

## Martial Unity 491

### Chapter 491: Technique

"Of course," Kan added. "It still makes me dependent on the Lightning Sect for protection against being coerced against my will to rejoin my family, but hey, we're getting there."

"Indeed." Fae nodded. "I am particularly impressed that your plan actually succeeded."

"It won't be that easy breaking out of the Arrancar Family's grasp, you know," Dalen told him.

"I know," Kane replied. "But there's a limit to how far they are willing to go."

"Perhaps," Hever replied calmly. "But that limit is likely much higher for someone like yourself. You're no ordinary Martial Artist. With your talent, you're a precious boon that any Martial Family would kill to have."

Kane sighed. He was aware of that, it would be much easier to cut ties with his family if they didn't give a shit about him.

"You should just fight them if they try holding you back." Nel snorted.

Kane snorted, ignoring him as he turned back to Rui. "Well, putting that aside..."

He studied Rui from head to toe. "So this is you as a Martial Squire, huh? You don't look or feel any different."

Rui chuckled. He had sealed the pressure that they would experience with the help of the Mind Mask, he didn't want them to change their behavior with him now that he was a whole Realm of power above them. "I've taken some measures."

"What was the experience of breaking through like, I've wondered." She stared at him with interest and curiosity in her eyes.

"Painful," Rui replied immediately.

Silence befell the group as they processed his simple yet scary answer.

"Like... breaking bones painful? Stubbing your tow painful? Or worse? Like stepping on lego painful?" Kane asked blankly.

"No no, it's not nearly as bad as stepping on lego, obviously." Rui shook his head. "But it was pretty bad."

The two of them exchanged a chuckle as Fae rolled her eyes. "I'm serious, you have to tell us more about the experience."

Rui scratched his head awkwardly. The information regarding the breakthrough to the Squire Realm was classified and not something Martial Apprentices were privy to until they fulfilled the conditions for Squire candidates.

Partly because the actual information itself was strategic intelligence that was highly relevant to the Martial power of a nation. Rui was vaguely aware that the discovery of the Martial body set the foundation for the higher Realms of Martial Art, though he wasn't aware of any details.

He sighed. "It's not that I don't want to tell you, it's because I can't."

There was also the fact that if their Martial Art hadn't reached maturity, then there was a chance that their lust for the power that the breakthrough to the Squire Realm would grant them would warp their Martial Art. Instead of their Martial body catering to their Martial Art, their Martial Art might cater to the ideal Martial body that they may desire.

Fae sighed. "I expected as much. Every Martial Artist of the higher Realms has unilaterally refused to tell me any meaningful information about the breakthrough to the Squire Realm, and what it is that actually separates Martial Squires from Martial Apprentices."

She turned back to face Rui. "It's because we aren't Squire candidates, correct?"

Rui sighed in relief, if they were aware of the concept, then it was easier to refuse them. "Correct."

"Would you tell us if we became Squire candidates?" Hever asked thoughtfully.

"If you became Squire candidates then you would be informed by qualified experts trained to explain to Martial Apprentices like yourselves about the breakthrough condition to the Squire Realm, you won't need to hear it from me," Rui explained.

"Don't care about that." Nel snorted, interjecting abruptly. "How strong have you become?"

Rui smiled at the hint of battle lust that flashed through his eyes. "Stronger than I ever thought I would be."

"Show me." Nel grinned.

Rui sighed. "In time. You should focus on attaining that power rather than challenging those that already have it before acquiring it yourself. How much stronger have you gotten."

"Way stronger." He grinned. "I would crush the old you!"

"That's quite remarkable." Rui smiled, amused. "You must be close to Squire candidacy, right?"

He shrugged silently.

"Each of us has fulfilled at least one of the conditions of Squire candidacy," Fae told him.

"That's good to hear." Rui nodded, before pausing. "Ah, I need each of you to contact me when you reach Squire candidacy."

"Why's that?" Kane asked curiously.

"I have an Apprentice-level technique to give to each of you," Rui told them.

They all threw confused expressions at him.

"It's complicated." Rui sighed.

He wanted to get all of them to master the Mind Switch technique. Specifically, the version of the technique that he had mastered. Triggering the neurological and metabolic phenomenon associated with hunger via pain. This would increase their stamina very naturally and organically, allowing them to ultimately obtain a stronger Martial body.

"You said 'give' us a technique." Fae frowned at his odd wording. "As in, a technique of yours and not something in the Martial Academy."

"Sort of." Rui scratched his head awkwardly. "It's a personal modification of a technique that exists in the Apprentice library."

"Why not give it to us now instead of after we become Squire candidates," Dalen asked thoughtfully.

"Mmm..." Rui wasn't sure how much to tell them. "Let's just say it has something to do with the breakthrough to the Squire realm."

"I don't do techniques." Nel snorted.

"You do training techniques, however." Rui pointed out. Nel was not averse to any training technique that naturally made his body's natural physicality greater. He had no problem with conditioning techniques that increased his body's natural toughness. Autophagy was a very normal and natural phenomenon, thus it wouldn't clash with his Martial Path.

"Will it make us stronger?" Nel asked.

Rui smiled. "Much."

"So you're telling me..." Kane summed up Rui's instructions. "...that you have an Apprentice-level technique that you modified to make you much stronger as a Martial Squire. A technique that the Martial Union and other Martial Squires don't have?"

#### Chapter 492: Selfish

"Is that skepticism I hear in your tone?" Rui chuckled.

The rest of them just stared at him with mixed emotions. If anybody else from their batch of students in the Martial Academy had told them that they had altered an Apprentice-level technique at the age of seventeen and created a technique that allowed them to become much stronger as a Martial Squire, through means that even the Martial Union did not know, they would have called him a conman and walked away.

But not when that person telling them this was Rui Quarrier.

While Rui's Martial prowess was one of his most impressive assets, they knew that at the core of all of his uniqueness and absurdity was his exceptional mind. By his accounts, he had learned to speak, read and write at astonishingly young ages. His performance in the evaluation of his mental parameters of the evaluation exam they had undergone after joining was the single highest recorded performance in the history of the Martial Academies.

Each of them had many anecdotes about his mind. Be it his impeccable analyses and deductions, or his ridiculously accurate predictions and decision-making. The most absurd feat was the one he performed time and time against, the most frequently, that was the creation of a combat style designed to have the highest probability of victory against his opponent.

None of them could even begin to fathom how such a feat was even possible, yet it was bread and butter for Rui.

Thus, despite how scam-ish the claim sounded, it could not be dismissed when the one uttering it was Rui.

"Look." Rui placated them. "If it doesn't work out, it doesn't work out for you. It can be undone so there's no issue. Of course, I guarantee you it works, but there is very little to be lost if it doesn't. I took that risk because the benefits were too good, and it paid out extremely well."

"Alright, I'll do as you say." Kane shrugged nonchalantly. He was the closest to Rui among all of them and knew him better than any of the others.

"Count me in!" Nel grinned.

The others soon followed suit. Rui's intentions and credibility were trustworthy enough.

"Still, why not give it to us now." Kane wondered.

"I might be able to give it to some of you, depending on whether the time is right." Rui scratched his chin.

He was afraid that by giving them a technique outside of their Martial Path before their Martial Art reached maturity, he might mess up their Martial Art and hinder their progression to obtaining Martial maturity.

Of course, some of them had achieved Martial maturity like Kane, and he had already left the Martial Academy so the others wouldn't find out even if he mastered it.

"I might be able to give it to you right away Kane... and also..." He turned to the silent Milliana. "You as well."

This surprised all of them. They had assumed that the reason he couldn't give it to them was that they weren't strong enough yet. Yet he had also given it to Milliana, who was the weakest of all of them.

"Me?" She asked with a surprised expression.

"Yes, you."

"Why me?"

"Because you're suited for it," Rui replied.

Her Martial Path was centered around stamina, thus regardless of whether her Martial Art had achieved maturity or not, giving her the technique would not cause any problems. Although it was a mental technique at its core, it was quite low-grade. With Rui's modifications, it was a stamina training technique more than anything else.

As long as she had the perseverance needed to get past the torture that the training entailed, she would receive a significant boost to her stamina.

Furthermore, there was another benefit to giving to Milliana. He wanted to avoid making the others think he was showing some kind of favoritism by teaching it only to Kane, who was his best friend. By choosing Milliana, who he wasn't very close to at all, he was indirectly proving to them that he wasn't being driven by personal bias.

"You have to keep it a secret for now, however," Rui told them. "It would be a pain in the ass if others found out."

"The Martial Union has access to the techniques that we master, I ought to remind you." Fae pointed out. "They would certainly find out about the technique, isn't it better to tell them about the technique and gain some special benefits and credits in return?"

Rui smiled. It was not easy to explain his motivations. The problem was that the principles of the technique stemmed from the human anatomy of his previous life. While Martial Artists did create new techniques, it would be nearly impossible to convince them that the mechanics of the technique are legitimate. After all, how could a seventeen-year-old Martial Squire know more about the human body than even the top experts of the Martial Union?

He needed proof that the technique was effective, and for that, he needed empirical data. He needed to establish a correlation and causation between his personalized Mind-Switch technique and superior Martial bodies.

That was perhaps the more selfish reason he was giving the Mind Switch technique to his six friends. Once they mastered the technique, and if they reached the Squire Realm, then they would be the proof that Rui needed to substantiate his claims.

Once he proved to the Martial Union that his technique was indeed revolutionary, then the benefits he would gain in return for submitting the principles, mechanics, and a refined training regime for mastering the technique would be enormous. After all, he would be responsible for making the new generation of Martial Squires of the Kandrian Empire superior to those who came before.

Of course, while he was using them to his benefit to a certain degree, the primary reason he was giving them the technique was for their sakes, especially Kane, who needed power more than the rest of them.

#### Chapter 493: Mission

The seven of them conversed for nearly an hour before they needed to disperse, after all, they were all preoccupied with their own matters. Everyone but Rui and Kane had returned to the Martial Academy.

"Keep in touch, Kane," Rui told him. "I'll send you the details of the technique soon."

"I already have a bunch of techniques I've chosen to work on at the moment." Kane shook his head. "I'll let you know when I'm open to learning it."

"Sure, will do." Rui nodded. "See ya."

"Bye." They exchanged a handshake and a hug before setting out in their own directions.

Rui set out for the Martial Union. He had taken enough of a break in the past few days and intended to get back into grinding through missions. He needed to build up experience in the Squire Realm, experience that he was sorely lacking.



He was especially keen because he didn't yet have any genuine combat experience in the Squire Realm. He had sparred against some Martial Squires, but he did not have any experience engaging in actual combat against a hostile Martial Squire or a Squire-level beast. Something he intended to fix as soon as possible. However, missions involving other Martial Squires came at and above grade four, thus he had to upgrade so that he ran into missions of a higher grade.

Soon enough he found himself standing in the Mission library of the Martial Union. He immediately walked to the offense-class section of missions in the library. Out of all classes of missions besides from perhaps the hunter class, the offense class of missions was the class of missions that had the highest likelihood of actual combat. The mission involved actively attacking the target or targets of the mission.

As long as he ground and cleared the missions with impeccable perfection, the Martial Union would have no choice but to raise his grade as a Martial Artist. It was a simple but straightforward plan.

He immediately began browsing through the missions, running into a few interesting ones.

[Offense class mission: Elimination mission.

Clientele: Frindul Sentar

Target of the mission: King Fujilin Verine

Location of the target: Royal Palace of the Dermile Kingdom

Difficulty grade: 3

Mission Summary: The client seeks to commission a Martial Squire to eliminate King Fujilin Verine, the King of the Kingdom of Dermile. King Fujilin Verine is perpetually guarded by an elaborate security detail consisting of more than a dozen of the most competent Martial Apprentices of the Kingdom Dermile, each being no lesser than grade ten, causing the difficulty of the mission to reach grade three.

Mission commencement: Immediate]

"Wow." Rui's eyebrows arched. "I'm holding the mission bill for a commission to assassinate a king?"

He immediately plucked the mission bill out of its slot, smiling widely.

('This must be the first time I've chosen a mission this quickly.') Rui smirked.

He immediately proceeded to the register counter, duly filling up the paperwork needed to officially accept the mission. Soon enough, he was seated at a table with the mission bill in his hands. He had already gotten the gist of the mission, he wanted to process the background and all the details.

The first thing he learned was that the clientele was merely an ordinary butler that served in the government of the Kingdom of Dermile. According to the intelligence provided by the Martial Union, the butler was merely a personal servant of Minister Riunge Hurut. She was the Finance Minister of the Kingdom of Dermile, and also the true clientele that had commissioned the mission.

"Interesting..." Rui murmured, absorbed in thought.

The fact that she had her butler commission the mission under the latter's name instead of her own suggested a degree of caution and prudence. It was a sign that she did not trust the Kandrian Martial Union's data security. After all, if the official details of the commission contract were leaked somehow, she would be implicated.

Furthermore, the, albeit few, restrictions of the contract would not necessarily bear down on her since she was not the contractor, officially. Of course, the Martial Union would not let such technicalities slide, officially or not, it was still cleaner than being officially involved.

Of course, this wasn't a particularly unusual occurrence, but usually, these means were employed by criminals and other shady figures that had reason to hide from the Martial Union while still requiring the services of Martial Artists that the Martial Union liaised for.

There were risks to such a method, making someone else the official contractor meant handing over a lot of power and authority in regard to the matter. If the official contractor wanted, they could cancel the mission against the real client's wishes and the Martial Union would unhesitatingly cancel it.

The fact that the finance minister sent a personal butler meant that this wasn't an ordinary employee of hers, meant that this was someone whose loyalty could be trusted.

('Or someone whose loyalty is coerced.') Rui noted, before moving on. While he liked knowing as much about his client as possible, it wasn't the most important information.

The mission bill went a bit into the target of the mission as well. King Fujilin Verine was a greedy tyrant who had been draining the capital and resources of the already small and impoverished Kingdom of Dermile for his own personal greed. So much so that the GDP, the gross domestic product, had actually reduced noticeably due to his reckless and selfish expenditure of the capital he drained from his citizens.

His death would end that, and that was likely the motivation of the mission.

('Great.') Rui nodded. If he had to get his hands dirty, he would rather do it for a better cause rather than a bad one.

He quickly moved on to the details regarding the security and protection assigned to the king, which was actually the most important detail of the entire mission bill. While he was confident of winning regardless of what the Martial Apprentices were like, he still wanted it to be as clean as possible.

#### Chapter 494: Meeting

The Kingdom of Dermile, like the Commonwealth Duchy of Vinfrana, did not possess any Martial Squire or Martial Artists of higher Realms, thus the strongest Martial Artists in the kingdom were Martial Apprentices. The twelve Martial Apprentices assigned to the king's immediate security and protection were elite. They were almost all grade ten Martial Apprentices by the Martial Union's evaluation, barring two grade nine sensory Martial Apprentices.

Furthermore, their specialties were well-picked. There were three mid-range specialists, five close-range defense class Martial Apprentices, and two close-range offense specialists. A reasonable balance between protection and counter-offense to eliminate any threat to the king.

Meaning it was absolutely impossible for a Martial Apprentice to complete the mission. Frankly, Rui didn't think even back when he was a Martial Apprentice could succeed in attacking and killing the king in a direct head-on attempt. If he was still a Martial Apprentice, he most likely would not be able to crack the sheer amount of defense and counter-offense that the king possessed.

('This would be much harder than when I was ganged up on by the anti-me teams that the three super-nations had put together in the Serevian Dungeon.') Rui mused.

Back then, he had been attacked by ten Martial Apprentices, and he had won using the chaos of the war. He had also spent a huge amount of time just trying to survive, whereas this time he would need to actively break through and directly overwhelm twelve powerful Martial Apprentices.

Of course, it wasn't impossible, but it didn't particularly matter.

('Because I'm no longer a Martial Apprentice, I'm a Martial Squire.') Rui smiled.

Martial Apprentices were simply not a threat to him unless he was beset by many dozens of the strongest Martial Apprentices with perfect coordination and teamwork and well-balanced Martial Art.

He quickly brushed up on all the other details that he needed to know, adding all of them to his Mind Palace. There wasn't anything left to do, the mission was supposed to be commenced immediately, and the clientele had requested a meeting with him prior to the commencement of the mission.

He quickly headed down to the utility department of the Martial Union. This was the place where Martial Artists purchased the necessary gear and equipment needed for their missions. Rui had grown accustomed to purchasing stocks of the standard regular necessities.

"One Skydrop healing potion and four Sunspark rejuvenation potions please," Rui told one of the attending staff of one of the potion stores.

Unlike the Martial Art library, this department wasn't filled with products that were developed and owned by the Martial Union and Martial Artists. The Martial Union was not involved in the industries and sectors surrounding the gear and equipment that Martial Artists generally used. After all, almost all of them had no exclusive connection with Martial Art.

Anyone could use a potion, anyone could use a compass, a monocular, rope, etc. In fact, a vast majority of the consumer market for these items were not Martial Artists, which were only a small portion of the consumer market.

Thus, the Martial Artists purchased the things they needed, as recommended and mandated by the Martial Union from other private and public manufacturers.

The Martial Union allowed the largest and the most popular companies and brands to set up a branch outlet inside the utility department of each Martial Union branch., allowing Martial Artists to be able to purchase the equipage they needed for their mission out of reach of prying eyes that could use the potentially sensitive information maliciously.

Rui even wore his mask for good measure when procuring cheap but useful potions from a popular brand.

And soon enough, it was time to be dispatched. Rui filled up some of the registration and checkout paperwork before setting out in the direction of the Kingdom of Dermile.

The Dermile Kingdom was three hundred kilometers northwest of the Kandrian Empire. It was a great distance for ordinary humans, a significant distance for Martial Apprentices.

But for a Martial Squire like himself, it wasn't more than a warmup.

Fortunately, the border of the Kandrian Empire through the shortest route to the Kingdom of Dermile was also quite close.

He immediately took to the air, escalating as he stepped higher and higher, basking in the euphoric sensation that sky walking gave him. The only disadvantage of sky walking was that it was slower than walking on solid land, far slower. He could not travel massive distances in a very short amount of time like he did when he was on the ground.

Still, considering the fact that the Kandrian Empire was too populated to run too fast without committing mass murder and that he really enjoyed sky walking, he didn't mind the delay. King Fujilin was certainly going nowhere, not until Rui killed him himself.

It was only after he passed the transit port, wisely not sky-walking past the border to run into the Kandrian Border Patrol Force, that he landed on hard ground.

BOOM!

The very atmosphere recoiled as a sonic boom rippled past it. He sped at such a rapid speed that the ground, along with the sound barrier, broke with every step.

A little under fifteen minutes.

That's how long it took him to reach the Kingdom of Dermile.

He saw the paltry fence that ran along the perimeter of the Kingdom of Dermile. It was a pitiful and sorry excuse for border security, even a child could infiltrate the country. He simply walked past it, not even bothering to avoid breaking it as he simply trampled it under his feet.

If the Kingdom itself didn't give a fuck, which should he?

He quickly infiltrated and put on his mind mask, reducing his presence to that of an ordinary seventeen-year-old boy. Before traveling to the location where the clientele had requested a meeting at. Although the request had come from the official client, Rui had no doubt that he would be meeting his true client in this meeting.

## Chapter 495: Ignorant

As Rui had expected the location of the meeting was not the personal residence of the finance minister. He looked around when he arrived, noting how remote the location was. There was not a single soul anywhere within his senses to be able to pry on their meeting.

('No one except...')

He turned to his right. Seismic Mapping had picked up a rather large horse-pulled carriage traveling in his direction. As it got closer, Primordial Instinct picked up the presence of Martial Apprentices within the carriage.

Rui walked over towards it as the door opened and a man walked out.

He was the official client, the butler of finance minister Riunge Hurut. He walked towards Rui cautiously as he sized him up.

"Mister Frindul Sentar." Rui addressed him. "I am the Martial Squire who accepted your commission. What is it you wish to discuss with me in this meeting?"

"Please provide me with the verification code for the mission." The man cautiously asked.

Since Martial Artists did not directly accept commissions face-to-face with the client and immediately commence the mission then and there, there was a necessity to verify that Martial Artists were the registered Martial Artists of certain missions that they had accepted. Thus, the Martial Union had a verification system where a random verification code would be supplied to both the client and the Martial Artist.

Rui simply pulled out a card and handed it over to the man, who carefully studied it for some time before nodding. "The Madame is awaiting you inside."

He escorted Rui to the carriage gesturing to him inside the carriage. Within the spacious cabin of the carriage were two Martial Apprentices who stared holes into as he walked in, taking his seat opposite to the three figures inside.

"Pleasure to meet you, Squire Falken." She told him, initiating the conversation.

In order to protect the identity of all Martial Artists, they had the option of choosing an alias to be conveyed as the identity of the Martial Artist accepting a particular Martial commission. Of course, this

only applied to public Martial commissions, the ones that were placed in the mission libraries. It did not apply to personal Martial commissions from clients who knew his identity and wanted to commission him because of his identity.

"Pleasure to meet you, Minister Riunge," Rui told her as he studied her. She was quite beautiful, but her sharp and fierce dark eyes drew away any attention from her aesthetics. She was intimidating, and Rui felt that it was best to not earn her ire if possible. "You wanted to speak to me?"

"Yes." She nodded. "There are very few things I wanted to clarify."

Rui simply waited for her to continue.

"It pertains to the means by which you will complete the mission." She paused, before continuing. "I wish to confirm the means by which you will go about it."

"It's rather simple," Rui told her. "I will simply straightforwardly infiltrate, either through land or through the sky, and kill the target and those who stand between me and him."

She had a remarkable poker face, but Rui could sense surprise, confusion, and skepticism with the help of Primordial Instinct. Her two companions were much less subtle about it.

"Hmph." The one on the right snorted.

"You plan to straightforwardly attack?" The one on the left questioned him with a raised eyebrow. "Did the Kandrian Martial Union not provide you with information on the security measures surrounding King Fujilin Verine?"

It was Rui's turn to feel confused. Were they trying to insult him? Or were they really ignorant of how much stronger a Martial Squire was than a Martial Apprentice?

('Oh wait... They actually might be that ignorant.') Rui realized. Unlike the Commonwealth Duchy of Vinfrana, the Kingdom of Dermile did not ever have any history of ever having birthed a Martial Squire.



The Commonwealth Duchy of Vinfrana had retained extensive documentation on the capabilities of Martial Squires, but even that was missing here.

Of course, they knew Martial Squires were stronger, but they did not entirely understand just how ridiculously superior Martial Squires were to Martial Apprentices.

('Wow... Fucking country bumpkins.') He stifled a chuckle, feeling a little bad for finding their ignorance a little funny.

"The twelve Royal guards that are always within immediate reach are extremely wrong." She told him with a neutral-enough tone, maintaining a cordial atmosphere.

"I'm a Martial Squire." He simply said. "I'm quite strong."

This further irritated her aids. They seemed personally invested in this operation, rather than employed Martial Artist bodyguards. They were also clearly envious of his status as a Martial Squire and felt insulted when he treated Martial Apprentices as insignificant.

"If you infiltrate straightforwardly you will have to deal with the palace guards who are also quite elite, all by yourself." She told him. "You might want to consider another course of option. I have some sugges-"

"With all due respect, minister." Rui cut her off, losing patience. "I don't tell you how to manage the national treasury of your nation, I would appreciate it if you didn't tell me how to do my job."

Her eyes narrowed but the two Martial Apprentices lost control and stepped up.

"What did you say punk?"

"Apologize to her excellency for your rudeness."

Suddenly they choked as the atmosphere grew perilously taut. A maelstrom of mind-bending pressure erupted from Rui as he ripped off his Mind Mask. The full might of the fear he generated in all those of a lower Realm crashed into them.

A terrified expression appeared on minister Riunge's face as her poker face disappeared. The carriage rocked as the horses panicked.

The very next moment, the pressure disappeared.

The two Martial Apprentices collapsed to the ground, sweating bullets as they realized that the Martial Artist before them could extinguish their lives with a wave of his hand.

To her credit, minister Rinuge regained her composure quite quickly, even quicker than the Martial Apprentices. The very next second, her poker face had already taken its rightful place as her expression while the Martial Apprentices tried to pull themselves together.

#### Chapter 496: Accelerate

She had regained her composure rapidly, earlier than her Martial Apprentice aids. Her fortitude earned Rui's respect, she was quite impressive for regaining her calm.

"My apologies," She told him.

While she did not possess the sensitivity to understand exactly what the pressure Rui exerted on her meant about his power, she could make indirect inferences about how strong he was by looking at the state that her subordinates were in.

Her subordinates were not weak or ordinary Martial Apprentices by any means. The fact that they had such exaggerated reactions to his aura meant that he was likely more than just heads and shoulders above them. That put her at ease that he was indeed qualified to complete the mission.

"No worries," Rui replied. "Is that all you wished to talk to me about?"

"I wanted to make a request," She told him. "I want you to kill him publicly."

Rui raised an eyebrow under his mask. It was an odd request since most assassination commissions were requested to be done covertly normally, rather than publicly. But Rui now understood the reason why this mission wasn't in the shadow class section. All shadow class missions needed to be covert in nature, and any mission that didn't fulfill this condition, no matter what, was immediately excluded.

Thus, she had likely specified that she did not want a covert mission where the death would be silent and swift. As for why she wanted a public death, Rui could think of several reasons, but it didn't matter.

"...That can be done." Rui straightforwardly said. "How public do you want his death to be?"

"As public as possible." She told him.

"Hm... Alright." Rui eventually agreed. "Is there anything else?"

"No, that will be all." She told him. "When do you plan to complete the commission?"

"Well, my plan was to begin immediately," Rui told her. "But your condition complicates it a little bit, but I intend to end it at the soonest no matter what."

She nodded. "Understood. If you need any help of any sort, please let me know and I will do my best to aid you."

Rui nodded. "Is there anything else you wanted to discuss?"

"No, that was everything I wanted to cover." She told him.

"Alright then, I'll take my leave." Rui got up. "Goodbye."

He left after having exchanged farewells with her.

"What do you think Surn, Azazel?" She asked the two of her subordinates once he had left.

"He is... very strong," Surn admitted. "This is my first time seeing a Martial Squire's aura, and they are much stronger than I had ever expected."

"I agree..." Azazel sighed. "Had I known he was that much stronger than us, I would not have been nearly as cocky as I was with him."

"Hm..." She nodded. "What do you think are the odds that he will smoothly complete the assassination?"

She was worried about what would happen if there was a failure. If Rui failed, then she would no longer have any chance of doing it again. The king would take extreme measures to protect himself, and the cost of killing him would rise drastically.

This would be especially rough because the Kingdom of Dermile was poor, hiring Martial Squires from the Kandrian Martial Union, that too with international taxes, was not cheap. Services tended to be exponentially more expensive in richer countries compared to poorer countries, the commission fee for even a low-grade Martial Squire was absurdly expensive by the standards of the Kingdom of Dermile.

This was why she was incredibly paranoid about whether Rui was qualified to handle the mission, and whether the seemingly hazardous strategy of just running inside and killing him was going to work or not. But after experiencing the momentary horrific fear that Rui generated in her and her subordinates, she realized that the Martial Union wasn't messing around when it said it guaranteed that Martial Artists who happened to accept commissions were not unqualified.

"Well, let's wait and hope." She said. "The preparations for both success and failure have already been established."

"How long will it take him to actually complete the mission?" Azazel wondered.

"Well, I assume that he has to gain a good understanding of the king's schedule and find a good time for when the king is exposed to enough eyes and ears that his death cannot be concealed." Surn voiced a reasonable inference.

"Indeed." She nodded. "Which means he should likely take at least a day."

They spent a lot of time trying to figure out how he would go about it as they traveled back to her mansion.

It also depended on how much information he had been provided by the Martial Union. They were aware that the Kandrian Martial Union provided Martial Artists with intelligence. Perhaps he didn't need to spend too much time engaging in reconnaissance.

Just as she was absorbed in her thoughts, she received a message on her communicator. Her heart skipped a beat as she read the message with a shocked expression.

"The king is dead!" She exclaimed. "He was murdered!"

One of her informants had sent her a message regarding credible information he had just heard come across.

"What?!" Surn and Azazel simultaneously exclaimed.

She wondered whether Rui botched it up by killing regardless of the circumstances.

What were the odds that the king was in the public eye the very moment Squire Falken reached him? Very low, to say the very least.

She grew worried that the king's death would be hidden. It was not enough to remove him, he needed to die in specific circumstances, otherwise, it could be covered up and the rest of her plans would be put on halt due to that.

('How did Squire Falken even get there this quickly??') She wondered, gritting her teeth. ('Are Martial Squires that absurd?')

"New destination!" She snapped at the coachman. "We're heading to the Royal palace!"

The carriage accelerated as it corrected its course, heading towards the new destination.

Chapter 497: Proactive

Rui immediately took off once he had exited the carriage.

('Alrighty, how do I deal with this?') He wondered.

The very first thought he had was engaging in recon to figure out what part of his daily schedule had the highest exposure to the public eye whenever Rui killed him.

It was then that he realized something.

('What if I just kidnap him and drag him into the public eye?') Rui wondered.

The condition he had been given to fulfill was the assassination of King Fujilin with as much exposure as possible. Wasn't it better to drag him out into the public eye and then kill him rather than wait for him to go into the public eye naturally?

Who knew how long it would take before the man would step out of his castle and actually make his way into a place with enough exposure?

Rui didn't want to waste all that time doing nothing. Ideally, he would have liked to complete the mission as early as possible.

('Will she get mad if I drag the king out to a busy area and kill him there?') He wondered before a mischievous grin cracked on his face. ('Even if she gets mad, what she can do?')

Her request was unofficial and something Rui was willing to humor because it wasn't that big a deal. Meaning, she couldn't complain to the Martial Union about the way Rui went about it. He technically will not have violated the contract and will have fulfilled the mission as quickly as possible, which was a performance parameter that the Martial Union cared about, and one that went into the rating evaluation of a Martial Artist. This was another reason to go all out and kill him quickly, he wanted to upgrade to a higher grade as soon as possible.

('Well, she should have been careful what she wished for.') He sped through the Kingdom of Dermile, arriving at a bustling and surprisingly urban town.

The town of Bulgare was a rather posh town that was occupied by the rich of the Empire, by the looks of it. It was also not too far from the Royal Palace. He nodded as he walked around, looking for a good spot, it took him a while to spot what he was looking for.

('Perfect.')

He stopped as he happened upon the town center, where a large podium in the middle of a bustling area was present. Anybody that died atop that in front of the crowd could not possibly have their death exposed to a greater degree.

('Alrighty.') He turned in the direction that the Royal Palace was in, geographically, before immediately heading towards it. It only took him a minute to arrive at his speed.

Thanks to the information provided to him by the Martial Union, he knew the structure of the Royal Palace and the location of the king's personal chambers. All he had to do was verify that the king was there, and he could immediately swoop in and pluck him out and run with him to the town of Bulgare and off him on the podium.

He sneaked up as close as he could before extending his Seismic Mapping as far as he could. Its range had risen significantly compared to before he had the Mindmirror brain and before he obtained his Martial body.

('Hm...') He discerned through all the seismic radiation that he picked up on forming a decently crisp view of the Royal Palace. ('There are multiple presences in the king's personal chambers.')

According to the intelligence that the Martial Union had provided, the king's chambers were off-limits unless one had the king's authorization. Which meant that the people in there were almost certainly the king and others that had been authorized to be in his personal chambers. The Martial Apprentices, and the servants perhaps?

Primordial Instinct did pick up the presence of Martial Apprentices near the same location.

('Good enough.') Rui shrugged.

He crouched, as his legs tensed up, the very air quaked as his muscles built up power. His eyes narrowed as he estimated the distance, angle, and force for his launch.

BOOM!

He launched himself like a bullet as he crossed a great distance with a single leap.

BOOM!

He landed right in front of the entrance, shaking the ground and the entire palace with the sheer impact.

The Martial Apprentices guarding the doors took a moment to overcome their shock as they charged at him. Yet he simply ignored it as time slowed down from his perspective. He activated Wind Breathing as he hurried past them, still moving in slow motion to him, heading towards the king's personal chambers.

He ran into several Martial Apprentices, but he simply ran past them like they were crash test dummies.

POW POW POW!



Several Apprentice-level attacks landed on his body as he reached the king's personal chambers.

('Oh? Not bad.') He nodded. The Royal Guards certainly appeared to be the best of the best of those Martial Apprentices assigned to the castle.

Yet he didn't care to kill Martial Apprentices that he didn't need to. He simply blitzed past them inside, where he found the target he was looking for.

The defensive Royal guards were already in position, forming a defensive boundary around the target of their protection. Within their circle of protection was a nude, obese man surrounded by several nude women, cowering in fear at the sudden thunderous quakes.

Rui sighed. He fit the stereotype of a lecherous greedy ruler so well that it was almost funny. Rui simply brushed aside the meager defensive attempts that the Martial Apprentices attempted before grabbing the king and his garments and simply leaving.

The Martial Apprentices sounded the alarm for the kidnapping of the king, but it was far too late. Rui had long left the palace by then as he literally ran with the king above his head to the podium in the town of Bulgare, reaching there rather quickly.

THUD!

He dropped the man atop the podium as the two of them began drawing attention from the crowd.

Chapter 498: Next

The death of King Fujilin was a shock to the entire nation, yet a pleasant one. Rui was actually quite shocked at the positive reception he received from completing his mission.

('He must have been a real scumbag.') He mused.

He escaped wondering if he would get an angry message from Minister Riunge, before shrugging. What was done was done, there's nothing about it that could be changed. He simply hit mission completed button on his mission tracker before bolting out of the nation at top speed.

Of course, it wasn't as though he was particularly in trouble. The Kingdom of Dermile did not possess Martial Squires, so even if he was caught, there wasn't anything they could do about it.

He simply crossed the border and ran back to the Kandrian Empire.

"This has got to be my shortest mission so far." Rui thought out loud.

Travelling between the Kandrian Empire and the Kingdom of Dermile was rather trivial, trivially quick. The mission itself was wrapped up in around an hour.

"A little under two hours." Rui affirmed. "It's honestly not even worth going back home, might as well grind another mission."

He usually took a small break with his family in between missions, but it hadn't even been a quarter of a day since he last spoke with them.

He underwent the border transit process once he reached the Kandrian Empire, before entering and heading towards the Mantian Region and the town of Hajin.

The Kandrian Empire covered an area of thousands of several millions of square kilometers, it actually took him longer to travel through the country than it took him to travel to destinations in the geographical orbit for whenever he had foreign missions.

Once he arrived, he immediately headed right back to the mission library, pondering what class of missions he should pick this time. The default was offense-class, but it wasn't the only class that had a high propensity for conflict.

He glanced at the hunter class section.

It had been quite a while since he picked a hunter class mission. There was a degree of simplicity that came from tackling missions surrounding beasts. Of course, that didn't mean hunter class missions were particularly easy, they simply required a different skillset and mindset.

Offense class missions dealt with humans. Humans who were intelligent, relatively speaking, compared to most of the animal kingdom and thus needed to be tackled differently. While there were animals who possessed intelligence on par or perhaps even greater than that of normal humans, they were far scarcer.

This didn't necessarily make animals easier targets, because most hunting class missions operated in the wild and the natural environment. An environment that humans were quite unaccustomed to, compared to normal human civilization where most offense-class missions took place.

Understanding the best way to operate in these environments when dealing with beasts that were in their home court was an art in and of itself and one that took many years of experience to master. They were a challenge that was entirely different from that of the offense-class missions.

Rui shrugged. ('Why not?')

He was an all-rounder, limiting himself to offense-class missions may not be conducive to maintaining even proficiency across the board.

('Besides, I have a technique that's useful in this class of missions.') Rui mused.

The Fauna Flow technique was a technique that allowed him to engage in non-verbal communication with animals. Thus far, he hadn't yet used it to its greatest potential because he hadn't been in a position where he could employ the technique.

The only time he had used was when he communicated with a monkey like creature in the Serevian Dungeon. After that, he had immediately gone on to master a mental technique before undergoing the Squire evolution breakthrough process, Squire habilitation and the mastery of six more techniques. He obviously hadn't gotten to use the technique during this time period.

He nodded, having made up his mind.

He took his time scrolling through the several missions that the library had, noting how much lesser there were.

This wasn't particularly unique to hunter class missions, Squire-level missions were fewer than Apprentice-level missions simply because these missions were nearly an order of magnitude more expensive than Apprentice-level missions due to how much stronger Martial Squires were and how much more difficult Squire-level missions were. There were fewer Martial Squires than Martial Apprentices too, increasing the value of the supply of Martial Squires.

Rui saw some interesting missions in the library, taking his time to scour through all of them. His eyes ran into something interesting

[Hunter class mission: Capture mission]

Client: Ministry of Environment and Ecology

Grade: 3

Elimination target: A frost hypogriff

Target location: Cravitz Mountain [2.1, 3.45]

Remuneration: 10,000 Martial credits

Mission summary: The elimination target is an adult frost hypogriff. The target is a quasi-Squire-level threat that is verging on Squire-level, with a remarkable top speed, powerful beaks and limbs. It's a normally passive species of the hypogriff family that can engage in rampages that are destructive to the environment and life surrounding it when they experience emotional distress. The target of the mission has destabilized the ecosystem and has terrorized a large proportion of the fauna population into migrating away from their habitat, causing them to encroach on human settlements and towns. The mission is to capture the target and deliver it to the Ministry of Environment and Ecology with as little damage to the target as possible.

...]

"Interesting..." Rui's eyes lit up in interest. A capture mission instead of an elimination mission meant that Rui had to exercise a certain degree of finesse. He couldn't just mindlessly go all out against it, otherwise it would just die at his hand, since this particular creature was below the Squire-Realm. It made for a much more interesting mission since he needed to exercise control over his power.

"Alright." Rui nodded. "I'll take it. Sounds like a fun challenge."

He immediately plucked the mission bill out of the slot before heading to read more about it.

#### Chapter 499: Bait

He registered the mission to his name, before sitting down at a table by himself and reading through it, inputting them into his mind palace before analyzing them.

"Interesting..." Rui murmured as he sorted through all the information.

Mount Cravitz was a mountain at the very north of the Kandrian Empire, amidst the Faravali range. The temperatures dipped tremendously at those elevations, making it much more difficult to conduct missions. It wasn't as though the cold could kill him with his evolved body, but navigation and fighting were harder, and surveillance was harder as well.

Hippogriffs were winged creatures with the front half of an eagle and the back half of a horse. They were fast and powerful, nearly reaching the Squire Realm in those parameters, but their body was not particularly tough and their flesh was vulnerable to attacks in the Squire Realm. This meant that they could dish out more powerful than their body could necessarily withstand, which is why they generally weren't threats to Martial Squires, especially those of Rui's caliber

However, this also made it trickier to try and fight and capture aggressive rampaging hippogriffs with minimal harm. If he was not careful both he and the creature could get hurt.

Thankfully, he didn't need to immobilize and capture it with his bare hands, manually dragging the struggling creature back to the Ministry of Environment and Ecology was also implausible and difficult to do. The mission bill did have recommended tools and gear to rent or purchase that would aid in the capture of the hippogriff.

('Increasing the bill to even complete the mission.') He grumbled inwardly. Thankfully, the pay for the mission was solid and justified the extra expenditure he would need to make. He glanced at the list quickly memorizing their names

[Sedative: Tier 2 Refined Xhrenos Dew]

A potent tranquilizer that would subdue the creature. And an automatic syringe that would automatically inject the drug into the body of the hippogriff upon penetration.

Rui immediately got up before heading to the utility department, finding a drug store, and purchasing the necessary amount. It wasn't long before he had everything he needed. He had purchased several rejuvenation potions and food pills, consuming one of each to revitalize himself from his previous missions. While his previous mission wasn't particularly difficult, it did consume stamina to a certain degree.

"One last signature here, Squire Quarrier."

Rui nodded, obliging before wearing his mask and dispatching from the dispatch facility. He took to the air, rising to great heights and taking in the picturesque view.

WHOOSH

It wasn't long before he paddled his way forward at remarkable speeds. He wasn't nearly as fast as he was on land, but he was faster than his previous peak on land when he was a Martial Apprentice. It never ceased to amaze him just how much of a raw boost he had received ever since he discovered his Martial Body.

It took him a few hours to travel to the north of the Kandrian Empire. The weather and climate had changed dramatically, the temperatures plummeted, and the winds pushed harder and sharper. The air grew more opaque as time passed, hindering his vision.

THUD

He landed heavily on dense snow, gazing at the mountain before him.

"Here we are," Rui murmured. "Mount Cravitz."

He had already scanned the skies, hoping to catch a sight of the hippogriff flying around so that he wouldn't have to search for it, but alas, he wasn't nearly as lucky.

Hippogriffs only flew around when they were hunting. Unlike eagles, their bodies weren't entirely suited for sustained flight. The fact that the back half of their body was that of a horse, a land-bound animal, meant there was more of a limit to their flight capabilities. Their body was nowhere near as aerodynamic as that of a bird's, nowhere near as proportionally light either. Of course, as a Squire-level creature, flight was no issue. It was just that, by nature, it would spend most of its time on land.

He would most likely run into it whenever he chose to hunt. All he needed to was wait for it. Of course, he didn't intend to do anything. He had already chalked out the most effective and efficient means of finding the hippogriff.

He took to the air again, this time slowly escalating. He distanced himself from the mountain such that he was maximizing how much attention he drew to himself. Too close to the face of the mountain and only a small section would be able to spot him in their field of vision, too far and he would be too small and insignificant to draw any meaningful attention. He was intuitively adjusting himself to the contours of the mountain to ensure he was maximizing his noticeability.

That wasn't all he did, of course, he was also adjusting his presence. The 'aura' and 'pressure' that powerful beings emanated was something that existed in the eye of the beholder, rather than an actual phenomenon in physical reality. Powerful beings generated subconscious fear and a sense of danger from the subconscious evaluation of danger and risk that all creatures evolved with. The conscious mind simply perceived and interpreted this sense of fear and danger in the form of an 'aura'. It was an important element in the cognition creatures had of each other.

Rui was able to control this through the Mind Mask technique. He chose to reduce his aura and pressure to the peak of the Apprentice Realm. This was strong enough to draw even more attention as he triggered the sense of danger of the creatures inhabiting the environment of Mount Cravitz, while still being weak enough to appear as juicy prey to the target of his mission.

With this strategy, he could increase the probability of him running into the hippogriff better than any other plan he was able to come up with at the moment. He quickly set everything up just as it needed to be. He had laid the bait, now he needed to wait for the target to take it.

#### Chapter 500: Clash

It wasn't long before his plan came to fruition. Primordial Instinct rang alarm bells in his mind as he sensed danger approaching from below him at an astonishing speed.

WHOOSH

Rui evaded the creature narrowly as it zoomed past him at incredible speeds. It flew close to as fast as he was on the ground, meaning it was incredibly difficult to evade. He only managed to do so this time due to how far away it had approached him; from the ground.

The hippogriff opened its beaks, releasing a powerful eagle chirp. It locked eyes with Rui for a moment, as they stared at each other.

Rui could only see fury in its eyes, anger at having missed its prey.

[Why do you rage?] Rui asked it with Fauna Flow. He conveyed the question using a combination of body gestures, breathing, and growls. The hippogriff's eyes widened as it understood what he was trying to convey.

[FOOD] It chirped defiantly as it launched itself against him once more at a tremendous speed.

BAM!



It rammed into him with its full momentum, trying to haze him before finishing him off. Rui hadn't been able to avoid it in time because it was too fast and much more comfortable in the air than he was. He was fighting in its terrain. However, Rui had already predicted this would be the case.

He wasn't a moron. A creature with large wings was most certainly going to be more equipped in aerial combat than he was. He didn't intend to capture the beast midair amidst aerial combat. That was not his plan.

It turned once more facing him as it charged towards him with full force towards him again, this time, it raised its forelimbs towards him; its talons.

POW POW!

Rui smacked the two talons away with both arms as he evaded the attack. Eagles were generally ambush predators that swooped in, latched onto their prey, and pecked and tore apart at its prey until it was no longer moving before then feasting on it. He would be in for a world of hurt if he allowed it to reach that stage.

The hippogriff chirped before launching itself at him.

BAM!

It stumbled backward with a hint of surprise on its face.

Rui had negated the damage largely with the help of Adamant Reforging and Inner Divergence. He wasn't particularly concerned about the damage he suffered. In the past, he would have needed to take this into account. Damage could accrue fast, and he could be in trouble quicker than he realized.

Bruises could accumulate and he could suffer damage to a vital area, or his performance would decline too much leading to critical injuries that most certainly would threaten his life. There were all kinds of slippery slopes that could easily end up being very bad if he wasn't careful.

but this was no longer the case, thanks to his evolved healing. His enhanced healing factor healed lesser wounds quite quickly. Although he most certainly was no Wolverine, lesser and more superficial wounds effectively disappeared in a matter of minutes. Larger wounds couldn't be healed so easily, but his healing factor could do just enough to ensure that even major wounds wouldn't hinder his performance too much.

Thanks to this, his endurance had risen tremendously. He could withstand a lot.

But, he wasn't necessarily limited to simply enduring.

BAM!

He landed a blow on the hippogriff as it rammed into him. The creature chirped in pain as what appeared to be a grimace flashed across its face. Rui had not forgotten that this particular species was vulnerable as far as its durability went. Its muscles and bones were tough, but its flesh wasn't able to protect its inner vitals from damage very well.

This was especially true when Rui had mastered Reverberating Lance, which allowed him to permeate an impact deeper causing greater damage than he would have been able to with his raw power alone.

In fact, he needed to restrain himself. If he truly launched his most powerful attacks, the creature would probably end up hemorrhaging as a result of his attack. He wanted to avoid killing it at all costs.

He had briefly considered mortally wounding it and then feeding it a healing potion after drugging it, but that was too risky. The potions he had bought were meant for humans, he didn't know if they would work on the hippogriff. If they were incompatible or inadequate, then the creature would die. He couldn't possibly know how hard to hit it for this plan to work thus he avoided it.

BAM!

He landed another strike on the creature. He hadn't made up his mind on whether he ought to try administering the tranquilizer in aerial combat or on land. It was extremely difficult to do it midair when the creature was as mobile, fast, and agile as it was, and had as much of an advantage over him as it did. The three dimensions worth of maneuvering space made it difficult as well.

It wasn't just a matter of hitting the creature with the syringe, he needed to hit within certain locations and hold it there for a few seconds which made it difficult. He also needed to ensure it didn't break, which could happen given how fast the creature moved.

All of these considerations flew through his head, causing him to prefer to administer the drug on land than in the sky. He would need to wait until the creature was done with him.

Thankfully, it wasn't long before that happened. The hippogriff had come to realize that Rui was not something that could be taken down easily, if at all. Every time it clashed with him, it came away reeling in pain inside its body whereas he shrugged off everything it threw at him in the long run.

The creature chirped loudly before taking off back towards Mount Cravitz.

('Now, I can take the next step towards completing this mission.')