, in comparison, the Master's honed Martial Body possessed a higher constitution that was more durable as a result of its long honing.

There was no way he could lose in a prolonged battle.

In fact, if not for Temporal Disharmony and Breathing Crucifix's great suppression, he would have dominated Rui heavily by now.

Rui rushed forward at top speed racing forward for the Master's with a powerful blow. Master Krakule hastily defended throwing down a powerful attack that would inflict severe damage if Rui went through with his attack.

The offense was the best defense, as they said.

Or was it?

Master Krakule's eyes widened as Rui went through the attack anyway without any hesitation.

SPLAT!

The slicing palm cleaved through Rui's wrist, severing his hand entirely.

Yet the wild grin that appeared on Rui's face shocked him even more. The bloody arm hadn't stopped its motion even for a split second at the severing. It instead had accelerated to the man's neck, wrangling around.

CLASP!

"Ack!" Master Krakule choked as Rui managed to successfully rope him in a rear chokehold at the expense of a hand.

#### Chapter 1624: Intervention

Never had Master Krakule experienced such a turn of tables. Even while Rui choked him, he realized that this was part of the boy's plan.

A hand was not all that useful in a rear choke hold that occurred at the elbow.

He had sharply predicted that Master Krakule would employ an active defensive offense to deter Rui away.

But what if Rui was not deterred?

What if he bore the consequences in order to win the battle?

A losing battle could instantly be transformed into a winning one.

Rui crushed down on his throat with the full power of everything he could muster, activating Hypertrophic Surge in place of Weaving Blood, completely sealing off the blood flow to his head.

On top of that, he pushed the Breathing Crucifix technique to one hundred percent, cramping down on the man's breathing.

On top of that, a current of electricity passed through the man's nerves, inducing a paralytic effect, crippling him even more.

"Rgh!!" Master Krakule's eyes grew bloodshot as his face turned red with pressure. He pulled at Rui's hand, trying to free his neck from the young man's hold.

The strength gap was non-existent with Hypertrophic Surge, Rui had other shackles on the man's power like hypnosis and quasi-paralysis.

On top of that, there was a reason rear choke holds were so deadly, it was because the victim had absolutely no way to leverage strength to break out of it properly, while the one performing the hold had the absolute perfect way to leverage strength.

That was why unless one had a large strength gap, which he most absolutely didn't, one could not break out of such a hold.

'I'm going to lose at this rate!' Master Krakule desperately did everything he could to break out of Rui's hold.

He struggled, hurt Rui, try flying around to throw him off. But the grip never softened.

'Am I going to lose?' Master Krakule's eyes widened. 'Me? A Martial Master, to a Senior brat like him?'

His eyes narrowed. 'No.'

The world froze as an avalanche of pressure erupted from the Martial Master.

Rui opened his eyes with shock.

Chills went down his spine.

Shivers crawled up his skin.

One moment, the Martial Master in his grip.

The next moment, he was standing in the skies above Rui.

He was no longer a man.

No.

His very existence seemed to have transformed into an entirely different existence.

He became a shining dagger. One that towered over in the sky larger than a mountain. The surfaces of the dagger were not smooth, the surface was the shape of a hand, from end to end.

Rui's eyes widened.

The dagger wasn't shaped like a hand.



It was the hand that was shaped like a dagger.

The Martial Embodiment reflected the nature of his Martial Art.

He was a man who had forged his hands into blades.

The dagger embedded itself in the sky, drawing more attention from all life that beheld it than the sun itself. It stood tall and proud, declaring its existence to the entire world.

Rui beheld it with awe and admiration.

This was the power of a higher Realm.

In each of the honed palms of the Martial Master was the power to fell an entire mountain range with a single swing.

With the power to alter maps, Rui yearned to reach that Realm of power.

"You truly are an era-defining force, Rui Quarrier," The Martial Master's voice reverberated through the skies. "I have violated the sanctity of my promise to not use the power of the Upper Realms. I am indebted to you. I will fulfill any one wish you ask of me within my power as penance. If it is my death you desire, then that too I shall give you."

Rui's eyes widened, before furrowing his eyebrows.

There was but one wish that was appropriate.

"Never implicitly threaten me with my family again. In fact, as penance, ensure with all your power that nothing ever happens to them," Rui replied.

The Martial Master gazed deeply into Rui's eyes. "...So be it."

Rui could feel his sincerity, he heaved a sigh of relief although there was still some skepticism in his eyes. "I'm going to hold you to that, you know."

"As you must," The Martial Master remarked. "I don't like repeating myself. But I find it truly worth doing this time. Join us, Rui Quarrier. Join the Hawk Faction. Join us in the glorious conquest of East Panama. We will soar to heights unprecedented in history and you can be there with us, side by side."

He raised his hand, stretching out to Rui.

Suddenly, an avalanche of pressure crashed into them.

Rui shivered with the sheer amount of peril he felt at that moment.

'This...' Rui recognized the nature of the pressure. 'Martial Master!'

BOOM BOOM BOOM!!!

Many short-range homing ballistic missiles crashed into the giant hand-dagger, causing several enormous explosions across it.

Rui balled up as the explosion engulfed him, burning him to cinders.

Except it didn't.

Rui's body didn't experience any damage.

It was an illusion.

Yet Master Krakule grimaced as his physical bodies were struck with precise attacks.

'No...this is the same as the hand-dagger,' Rui realized. 'A Martial Embodiment!'

He glanced in the direction that they came from, only to be shell-shocked by what he saw.

A modern Earth-like military missile launcher with Earthen technology floating in the air, firing homing missiles at the hand-dagger.

The two powerful Martial Embodiments stood in opposition.

Yet there were more.

The pressure Rui experienced escalated astronomically as other forces joined the fray.

A titanic feminine mouth appeared from the East, opening and breathing out, sending a powerful windstorm tearing at the hand-dagger.

A puppet controlled by strings appeared from the south, crashing attacks onto the hand-dagger.

A shield with a mirror on the surface appeared, placing itself between the hand-dagger and Rui in a protective gesture.

The five Martial Embodiments clashed in the sky, four of them oppressing the hand-dagger aggressively.

Chapter 1625: Discourse

"My fellow Masters," Master Krakule managed to squeeze even as he was bombarded by four Martial Masters. "As warriors of Kandria, we ought not to fight amongst each other. What is the meaning of this? Cease this violence and speak with your words, not your Martial Art."

His Martial Embodiment disappeared as the bloody visage of his body became blatantly visible.

The other four Martial Embodiments also froze, before slowly fading away.

Yet the atmosphere grew more perilous.

The homing missile launcher faded away, revealing the identity of the Martial Master.

"Master Ceeran?" Rui whispered with shock, instantly recognizing him.

Yet the man didn't regard him.

Pure perilous rage erupted from him.

It washed over the entirety of the Daracol Region.

Every critter, every beast, every man and woman alike despaired at the wrath of a being that had ascended to a higher state of life.

A single whisper escaped his mouth.

"How dare you..."

His expression crumpled with rage.

"HOW DARE YOU?!" Master Ceeran bellowed, glaring at Master Krakule with bloodlust.

"You will answer for your transgression," Master Vericita coldly informed Master Krakule, emerging from the wisps of her withdrawn Martial Embodiment.

"As Martial Masters of the Martial Union, it is our duty to guide the future, not snuff it." Headmaster Aronian sternly informed the Martial Master.

"Now now," Master Zentra calmly interjected. "Let us hear what he has to say to defend himself.

The four Martial Masters stared at Master Krakule intently.

"Hmph," He snorted. "Is that what this is about? Do you think I attacked the boy with my Martial Mind? And he's still alive for some reason? Don't insult me."

"Your hand was pointed out at him," The Surgeon replied. "Which, knowing your Martial Art, is no different from pointing a sword at a person. On top of that, your Martial Embodiment was in full blaze, and the boy was severely damaged, and missing a hand. On top of that, you arbitrarily registered yourself as his combat partner for some reason. Tell me, what are we supposed to conclude?"

"I did not attack him. I was sparring with him with power limited to the Lower Realms. He managed to overcome a losing battle with a brilliant tactical gambit and defeated me, for all practical purposes. Truly an incredible Martial Senior."

"Is that true, my boy?" Headmaster Aronian glanced at Rui behind who was being tended to by Master Vericita retrieved his severed arm and had reattached it with a potent high-grade healing potion."

"Yes, headmaster," Rui heaved a sigh. "That is the truth. He never attacked me with the intent to kill, otherwise I would be dead right now."

"Just using your true power in a battle against a Martial Senior is highly inappropriate, especially when you gave your word otherwise," Master Vericita coldly pointed out.

"Hah," The man snorted. "You're all softies. It pains to witness this, get out of my territory if you have nothing else."

He turned towards Rui one last time. "Consider my words carefully, boy."

He closed his eyes, turning to leave the skies, heading back to the Daracol base.

Rui wasn't sure he would call any of the Martial Masters present 'softies', even Master Vericita who had taken to patting Rui's head affectionately.

"It appeared that we may have acted a bit too hastily," The Surgeon remarked.

"I disagree," Master Ceeran snorted. "We should not let this go. As Martial Masters, we are expected to have control over our power, he definitely used his power on purpose."

"It certainly was worth intervening regardless," Headmaster Aronian calmly remarked. "We have been blessed with a bright young star. Allowing it to be snuffed because of a prideful Martial Master is the height of imprudence and carelessness."

"Indeed," Master Vericita smiled, patting Rui's head gently.

"I appreciate your aid, Your Masteries, it is reassuring to know that four Martial Masters came to my aid at the first hint of danger," Rui smiled, bowing his head to the four Martial Masters.

He also did not miss that three of them were from three different princes and princesses. Master Ceeran was from the Ranea Faction. Master Zentra was from the Rajun Faction. Master Vericita was from the Rafia Faction. He knew that Headmaster Aronian was also part of some faction, though the elder Martial Master did not disclose which faction he was a part of.

While Master Krakule, the offender, was part of the Randal Faction. In other words, this incident became a little battle between the various factions. A battle to win over Rui Quarrier.

Still, he didn't mind. There could be multiple intentions behind an action, and he knew Senior Ceeran was most certainly extremely sincere about helping him out.

It wasn't long before Rui found himself completely healed with some particularly powerful healing potions that the Martial Master supplied him.

"Thank you, your Masteries," Rui bowed once more. "I am perfectly fine now, so there is no need to worry."

"Indeed, take care, Rui Quarrier," The Surgeon replied. "We need you. More than you realize."

He disappeared.

"Hm, I'm glad to hear that, my boy," Headmaster Aronian smiled. "Come visit the Academy every once in a while to keep this old man some company."

"I will be sure to do that, Headmaster," Rui smiled.

The old man smiled, disappearing.

"The Roaring Dragon Blood Potion has done you much good. Be sure to harness its power well, my child," Master Vericita smiled, petting him, before stepping away. "I look forward to the path that you will tread."

That left Master Ceeran who stood in the air with Rui, smiling. "Come, walk with me, Rui."

The two of them treaded the skies, unperturbed.

"Today went very unexpected," Rui replied, turning to Master Ceeran. "Was it okay to bare your Martial Embodiments in the skies like that? Didn't that hurt a lot of people?"

Master Ceeran shook his head. "The Daracol base is deserted and restricted to unauthorized non-Martial Artists precisely to allow Martial Masters to go all out without worrying about our power hurting people. We cannot turn off our Martial Embodiments at all because it occurs in the eye of the beholder."

"Speaking of Martial Embodiments," Rui turned towards Master Ceeran. "Your Martial Embodiment is...how do I say it..?"

It was a homing ballistic missile launcher. However, there were no equivalent words in the Kandrian dialect for half of those. "What did you see?" Master Ceeran asked, raising an eyebrow. "Most people see siege weapons."

His words implied a crucial point. "So, you're telling me not everyone necessarily sees the same thing."

"Indeed," Master Ceeran nodded. "Why would everyone see the same thing? Ultimately, a Martial Embodiment is the image a mind associates and creates as a pictorial representation of the Martial Mind that is being imprinted on their subconscious mind while they're being misdirected by our Martial Art. That means the image is what the subconscious mind imagines our Martial Mind to be if it were a material phenomenon. What that image is depends on the associations one makes, which in turn depend on the person's experiences and memories."

"I see..." Rui contemplated this new information. That would explain why Rui saw a modern missile launcher from Earth. It was the closest association to Senior Ceeran's Martial Art that he could muster, thus it made sense that that was what he saw.

People would not see what they didn't even know existed, which explained why only Rui would see such a thing since he was the only one in the world with it.

Rui could not help but wonder what his Martial Embodiment would be in the minds of others. There was only one way to find out.

For now, he could only work his way to that stage step by step.

"Ah, one more thing," Master Ceeran reached into an inner pocket, pulling out something. "Here."

He handed Rui an exorbitantly clad card. "It's your official invitation to the unveiling of the first functioning Kandrian submarine."



Rui's eyes widened. "I thought you said that the research was underway."

"It is," Master Ceeran remarked. "But not for the creation of the vessel, for the mass production of it since at the moment it can only be constructed by relying on the fantasies of esoteric material reality that are rare and expensive."

"I see," Rui murmured as he read through the formal invitation addressed to one Rui Quarrier. "That's a good measure."

She was trying to promote the technology by holding some sort of grand unveiling. It was a good way to build support for the technology and for her political campaign.

"I am grateful for Her Highness' invitation to this historic event," Rui replied, nodding. "I look forward to witnessing the unveiling of the first submarine vessel of the Kandrian Empire."

"Indeed, I am quite excited myself," Master Ceeran smiled. "It is important for our nation to keep progressing in order to ensure that we don't fall behind. Wouldn't you agree?"

Rui nodded. "I most certainly do. Nobody realizes how important it is."

It was easy for technology to regress and disappear. Most people assumed that technology would naturally get better, but the state of technological progress was more fragile than people realized.

It has happened many times in the past on Earth.

The Egyptians forgot how to build pyramids.

The Greeks lost their civil engineering.

The Romans lost their aqueduct technology.

More modern examples in his lifetime were rocket technology. The race to reach the moon was fueled by competitive desire during the Cold War out of fear of losing out to each other, but as soon as it became clear no superpower had major spacefaring ambitions, the drive to reach the moon was snuffed out, and even shortly before John passed away, some nations actually regressed in rocket technology, and failed to replicate feats that they had accomplished half a century prior.

However, it appeared that with Princess Ranea firmly driving down to enhancing the Kandrian Empire's already large seafare industry with better conventional esoteric technology, Kandrian seafare technology would only grow from here on out.

'I wonder if I should give them a hand,' Rui wondered.

He was no naval engineer, but even with the knowledge he knew, he could probably offer some extraordinary knowledge that could drastically change the foundation of shipbuilding technology.

He had traveled on the Martial Union's vessels, so he knew that their technology was not based on any sophisticated principles of physics, they were closer to how ships were built before the Greek mathematician Archimedes discovered what was on Earth known as Archimedes' Principle.

'Meh, I've drawn too much attention for my knowledge recently,' Rui shook his head inwardly. 'Better to not push my luck.'

Finding the justification for the knowledge was going to be much harder this time since Julian's specialty was not even remotely near the field. Perhaps he could send an anonymous mail to the relevant people.

Still, it would be better if they discovered it from their own understanding of the world. Artificially handing them knowledge that they didn't obtain would hinder progress in the long-term, since making progress was necessary for making further progress due to an exercised inquisitive tendency into the nature of the universe.

"There will be many people who look forward to meeting you," Master Ceeran remarked. "Yeah, I've gotten used to that," Rui heaved a sigh. "Comes with the territory."

"It seems that you've grown quite busy over time," Master Ceeran remarked. "However, do not let that get in the way of the momentum of your growth. You've just consumed a potent resource and grown stronger, but ensure that you never cease developing your Martial Art."

"Don't worry, Master, I have no intention of stopping now," Rui replied. "I have a vision for the path forward."

His eyes narrowed. Now that he had tested out his newborn power with the Roaring Dragon Blood Potion completely, it was time to make good use of it in a manner that did not neglect the development of the power of thought so that his progress to the Master Realm never stopped.

'Time to see what I can make of domain techniques.'

#### Chapter 1627: Master Gurren

"Master Ceeran, can you tell me about the Kandrian Martial Master of domain techniques?" Rui asked.

"Hm? Ah, Master Gurren," Ceeran nodded. "I don't know too much about him, personally. I do know that he lives in South-West Kandria on a mountain in the Great Javian mountain range, though it is said that he keeps moving around the vast mountain range to keep people from approaching him. If you're interested in speaking to him, you will have to find him yourself."

"Oof," Rui winced. "That's rough."

The Great Javian mountain range was called 'great' because of its enormous vast expanse extending thousands of kilometers across any direction. If Rui was going to have to find a single Martial Master across this expanse of mountains, he was going to have to scour every ounce of the entire region with his senses.

Also, if the Martial Master did not want to meet him, then Rui highly doubted he would be able to find him.

"I'll have to get it a shot nonetheless," Rui heaved a sigh.

"Are you interested in domain techniques?" Master Ceeran asked, curious. "That's a little unexpected, domain techniques aren't known to be the most flexible techniques, which I thought would not gel well with your Martial Path."

Rui shook his head. "Domain techniques give me the opportunity to adapt another element of combat to my opponent. The environment. The environment is just as important in a fight as the fighters themselves. If I can adapt the environment to my opponent, then I will have achieved a higher level of adaptive evolution than was previously possible."

Master Ceeran's eyebrows rose. "I see, that is truly ambitious. I foresee an enormous growth in your power should you succeed, you may even reach the fourteenth grade as a Martial Senior!"

"Er, I'm pretty sure I'm already in the fourteenth grade," Rui remarked with perplexity. "The Roaring Dragon Blood Potion has given me a considerable boost in power."

Senior Ceeran smirked, amused. "I'm afraid not, young man."

"...Why not?"

Senior Ceeran turned forward, facing ahead. "Did you know that I never managed to reach the fourteenth grade as a Martial Senior?"

"What?!" Rui's eyes furrowed with surprise. "You broke through as a grade-thirteen Martial Senior?"

"Indeed," Master Ceeran nodded. "The average grade to break through to the Master Realm is at grade thirteen."

"That is substantially distant from the peak of the Senior Realm," Rui replied, flummoxed. "You're telling me most Martial Masters were only as strong as I currently am while they were Martial Seniors?"

"Correct," Senior Ceeran replied. "I don't fully understand it myself and probably couldn't explain it as well as a scholar would. But the reason for this is that there is a greater variance of power at the highest

echelons of the Senior Realm despite the lower population. The low population means that we do not wish to add another grade just to host a single Martial Senior in it, yet at the same time we cannot simply update the entire grade system as a whole since this isn't a universal increase in power due to expected generational growth over time. Thus rather than having to add more grades for very few Martial Artists and deviate from fifteen grades, simply distribute all the extra variance of the upper echelons amongst the last three grades, making them wider than the other grades."

"Damn...So this is class-interval inflation due to higher mean deviation of the upper-class datasets," Rui murmured, instantly understanding the statistics of the issue.

"Yes. That thingy. That sounds like what the scholars said when I inquired why my grade as a Martial Senior was not going up despite getting much stronger," Master Ceeran replied, heaving a sigh. "Regardless, I did get it intuitively. Did you know that there are only twelve grade-fifteen Martial Seniors in the Kandrian Empire?"

"Wow," Rui murmured, impressed. "Only twelve out of a thousand five hundred or so? That's crazy."

It showed how scarce the power of the Upper Realms was.

"That's right," Master Ceeran sighed. "If we made the grades normal sized and added extra grades, then we would have to have six in grade fifteen, another five in grade sixteen, and one in grade seventeen. But nobody wants to create an extra grade just for one Martial Senior, or for five out of one thousand five hundred, so we stuff them all in grade fifteen and just make the higher grades wider."

"So no wonder I would not be considered grade fourteen just for having grain a substantial boost to my breathing," Rui murmured. "Indeed," Master Ceeran replied. "It's also a testament to the sheer size of the Senior Realm."

Rui nodded, the Senior Realm utterly dwarfed the Squire Realm in width. The gap between the peak and bottom of the respective Realms was not even remotely equal in any way.

"I have a long way to go before I reach the peak of the Senior Realm," Rui murmured. "The difficulty is so high that most Martial Seniors can only dream about being in the most powerful class of Martial Seniors."

"Just so," Master Ceeran smiled. "However, I believe that you specifically shouldn't even bother dreaming about achieving it."

That sounded sharply negative.

"Why not?" Rui furrowed his eyebrows. "Because I believe with all my heart that you will not only reach it but go far beyond it," Master Ceeran smiled. "If you're going to dream about something, it should be far beyond something that is this trivial for the likes of you."

Rui smiled. "I'll bear that in mind."

"Good luck in your pursuit of Master Gurren," Master Ceeran remarked. "Frankly, I highly doubt that you will be able to gain his tutelage. He is known to religiously avoid engaging even with the local Martial community, let alone the international Martial community. He hasn't once accepted a student, so I highly doubt that he will aid you in any way. Still, it's worth a try. Just know that he isn't the sole domain-oriented Martial Artist in this world."

## Chapter 1628: Search

The next day, Rui quickly prepared himself for a long day of laborious work in finding Master Gurren in the Great Jrava Mountain Range in the southwest of the nation. This vast expanse of mountains occupied a small portion of the territory of the Kandrian Empire, covering millions of square kilometers in totality.

Rui would need to scan all that area with his senses, looking for a Martial Master who didn't enjoy interacting with the empire.

However, Rui still maintained some hope for connecting with this Martial Master. The reason for that was that he was a partner of the Martial Union, about the same as Rui. Which effectively meant that they had signed a partnership contract for commissions and remuneration.

The fact that he had that tie to the Martial Union gave Rui hope that he wasn't an absolute isolationist.

He left extremely early when the rising sun had yet to light up the morning, swiftly coursing through the skies of the Kandrian Empire heading towards South-West Kandria.

He didn't have the most sophisticated strategy prepared at hand.

He was just going to request for tutelage from the Martial Master, and see if he had anything to offer.

If that didn't work, there wasn't really anything he could do. He was dealing with a Martial Master.

Eventually, he reached the Great Jrava Mountain Range.

Mountain stretched out as far as the eye could see, snow-topped and flora-laden valleys with remarkably lush greenery with fantastical colors.

The beautiful visage greeted him warmly, welcoming him with a cool gust of wind.

"Wow," Rui whispered, taking in the sight from a great altitude.

This wasn't the first time he had seen the mountain range during his missions, it was too big to be missed, but it had been a long time since he had visited it.

"Let's get to work," He furrowed his eyebrows as he spread his senses as far and wide as he could.

He could accelerate the search for Master Gurren if used his Martial Heart, but even within the Kandrian Empire, he didn't dare leave himself in a vulnerable position where he was limited to the power of the Squire Realm.

Had he been a normal Martial Senior, it would have been less risky, though still far too daring. However, it was almost unthinkable to do so with his current status. There were many people who had their eyes on him, and not all of them had the best of intentions.

The Great Jrava Mountain Range was different from the rest of the nation. Its distance from the Great Name Ocean meant that not even a whiff of the saline humidity that characterized regions close to the ocean, relatively speaking, could be detected in its air.

The air possessed a hint of rejuvenating freshness that seemed to nourish the mind and body.

"Not a bad spot to retire," Rui remarked out loud.

He could see why someone would want to retire in such a place and just cut away from the rest of human civilization. There was a peace that came with simply living in nature that could not be found in human civilization.

To a certain extent, that vibe could be found in the Quarrier Orphanage too. Of course, that was less so now that there was a bit more of a settlement around the area with the various young and middle-aged adults forming their own little huts with their own families.

Still, it could not compare the sense of nature, fantasy, and adventure that living in this enormously wide mountain range conveyed.

He immediately got to work, dividing the area into grids with a width equal to that of his sensory radius.

He began scouring the mountains remotely, employing the Lesser Phantomind Void technique so that nobody could detect him easily.

Of course, that wouldn't be enough to hide from a Martial Master, but it helped nonetheless. The Great Jrava Mountain Range was not an entirely benign region. There were monsters and beasts, although almost all of them were limited to the Apprentice and the Squire Realm.

A great many of the Apprentice and Squire-level domestic hunting missions that the Martial Union had were actually related to the Great Jrava Mountain Range. It served as a good place for Apprentices and Squires to test their prowess and was not dangerous enough to warrant culling the dangerous fauna.



Apprentice and Squire-level beasts were just harmless enough to the Empire to allow them to freely inhabit the Great Hrava Mountain Range. Things got tricky when there were Senior-

level beasts since these creatures were a little too dangerous to be allowed to run around the Kandrian Empire, still, it could work.

Rui kept his senses alert for he had no intention of dying to a Senior-level beast that managed to get the better of him.

Nothing of remark happened in most of the process, naturally. Grid searching was a rather boring and tedious job with the least amount of excitement in this world. One merely searched and documented, and that was the job description.

Rui smoothly traveled across the Great Hrava Mountain Range at a medium pace, ensuring that he wasn't too fast. He needed to carefully scour the entire area as he passed it, there was no point being hasty and messing up the job. Slow and steady won the race.

One of the challenges was that he often ran into small human settlements in the mountains that he needed to search in order to eliminate the possibility that Master Gurren resided among them. But given that he knew that the Martial Master was solitary, he could be pretty sure that he wouldn't live among other humans.

Yet after three-quarters of the day, he came across something that seemed promising. A small hut at the top of the peak of a mountain. The hut was small and humble, built of rock and wood, with the roof built out of stacked layers of large dried leaves cut into strips and interwoven with each other.

"What do you want, boy?" A voice from behind him called out to Rui.

## Chapter 1629: Refusal

Rui almost shook with surprise, for the figure had entered his sensory ranges instantly.

The old man resembled a caveman. His attire was fashioned from the furry pelts of several animals and beasts. On his shoulder was a large bunch of firewood that he held up with a single arm.

His hair and beard were frizzled and matted. He resembled an ascetic who had secluded themselves in the mountains for a long time.

Which he indeed had done.

"Master Gurren, I-"

"Not interested," The Martial Master walked past him into his hut.

"You don't even know what I'm about to say," Rui raised an eyebrow.

"You're here because you want to learn domain techniques," Master Gurren snorted. "You're here despite the fact that you have undoubtedly hurt that I don't teach. Which means you think you can convince me otherwise. I hate arrogant brats like you. Especially brats like you who broke the record for the youngest breakthrough to the Senior Realm. You must think you can do anything."

"So you know about me."

"No, I'm just not blind. I can see your Realm and I can see your age," He snorted, putting aside the firewood he had collected. "Arrogant brat insulting my ability."

"It wasn't my intention to-"

"Don't care," The Master snorted.

Rui heaved a sigh as he considered the Martial Master. He wasn't sure how he was going to make progress if the Martial Master was going to make it this difficult.

Still, he noted that the Martial Master had yet to tell him to get out. Yet, the issue was that the Martial master had no reason to cooperate with him. Until that didn't change, he couldn't do anything.

"If you have nothing to do, get out of here," The Master snorted.

Welp, there it was.

"As you wish, Master Gurren," Rui replied, skywalking away, but he kept observing the Martial Master with his senses.

He couldn't rely on the Martial Master's goodwill as he did with Master Reina and Master Zeamer. If he wanted the Martial Master to help with domain techniques, he was going to have to give the Martial Master something that he wanted or needed.

Rui scrutinized the hut and its surroundings. The man truly lived with very little despite being a Martial Master.

Not only did he live alone, but he refused the use of esoteric artifacts or technology for some reason. Even though they certainly would make his quality better.

'Is he a Martial Supremacist?' Rui wondered inwardly. Perhaps him being a Martial Supremacist would explain his disdain for technology.

However, would a Martial Supremacist seclude themselves instead of making the effort to turn the Kandrian Empire into a Martial nation?

There was a realistic chance that he could succeed as long as he threw his support behind Prince Raijun, but he certainly was not doing that.

Rui spotted the man discarding spoiled meat that was no longer fit for consumption off the mountain. His senses went inside the little hut, spotting some cut meat that was still fit to use. The old Martial Master quickly set light to a bunch of firewood, impaling the meat before lighting it over the fire.

He was intent on finding out exactly what it was that the old Martial Master wanted and needed. So far, Rui had already thought of some things that he could offer to the elder Martial Master that he would want.

He continued observing the Martial Master from several kilometers away. The elder Martial Master could undoubtedly sense Rui, but apparently, he didn't care enough to chase Rui away.

Soon enough, it was nighttime. Rui relaxed on a tree, watching the Martial Master intently as dusk came and the sun settled. A little prior to midnight, Rui raised an eyebrow as he felt the Martial Master activate his Martial Heart.

He quickly leaned forward confused. With how powerful the Martial Master was, there was no need for him to activate his Martial Heart. On top of that, he went as far as to activate his Martial Mind.

His existence changed... altering to a 'domain' as he activated his Martial Mind, manifesting his Martial Embodiment inside Rui's mind.

What did it look like?

It was hard for Rui to describe. It resembled a vast sky and land stuffed inside a spherical pocket dimension with curled space to contain them, like a drop of water refracting light to warp the image that the light conveyed.

Rui wondered how other people saw his domain. After all, the concept of a domain did not have a universal image that everybody shared. It was a more abstract concept, especially in a world with limited mathematics that could provide concrete mathematical definitions for the concept of domain.

The Martial Master activated a single domain technique, much to Rui's intrigue. Suddenly the air around him became opaque, sealing off any light. Not just light, it sealed off any other of the five senses from peering through the domain of opaque air.

Rui understood why he had taken that measure, it was to protect the animals and the few human settlements that occupied the Great Jrava Mountain Range from his power. If they couldn't see him,

then they wouldn't be passively hypnotized by his Martial Embodiment and wouldn't suffer mental damage as a result.

He was a lot kinder than Rui had expected, for someone who hated interacting with other humans.

He ascended to the skies, sky-walking straight up at incredible speeds.

Rui was curious about what a Martial Master could be doing at such heights. He decided to lightly follow him at just the edge of his senses, trying to keep as much distance between them as possible.

Eventually, the Martial Master soared to heights that not even Rui could reach through sky-walking due to the plummeting density of the air, the Martial Master on the other hand, went far beyond his vision.

'Is he trying to go beyond space or something?' Rui wondered with curiosity.

#### Chapter 1630: Offer

The Martial Master stopped at an incredible altitude in the sky. He glanced back, snorting at Rui who had been left behind. He himself would have loved to go further, but Martial Masters too were limited by the necessity to breathe air. He couldn't any further.

The night sky glowed with an endless ocean of stars twinkling in the sky.

He fixated on them intently as his powerful vision was able to peer into them far deeper than any human possibly could.

The cognition that his Martial Mind gave him allowed him to gain an intuitive understanding of them. While he did not possess a theoretical framework for the magnificent shining existences that were embedded deep in the sky.

Interestingly enough, he never once paid any attention to the moon. In fact, his mouth curled in contempt every time he looked at the gibbous moon. He only was interested in the natural state of the universe.

He was not interested in a man-made object.

He continued spectating the night sky until dawn arrived, before finally declining from the sky, and returning to his hut.

The arrogant brat was waiting for him there.

"I thought I told you to get out of here," Master Gurren growled.

"If I didn't have anything to do," Rui replied. "But I do."

"I told you, I don't teach," Master Gurren snorted.

"But you do stargaze," Rui remarked turning to the dawning sky. "Unexpected, for a Martial Master. Is that why you became a Martial Artist?"

Rui couldn't help but suspect that.

"You're awfully nosy for a brat that has no business being here," He narrowed his eyes. "Perhaps I should kill you right here and now. Nobody would ever know as long as I hide your body well."

"You're too kind to do that," Rui replied matter-of-factly.

"Am I now?"

"You ensured that your Martial Embodiment would not hurt any animal or human in this mountain range even when you didn't have to," Rui replied. "That shows you care."

"Hmph, don't push me, brat, everybody has limits," The Martial Master snorted. "You really are arrogant. Give me one reason I shouldn't kick you out of here."

Rui smiled. "I can give you a Martial Art technique that will allow you to observe stars better. Far better than any existing telescope, I promise."

The Martial Master narrowed his eyes. "There exists no such Martial Art technique."

"Not physically, no," Rui replied. "But it exists in my mind. I created it after I realized you could use it."

Optics was something one studied in high school and even more in-depth in college for a bachelor's and later master's degree in Physics. Once realized that his knowledge could work as a fine bargaining chip for the Martial Artist.

"Inside your mind?" The Martial Master narrowed his eyes. "Do you expect me to believe that nonsense? There's a limit to arrogance."

Rui smiled wryly.

The formula magnification was rather simple. Rui knew that he probably could create a telescope technique that used that atmosphere as a lens.

Any and all transparent media that allowed for light to pass through them could serve as a lens. Of course, it was complicated, he would need to manipulate the air to alter what was known as optical density, which was a measure of how much slower light was in a medium compared to a vacuum, and then create curvilinear lenses out of the air to magnify light as much as possible.

"If I improve your stargazing experience by ten times, are you willing to help me out?" Rui asked him.

The Martial Master didn't respond, simply staring at Rui intently.

"I'll take that as a yes," Rui smiled wryly. The Martial Master was too aloof to even verbally concede.

Rui turned to the side, activating a crude breathing technique that he had created while the Martial Master stargazed all night.

He brought his hands in front of him breathing in a particular way, it created a small pocket of air that was much more dense than normal.

Master Gurren's eyes widened as the image that the light passing through the pocket air was a zoomed-in version of a distant mountain.

"That's all I was able to do overnight," Rui replied, heaving a sigh. "It doesn't rely on any energy-consuming esoteric substance that normal telescopes rely on. I presume that that is why you don't use them. However, to create a technique fit to gaze at stars, I will need to master the foundations of domain techniques."

Master Gurren narrowed his eyes as he understood the proposition that Rui was making. He had created a circumstance that not only was he offering something that Master Gurren wanted in return for a powerful foundation in domain techniques, but he had also made what he wanted necessary to fulfill what Master Gurren wanted from him.

"Who are you?" Master Gurren asked Rui with grudging curiosity.

"Just an arrogant brat, Your Mastery," Rui bowed lightly, smirking.

"Hmph, you refuse to tell me your name? Arrogant brat."

"So what do you say?" Rui asked. "We can help each other out."

Master Gurren snorted. "Hmph, you truly are arrogant...Show me that technique again."

Rui tilted his head with a smirk, raising an eyebrow.



"Alright, fine. I accept your deal." The Master begrudgingly conceded. "Now show me that technique."

"Of course," Rui replied, smiling, before demonstrating the prototypical technique.

He wasn't worried that he would be losing out on the deal by displaying the technique. He wouldn't be able to make anything meaningful from it, the physics and math behind was complex. Rui just made it look easy.

He had been doing this for a long time, after all. He had grown to become something of an expert in converting Physics to a Martial Art technique after doing it so often. Considering he had succeeded with difficult techniques like the Riemannian Echo and the Pathfinder technique, he had no doubt in his mind he could succeed with the magnification formula for a convex lens.