

## Martial Unity 581

Chapter 581: Approve

The hunting class of missions sounded just fine for the Pathfinder technique, but the shadow class of missions sounded even better.

('The problem is that these classes of missions have a higher barrier of entry than other classes of missions.') Rui noted.

For most other classes, having a few extra techniques of a certain kind was good enough to be more or less eligible to undertake missions of those classes. However, the same could not be said for the shadow class of missions. It was most divergent from standard combat, and thus, it wasn't as simple for Martial Artists to get into this field.

One needed a foundation in stealth, sensory capabilities, and assassination capabilities to enter this field.

('Thankfully, I should be just barely passable.') Rui noted.

While he didn't have stealth, he had the ability to disguise himself as a normal human being even to the senses of other Martial Artists. This gave him the ability to infiltrate places under the guise of being a normal human, it wasn't something an overwhelming majority of Martial Squires could do. Even people who had mastered the Mind Mask technique couldn't use it as well as Rui because their imaginations weren't as powerful as he was.

He had pretty good sensory abilities thanks to his three sensory techniques. Primordial instinct was mainly a combat-oriented sensory technique whereas the rest of his sensory techniques were broadly applicable and had a wider range.

As for assassination, he certainly did have the tool to do so with his newly developed Pathfinder. Furthermore, with how far he could assassinate targets, he didn't particularly need stealth capabilities. Stealth was more relevant when he needed to be in the vicinity of his target or within a surveilled area.

He went to the shadow class of missions, having chosen to take a mission from there.

('Come to think of it, this is the first time I'm taking a shadow class mission.') Rui mused.

It couldn't be helped; the high barrier of entry prevented him from entering this field when he was a Martial Apprentice. Furthermore, assassinations didn't guarantee having to engage in combat against Martial Artists of the same class, thus Rui, who had always been in pursuit of real combat experience, never felt driven to go for this particular class of missions.

He sauntered across as he skimmed through the many mission bills that were placed there, before running into something that caught his eye.

[Shadow class mission: Assassination mission.

Client: Fauche Viril

Target of assassination: Hergusen Meine

Target location: Republic of Menrea

Difficulty grade: 4

Remuneration: 7000 Martial credits.

Mission summary: The target is one of the directors of the board of directors that the client is the vice president of. The target is guarded by two low-grade bodyguard Martial Squires at all times, estimated to be adept sensors and defensive Martial Artists. The client has special conditions for the assassination.]

"Interesting," Rui murmured. "Two defensive Martial Squires with sensory capabilities is actually an excellent opportunity to try out Pathfinder in the field. Furthermore, it will help me gain some credibility as a Martial Artist entering the Shadow class of missions for the first time once I succeed."

Rui was not unaware that even if he was truly capable of some incredible feats, it was difficult to gain recognition for those feats right off the bat. Ultimately, the best proof of his ability to assassinate in the field was a good track record, and nothing could truly replace a good track record. He needed to start from scratch and build up a good reputation as he piled up achievement after achievement.

Only then would he truly be able to get his hands on missions and commissions that truly tested his limits that effectively no other Martial Squire could possibly complete?

('This is a good start.') Rui nodded.

He plucked the mission bill out of the slot as he headed over to the registration counter.

"Excuse me, I'd like to accept this mission please." Rui offered her the mission bill along with his Martial license.

"One moment please." The staff member took both of them before tapping on her terminal.

"I'm afraid the client has applied for a conditional-approval commission; he would like to meet with the Martial Artist who seeks to accept the commission before allowing them to accept it." The staff member smiled apologetically. "I'm afraid you can only accept this mission after the approval of the client."

Rui frowned. "That's a thing? I didn't know clients could do that."

"It costs an extra fee as it delays the rate of completion of missions, hence clients of missions in the Apprentice Realm generally don't apply for them, however, this is not an uncommon sight for many Squire-level missions." The staff member informed him.

"I see..."

Rui had only completed four Squire-level missions, he didn't have much experience with dealing with Squire-level missions. However, he could see how clients who were wealthy enough to afford Squire-level missions on a regular cared about the Martial Artist fulfilling their commissions that they did the fee needed to obtain that benefit.

"Alright then," Rui nodded. "I don't mind meeting with the client. How does this normally work?"

"The client applies and pays for a timeframe after a Martial Artist seeks to accept a commission before which they approve of the Martial Artist or reject them." The staff member explained. "The client of the mission you've applied for has set a time limit of twenty-four hours. They will most likely contact you privately, or they can also choose to immediately accept or reject you based on the information available in your alias profile."

"I see..." Rui murmured. "So I just have to sit doing nothing until the client chooses to accept or reject me?"

"That's correct, if the Martial Artist does choose to reject you, then half of the fee paid for the conditional-approval contract will be deposited in your account to compensate for the loss of time."

It seemed that the Martial Union did understand that Martial Artists didn't enjoy having their time wasted. Even if Rui wasted time only to be rejected, at the very least he would earn money doing so.

#### Chapter 582: Client

"And they'll contact me through my accouter, I presume?" Rui wondered.

"They can." The staff member nodded, "But they can also choose to communicate with you through other ways, such as arranging a personal meeting with you. It all depends on the client. It is recommended to get two separate accouters for your two separate profiles on the Martial Union database. On the other hand, you may also take the initiative to communicate with them as the client has chosen to divulge a means of contact through their comms. You will receive a verification code that can be used to verify your identity."

"I see..." Rui muttered. "Thank you."

He walked away as he considered the matter. The client, Fauche Virgil, had chosen to approve the Martial Artist who applied to accept the mission, in spite of the extra fee. That alone told Rui much.

('It seems like he has conditions for the Martial Artist who will be attempting to complete the mission.') Rui thought to himself. ('Conditions that the profiles and the information about the Martial Artist offered by the Martial Union aren't enough for him to know whether the Martial Artist actually fulfills those conditions.')

Rui was pretty certain that the public profiles offered a general understanding of the Martial Artist's capabilities without getting too specific. There were probably plenty of clients who wanted to get a much more precise understanding of the commissioned Martial Artist's capabilities personally.

('Or he could simply be the paranoid type in general.') Rui shrugged.

Rui wasn't sure which one it was, but there was definitely a high chance that it was one of the two.

Just as he walked out of the branch office, his accouter beeped.

[This is Fauche Viril. Be there at a restaurant called Grill Feast in the town of Vermeen within the next three hours.]

('Well, he seems rather blunt.') Rui mused as he closed off his accouter.

He knew the town that Fauche was talking about, albeit not the restaurant. Not that was a particularly problematic roadblock. The town was within the Mantian Region, so Rui didn't even need to travel very far.

Rui took to the air as he sky-walked towards the town of Vermeen as he donned his mask. All he needed to do was spot the path that led from Hajin to the town and follow it while in the air.

Although he was slower in the air than on the ground, it didn't take more than ten minutes to reach his destination. He found himself standing before the designated restaurant after having asked for directions from the locals.

The town of Vermeen was not a commercial hub like the town of Hajin was, it was a much more down-to-earth residential area of sorts. Rui found it strange that the man would choose this town instead of the town of Hajin.

It wasn't long before Rui spotted him, either. Fauche had consented to have his appearance disclosed to the Martial Artist that applied for his commission. The man was rather young for someone who occupied the position of vice president in a company that was large enough to have a board of directors. He had a certain degree of gravitas about him, well-groomed, and smoked a cigar, which was the tell-tale sign that a person was a gangster, or wanted to appear as a gangster.

He was accompanied by two Martial Apprentices, who stood behind him, alert.

"Fauche Viril?" Rui approached him, speaking in the international dialect. "I am Squire Falken, the Martial Artist who applied for your commission."

The man didn't respond, as he glanced Rui over, clearly trying to get an impression of him. Rui pulled a chair opposite to him, taking a seat. He couldn't be bothered by the man's antics.

"You wanted to arrange a meeting? Well, here I am." Rui told him.

The man puffed a cloud of smoke before leaning forward to Rui, opening his mouth to utter a single word with his gravelly voice. "Code."

"HJN91u287bh39." Rui replied, having memorized it on his way there.

The man nodded, before finally uttering more than a word. "So, Squire Falken..."

He paused, running his gaze across Rui once more. "I hear you've applied to accept my commission."

"Indeed," Rui replied.

"Why?"

Rui considered the question for a moment, he could just give some generic reply to that question, but he didn't particularly feel the need to obfuscate much.

"I wanted to test my capability, having grown stronger recently," Rui replied, refusing to be specific.

"Stronger how?"

"That's none of your business, I'm afraid."

"What if I choose to reject you because you refuse to answer my question?" Fauche asked with a hint of curiosity in his eyes.

"Your loss, not mine. You'll be paying me regardless." Rui shrugged. It was true, Rui didn't particularly need this mission. It was a nice opportunity to test the Pathfinder technique, but it was hardly the only opportunity for him to do so.

"Hm." The man chuckled lazily at Rui's words. "Here's the deal. I want you to kill the target at a particular time, as specified in the contract. You do that successfully, I'll give you a bonus, hm?"

He nodded upwards inquisitively at Rui, wanting to know his response.

"I don't mind." Rui shrugged. "Mind you, I only know some generic details about the commission contract. I have not obtained full access to it until after you approve my application to accept the commission."

"Hm." The man's expression grew a tad bit perplexed. "Did not know that."

He tossed his cigar out as he waved to the waiter. "Two whiskeys, please."

"Then you and I have a lot to talk about." The man said, turning back to Rui.

Rui didn't particularly have anything against that, it seemed the man wasn't particularly averse to accepting Rui's application. Rui wasn't even sure why he went out of his way to want to meet Rui prior to approving him. Given how strange he seemed, Rui chalked it up to personality issues.

"I don't drink," Rui replied simply.

Chapter 583: Sub-optimal

"They weren't for you." Fauche shrugged.

Rui didn't bother responding as he waited for the man to elaborate.

"This is specified in the contract, but I need you to kill the target Hergusen Meine at a specific time and place." Fauche elaborated. "Specifically, in the middle of a hearing with the Senate that is going to be held in..."

He pulled out a pocket watch, referring to the time. "In a little over seventy-two hours."

He turned back to Rui. "The Senate hearing is going to be held where it usually is, the Congress Capitol block in the capital of the Republic of Mernea; Rjavoi."

He pulled out a small map before opening it on the table.

It depicted the capitol block, which seemed about as large as a big city block, as well as the surrounding districts of the town of Rjavoi. On the map were several marks and symbols that corresponded to a map legend that explained what each of the symbols represented.

Some represented vehicles, others represented Martial Squires, some represented security stations, roadblocks, and a variety of other things.



"This is the planned layout according to protocols for Senate hearings." The man explained, before tracing a circle on the map with his finger. "This is the area beyond which authorized personnel are no longer allowed. So someone like yourself cannot get past this area through ordinary means."

He pointed at several locations on the map. "These are all stationed Martial Artists, all Martial Squires, of course. The Republic of Mernea does not possess more than low-grade Martial Squires."

"They're divided into two layers." He continued. "The outer layer is responsible for detecting and stopping the unauthorized entry of anyone or thing."

His finger shifted inwards, tracing a smaller circle. "This is the inner layer of security. They are tasked with protecting and ensuring no harm befalls the senators and other authorized witnesses."

"Here..." He tapped a specific point on the map "is where the target will be when you have to conduct the assassination."

"And when is that?" Rui asked him.

"When I give you the signal." He replied.

Rui wordlessly considered his response. He was gaining a bit of an understanding of why he wanted to meet all Martial Artists that wished to apply for the commission. This mission required active coordination with the client, it wasn't as straightforward as most missions when it came to the degree of cooperation needed between the client and the Martial Artist.

If Fauche wanted the assassination to occur at a particular point of his own choice, then he needed to that he had a good understanding with the commissioned Martial Artist.

"I read that you can disguise as a normal person, and that you have long-range capabilities." The man revealed. "The capitol block is six hundred meters wide, this makes it quite difficult to snipe the target with a long-range attack. The difficulty of achieving the necessary accuracy is high. Furthermore, the outer layer of Martial Squires will no doubt jump intercept the attack and prevent it from reaching the target. Therefore, I propose..."

He pulled out what seemed like an ID card. "Infiltration."

Rui stirred, considering the idea.

"I have prepared a slot for you to be an authorized staff member of the Capitol block in the senate building. This will allow you to bypass the outer layer and reach an area where you can take out the target of my commission, Herguson Meine." The man explained.

"The inner team of Martial Squires isn't going to be just sitting around, I'd imagine," Rui replied. "How do you propose I actually kill the target? The basic information I was given informed me that the target was protected by two defensive sensory Martial Artists."

"Good question." The man nodded. "I have prepared a distraction. An explosive at the edge of the Capitol block, it will go off three seconds after I give you the signal, that will give you the opportunity to kill the target, hm?"

"I see..." Rui replied, before asking. "Why do you want the target killed?"

The man's eyes narrowed. "That's not a very professional question in your line of work."

"I'm not very professional in this line of work, not yet," Rui replied calmly. "But I don't take commissions that I do not wish to execute. You don't have to reveal anything confidential, but I am curious about the core motivations of your commission."

"And what if I refuse?" His eyebrow rose.

"Then I might refuse."

"I'm the one who's in the position to refuse you."

"True, then I suppose I'll have to settle to make you refuse by making you refuse," Rui replied flatly, unperturbed.

The man stared at Rui, before snorting into a brief chuckle. He laid back, lighting up a new cigar before taking a puff.

"Ambition." He replied, exhaling smoke. "The target of assassination is a director in the board of directors of the company that I am vice-president in. However, my true target is the president of the same company."

"How does that work?" Rui asked curiously.

The man stared at Rui silently. "This falls under confidential information between you and me as mandated by the Kandrian Martial Union, I hope you're aware."

"I'm aware." Rui shrugged. "I don't care to violate that agreement."

"The assassination, especially with how I intend to time it, will be blamed on the president due to their well-known, hatred for each other and the sensitive nature of the senate hearing that conflicts with the interests of the president. He will be under immense heat, and it will allow me to discredit him enough to win over enough shareholders and stakeholders of the company that I can dethrone him and regain my position as president of the company."

"Regain?" Rui tilted his head.

"Yes, regain." The man nodded. "Regain it from the man who took it from me. That is the second motivation; revenge against him, for that and plenty of other things he has done to me."

"I see," Rui looked up, considering the matter. "Alright, I accept."

"Hm, then I sha-" "But your plan is sub-optimal. Leave everything to me, and I'll get him killed."

"What did you just say?" The man growled.

"I said..." Rui leaned in closer, "Your plan is sub-optimal. My specialty does not lie in infiltration. I can hide my identity as a Martial Squire very well, yes, but there's more to infiltration than that. I would effectively be no different from a normal human trying to infiltrate the Senate building of the Capitol block. The intelligence and security agencies or departments or whatever they are will instantly sniff out someone of my caliber. Furthermore, my unnatural features draw attention to me, so there will be eyes on me."

Rui sharply and aptly highlighted the problems with the plans that the man had laid out. He was sure that the man was somewhat aware of these considerations, he didn't come across as a fool. Yet the fact that he proposed such a plan meant that he had some reason to.

('He's likely constrained by resources and funds.') Rui mused. ('The Republic of Mernea doesn't have Martial Artist above the Squire Realm it seems.')

This wasn't particularly surprising considering how difficult the path to Martial Senior seemed. There were other clues that Rui had picked up to gain a clearer understanding of the limits of the security at hand.

('I'd learned that they were very low-grade Martial Squires protecting the target,') Rui thought to himself. ('The fact that low-grade Martial Squires are the best the nation can muster to protect the senators of the Republic is very telling...')

Rui speculated that the Republic of Mernea probably discovered or obtained the secret to the Squire Realm very recently, historically speaking.

('Definitely no more than five years ago, purely based on the grade of the Martial Squires at hand.') He mused.

Had it been more than ten years ago, then he highly doubted that the best they could muster would be low-grade Martial Squires, they would have at least developed some mid-grade Martial Squires in that timeframe.

Because of this, Rui considered a straightforward assault from the outside considering he was definitely much stronger than any individual Martial Squire. Though he ultimately tossed the idea away.

('If they have sensors, they will see me coming from a mile away.') He sighed.

He was confident in his strength, but there was a limit to the number of Martial Squires he could fight at once. He was not confident of taking on the entire outer team, winning, and killing the target before the target would undoubtedly have been swiftly evacuated by the security. He was not at the peak of the Squire Realm, to accomplish a feat like that.

The man considered Rui's words, stirring a bit before finally looking back at Rui. "You said you have a better plan?"

"Yes." Rui nodded. "It's simple. I snipe him from outside the Capitol block."

The man's expression darkened as his jaw grew tauter.

"That's a moronic plan." He huffed. "I already laid out why. There is no way you can possibly make that shot with the distance and the windy conditions that are common in the town of Rjavoi."

Rui smiled underneath his mask. "Trust me, I can make it."

"And why should I trust you?" He leaned forward. "When you, a grade-four Martial Squire who doesn't even specialize in long-range accuracy, make outlandish statements about your long-range accuracy?"

"I'll sign a conditional contract." Rui shrugged. "If I fail, I'll do you ten commissions for free."

The man's eyes widened, as he wordlessly stared at Rui.

Rui had already made certain inferences regarding the man's situation. Firstly, the commission was only about exploiting a ripe opportunity, it was not a desperate last resort of sorts, based on the information he had at hand. Furthermore, the consequences of Rui's failure probably weren't even that severe, Rui

speculated. Hell, a failed assassination was probably not that bad either as far as fulfilling the purpose of the commission, though the man probably had incentives to want the assassination to succeed. It clearly wasn't the case that the man's career or life was at stake with the nonchalance and the core motivations for the commission that he gave Rui.

Both of these meant that the costs of Rui's failure were not too high.

Thus, Rui simply had to give the man a payment, if he failed, which exceeded the costs of failure.

Based on the information regarding the wealth and Martial prowess of the Republic of Mernea, Rui was relatively certain that ten free commissions from a Martial Squire himself was a highly attractive deal.

"You're willing to sign that right now?" The man asked with a serious face as he put aside the cigar.

"Well, I don't trust your words, I'll sign it after I've obtained all the information from the Martial Union to verify that the information you just provided is accurate." Rui shrugged.

"But you will have accepted the mission by then." He growled. "How can I trust you'll sign the contract after?"

"I'll sign an agreement that if the information you provided is accurate then I'll sign the failure-conditional contract."

"And who decides whether the information I provided is accurate?" The man asked with a skeptical expression.

"The Martial Union, of course." Rui shrugged. "The Martial Union can judge whether the information you provided me here today, something we both agree upon, is accurate. There is nothing to be afraid of, the Martial Union works hard to maintain its fair position."

"Unless, of course..." Rui continued as his eyes met his gaze. "...the information you provided to me was inaccurate."

"Hmph. I did no such thing of the sort." The man snorted. "I'm going to hold you to your word. Let's chalk out all the information I've provided here before I have you sign a declaration promising what you promised me." The man stared at Rui with furrowed eyebrows. "I presume that sounds fine?"

"No problem on my end." Rui smiled.

The two of them quickly whipped out a statement that contained all the elements that they had agreed upon before Rui signed it.

#### Chapter 585: Accepted

Rui had long gotten the impression that the system of commissions worked differently now from when he was a Martial Apprentice. The role that the Martial Union took when he was a Martial Apprentice was much more significant than when he was a Martial Squire. The Martial Union was like a manager and a boss to Martial Apprentices when they undertook missions. However, when he was a Martial Squire, the Martial Union took a few steps back and instead shifted to the role of a somewhat distant moderator and a rule enforcer.

He had already felt this in the few Squire-level missions he undertook, but he could really feel it in this particular commission.

Conditional-approval contracts, personally negotiated failure penalties, and declarations that the Martial Union would enforce without having any hand in were much different than it was when he was a Martial Apprentice.

He had much more freedom and liberty in the arrangements he could have with his client. It was as though the martial Union was giving him more autonomy now that he was a bit more mature as a Martial Artist.

Of course, he didn't mind. It made his job much more enjoyable. But he also had to make important decisions.

Like the one he just made.

In all honesty, from an objective perspective, he knew that he was being risky and foolish. Not only was there a natural chance for failure from an objective perspective, but perhaps his own client may try to cause him to fail.

Of course, this was extremely difficult as the agreement meant that all the information he gave him prior needed to be true, or else it would violate the contract and Rui would not be prohibited from aggressing violence on Fauche.

However, Rui was quite confident that he would succeed. He also wanted to put himself in a situation where he was under pressure. The true test of his capability would not be under light circumstances, but under circumstances where there were stakes.

That is why he decided to take the risk, ultimately. Granted, he was more than smart enough to know that he probably wasn't being the most rational he could be.

"Alright, done." Fauche looked up at Rui as he put his comms device away. "I've officially accepted your application to accept my commission. I imagine you should already have access to the information you need."

Rui wordlessly took out his accouter as he accessed his account, finding a digital version of the mission bill.

He quickly read through it as he inputted the information into his Mind Palace.

To his relief, the information that Fauche had provided seemed accurate. The details regarding the locations of security specifically were on point. The broader details surrounding the event were also quite accurate.

In fact, the Martial Union provided him with even greater insight regarding the desired outcomes of the assassination. The director of the board of directors was answering to the Senate on the potential for treason in the form of facilitating espionage into classified military intelligence, that the company had access to and was capable of in its current state.



Caruntel Corp was a weapons developer that had been contracted by the military of the Republic of Mernea, according to the mission bill. Rui could gauge the objective of the assassination on a deeper level, though he wasn't if it would even work.

"You must really be convinced that the president will automatically be under a lot of suspicions just because this particular director happens to be assassinated," Rui murmured. "Because based on this, there's nothing strongly

"That's because you're highly ignorant on the matter," Fauche puffed some smoke. "When the director about to utter testimony in a senate, that will be detrimental to your publicly-stated stance on governmental intervention on the information that you as a president has, dies before he can finish the sentence, you will be the first person everyone will look at. Especially when the two of you have had a history of severe conflict of interest. That's enough."

"Hm." Rui didn't deign to bother replying to that. It wasn't particularly relevant to him and the mission, it was just a point of curiosity.

"Lots of sensory Martial Artists, I can see," Rui noted.

"Indeed." Fauche nodded. "That's why your plan is screwed. Don't say I didn't warn you. I did it twice."

"Mhm." Rui didn't bother to retort.

The probability that a nation with little to no Squire-level martial Art foundation had developed sensory techniques that would be able to develop a technique that allowed Martial Artists to sense potent sound bullets that were naturally invisible and difficult to perceive was very low.

Rui didn't think they would be able to perceive the activation of the technique, either. That was too difficult for a bunch of low-grade Martial Squires. Of course, Rui didn't care to inform this rationale to his client. He would just have to be content with watching a flash of shock on the man's face when Rui succeeded.

He would still take precautions around the matter, he would fire off a sonic bullet in the air in the same general direction as the shot he would take to test their reactions to it. It would tell him whether by some miracle it was somehow sensed, or whether he was right.

Now he needed to find a spot where he could perch himself before the Senate hearing so that he could take care of the technical stuff. That would require Rui to scout the areas around the Capitol block to find a good spot to take out the target of the mission.

He wanted the best altitude and the best cover he could get. While he could shoot under much less ideal circumstances, he did have much on stake, thus he wanted to make sure he wasn't missing a single thing. It was one thing to be confident enough to make raise the stakes, it was another to be careless and arrogant and end up goofing on the job.

#### Chapter 586: Arrival

"That will be two thousand Martial credits."

"You can debit it from my account," Rui replied as he picked up the product he just purchased.

[VXL-100 Monocular]

This was a rather high-quality monocular that Rui had purchased just in case he needed it. Although he was quite confident that he wouldn't, he still decided to err on the side of caution.

That wasn't the only thing he had chosen to purchase. He had also purchased several clothes that were native to the Republic of Menrea and part of their ethnic wear. Although he certainly would stand out, it was better than outright being detected as a Martial Artist of the Kandrian Empire.

He immediately headed down to the dispatch facility after changing into those clothes, finishing the pre-mission protocols before heading out.

His destination? The Republic of Menrea.

It had been only two hours since his conversation with Fauche Vigil had concluded. The Senate hearing was a little under three days away, he had plenty of time. Had it been an ordinary mission, he might have even deigned to leave later rather than waste precious time doing nothing.

However, this wasn't an ordinary mission.

This was his first Shadow-class mission. It was also the first mission where he would be testing the pathfinder technique in the field for the first time. Furthermore, he had staked a lot on the success of the mission. He couldn't help but feel just a tad little tingly inside.

('I'm going to have to be extra careful.') Rui noted.

There were several things on his agenda that he needed to complete before the time for the actual assassination came through. First, he needed to find an appropriate spot where he wouldn't be noticed, but from where he would also have a clear shot of the target of assassination.

Ideally, he would like to have a spot that has the same amount of elevation as the target, as differences in elevation increase the distance between him and the target and forced him to shoot at an angle. Not that he couldn't do the latter and still succeed, but he didn't want to take chances.

Thankfully, the senate hearing was actually at ground level, thus he didn't have to worry much about finding a good spot.

Once that was done, he needed to consider his escape route. He wasn't too concerned, the Martial Squires of the Republic of Menrea, according to the intelligence provided by the Martial Union was not a threat to him individually.

Not only was the evolution breakthrough process of the Republic of Menrea inferior to that of the Kandrian Empire, which was what Rui underwent, but their techniques were shit in comparison to that of the Kandrian Empire as well.

Furthermore, Rui was especially tough thanks to the new techniques he had developed and the VOID algorithm. He also had a symbiote empowering his cognition.

Although the impact it produced was no longer as significant as it was before as the Symbiote did not undergo as immense of an evolution as he did at all, and thus was only a grade-ten technique by Apprentice standards, it was still useful and gave him an edge over the Martial Squires of the Republic of Menrea.

Furthermore, Rui had also obtained a superior Martial body thanks to the Mind Switch technique. He could probably crush any individual martial Squire of the Republic of Menrea in a head-on fight. The issue was if he got surrounded by a large number of them. That would complicate issues significantly and he couldn't be truly confident that he would be able to escape in such circumstances.

Still, he wasn't too worried about this issue. He was most likely faster than almost all of the Martial Squires assigned to protect the target, and there would be a significant gap between them since he would be sniping his target from a long distance away and would begin running away the second he succeeded. There was surely no way that any of them would be able to catch him with him getting such a head start.

Even if one of them was that fast, Rui wasn't concerned with a single Martial Squire.

Another potential hindrance to the escape route would be law enforcement departments enforcing a shutdown of transit in and out of the country, and perhaps a strengthened border control, but that wasn't something Rui was too concerned about.

Although the Republic of Menrea was a small nation, its borders were still far too large to be thoroughly guarded, and even if Rui encountered a stationed garrison, they were unlikely to be able to stop him even if they contained a Martial Squire.

Still, he needed to scout a path first, just to be careful. He didn't want to take chances.

As he pondered these issues, he finally arrived.

As he had suspected, the border wasn't particularly secure. Though he had to admit, it was better than a lot of the other nations that he had been to. It was a rather tall fence that would make it difficult for a normal person to get in, though Martial Artists would surely have no problem.

And he didn't. He had already sensed that there were no people on the other side, so he peacefully jumped over before taking off his mask. He had covered his hair with common garb worn on the head in the Republic while wearing contacts to ensure that his abnormal features did not draw too much attention.

"Alright," He murmured. "Time to head to the site of the deed."

He didn't rush through the country at the speed of sound as he might have had he not been on a mission, but it was hard to control himself at those speeds, and he would draw far too much attention from everybody if he recklessly revealed his status as a Martial Squires that was clearly not from this nation.

He peacefully walked into the street of the nearest town, having already worn a solid Mind Mask that made his vibe feel diminutive.

#### Chapter 587: Considerations

It took him a while to reach the town of Rjavoi, he took the shortest route to the town that he could find in the maps of the entire country and the regions that he inputted into his mind palace. The first thing he did was head to the Capitol block which was located at the center of the town.

('Hm, they could also choose to lock down the town once the assassination happens.') Rui noted, before shaking his head. ('They can try, but I'll be long gone before they can.'))

He didn't think that the officials could lock down the town before he escaped, but it would take him escaping at top speeds on land.

Both means had their merits.

The only issue he hadn't resolved was whether he should prioritize speed or stealth while escaping. If he simply ran for the closest border at top speed, he would draw a lot of attention but he would make the quickest progress. There was very little chance that they could possibly obstruct him, the problem was that if they did succeed in obstructing him, then he could be in deep trouble.

A stealthy escape had its own merits as well. With the sheer distance between the Senate hearing and Rui, if he quietly mixed into the town, they would almost certainly never find him. Then he could quietly leave the country from another point and it would be over.

This method took longer, but it didn't have the risk of revealing his position and even his tentative appearance to the martial Squires who would no doubt notice him otherwise. That being said, spending more time in the country came with its own risks. Perhaps a clean speedy getaway was desirable, Rui didn't think the Martial Squires would be able to stay on his tail for very long. Thanks to the Mind Switch technique, he was fast, but he also had a ton of stamina. He also had the Phantom Step technique that allowed him to juke his trackers if they did manage to stay on his tail.

('What if I try a combination of both?') Rui wondered. ('I can get out of the immediate area when the assassination is complete at relatively high speeds, then choose the stealth option once I've gotten enough distance.

Another advantage he had was the element of surprise and uncertainty. It wasn't as though the Martial Squires would be released into pursuit the very instant the shot succeeded, they would be obligated to at the very least ensure the Senate was safe, and only after several seconds of chaos in doing that would a team of Martial Squires be dispatched.

Rui, on the other hand, would be dashing away the very second that he confirmed the assassination operation was a success.

Furthermore, their searches would be restricted since they wouldn't know that Rui would be sniping from tremendous distances away. Thus, their preconceived notions would prevent them from taking the apt measures that would be required for them to capture Rui. In fact, depending on how primitive their techniques were, they might even suspect that the culprit was within the Capitol block or just outside. Instead of a great distance away from it.

('Hm.') Rui nodded.

He pulled a comms device from his utility pouch. Fauche had given it to him before they parted ways, it would serve as the way for him to signal to Rui the timing of the assassination. He would have to be very conscious of both the target and the timing.

He put it back into his pocket as he began circling the Capitol block at a distance of nine hundred meters. Although there were windows, Rui didn't need them thanks to his sensory techniques and also the penetrative power of his attack. A measly wall was no different from wet paper before the might of a Martial Squire like himself.

('This works.') Rui paused as he looked around. He was in a residential area, with buildings that were each only one story tall, across the entire area.

Operating in an environment with great uniformity was a good idea, it made it more difficult for the trackers to estimate where the shot actually came from, as opposed to if he shot from the highest height in the area.

He got quietly jumped upon the flat roof of a wider house.

('This is ideal,') Rui nodded as he noted the short fencing at the border of the room that would ensure that nobody on the street would see him.

He only needed to make sure that the occupants of the house would not inadvertently walk onto the roof when he was occupying it.

('I can just lock it from the outside,')

He jumped on, lying flat on the ground, facing the Capitol block. He immediately activated the combination of Seismic Mapping and Tempestuous Feel. Together the two techniques synergized with each other, in a way, and allowed his senses to extend a great distance in the direction of Capitol block, occupying the Senate Hall.

He could sense the structure of the hall with remarkable precision and accuracy. When the Hearing would be held, the room would be filled with the many senators, the other dignitaries, and the target; Herguson Meine, a director on the board of directors of Caruntel Co.

('Alright, location of sniping; check.') Rui nodded, getting up. ('Exit strategy; check. I just need to make sure that I have several contingencies down for the possible measures they may take.')

The mission bill covered the protocols that would be undertaken in such a scenario, though they weren't as certain of the outcome as Rui would have liked, thus he decided to take extra measures in any case.

('Also... I have to observe the target and formulate a predictive model of him.') Rui noted.

It was much more difficult to form predictive models of people outside of combat, for there was more data to be taken in and the results weren't as reliable as combat predictive models. However, this was also another precaution Rui had decided to take.

#### Chapter 588: Fire

A little under three days passed.

Rui spent most of the time in the Republic of Menrea, fleshing out his contingencies as he spent his time observing the target Herguson Meine from a good distance away with the help of his two sensory techniques. He had identified the man's tics and other movements that could be used to predict his movements ahead of time.

All the preparations had been completed.

It was time.

There were only a few hours to go before the estimated time of assassination provided by Fauche.

"That'll do." Rui quickly locked the door to the roof of the house he had chosen to reside on.

He lay flat on the ground as he observed the Senate Hearing commencing.

The security measures were quite accurate to the information provided by the Martial union and by Fauche. Rui had committed all of them to memory.



The outer layer patrolled the Capitol block, scanning the area with their senses. The senses of a Martial Squire were sharp even if one did not learn sensory techniques. They could all be used to ensure that there were no unauthorized intruders within the Capitol block.

Rui could sense that, as informed, there were multiple security check-ins and verifications at multiple levels before access to the Senate Hall.

There were even Martial Squires sky-walking in the air to get a bird-eyed view of the area surrounding the Senate Hall.

('The measures are definitely strict,') Rui mused.

Unfortunately for them, none of those measures were going to be effective.

('Oh, it's starting.')

Rui peered with interest as all the senators and other dignitaries had taken their place and the chairperson had opened the hearing.

Unfortunately for him, the hearing was being conducted in the national language of the nation. Rui didn't really have any clue about what was going on. It was a shame because the commission had given him some interest in the contents of the hearing, to gain a deeper understanding of why Fauche chose to commission him.

Still, it was probably better that there was an avenue for him to grow distracted. He hadn't developed the assassination mindset that centered around absolute mental perseverance in the field, nor did he intend to.

Still, he managed to stay focused. Focused on the target, while conscious of the comms device that Fauche had given him.

Hours passed, and soon the fated time approached.

Rui's demeanor grew more severe and solemn as the estimated time for the assassination was nearly there. If not for the Mind Mask straining to control his mighty aura, the surrounding humans in the area

would have long collapsed unconscious. Civilians, who didn't receive training to resist mental pressure, did not have any way of not succumbing to it.

('Ok, he's getting up and walking to the speaker's platform.') Rui's eyes sharpened.

That was the cue for Rui to be ready to fire at any time. The assassination would occur during the address and opening statement of the target to the Senate. The whole point of the operation was to kill him at a time in his speech that would inevitably throw suspicion on the president. Rui had already informed Fauche that the shot would land only after nearly three seconds after the message was sent.

After all, sound could travel nine hundred meters in less than three seconds, but Rui also had to account for the execution of the ODA system and the time taken to physically launch the attack.

Of course, Rui had long finished the first phase of the ODA system for the speaker's podium, because he knew that that would be where the target for his platform would be standing. Thus, all of the calculations of the distance between them, the equations of propagation of the wave trajectory, and the launch conditions had long been well figured out.

The only part left was the second phase of the ODA system that tackled atmospheric conditions. He could not complete that part until after he got the signal. He had already begun paying deep attention to all the atmospheric conditions ready to input them into the protocols of the second phase of the ODA system any second.

BEEP BEEP BEEP

The comms device that Fauche had given him began beeping in his pocket.

The moment had arrived.

Rui's pupils dilated as time slowed down to nearly a halt, it was as though his consciousness had ascended to a higher dimension of time. His mind fired through the Mind Palace as remarkable amounts of information flushed through the calculations entailed by the ODA system.

An image formed in his mind.

This was the necessary trajectory that he needed to launch the Sonic Bullet. Rui's mouth widened as he shifted himself in order to fulfill the launch conditions needed for the fated trajectory.

THWOOM

A sonic boom rippled into the air as the sound bullet sprung forth as it shot forward at a remarkable speed. Even Rui could not really sense it once it left his vicinity. Only Primordial Instinct made him feel danger, albeit nothing specific.

His perception of time returned to normal, by Martial Squire standards, as the Sonic Bullet crossed the great distance between Rui and his target

BANG!

By the time the Martial Squires could overcome their shock at the sight of the wall breaking open to apparently nothing. The speedy projectile had already moved on.

SPLAT

The head of Herguson Meine blasted as a wave of blood, cerebral fluid, and human tissue splattered across the entire room, dousing everyone in gore.

The heightened shock in the room was almost physically tangible. The civilians in the room were frozen in horror in the moments after the hit. The Martial Squires, however, dashed in as their training kicked in. Both layers of security shielded the various dignitaries in the Senate Hall as they were swiftly evacuated.

The entire town erupted in chaos as the town was put in lockdown as the mayor of the town took the most extreme option to catch the culprit that dared to assassinate a dignitary in the Senate Hall!

## Chapter 589: Shock

Fauche Viril was having a good day.

He had found himself in the middle of a good deal, with only two possible outcomes, and both outcomes were just fine by him.

If Squire Falken ended up succeeding, then he would have successfully destabilized the loyalty of the shareholders and stakeholders towards the president significantly. It didn't matter if there was no proof, the timing of the attempt given the friction between the president and Herguson Meine would, at the very least, sprout significant doubts and distrust toward the president.

If Rui failed, then the situation would be less ideal, albeit more volatile since the director would still be alive and would also suspect the president above all else.

No one would dare suspect Fauche, one of the staunchest supporters of the director and a close friend of his.

Furthermore, if Rui failed, then Fauche would gain ten free commissions from Rui. That was not a small amount!

Although Fauche was wealthy, commissioning Martial Squires from the Kandrian Martial Union was not a light matter. There were taxes on any transactions and exchange of services that he had to pay to both the Kandrian Empire and the Kandrian Martial Union, on top of the actual commission fee for the mission.

Furthermore, the Kandrian currency was a heavyweight compared to the paltry currency of his nation. A single Kandrian copper coin was equivalent to a hundred and twenty-seven crolls! The latter could get you three meals a day in the Republic of Mernea.

Commissioning Rui had cost him over a dozen million crolls! Even for a multi-millionaire, within the Republic of Mernea, this was not a trivial sum.

That was why he found it hard to believe that Rui promised ten free commissions. He had gone through all the paperwork exceedingly thoroughly, trying to find a loophole that Rui was perhaps thinking of exploiting in order to get out of doing the ten free commissions that he promised, but he found nothing.

It seemed that Rui was actually serious and earnest.

A small part of Fauche prayed that Rui would fail. That's effectively how alluring the fortune Rui was offering was worth.

He didn't understand why the clearly young man made such a rash deal, but he chalked it up to youthful recklessness. He surmised that Rui was likely a young, but talented, Martial Artist who had recently broken through to the Squire Realm. It was rather clear that he had let his newborn power and status get to his head and inflate his ego.

Fauche was not intimately clear with the power of a Martial Squires, after all, the Republic of Mernea had only obtained the secret to the breakthrough less than ten years ago. However, he was relatively certain that Martial Squires were not capable of the feat that Rui claimed he would accomplish. In his perspective, it was possible that extremely high-grade long-range accuracy Martial Squire veterans would be able to accurately snipe targets from nearly a kilometer away, despite highly unfavorable atmospheric conditions. However, for a meager grade-four all-rounder Martial Squire to be capable of this feat?

('It's impossible.') Fauche shook his head lightly.

"Next, I call upon the chairman Herguson Meine to the speaker's podium." A senator invited him, to which Herguson deftly made his way to it.

Fauche moved his hand atop his pocket within which the button of the comms device, when pressed, would send the signal to Rui to assassinate Herguson. Rui had already informed him of the time delay, so Fauche had to judge the timing ahead of time.

He listened to the man's words carefully as he droned on with an official statement.

"Last but certainly not least, I would like to bring up the issue regarding the current president of Caruntel Company, Herguson Meine..."

Fauche had already pressed the button the moment the man began to utter the president's name.

"... poor judgment and igno-"

BANG

The wall blasted open.

The Martial Squires in the vicinity jerked back, startled. They began moving as per protocol once they saw that something had somehow managed to bypass their senses and break in.

Yet, it was too little too late. Even though they could reach the speed of sound themselves, that was at top speed, not when they were stationary.

Not that they even knew that an invisible projectile was moving at the speed of sound.

SPLAT

Herguson's head, which was still in the middle of making a passionate point against the president, blasted.

Gore violently sprayed across the hall, covering every single dignitary in the room.

"AAAAAAAHH!"

"OH MY GOD!"

"WHAT THE FUCK!"

At that moment, the sheer shock and panic that beset these highly important individuals caused their otherwise trained demeanor to crumble. These were people who were used to feeling personally safe due to the security measures in place to protect them. Exploding heads were not something that they were accustomed to.

The Martial Squires of both layers immediately formed a sort of physical barrier between the direction the shot came from and the dignitaries they were obligated to protect. Until their charges were safely evacuated, they could not afford to move.

Easier said than done, with the sheer chaos in the Hall. The only person who wasn't scrambling around or panicking was Fauche. His face was covered with shock, and blood, but mostly shock.

('He succeeded!') Fauche was frozen. ('Nearly a kilometer! Strong winds! Dozens of Martial Squires!')

He felt a deep surge of regret, in hindsight. He strongly wished that Rui failed, he would have gotten himself ten commissions out of this unfathomable Martial Squire!

('DAMMIT!') he cursed inside. ('Ten free commissions from him could give me a tremendous amount of power! Nothing could possibly get in my way had he failed!')

"SIR! GET DOWN!"

Fauche jerked back as a Martial Squire shouted at him in his face.

"I know you're in shock! But your life is at risk!"

The Martial Squire had a strong urge to shove the man to the ground, but he wasn't sure if he would be able to get away with it.

## Chapter 590: Value

The town of Rjavoï erupted in hysteria as word of an attack on the Senate Hall spread through the town. None of the citizens had managed to gather anything specific, but that alone was shocking enough. The mayor even went so far as to put the entire town on lockdown!

"Too little, too late." Rui shrugged as he crossed the border of the Republic of Mernea by the time any meaningful and coordinated investigative measures were taken once the dignitaries were secured. He had left the town of Mernea stealthily, before heading to a more remote region, he then shot off at top speed towards the shortest route without intersecting with any towns or other settlements.

While there were, no doubt, some people here and there who noticed a noisy blur in the distance, they were inconsequential.

Once he crossed the border and left it in the dust behind him, he finally loosened up a bit before indulging in his exhilaration of having succeeded.

"YES!" He jumped high into the sky. "That was perfect! Oh, how I wish I could have seen the look on Fauche's face when the assassination succeeded."

Unfortunately, that was impossible. Rui would have to be content with imagining it.

More importantly, the sheer satisfaction of actually employing the Pathfinder technique in the field and successfully completing missions in ways that would have been utterly impossible for him prior, was truly immense. He could be happy for days at how well it worked out. It was an addicting feeling, almost. Although he didn't face any combat against Martial Squires, he wasn't too dissatisfied, which was very strange for him.

"I wonder what the Martial Union is going to say to this," Rui laughed out loud as he tried imagining how shocked the Martial Union would be when they learned about what Rui had accomplished.

He was sure that their very first reaction would be skepticism. The Martial Union had, no doubt, seen its fair share of lies and exaggerations when it came to reports of Martial Squires regarding the events that occurred during missions. Although Rui had a pretty good track record of proving his unbelievable reports, such as the time he killed a Martial Squire as a Martial Apprentice.



He was sure that the Martial Union would not have believed that had he not brought the corpse of the Martial Squire with him.

The same could be said this time as well. He wouldn't be surprised if the martial Union took extra measures to verify the veracity of the report that he submitted.

After all, the Martial Union doubtlessly had an intelligence network based in the Republic of Menrea that would give them as much information as they could procure. In fact, given that the Martial Union already knew that an assassination attempt would be taking place at a given time and place, they probably had spies that were watching the Senate Hearing from any and all angles.

That should provide some degree of confirmation that his account was quite truthful. Furthermore, Fauche would also vouch for the veracity of Rui's report, if needed.

"The question is what they'll do after," Rui murmured.

It was possible that they would do nothing. Perhaps they would simply be impressed, but shrug and leave Rui alone. Rui's understanding of how the Martial Union worked was not intimate, he did not think he understood all the nuances of how the association treated such feats.

After all, they did not do anything even though he killed a Martial Squire.

"Oh, that's not true." Rui stroked his chin. "They did update the Martial Artist grading system."

He had heard over the years that that was done most likely in response to the shocking feat that he and his friends had managed to accomplish. Although he had help, the reports, especially those of his friends, made it clear that Rui was the core reason that they were not as hopelessly screwed as they ought to be.

"This time is a bit different than that time though," Rui frowned.

It was one thing for his Martial Art and Martial Path to be so potent that it allowed him to exploit an opportunity that allowed him to kill an inexperienced and unhabilitated Squire, it was another to have a singular technique that could allow him to surpass even specialists in their field.

The former was not something that could be easily obtained and replicated. A Martial Path was deeply personal and individualistic. It was impossible to universalize it completely, or even partially. At most, certain elements could be turned into universal techniques.

But a technique could be passed on much more easily than a Martial Path.

Rui would be truly surprised if the Martial Union did not take any measures to obtain the technique that Rui had created. As an organization that prioritized the interests of the Martial Artist group as a whole, collecting techniques that could be used by others was an extremely important part of the process.

Rui recalled hearing from a headmaster Aronian that roughly half of all Martial Art techniques that the Martial Union collected came from Martial Artists coming up with them. It would be rather irresponsible for them to ignore techniques like the one Rui had demonstrated in this battle.

"The question is what to do then." Rui scratched his head.

Frankly, he wasn't all that averse to sharing the technique with the Martial Union if he had an opportunity to. Unlike the VOID algorithm, the ODA system wasn't as fundamental to his Martial Path and Martial Art. He didn't feel the burning sense of possessiveness like he did with the VOID algorithm due to this reason.

As long as the Martial Union evaluated the value of the technique accurately and gave him fair compensation for his valuable contribution, he had no qualms about selling them the Pathfinder technique. He wasn't too concerned about a bunch of copycats arising from the Martial Squire population of the Martial Union. The conditions for using the technique successfully were anything but easy.