

Martial Unity 1641

Chapter 1641: Foundations

It wasn't long before Rui exited the business convention. He frankly had nothing to do, and he wasn't interested in acting chummy with Decker. He had more important agendas to tend to.

He needed to get started on his training of bending heaven and earth. That was far more important than hanging around some conglomerates and business tycoons. He also needed to start working on the three adaptive evolution techniques that he was preparing for the fiscal meeting that was due to appear in a little less than a year as well.

Those were his priorities for the moment. His plan to win over Master Gurren panned out very well, meaning he succeeded in his attempt to go down domain techniques for his next path forward for adaptive evolution.

Those were the two primary objectives that he was going to be spending time on.

Outside of Martial Art priorities that ranked at the top of the list, he also awaited Prince Raijun's response to his proposed offer. In addition, he was also to attend Princess Ranea's unveiling of the first functioning submarine of the Kandrian Empire's navy in an attempt to build up support for the new form of naval technology.

Out of all the seven prime princes and princesses he knew, he was more intrigued to meet Princess Ranea. She certainly seemed to be one of the less extreme of the seven. Princess Raemina and Rafia were both batshit crazy as far as Rui was concerned. Prince Raijun was sane but was quite the extremist.

Prince Randal, the military prince, did not sound very normal. He seemed highly militaristic and warmongering based on how Master Krakule spoke about his ambitions to lead the Kandrian Empire into war with the rest of East Panama.

That left Prince Rajak, the Underworld Prince. Rui had already clashed with the Kandrian Underworld before, and he had the worst impression of them. They were willing to destroy lives just to have a better chance at winning the Kandrian Throne War.

He disdained them.

He hoped that Princess Ranea would not give him a reason to regret the deal he made with Prince Raijun. But alas, there was a limit to how much even he could control. If she turned out to be a psycho, he could only throw his hands up in resignation.

Thankfully, the unveiling of the submarine wasn't due any time soon, perhaps because it wasn't ready yet. He was given enough time to train and focus on himself for the time being.

He began his days training in bending heaven and earth with Master Gurren. To his discovery, Master Gurren was not a lenient teacher.

"Your power needs to come from your core."

"Your hands exist to bend breath, not generate it. Your movements need to be precise, accurate, and firm."

"Your balance needs to be perfect to manipulate earth."

He trained Rui in the art of bending heaven and earth rigorously, building up his foundations.

Much to Rui's joy, these foundations got him further along the path of creating domains than he had expected. Unlike with most fields where the foundation was merely the first step, it was much more than that with domains, and it was the core of domain techniques.

But because of that, it meant that even mastering that foundation took Rui much longer than he had expected.

One good thing was that he had an affinity for both heaven-bending and earth-bending.

His many years of expertise with using his breathing for long-

range techniques certainly helped with heaven bending.

Of course, heaven bending was much more mentally consuming than his long-range technique because it required an amount of active mental engagement to manipulate heaven through by bending his breath.

He didn't have as much experience with subterranean manipulation, but he did have Seismic Mapping that had increased his intuition for seismic radiation, allowing him to better understand it.

On top of that, his prime defense, the Flux Earther technique, had also given him a good affinity for the earth bending. He was able to make remarkable progress by employing vibrations and force to manipulate the earth.

He discovered that Master Gurren had formed a remarkably accurate intuition for the physics of solids and the physics of seismic radiation. This had come about from many years of manipulating earth, no doubt. Of course, it was a subconscious understanding born from experience rather than a conscious understanding born of scientific inquiry. He was not able to apply it any other way, but Rui was different.

His conscious scholarly understanding of the environment was extremely high, in addition to a powerful intuition that had come from his years of developing and using sophisticated techniques centered around complex principles. He no longer needed to think all that much when using Transverse Resonance because his subconscious intuition had grown quite proficient at it.

Master Gurren was shocked at the speed at which Rui absorbed the foundations of heaven and earth bending.

"Huff..." Rui exhaled deeply with immense force. The Roaring Dragon Blood Potion had empowered his breathing to the point of being able to generate tremendous force.

His hands and fingers swayed gently, curving and shaping the breath he exhaled, redirecting and distributing it across his environment.

WHOOSH!

Several powerful wind currents converged in a circle around Rui, overlapping each other, forming a spiral.

A tornado was born.

Yet he wasn't done.

His feet pressed into the ground, vibrating with Reverberating Lance, causing longitudinal waves of seismic radiation to constructively superimpose, causing a spike of pressure at the point of superimposition.

RUMBLE!

A wave of earth erupted, spiraling into the powerful tornado that had formed around Rui. A spiral of heaven and earth spun around him with immense force, enough to grind anything that dared step near it into confetti.

He opened his eyes.

WHOOSH!

The heaven and earth bending ceased, causing the technique to fall apart.

"In just three months, you have mastered the foundations of heaven and earth!" Master Gurren stared at him with shock. "What an absurd speed of growth. No wonder you have broken through to the Senior Realm at such a tender age."

Chapter 1642: Quote Cheating

Rui heaved a deep breath, staring at Master Gurren.

Frankly, three months were far longer than he had hoped, even if Master Gurren claimed otherwise. But it could not be helped. Even with his growth, it was extremely difficult to master it any sooner.

"Still, I suppose three months isn't too bad," Rui replied.

"Hmph, arrogant brat."

"How long does mastering the foundations of heaven and earth to this level normally take?" Rui asked.

"A year," Master Gurren replied.

"...Ordinary Martial Artists sure have it rough."

"You truly are arrogant through and through," Master Gurren snorted.

"I was jesting. Partially."

"Hmph. It is time to fulfill your end of the bargain," Master Gurren remarked with eager eyes. "Now then, create the technique that will allow me to peer into the depths of the cosmos!"

Rui smiled, activating his Martial Heart, before turning up to the night sky and breathing out in a specific manner. His hands stretched out in front of him, forming a symmetric hand sign that altered the shape and density of the wind currents his breath generated.

It created several hemispherical layers of high-pressure high-density air at specific distances from Rui that he constantly maintained with the force of his breathing and his hands redirecting the vectors of his breath.

The altered density of the air needed to be just perfect, altering the optical density of the air pockets in just the right manner so that they would refract light, in the same way, a convex lens made up of glass would.

It was his first time trying this, so it took quite some time, but eventually he succeeded.

What followed shook Master Gurren.

"This...!!" He gasped at the sky itself warped, zooming in straight up as he saw the ocean of tiny twinkling stars becoming more distinct.

It was as though Rui's technique had bent the entire universe.

"Incredible...!" He witnessed stars enlarging into not-so-small spots of fire. He saw strange, vast oceans of clouds that he had never seen before. He saw the vague figure of a glowing spiral in the backdrop of the enlarged image that Rui conjured. "What are those?!"

"That is a galaxy," Rui replied calmly. "It's a collection of stars. That is a nebula; it appears that there is one of both very nearby in our interstellar neighborhood; otherwise, even this powerful telescopic domain would not be enough to spot one."

Rui used words that sounded alien and unlike anything he had ever heard.

"'Nebula'...?" He uttered them aloud.

Rui nodded. "Where do you think stars come from? They are born from nebulae. That strange cloud is made up of a gas known as Hydrogen. Eventually, gravity will cause the hydrogen gas to coalesce into giant balls, causing an immense amount of pressure to well up at the core of the ball of gas, triggering nuclear fusion, which causes it to enormous heat and light, resulting in the birth of a new sun."

Master Gurren stared at Rui with pure shock and amazement. He didn't understand the words that Rui uttered, but they sounded fascinating, unlike anything that he had ever heard of.

"The birth of a sun?" He incredulously whispered. "And...'galaxy'..."

was it? What are those?"

"They're just rotating collections of stars and dark matter," Rui calmly replied. "Each contains hundreds of billions of stars, just like the Sun. And considering how similar this cosmology is to what I am familiar with, I would venture to say there are probably trillions of galaxies out there, bare minimum."

"WHAT?!" The Master bellowed.

Rui smiled, amused at the Master's exaggerated reaction.

"How can you possibly know all of this?" The Master asked. "Is all of that true?! I must know!"

Rui smirked. "If you want to know whether or not it's true, then you'll have to find out yourself. After all, I just created the tool that allows you to explore the universe with your own power. Explore the universe and find out for yourself."

Rui's smile deepened. "Find out if what I told you is the truth or not."

He stared at Rui with a bewildered expression before turning back to the enlarged image that Rui's domain demonstrated. "Incredible."

"We can probably see even more if we take to the heavens," Rui informed him. "Less air scattering of light."

The two of them shot up into the sky, eventually enhancing the image further and providing greater details.

"Incredible!!" Master Gurren remarked.

Suddenly, Rui dispelled the domain, heaving a sigh.

"Hey!" The Master protested.

"I'll teach you the technique; you can do it yourself," Rui waved him off, placating him with the excitement of mastering such a wonderful technique.

"To think that we are so small," Master Gurren remarked, his eyes swimming around as he experienced a cosmic existential crisis at how utterly insignificant even his mighty power was before the grand magnificence of the heavens beyond earth.

Rui smiled knowingly, turning around as he gestured to the world below them.

His voice took on a sagely luster.

"If you look at it, it's no more than a dot. That's here. That's home. That's us. On it, everyone you ever heard of, every human being who ever lived, lived out their lives. The aggregate of all our joys and sufferings, thousands of confident religions, ideologies, and economic doctrines, every hunter and forager, every hero and coward, every creator and destroyer of civilizations, every king and peasant, every young couple in love, every hopeful child, every mother and father, every inventor and explorer, every teacher of morals, every corrupt politician, every superstar, every supreme leader, every saint and sinner in the history of our species there..."

Rui smirked softly.

"...on a mote of dust, suspended in a sunbeam."

Master Gurren stared at him with amazement. "...I have never heard a more profound thing uttered by any other human being in my life."

He gained a deep amount of respect for Rui as his demeanor shifted.

Rui, on the other hand, was laughing inwardly. One of the benefits of reincarnating in a new world was that he got to plagiarize all the great quotes he had heard back on Earth!

This particular quote was one from the great astronomer Carl Sagan when he beheld the first distant image taken by Voyager II. Rui thanked the late astronomer for his wisdom as he partook in the profoundness of his words.

Chapter 1643: Crushing Weight

From that day, Master Gurren never called Rui an arrogant brat ever again.

Creating the telescopic technique wasn't hard once Rui gained a strong foundation in heaven bending. The formula for magnification employed in telescopes was dreadfully simple, simple enough to be taught in high school. Yet because there was some esoteric out there that could do the job without requiring an understanding of optics; it had never been uncovered by the science community of Gaia.

Rui shook his head, heaving a sigh as he began the hard part, teaching the technique to Master Gurren.

Master Gurren was absolutely resolved to master the technique no matter how long it took. Rui saved himself by writing down as dumbed-down an explanation as he possibly could.

Yet even that was too much for a fossil of a Master that had lived for centuries.

"What is this...?" He stared at strange symbols that Rui had jotted down in a booklet.

"That is Physics," Rui smiled pleasantly. "You're going to have to learn it."

What followed was a crash course and tutoring classes as Rui had the man build up a simple foundation of the basic mathematics that the Master simply could not do without if he wanted to learn the technique.

Much to Rui's surprise, however, the Master was not nearly as overwhelmed as he expected him to be.

Perhaps it was because Martial Masters were necessarily familiar and proficient with the power of thought. However, harnessing thought in combat was different from harnessing thought for scholarly pursuit.

After several hours of tutoring on algebra and solving problems and numericals, Master Gurren heaved a tired sigh.

Several days had gone by since Rui began teaching him the mathematical foundations. Master Gurren had no idea how and why this was necessary for the magical technique that Rui had displayed to him that day. However, his ascended senses could sense Rui's sincerity emanating from within his mind. Therefore, he decided to simply trust that this was somehow relevant to peering into the depths of the universe.

Rui hadn't even gotten to the principle of optical magnification yet. He hadn't even presented the framework for the nature of light and the phenomenon of refraction. The Master was so illiterate that he was far from reaching the stage needed to even understand the technique.

That was Rui building up his proficiency with algebra.

THUD

Rui dropped a stack of books on the topic of algebra to crack the journeyman scholar exam that he had purchased.

"What is this for...?" The Master asked, feeling an ominous omen.

"This, dear Master, is what is known as 'homework,'" Rui smiled pleasantly.

Yet Master Gurren could almost feel the despair and misery of countless students on Earth that had been evoked by Rui invoking the very word.

"I want these finished by today," Rui ordered him. "Good luck."

While Rui left the Master to mull his own suffering and misery, he isolated himself from the Martial Master atop a mountain in the Great Jrava Mountain Range as he focused on honing his mind.

Now that he had mastered the foundations of bending heaven and earth, he could finally venture into creating his own domain techniques.

His goal was to create domain techniques that would adapt his environment to his opponent. That had not changed.

'For now, let's go with the three most common broader fields,' Rui decided.

How could he adapt his environment to antithetically counter offense, defense, and maneuvering?

His mind sharply calculated all the potential principles in just a moment.

'Most offense relies on the heightened power,' Rui remarked. 'Crippling the exertion of power will certainly be useful. However, most offenses are also centered around collision damage. Thus, an environment that is antithetical to my opponent's collisions?'

These were definitely the two most promising principles on which to base an anti-offense domain.

"Ideally, I would like to do both, but..." He paused as his busy mind stumbled upon an interesting possibility. "What if I create a heavenly domain that places the weight of the sky on my target?"

He could use heaven-bending to alter the vectors of air "Kugh...!"

pressure and redirect them toward his target, forcing them to carry the literal weight of the sky.

This domain would have to be enormous, but Rui thought it was possible. The targeting scope of the domain would be limited to his opponent, but the size of the domain that would be employed into the domain would extend deep into the atmosphere around the battlefield. However, he wouldn't need to

exert too much power, merely enough to alter the vectors of force by several degrees, causing them to converge into a single point.

He could directly employ the power of his breath to create a heavenly domain to leverage the sky itself to weigh down upon his hapless target!

A grand domain that harnessed the fury of the heavens themselves!

It would hamper their power because they would have to employ a considerable amount of power just to stand. It was a good way of sealing their offense.

'I can double the potency of the technique by employing earth bending to act upwards, grinding my target against the weight of the sky, forcing them to use all their power to not be crushed!' Rui realized. 'If they're not strong enough, it could become an offensive attack itself!'

Rui grew incredibly excited at the prospect of this technique as a way to hamper the offensive power of his opponent without actually having to face it in combat.

'However, the technical aspect of the technique will be quite mentally consuming, making me quite slow to react,' Rui realized. 'Which means this technique is only suited towards highly offensive Martial Artists who aren't extremely speedy. It's also ineffective against defensive Martial Artists because they don't require a lot of power in the first place, so they will be less burdened to resist it.'

It was better to create domain techniques that were more specialized to handle both of those individually.

Chapter 1644: Project Allocations

However, even if it was not suited against defensive and maneuvering-oriented Martial Artists, it was suited to taking down offensive Martial Artists, which was good enough. A single solution could never be tuned to countering everything.

"I'll call this... Project Skyfall," Rui decided.

That occupied one technique slot that he could work on.

He still needed two more techniques for countering speed and defense.

He also needed techniques that weren't exclusive in nature; these techniques were meant to increase adaptive evolution, not sabotage the other elements of his adaptive evolution, which suggested that he ought to be able to fight normally even with domain techniques.

It was meant to expand the dimensions of his combat, not contract it. Although he wasn't too sure how realistic this condition was, he was willing to give it a shot.

Bearing that condition in mind, he had the perfect domain techniques in mind for defense and speed.

'For speed, I can create a domain that impedes all motion,' Rui realized. 'By using heaven-bending, it should be possible to manipulate the properties of drag force, specifically the drag coefficient.'

Rui grinned as he happened upon an incredible idea. Drag force was simply the force of air resistance when moving. The drag coefficient was a constant that every object had in a given medium, and it was essentially a measure of how much the air would impede motion for a given object moving at a given speed.

Drag force is increased by the square of the velocity of the object. Meaning if the object became twice as fast, then the drag force would become four times stronger. If the object became thrice as fast, then the drag force would become nine times stronger.

However, Rui conjectured, based on his somewhat decent knowledge of aerodynamics, that it would be possible to use heaven bending to alter drag force and the drag coefficient for it to increase cubically or even tetragonally or by even greater degrees to velocity, not just squarically.

Thus, if an object grew twice as fast, then this time, drag force would become sixteen, or possibly thirty-two times stronger!

This would severely impede any and all motion. Rui knew that drag force was a menace because it was the biggest challenge back on Earth when it came to creating rockets or jets that could propel forward at extremely high speeds.

If Rui increased the magnitude of that problem exponentially within his domain, then it was most likely enough to pose extremely harsh barriers to maneuvering and speed-oriented Martial Artists.

The drag force equation was actually quite trivial, so Rui was able to run numerous elementary simulations in his head, calculating the various outcomes.

In the most optimistic projections, maneuvering and speed-oriented Martial Artists would be able to move at only ten percent of their full speed!

The sheer drag force would cancel away ninety percent of their acceleration, reducing them to extremely slow speeds, This domain was theoretically so antithetical to speed-

oriented Martial Artists that it gave even Temporal Disharmony a run for its money!

"It works!" He grinned excitedly as he began plotting out the mechanics of the technique. The hard part would be figuring out how to use heaven-bending to alter the nature of the drag force and the drag coefficient of the medium inside his domain. But as hard as it was, Rui was confident that he could overcome this hurdle.

In addition, he could add an element of earth-bending where he decreased the friction of the land around his opponent, making it almost impossible to leverage their force to accelerate. With this, he would complete and thoroughly crush almost any speed or maneuvering-oriented Martial Artist.

"I shall call this Project Speed Prison," Rui filled up another project slot in his head. It was not going to be easy to accomplish either project by itself, but since he was taking both of them on and another, he knew that he was going to be putting himself through a rough time.

For the third project, he had an interesting idea that had struck him while he was mastering heaven bending but had postponed exploring until he finished training his foundations.

This project was dedicated to an anti-defensive domain that targeted defensive Martial Artists.

"Acoustic conduction."

It was a phenomenon that most people did not anything about. It was the process of heating via sound. Sound, in completely killing their Martial Art.

general, always produced heat. However, it was possible to convert sound to heat.

In general, they were very similar kinds of energies that were centered on the vibration of particles. The only difference was that sound was ordered and directional, while heat was unordered and non-directional.

The difference between the two was much smaller than most people realized.

Rui was already extremely proficient with sound. While his intuitive understanding was not on par with Xanarn, his scientific understanding of sound obviously far surpassed hers. With techniques like Transverse Resonance and Death's Sympathy, he had expanded his intuitive grasp of sound wider than probably anybody else in the Senior Realm. That was why he was keen on exploring this principle to create a domain technique that employed his mastery of sound.

Since he was creating a domain that was antithetical to defense, he wanted to create a domain that bypassed defense in some way, either directly inflicting damage or indirectly.

With acoustic heating, he could heat up his opponent's internal body temperature through a domain of sound. This domain, like Project Skyfall, would have a small target scope, but the domain itself would leverage the atmosphere and the land to employ sound to converge on to his opponent's body.

The trick was to not allow sound to propagate. By bombarding his opponent with sound from all directions, the vectors would cancel out, and the sound would no longer be directional or ordered, turning into heat.

This was a domain that would cook his opponent inside out, literally.

"I shall call this Project Malevolent Kitchen," Rui declared.

Chapter 1645: In Pursuit of Thought

Project Skyfall, Project Speed Prison, and Project Malevolent Kitchen. These were the three domain projects that he had decided to embark on.

One domain hampered power by dumping the weight of the sky on them and every movement they made.

Another domain hampered speed by having the heavens themselves oppose speed and agility by exponentially empowering drag force and the drag coefficient within the domain.

The final domain cooked his opponent inside and out, bypassing durability and putting them on a time limit before they would eventually die from having their brains boiled, something that not even Martial Seniors could survive.

In addition, this domain served as a decent counter to freezing Martial Art that were extraordinarily lethal, even for him. Perhaps he could create a domain for that specifically when he had the time.

Rui got up with renewed drive and purpose as he set out to expand his Martial Art to include not just himself and his opponent, but also the environment they were in. He instinctively felt that he had taken several more steps down his Martial Path just by endeavoring to add domains to his Martial Art.

Rather than simply adding more redundant techniques, it was better to add entirely new dimensions to his Martial Art. That was individuality.

While the new dimensions that he was adding were not born of him, he had certainly come up with domains that only he could have come up with with knowledge from another world.

That was as good as one could expect from its individuality.

He had one more technique slot he could fit in as long as he was willing to adjust his training timeframes.

In the past nine years, he had limited himself to three technique slots at a time for mainly one reason.

"I was on a time limit back then," Rui heaved a sigh.

He couldn't afford to take many years worth of time for each training phase. The time constraint that he had to deal with Chairman Deacon meant that he had to spend four years just getting to the Senior Realm, and nearly another five just training to reach a stage where he could kill the six high-grade Senior bodyguards that he had.

He couldn't afford to breathe freely and take as much time as he wanted.

Just three mental techniques had taken him two years, and the time to master them would have increased by more than just thirty-three percent had he chosen to add another technique atop them; it was too scary when his due date was rapidly approaching.

Now, however, the perilous urgency he had felt back then was gone. There was no Chairman Deacon that was aiming to kill his life. His son Decker, instead, was actually doing his best to cozy with Rui.

On top of that, as the youngest Martial Senior with decades of youthful vibrance ahead of him, he was not in any hurry psychologically.

The only thing that did put pressure on him was the Kandrian Throne War, but that was not a direct threat to him. Furthermore, he had already done as much as he could at his current stage of power to alter its course. He was a practical man; he did not think about controlling things that were wholly out of his control.

He had already emptied his pocket of tricks and solutions to impact the war. From this point on, it was time to focus on getting stronger. So strong that no one below the Master Realm was enough to hurt him.

In addition, it was time to take another step to the Master Realm. He needed to harness the power of thought even more, for his threshold was much higher.

'How well do these three domain techniques harness thought?' He asked himself.

Project Skyfall did not require active thought all that much. Redirecting the vectors of pressure and weight were not active thought-requiring actions and would even become muscle memory as he used the technique more often; moving the target to scope to follow his target as they moved was also not thought intensive.

Project Speed Prison, too, was not a thoughtful domain. Once he mastered and committed the heaven bending, he needed to alter drag to muscle memory; it too would become a very thoughtless technique that did not require his conscious decision-making.

The same could be said of Project Malevolent Kitchen.

These three techniques would require an immense amount of thought while training and figuring them out, but once he mastered them, he would probably be able to do them subconsciously.

They certainly improved his adaptive evolution, but how much closer would they bring him to the Master Realm?

"Hm, for my final technique slot, I shall create a domain that harnesses the power of thought," Rui declared.

There was one big problem though.

'I'm running out of information to process.' He heaved a sigh.

Thought was the processing of information. As far as he was aware, there were only two forms of conscious thought relevant to combat: deduction and decisioning.

Realm. He needed to harness the power of thought even Deduction was the processing of information, from senses and memories, to output deductions through logic. This could be as simple as figuring out the weakness of your opponent or as complex as Rui's predictive models.

Decisioning was the processing of those deductions to result in a decision that your body would act out. This could be as simple as the decision to target his opponent's weakness that he had earlier deduced or Rui perfectly countering a predicted move ahead of time with an accurate decision.

Rui's problem was the former: the deduction aspect. Deduction required information to process as all thought did. However, he had already processed all the useful information he could about his opponent and environment.

He processed each and every movement and motion they made across the entire battle from start to finish. What else was left?

'Maybe I can create a domain technique that gives me access to a greater pool of information?' Rui considered the possibility, though he wasn't very optimistic. Gaining new information was something he would create a sensory technique for, not a domain technique.

'Maybe I can create a domain sensory technique to gather more information that can be used as fuel for more thought?' Rui's eyes lit up with interest as he happened upon a potentially interesting concept.

A domain technique that manipulated heaven and earth to serve as a sensory technique that could supply him with additional information that could fuel more deduction.

Rui excitedly thought about this concept, seduced by the possibilities.

Chapter 1646: Sensory Domain

The idea was fascinating, but he wasn't sure if there was much merit there.

Yet a domain sensory technique definitely sounded interesting. Was it possible to employ a domain to allow him to gather more information that he didn't have before that would allow him to sense more than he previously could?

He wasn't sure.

In the first place, he would need to identify a new source of information that he did not have access to and strive to solve the problem via domains if possible.

However, that alone was quite challenging. For one, he couldn't think of any such source that could viably give him important information that he could process to harness the power of thought.

'I already collect every ounce of relevant information across the entire fight,' Rui heaved a sigh. 'The only times this isn't the case are for assassinations where I collect information before the fight. But I can't do that for every fight unless I peer into the past.'

He paused.

Anyone else would have scoffed off that thought as an impossibility.

'Peer into the past...to gain more information?' Rui's eyes lit up with interest.

Was that even possible?

The past had passed, and the only indications of what had happened were in the present.

'Could I then infer the past from the present and then refine predictive models from the information of the past?' Rui widened his eyes as they swam around, immersed in thought, calculating the plausibility of the idea that he had come across.

Using the present to predict the future was something that he was accustomed to. But now, he was using the present to decrypt the past and then using the past and the present to predict the future.

Predicting the future with the past and the present together would naturally be superior to predicting the future with just the present.

The more data he had, the more refined his predictions were.

'This could serve as the basis for the first concrete upgrades to the pattern recognition system,' Rui realized.

The pattern recognition system had remained unchanged in the many years since he had used it. The VOID algorithm had undergone some drastic upgrades, but that had been due to the partial addition of systems that involved thought in their applications, like the Metabody System and the Hypnomatrix.

But never before had he touched the process of creating predictive models that he had originally devised on Earth, leading his research team. The reason for it was that its only flaw was its difficulty of mastery, which he had overcome with the Mind Palace technique. Since then, it has been the core source of his dominance as a Martial Artist.

However, today, he happened to have a way of upgrading the pattern recognition system by employing data from the past deduced from the future.

'Theoretically, it is possible,' Rui realized. 'The law of causality binds the past to the present. Tying effect to cause over and over again will allow me to decode the past. But...that's an immense amount of information. I also don't think I can access the information with my current senses.'

In order to be able to decrypt the past from the future, he would need to be able to sense and detect all the vectors and tensors in a given system and then trace them back, applying classical mechanics to rewind time to recreate a picture of the past.

However, he wasn't sure how he was going to detect and sense all the phenomena happening for him to draw all that information. He needed a mechanism to gain knowledge of all those vectors.

He definitely couldn't sense it directly using his senses; there was too much information, and his senses were not detailed enough to directly sense those minute vectors in the environment to decrypt the past.

However, that wasn't strictly a problem either. He wasn't inherently able to sense space, but he had overcome that problem as well.

'Though it's not worth hunting an esoteric substance yet again. I can't pump my body full of esoteric substances endlessly; the health risks spike exponentially. Besides, they are unnecessary in these circumstances,' Rui happened upon an interesting solution.

'I could try and magnify the vectors by pumping more energy into the system,' Rui realized. 'But there's no way to do that without disrupting them and the information that they possessed. So that's a no-go too...unless...'

One way to measure a vector was to measure how much it changed when acted upon by another known vector, like force. If a rolling ball moved a certain way after Rui kicked it blindfolded with a certain amount of force, then Rui could gauge which way it was going before he kicked it.

This was actually how quantum phenomena were measured since the fact that they were that small meant that even the act of measuring them with electromagnetic waves would disrupt them; scientists would measure the disruptions to understand their original state.

If Rui could theoretically do that for all vectors in a given system, then he would be able to gain an account for all the vectors in a system at any given point in time.

Of course, he would still be faced with the challenge of having to process all that data accurately and plot out the past, but it wasn't theoretically impossible.

'If I refine the precision of my heaven and earth bending, then...' Rui's eyes lit up with interest.

Unlike the other three projects, Rui had absolutely no confidence that this project would succeed. Even if he could get past the massive technical hurdles, he would still be faced with practical obstacles.

Only by overcoming both the technical and the practical hurdles could he then successfully employ the technique in combat.

It was a difficult gambit, but it was at times like these that he could develop his Martial Art in such a manner. If it paid up, then it was all when and good, if not, then he would be reminded that he couldn't win them all.

Chapter 1647: Terms and Conditions

The next day, Rui abstained from training, instead preparing himself for another audience with a member of the Royal Family. He had grown used to them by now, so he wasn't perturbed to any extent.

There wasn't really much to think about; he simply sky-walked over to the Royal Palace of the Mantian Region.

By the time he arrived, there were maids already ready at the front gate, bowing to him as he appeared.

"Welcome, Senior Quarrier, please allow us to guide you to His Highness."

Funnily enough, the journey of walking through the absurdly elaborate palace was more tiring to Rui than traveling across the Mantian Region. Just beholding the sheer extravagance and the lavishness that the Royal Family splurged on was something that he didn't care to be bothered with.

Eventually, they arrived at a large, exorbitant chamber in the Royal Palace; the doors opened immediately, revealing the seated visage of the Martial Prince along with three Martial Masters standing behind him and an array of maids and butlers across the entire chamber.

"Your Highness," Rui bowed.

"I have already informed you to abstain from observing such protocols, Senior Quarrier," The Martial Prince chided him with a gracious tone. "Have a seat. We have much to discuss."

Rui followed suit, taking a seat opposite to the Martial Prince, who simply stared at him.

"To what do I owe the pleasure of this meeting, Your Highness?" Rui asked.

"Do not play dumb with me, Rui Quarrier," The Martial Prince rebuked him. "You know why you are here."

Rui smiled. "Perhaps. Then again, it has been three months since our last meeting. I was beginning to wonder if you had forgotten me, having ignored me for so long."

An obvious lie that the Martial Masters did not even bother rebuking him for.

"I did not forget you," Prince Raijun narrowed his eyes. "However, the sheer magnitude of the proposal that you made to me was such that even three months is rather swift a timeline. The decision I make on it will affect the course of history of our great empire."

His words were heavy, yet he didn't stop.

"I have consulted my entire faction extensively over the past three months. There are powerful and influential people who have invested in me and have a stake in my campaign. Only then was I able to take a decision."

Rui simply stared at him silently. He had nothing to say until he had heard what he had come to hear.

"Senior Rui Quarrier," Prince Raijun's tone grew officious and ceremonious. "I accept your proposal."

A soft sigh escaped Rui's mouth. For better or worse, this was the outcome of the decision he had made back then.

It appeared that the prospect of becoming a Martial Squire was too alluring to the Martial Prince. He couldn't possibly let go of this opportunity, especially since it had become clear to him that he had no other way of going about it. If he refused Rui, then he may never become a Martial Squire in his entire life.

Ceasing all counteractive measures against Princess Ranea and Prince Raul was definitely quite difficult, but it was something that he was willing to tolerate. As long as he leveraged his new status as a Martial Squire to rope in people who were previously skeptical of drive as a Martial Artist, he was confident that he could more than compensate for the self-

harm that he would be bringing upon himself by leaving Prince Raul and Princess Ranea alone.

All of the princes and princesses were constantly trying to counter each other; this was especially true among the seven prime candidates for the throne. Any candidate that gained a free pass from any of the other candidates was bound to be less hindered and thus make more growth.

He just needed to ensure that he grew faster.

"Now then," Prince Raijun waved his hand as a butler placed two sheets of paper featuring the terms and conditions of their agreement on the table. "Let us officiate our agreement once you have revised the terms."

Rui skimmed through a single, albeit large, sheet of paper that documented the terms of the proposal that Rui had made to him three months prior.

Half of the sheet was simply an array of definitions that defined every single important term mentioned in terms of their agreement, while the remaining half of the document specified the actual terms and conditions.

In return for immense wealth and the complete abstinence from any and all counteractive measures against Ranea Faction and the Raul Faction, Rui would train Prince Raijun to ensure that he achieves Squire candidacy.

The section that specified his abstinence from sabotage was quite large since every form needed to be specified.

[Persuant to clause three, notwithstanding the completion of Part B's tutoring services as described under clause two, Party A hereby undertakes that the Raijun Faction, and all its constituents, directly or

indirectly, through funds from private, external, or funds accrued from any organization in partnership, patronship, association, membership or transactions with Raijun Kandria will hereby:

5.1.2) Abstain from engaging in dissemination of harmful information through media including but not limited to publications, distributions, projections, remote communication or any other form of organized form of information communication.

5.1.3) Abstain from engaging in any form of agreement that, directly or indirectly, infringes upon supply channels and transactions of goods and services, involving any and all organizations associated with individuals Ranea Kandria and Raul Kandria.

5.1.4) Concede a right of priority to any and all conflicts of interest between Party A and parties associated with Raul Kandria and Ranea Kandria in any business venture of any kind.

5.1.5) Concede the right to invoke the identities of Raul Kandria and Ranea Kandria in any and all public discourse.

5.1.6) Abstain from contact with any and all individuals in any form of registered relationship of any form with parties associated with Raul Kandria and Ranea Kandria.

5.1.7) Abstain from...]

What Rui was particularly interested however, was a clause that specified that Rui had the right to cease any and all supply of his services at any time he deemed necessary and retained the right to void the contract at any time, including the non-disclosure agreement that he would be under if signed the contract.

Chapter 1648: Ambition

Prince Raijun had made some considerable concessions, even at his own expense, that gave Rui a lot of leverage.

Of course, Rui was not fooled that he had suddenly come to have the prince by the balls if he signed this. The power disparity between them was too large. But it was a token of his good faith.

He was afraid that Rui would not give the training his very best if he felt like he was being unfairly disenfranchised in their agreement. Thus, these terms were quite beneficial to Rui.

While other prominent and powerful Martial Artists had personal staff that took care of making sure such contracts were clean of any traps, Rui didn't have such people.

He didn't need them either, having gone through and memorized Kandrian contract law thoroughly after he made the offer to Prince Raijun.

Surprisingly, the contract did not contain any traps that he was able to see despite his very best efforts to find even the dimmest possibilities of any loopholes that could be exploited against the spirit of the agreement.

Normally, both sides try to get away with as much as they can.

Rui didn't think it was because the Martial Prince was a kind-hearted soul who believed in fairness and justice.

'The Martial Union would never allow a member of the Royal Family to bully a the youngest Senior partner of the Martial Union through contract traps. The factions and sects of the martial Union that were backing him probably had entire divisions go through this agreement to make sure there was no way Prince Raijun could scam me,' Rui mused inwardly.

"These terms and conditions are just fine," Rui nodded after going through them for some time. "Let us go ahead with the officiation."

An ink foam was produced for Rui, who promptly pressed his thumb into it before pressing an impression of his thumb at the bottom right of both sheets of paper.

And just like that, a historic agreement was officially made.

"Great!" Prince Raijun grinned. "Let's get started!"

Rui heaved a sigh.

What followed was sparring sessions that lasted hours. Rui refined his predictive model on the prince while using it not to adapt to the prince but to predict what the prince would do when fighting against him and mimicking the movements to the T.

He eliminated the inefficiencies in his tempo and pacing, balance, maneuvering, and flow of power.

POW POW POW

He pummeled the Martial Prince with a barrage of Apprentice-level attacks that were swifter and stronger than his, forcing him into a defensive.

Rui threw a kick flying straight at their ribs, causing him to reflexively block, yet the kick's trajectory shifted, flying down to his ankle.

THWACK

THUD

The kick unbalanced him, pushing him down.

"Tsk, I was defeated again," The Marital Prince heaved a sigh, getting up. "It truly is like fighting a stronger and faster version of myself."

"Except I'm not," Rui replied calmly. "I'm employing the same amount of force and speed that you are capable of; I'm just making better use of it. I have noticed minor improvements in your form."

Prince Raijun nodded. "I never knew that I sabotaging my power due to sub-optimal balance during the moment of attack."

Rui nodded. "Balance is the foundation of power. The subconscious mind always strives to achieve balance, thus when you are imbalanced, your subconscious mind focuses on that instead of your attack, it kills your power because balance takes priority."

"I always felt like something was wrong, but no one has ever explained it with that much clarity," Prince Raijun remarked with admiration. "You truly are one of a kind. Where did you gain such knowledge and wisdom?"

Rui shrugged.

He couldn't tell him that it was partially due to the fact that he had studied combat his entire previous life.

"Knowledge and wisdom do not fall out of the sky, Senior Quarrier," The older Martial Artist informed Rui. "I cannot imagine what kind of experiences you have undergone to attain such a deep understanding of Martial Art. I have only met Martial Masters, and Martial Sages exhibit such profound wisdom. Tell me, Senior Quarrier, what is it that drives you forward as a Martial Artist?"

The prince gazed at him with curiosity. Rui considered the question, wondering how much he ought to reveal. He could just dismiss the question, but that could be considered rude.

Especially when Prince Raijun could probably find out through other ways if he really wanted.

"...Personal ambition," Rui replied.

"That's quite vague," The prince raised an eyebrow. "Personal ambition could mean just about any self-centric pursuit. However, I have a feeling that it is linked to Martial Art, is it not?"

"Indeed," Rui sighed. "I endeavor to elevate my Martial Art to be able to overcome any force in this world through adaptive evolution."

"Ambitious indeed," The Martial Prince smiled. "How else can a Martial Artist of your prodigious caliber come about from nowhere? I admire your ambition. It is free from worldly shackles that many other Martial Artists are subject to."

"It's not the only source of my drive," Rui remarked. "I do wish to keep my family safe from the turbulences of this harsh world and the current political climate of the Kandrian Empire. I require power for that."

"I'm afraid you cannot fully do that with merely the power of the Senior Realm," Prince Raijun shook his head. "Only if you become a Martial Master will you be able to singlehandedly protect them from any and all threats."

"I am aware," Rui replied. "That is why I do things such as demand extravagant wealth from you that can be employed to protect them. I am quite motivated to train you; I hope you grow stronger and become a Martial Squire, for both our sakes."

"Don't worry, Senior Quarrier," The Martial Prince flashed a confident smile. "I have no intention of failing. I will become a Martial Squire and, eventually, Emperor."

Chapter 1649: Someone

The two of them spoke for a bit longer. The allocated for training had not yet concluded, yet the remaining time was far too little to be worth spending on training. Prince Raijun spoke to Rui freely, putting aside his royal bearing as he tried to accommodate Rui's comfort.

The more he learned about this spectacular Martial Artist, the more he realized that this was not someone he wanted aligned against him.

While it was true that a Martial Senior, no matter how prodigious, was small before the might of a political faction, Rui Quarrier possessed boundless potential by all estimates. On top of that, there was the mysterious knowledge of the mechanics of reality that he possessed.

Prince Raijun was never privy to the details of Rui's contributions to the Squire evolution breakthrough procedure as an outsider to the Martial Union. However, the Surgeon had informed him in confidence that it was unlike he had ever seen in his entire life. The unfathomable knowledge that Rui had bestowed upon them was otherworldly.

This was not the first time that Rui had done such a thing, his sources told him. The Pathfinder technique was apparently a revolutionary manner of achieving accuracy and would have changed the landscape of ranged combat if not for the difficulty of mastery.

Even a blind man could see that Rui was a force that could change the world as long as he didn't die early.

Most of the Sects and factions within the Martial Union were highly pleased with him, including the Martial Sects that had joined the Raijun Faction. While other non-Martial patrons and power blocs within the Raijun Faction were in favor of trapping Rui with a loophole in their contract agreement, the Martial Sects and Martial factions that had joined his faction ultimately killed the proposal with great backlash.

"Senior Quarrier has just left the premises, Your Highness," His personal butler informed him. "He refused our offers of transport yet again."

He was wrong.

One of his most trusted patrons and supporters, the Minister of Domestic Affairs, had come across something quite shocking when he searched the Kandrian Intelligence Bureau for intelligence on Rui Quarrier.

An ocean of intelligence reports on Rui Quarrier. Information that not even the Martial Union had.

What shocked all of them was how far back some of these reports went.

Reports on not just his Squire and Apprentice days but also on his early days in the Martial Academy before he broke through to the Apprentice Realm.

"However, that wasn't all..." One of his advisors solemnly reminded Prince Raijun.

"...Minister Grances had also found extensive reports detailing his early life as a child in the Quarrier Orphanage. The chain of commission was redacted, and the supervising agent on all these reports is currently missing," His supervisor informed him. "These files were not classified as highly confidential. They were actually buried deep in the depths of the intelligence archives of the Kandrian Intelligence Bureau and were neither registered nor tagged with unique report IDs. The officers that the Minister had deployed barely managed to find one of them incidentally when looking through old declassified archives for a particular incident."

That was not the extent of the anomalies. "The old reports clearly indicate input from Martial Masters, whose identities are also redacted and scrapped out of the database. Whoever commissioned these reports made use of multiple Martial Masters to collect intelligence on Rui Quarrier for many years and even decades and had enough power and authority to erase any and all records of Their Masteries' identities."

It was shocking and bewildering, so much so that they had yet to piece together everything there was. Yet one thing had become evident to the elites of the Raijun Faction. Someone powerful had been trying to collect this information without alerting anyone of its existence. Someone who had immense influence and control in the Kandrian Bureau of Intelligence. Someone who could deploy Martial Masters without anybody in the nation ever finding out.

Someone very high up in the Kandrian Empire had been spying on Rui Quarrier his entire life.

Chapter 1650: Factional Decisions

The Raijun Faction had come across this shocking information in the three months since Rui had made his offer to the Martial Prince. They had, for the time being, decided to keep it under wraps.

They certainly had no intention of divulging it. Regardless of where it came from, regardless of how fishy its source, information was information. It was power. On top of that, whoever was responsible for manipulating the Kandrian Bureau to collect information on Rui without anybody knowing was clearly hell-bent on it remaining that way: unknown.

"If they have the power to manipulate the bureau to such a degree without anybody knowing, while also erasing any and all incriminating information, then they possess an immense amount of power within the bureau, then this person is undoubtedly extremely powerful. Not even the director of the Kandrian Intelligence Bureau possesses the power to do what we see is being done. It would constitute treason, even," Another of his personal advisors told Prince Raijun. "Yet these documents were clearly inside the system, not outside. This leaves us with two possibilities."

The Martial Prince narrowed his eyes.

"The first is that this is someone who has deeply infiltrated the Kandrian Intelligence Bureau and has compromised it, allowing them to manipulate it in whatever way they wish, including harnessing its intelligence capabilities to do something like this," One of his advisors told him. "Minister Grances has already launched a formal investigation into the matter, and this possibility has neither been refuted nor proven. It will take some time for the results to come back. As for the second possibility..."

His advisors glanced in his direction. "It is possible that someone from the Royal Family orchestrated this. Intelligence and military are the two parts of the government that are directly under the control of the Royal Family while also being answerable to the executive government. The orders of the Royal Family, of course, trump that of the executive government."

Prince Raijun nodded, heaving a sigh. It was a long road ahead of him.

"The Kandrian Throne War is still in its nascency," Prince Raijun heaved a sigh. "Most of the government and most players in the game have yet to be roped in by one of the seven of us. That's a good thing for me since it means that the impact that I will make when I do become a Squire will be quite substantial."

East Panama had essentially become a market for all princes and princesses aiming for the throne, but especially the seven prime candidates. There were many powerful forces who were interested in the power of the throne of the Kandrian Empire. The seven princes and princesses had essentially been shopping throughout the Kandrian Empire and beyond for entities with a vested interest in the throne's power. "Princess Ranea has been the most aggressive with international funding," One of his personal advisors informed him, passing him a report. "The Ranea Foundation has received two billion gold coins in total from a number of its international patrons, including but not limited to the Bradt Distribution Services, the International Naval Association, the Panamic Cartographer's Guild, and the Derschek Union."

"Tsk," Prince Raijun tutted as his eyebrows furrowed with disdain. "If she loves the ocean that much, she should jump into it."

"She has been gaining a lot of momentum into her idea of turning the Kandrian Empire into a nation that pedestalizes seafare industries and maritime sectors," His personal advisor warned him. "However, there are those who do not wish to see the government funnel hundreds of billions of gold worth of subsidies into the seafaring industry, including several sects of the Martial Union that are yet to commit to any one prince. We can use her momentum to win them over should they want to avoid seeing the Kandrian Empire become nothing more than a glorified port for the rest of the world to use. It is a shame that we can no longer act against her, though."

Prince Raijun winced. It was indeed quite painful.

"However, we can harness dissenting and grudging powers against her."

Prince Raijun nodded. "The best part about any of my competitors gaining momentum is that we use those who are dissented to them from joining our camp."