

Martial Unity 621

Chapter 621: Agreement

"Don't dismiss this measure too quickly, Squire Quarrier," Martial commissioner Derun told him calmly. "We intend to compensate you accordingly. The details can be negotiated, yet the Martial Union is willing to go above and beyond to make this measure worth it."

She extracted a document from her desk, handing it to Rui.

"This..." Rui's eyes widened when he read through it. "It seems that the Martial Union must truly value the techniques of the G'ak'arkan Tribe to get to go this far to get me to undertake this role."

"Indeed we are," She smiled. "Do not look down this opportunity, young man. The standard offense, shadow, and hunter-class missions that you normally undertake regularly are a dime a dozen and will forever be that way for as long as Martial Art exists. You will never run out of them, and they will always be available whenever you seek them. They are not special nor unique experiences that can meaningfully nourish your experience and worldview of the Martial World. While it is true that you are extremely attractive as a prospective diplomat to us, it is also true that this is an opportunity that you will probably never ever receive again for the rest of your extended lifespan."

This was a much harder rationale to refuse for Rui. It was true that the monotony of the standard mission could get too boring for him, and it did not hurt to go for a change of pace every now and then. Furthermore, his love for Martial Art inevitably fueled a deep curiosity about the Martial tribes of Vilun Island. New experiences that diverged immensely from anything he had ever experienced ever before could greatly fuel his imagination and serve as fuel for new inspiration.

This new inspiration could potentially serve as fuel for new techniques. Individuality was not easy to generate, in order to exercise his imagination to come up with something new and original, he would do himself well by expanding his worldview on what is possible. It could potentially serve as a rather solid boost to his individuality in the meantime.

This alone was worth undertaking the mission as a diplomat. The exaggerated remuneration that the Martial Union was willing to give him in exchange for taking this measure was simply the cherry on top.

"...Alright," Rui sighed. "I accept the mission and the preparation it entails."

"Brilliant," She smiled. "That is quite relieving to hear."

"What I'm unclear about is the degree of preparation that will be necessary for me to serve as an adequate diplomat," Rui pointed out. "I'm also unclear on the negotiation capital that the Martial Union is willing to concede for this diplomatic endeavor."

"You will undergo basic training on the fundamentals of diplomacy, the Kandrian Empire, and the Martial Union. You should be competent enough to be able to quell any queries that the G'ak'arkan Tribe may pose to you if the negotiations go well. You will also receive instruction on the specifics and the limits of the diplomatic capital that the Martial Union has set aside for the endeavor." She explained. "Furthermore, you will need to thoroughly familiarize yourself with everything related to our diplomatic targets, directly or indirectly. That includes the known history, geography, and topography of Vilun island, its cultural profile as well as the details surrounding its demographics. Ultimately, you will be familiarized with their interests and issues intimately. This will allow you to know what they want, and what they don't, and you will be able to correspondingly navigate how to go about establishing a Martial Art trade by knowing what the Martial Union can and is willing to offer; Our negotiating capital."

Rui nodded.

He actually had a good understanding of the thought process of diplomats in a general and broad sense. Diplomats furthered the interests of the entity that they represented by accordingly persuading and negotiating with foreign parties to act or engage in a manner to further their own interests. In practice, this included trades and exchanges, offers and threats, and other transactions.

However, it was one thing to have a good qualitative understanding of the role of diplomats and how they fulfilled it, and another thing entirely to obtain the competencies required to do that successfully.

Of course, neither Rui nor commissioner Derun expected Rui to obtain the competencies on par with that of the actual professional diplomats of the Martial Union, not at all. That was an impossibility for the most part and would require many years of studying that Rui would not even consider doing even for the slightest millisecond. However, Rui was sure that he could reach a stage where he would at the very least abstain from making tremendous blunders like his predecessors did.

"All of these matters will be addressed once you sign the contract," Martial commissioner Derun told him. "We will specify all of the agreements we have made in the contract as clauses. In exchange for

serving as a diplomat to engage in a diplomatic endeavor to obtain the long-range techniques of the G'ak'arkan Tribe, you will be given extensive remuneration in return as shown earlier."

Rui nodded as a tiny smile broke onto his face.

A small little world isolated from that of the rest of human civilization. Martial philosophies that he had never encountered before and Martial Art techniques that he had never seen before. There wasn't a single element of this experience that wouldn't be entirely brand-new to Rui. He probably would have experienced such a culture shock since he was reborn into this new world!

Rui couldn't wait to get going with this mission immediately. He intended to give the training and tutelage his very absolute best so he could immediately head over to Vilun Island and convince the tribal folks to trade techniques. He wasn't sure how he was going to go about it, but he was very confident that he would figure out some plan that would make things proceed in a desirable manner.

Chapter 622: History

Once they came to an agreement, Martial commissioner Derun drafted a contract that specified the details of the mission before Rui signed it and once the stamp of the Martial Union hit the document, it became official.

"So, now what?" Rui asked as he relaxed back into his seat.

"I'll have the department of foreign affairs and the intelligence department set up a team and a training program to train, instruct and brief you on everything you need to know to accomplish the mission as well as possible," Commissioner Derun informed him. "Unfortunately, that takes some time. We cannot subject you to ordinary training programs that our diplomats have gone through, that would take too long. Not even you with your supreme cognition could complete it within a reasonable timeframe, as we've agreed. That means our internal training department will need to cooperate with the department of foreign affairs and the intelligence department to come up with a tailored training and briefing program just for you and this particular mission."

"I understand," Rui nodded. "Can I access the historical reports and records documenting all of our diplomatic endeavors with the G'ak'arkan Tribe?"

"That can be arranged," Commissioner Derun nodded. "Although that will be thoroughly covered in the briefing program arranged by us, it won't hurt for you to go through them if you wish to."

They conversed extensively, discussing the details before the conversation finally came to an end.

Rui had a lot to think about on his way home, there were so many things to think about that he felt like he could do so forever.

"This will probably be one of the most unique missions that I have undertaken thus far," Rui murmured to himself as he sky-walked home. "At the very least, it's probably the only Martial Art barring training partner missions where my combat prowess is entirely irrelevant."

The Martial commissioner was absolutely right when she said that this was a unique opportunity. Where else would Rui have the opportunity to serve as an ambassador for the Martial Union?

Rui had already rejected the invitation to become an internal member of the Martial Union rather than just an external associate. This meant that, unless very necessary like it was in this circumstance, he would not be assigned to handle truly sensitive matters of the Martial Union.

Rui was firmly against putting himself in a position where he had to undertake responsibility for matters and people other than himself, and perhaps his family. While he did not regret this decision, and had no intention of changing it in the short term, it was also true that he would generally not be given the juiciest and most important of missions to the Martial Union.

"That's fine by me," Rui shook his head.

Once he reached home, he locked himself in his room, opening up his account as he accessed his inbox. He had already received documents of the Martial Union's diplomatic history with that of Vilun island.

He opened them, browsing through their history.

[Naval exploratory team EW778 'Eagle's Flight' daily report

Date: Year three hundred and seventy-one, 53rd August

Title: Discovery of a new island.

....]

Rui raised an eyebrow as he read through the report that preceded all the other files in the digital document that the martial Union had sent him.

"To think she literally sent me the entirety of all documentation of the Vilun Island since the very initial discovery of the island thirty years ago," Rui smirked.

What surprised Rui more than anything was that they only happened to discover the island thirty years ago. This seemed to indicate that the exploration and mapping of the world by the human civilization on the Panama Continent was disproportionately lacking behind other aspects of its progression.

This was an interesting revelation, but not one Rui focused on too much.

Rui read through the report of the initial discovery of Vilun Island. The team reached the island and immediately debarked and began hastily scouring the island, after noting that there were no signs of civilization. This was as per protocols at the time, of course. The naval team was not supposed to make contact with inhabited land with clear signs of civilization such as the infrastructure of buildings, roads, ports, etc. They were supposed to merely record the location of the land before promptly returning to the Kandrian Empire.

However, this did not appear to be the case with Vilun Island. The island was covered in a lush, dense, and rich forest without any signs of human habitation. The naval exploratory team mistakenly assumed that the island was uninhabited and endeavored to explore the new island extensively.

They discovered valuable esoteric natural resources, yet the second they began aggressively extracting them, they received a shocking welcome from the Martial tribes of Vilun Island who retaliated after witnessing the outsiders harming their island.

The naval exploratory team suffered many casualties as they retreated and ran away from the island in a haste.

('Interesting,') Rui was faintly reminded of the story of Columbus with this tale. Of course, the outcome of that discovery was radically different. The fundamental difference between the opposite outcomes of the two discoveries was the balance of power.

The natives of Vilun Island were strong enough to drive away the naval exploratory team dispatched by the Kandrian Empire. However, the same could not be said for the natives of North America.

Ultimately, power was all that mattered.

Rui resumed reading through the files, gaining a broader understanding of the events that followed understand.

The naval exploratory team of the Kandrian Empire was part of a larger exploratory endeavor to map out the oceans while also seeking land and natural resources. The Martial Union partook in this endeavor by supplying the much-needed aquatic Martial Artists that at the time was a special niche in which the Kandrian Empire lacked enough of a foundation.

The discovery of a new isolated and small island filled with many Martial Artists was a much more interesting development to the Martial Union and the Kandrian Empire.

Chapter 623: Mystery

While the territory and esoteric natural resources of the island were of interest to the Kandrian government, the Martial Union had grown a lot more interested in the discovery of a primitive civilization entirely distant from the Panama Continent that also happened to develop Martial Art.

Rui also got access to confidential analytical reports of the Institute of Martial Anthropology regarding the Martial Artists of Vilun Island as well as the transcripts of the internal moderated caucuses of the Martial Union regarding the situation.

The fact that Vilun Island was many thousands of kilometers away from the Kandrian Martial Union made the plausibility of Martial Art existing independently on the island quite interesting. This was plausible.

After all, the breakthrough to the Apprentice Realm was entirely a natural phenomenon. It wasn't implausible that the Martial Tribes of the Vilun Island independently discovered the Apprentice Realm.

After all, these Martial Tribes lived a life of conflict. They engaged in a drastically disproportionate amount of physical conflict that far exceeded that of nearly any society on the Panama Continent. Furthermore, unlike that of human civilization on the Panama Continent, the Martial Tribes of Vilun Island did not develop excessive reliance on technology to augment their warfare.

This meant that all of the physical conflicts were conducted with their physical bodies. Rui was sure that this was, no doubt, the reason that the first Martial Apprentice of Vilun Island came to be. It was probably the case that the first Martial Apprentice of Vilun Island was a particularly skilled fighter who had dedicated themselves to increasing their combat prowess by training before finally discovering their Martial Path and becoming a Martial Artist.

The first several Martial Apprentices of the Martial Tribes of Vilun Island must have set a precedent and facilitated the coming generation of their tribes to develop the mindset, body, and approach to combat that was conducive to them discovering their Martial Paths.

Over time this process must have become significantly refined and an increasing number of Martial Apprentices would go onto blood from each generation.

The analytical report of the Institute of Martial Anthropology speculated that this hypothesis was the likeliest explanation when one only considered the breakthrough to the Apprentice Realm. However, this hypothesis became much less likely when one considered the fact that the Martial Tribes were discovered to have also discovered the breakthrough to the Squire Realm and also the Senior Realm!

This discovery made the then prevailing hypothesis that the Martial Tribes of Vilun Island became Martial Artists independently of the Martial Artists of the Panama Continent much less credible and likely.

This was because the breakthrough to the Squire Realm was an artificially constructed product of science and not a natural phenomenon.

The original evolution breakthrough that gave birth to the first Martial Squire was developed by a researcher. Although it was absolutely true that this breakthrough procedure was highly crude, unsophisticated, and primitive compared to the modern evolution breakthrough process that the Martial Union currently employed, it still was the origin of the Squire Realm.

The Martial Artists produced by that original process, while far weaker than that of modern Martial Squires, were still bonafide Martial Squires.

This was not something that could be accomplished without a technological foundation.

This was something that the Institute of Martial Anthropology found puzzling. But as an institute that extensively documented and studied the history of Martial Art and Martial Artists and their impact on society and civilization, they had managed to come up with an alternate hypothesis.

While it was true that Vilun Island was separated from the Panama Continent by thousands of kilometers, that was by modern standards. According to historical records as well as modern extrapolations of geography, climate, and the environment used to be like in the past, it was entirely possible that Vilun Island was connected to the main continent by land for a brief period in history during the birth of the Age of Martial Art due to elevated land and lower sea levels.

This meant that the Martial Art that currently existed on Vilun Island may very well be a strange mutation of a relic inherited from the Panama Continent.

Of course, this was just a hypothesis. There was no proof that this was actually the case. Ultimately, the history of the Martial Art of Vilun Island was nebulous and unclear to this day. Not even the diplomatic endeavors with Vilun Island had managed to shed light on this mystery.

Part of it is due to the failed diplomatic endeavors on setting up cooperative and mutually beneficial trade between them and the G'ak'arkan Tribe as well as the other tribes. Another part of it was certainly due to the fact that the natives themselves did not have sophisticated documentation and recording in their culture. What history and heritage they seemed to know about were vague legends that had been passed down by word.

If there had been any specific details surrounding the birth of Martial Art on Vilun Island, they had long been stripped, leaving uselessly ambiguous tales that did not clarify this puzzle.

Of course, it was not particularly important, all things considered.

At the end of the day, who particularly cared about how Martial Art originated on Vilun Island? Once the initial speculation hit a dead-end, it was forgotten about. The Institute of Martial Anthropology, an institute founded by the Martial Union, never received too much support in its proposal to uncover this historical mystery above other matters.

Rui was the same, to an extent. Of course, he was curious about the truth, but he cared much more about the actual Martial Art of Vilun Island!

He moved to the files that contained the reports detailing the Martial Art techniques that the Martial Artists of Vilun Island, and specifically, the G'ak'arkan Tribe employed. These were not only much more interesting and valuable, but also much more relevant to his mission. In fact, it was the driving force behind why this mission had even been created in the first place!

Chapter 624: Technique

"This..." Rui's eyebrows rose as he read through the files that contained reports of observed techniques employed by the G'ak'arkan Tribe.

A variety of long-range techniques that were truly unlike anything Rui had seen in the libraries of the Martial Union or in the field ever before.

One report spoke about a magical telekinetic-like technique that allowed the user to exert magical invisible force on anything within a certain range as though there were invisible arms extending from the user's body!

This user could simultaneously fight enemies by using this technique to exert a crushing force on their opponent, while also using the technique to form invisible barriers. Furthermore, the user reportedly possessed a lot of finesse with this technique. She was reported engaging in a variety of activities

simultaneously. Trees cleanly chopped themselves into wood, food cooked, toys magically played with by the young ones, etc.

It was a magical degree of control that was hard to believe. If not for the fact that this outcome was verified by multiple sensory/stealth-oriented Martial Artists who engaged in long-range surveillance, Rui wasn't sure he would be able to accept this so easily.

Rui had no doubt that the Martial Union possessed Martial Artists that could replicate these feats, the important point was that these Martial Artists would certainly be Martial Seniors and Martial Masters. The report alleged that the Martial Artist performing these feats was a young and otherwise unremarkable Martial Squire.

This was the shocking part.

In a way, this was very similar to Rui's situation.

Rui's Pathfinder allowed him to strike targets with extreme accuracy from remarkably great distances away. No Martial Squire was likely his equal in this regard.

However, this did not apply to the Senior Realm or the Master Realm. Rui did not dare to assume that his feats were even impressive by such standards, let alone irreplicable.

Despite this, the Martial Union and the Longranger Sect greatly valued his technique. The reason for this was that it was a technique that allowed a Martial Squire to replicate a feat that should have ordinarily been impossible for Martial Squires.

Allowing Martial Artists of lower Realms to accomplish what should have otherwise been impossible to achieve was what Rui was contributing with the Void Pathfinder technique.

Evidently, the technique that he had just read about was of a similar value.

Of course, the difference was that Rui developed the Void Pathfinder technique all by himself, while the techniques of the G'ak'arkan Tribe were probably developed over an extensive period of time.

Regardless, Rui could only imagine how much the Martial Union yearned for techniques like these.

The value of such techniques was not low. Rui could easily imagine the potential these techniques had as far as strengthening the Martial Union. Although the difference wouldn't be too drastic, it was still extremely relevant.

With how powerful the Martial Union was, even a single percent boost to its net Martial power was something that was extremely valuable. It was not easy for the Martial Union to obtain such a straightforward boost.

Of course, whether this was even possible depended on the difficulty of the technique and its dissemination viability. These two factors decided how widely such a technique could be spread. Rui's Pathfinder technique scored high as far as the difficulty of mastery went and low as far as dissemination viability was concerned.

If this technique was a grade-ten technique like Pathfinder, then its value would decrease, but it would still be a highly desirable technique capable of strengthening the high-end capabilities of Martial Artists.

Rui studied the reports as he tried to figure out how the technique worked.

Of course, given that he had nothing but reports, albeit detailed, to work with, Rui wasn't particularly optimistic about his chances of figuring it out.

('But if I had to guess...')

If he had to guess, then he highly suspected that she was using a breathing technique to generate powerful wind currents, and then using intricate movements of his body to manipulate those wind currents to exert force in certain ways.

In a way, she would be manipulating objects like they were puppets, where the winds acted as the strings.

This hypothesis matched up with the observation that she was never still when applying this technique. If that was the case, then Rui had to admit that he would be more than just a little curious as to how such a technique was able in the first place. He would have loved to have mastered this technique if it was viable. However, he probably would not be compatible with such a technique in the first place.

The reason that the Pathfinder technique was a technique that he had a high affinity, compatibility, and synergy with was that the technique almost fundamentally depended on his unique strengths to be viable for him to use at all.

The technique that he was reading about was probably a grade nine or grade ten technique, Rui highly doubted that it had a difficulty lower than that.

Regardless, it was definitely valuable. Rui could easily imagine Senior Ceeran growing extremely excited at this technique.

('Actually, given the fact that he's the deputy director of the long-range research division, he's probably already aware of the matters surrounding Vilun Island, the G'ak'arkan Tribe, and the various techniques that they possess.

Given how excited he had gotten when Rui showed off what his Pathfinder technique could do, he was probably heavily involved with the analysis of the techniques of the G'ak'arkan Tribe. Hell, Rui wouldn't be surprised if he had been one of his predecessors and been dispatched to Vilun Island as a diplomat.

He could also imagine why the endeavors failed if that were the case. The Martial Senior was certainly driven, and that was probably what would disqualify him in the first place.

Rui shook his head as he continued reading through the recorded techniques and capabilities of the G'ak'arkan Tribe, growing more interested in what he read the more he did.

Chapter 625: Limitations

Rui spent time going through the reports that the Martial Union had provided him with, gaining a more nuanced understanding of the G'ak'arkan Tribe's techniques. He understood that while the techniques of the G'ak'arkan Tribe were truly spectacular in some regards, they were truly lacking in other regards.

"They have shitty range limits," Rui sighed.

They were unable to target extremely distant techniques, at least, nowhere near as far as the Martial Artists of the Kandrian Empire could. Rui understood what Martial commissioner Derun meant when she said that they had their own shortcomings and their own unique strengths.

"Their potency is also lacking, relatively speaking," Rui realized as he went through the techniques that were of special interest to the Martial Union.

The G'ak'arkan Tribe possessed a diverse set of techniques that, while strong in some ways were much less than optimal when it came to range and potency.

"But this is an area that the Martial Union's techniques thrive in," Rui nodded. "While the Martial Union's techniques less gimmicky, they possess greater superiority in some of the more fundamental aspects of long-range offense."

Part of this has to do with the fact that the Martial Union dumped a fortune for the budget allocation of long-range techniques research every year. Not all of this funding went into creating new techniques, a lot of it also went into optimizing existing techniques.

Considering that this had happened for nearly four centuries, it had snowballed tremendously over time, leading to much stronger long-range foundations as far techniques went. The G'ak'arkan Tribe did not possess such an advantage, and thus their techniques were less solid in many ways compared to that of the Martial Union.

Part of the superiority of the techniques of the Martial Union came from the fact that the Squire evolution breakthrough process of the Martial Union was much superior to the much more primitive version that the G'ak'arkan tribe seemed to have.

The Martial Union was able to grant Martial bodies that had high affinities for long-range targeting to long-range Martial Artists. Once these Martial Artists developed techniques that were highly synergistic with that of their body and their Martial Path, then they were able to exhibit power greater than what the technique by itself was able to merit at times.

This was an advantage that the Martial Artists of the G'ak'arkan Tribe were unable to match. It was one of the reasons that the Martial Artists of the G'ak'arkan Tribe were unable to match the Martial Artists of the Martial Union.

Rui studied the reports surrounding their techniques extensively until he was finally satisfied.

('There is definitely plenty of merit to befriending these tribal folks,') Rui concurred by the time he was done.

It wasn't just the techniques that they had already developed and refined thus far, but also the advancements they would make in the future. These people had many Martial Artists every generation, considering how much progress they had made in centuries, Rui could not imagine how much further they would go in the future. New techniques and improvements to existing technique were almost a guarantee. It was a waste to try and kill them, or dominate them. The Martial Union would benefit the most by keeping them alive and growing stronger, which in turn would make the Martial Union stronger.

('I can also see why the Martial Union is relying on a diplomatic strategy instead of an espionage strategy to try and steal those techniques.')

Rui nodded.

The Martial Tribes possessed remarkable senses, they had grown so familiar with their forest and island that encroaching upon it had considerably higher risk of detection. And reaching close enough to try and spy on them was even worse.

Meaning, any stealth and sensory oriented Martial Artist would not be able to get particularly valuable information because the tribal folks were highly cautious of their techniques being stolen due to the presence of multiple Martial Tribes. When training, they took measures to obscure any secrets surrounding their techniques. Esoteric natural resources found on the island that dampened matter and energy flux through them were quite effective in hampering sensory although they could only be used in a small isolated area.

In order to avoid detection of all the Martial Artists including the Martial Seniors, while also gaining deep sensory insight into the training methodologies and techniques of the G'ak'arkan Tribe could probably not be accomplished by shadow-class Martial Seniors.

Rui suspected that it would probably take Martial Masters to accomplish such a feat.

('The problem is that Martial Masters are scarce and highly strategic resources that need to be employed on matters that truly warranted their power.')

Rui sighed.

The G'ak'arkan Tribe was significant, but it did not weigh down on priorities of far greater importance such as the deadlock between the Martial Union and the Royal Family. Or the power struggle between the Kandrian Empire and the other super-nations such as the Britannian Empire, The Republic of Gorteau and the Sekigahara Confederation.

Maintaining surveillance of the most powerful assets of their adversaries was a near full-time job and required these powerful Martial Artists to invest considerable time and energy on them.

These matters were of existential importance and were far more needy of the most powerful Martial Artists of the Martial Union than the curious and interesting, but ultimately harmless G'ak'arkan Tribe.

That was why Martial commissioner Derun had approached him, outside of the upper echelons of the Martial Union who possessed the power to extract the techniques of the G'ak'arkan Tribe, simply because such a mission wasn't worth the time of Martial Artists who possess far more important matters to attend to.

The more Rui read, the more he comprehended why she decided to entrust this mission to him. He also gained a deeper understanding of how he would likely go about it. Of course, he abstained from making any specific plans. He was still quite far away from that stage and there were plenty of things that he needed to do before he was ready to serve as a diplomat.

Chapter 626: Trainer

Rui spent the entire day reading through all the files and documents that the Martial Union had sent him before finally putting his accounter down, massaging his forehead.

He had already memorized the data and stored them in his mind palace, organizing them most appropriately.

The data could roughly be divided into a number of categories:

Surveillance data which was obtained through low-risk and low-yield surveillance.

The diplomatic history between the tribes of Vilun Island.

Analytical reports from various departments and divisions regarding the data procured.

Surveillance reports could be divided between that of the surveillance of the G'ak'arkan Tribe and the other tribes of the island as well as general discreet surveys conducted of the island itself. The surveillance reports could further be bifurcated into surveillance surrounding their Martial Art and non-Martial Art surveillance.

Rui still needed to take time and process all this information thoroughly.

It was one thing to memorize them word for word, it was another thing to have properly processed them and derived and inferred all the information from them that he could. He couldn't do that in a short amount of time. He would need to spend an extensive amount of time immersing himself in the information before he was content

Fortunately, he didn't really need to. A few days later, he received a message from the Martial Union regarding the preparation for his briefing and training program had been completed, which was sooner than Rui expected, but the Martial Union could not keep him waiting for too long.

"Squire Quarrier," An aged man bowed to him, greeting him with a smile once he reached the briefing office where he was supposed to be. "I am Carl Sullion, a senior diplomatic trainer for the Martial Union. I am a former diplomat of the foreign affairs department, having served for twenty years as the assigned representative of the Martial Union to the Town of Xeron before retiring and spending eighteen years as a trainer. I have been tasked to provide you with the basic training to help you complete your diplomatic mission in the G'ak'arkan Tribe."

Rui studied him and the men and women behind him. The man possessed grace and dignity while still maintaining an appropriately modest and adequately deferential attitude. He managed to convey the respect that ordinary employees of the Martial Union ought to have for Martial Artists while still

maintaining a sense of pride and self-esteem. He gave Rui an impression of a wise man who had a wealth of experience.

Rui could instantly tell that the man must have been one hell of a diplomat when he was occupying his post. Rui was very adept at reading non-verbal communication, courtesy of a combination of his shrewd awareness as well as his mastery of the Fauna Flow technique. Rui got the impression that the man had impeccable control and mastery over his demeanor.

Rui smiled. "Thank you for your help, it seems that I am in good hands,"

"Thank you," The man responded with a gentle smile. "I was the assigned diplomatic trainer for your predecessors. I have a lot of experience with this particular mission and am the most qualified faculty of our internal training department to aid you with it."

"That's quite reassuring to hear," Rui nodded. "Well, if there are no other matters at hand, can we begin the training and briefing immediately?"

"Of course, though since this is your first day, we will begin talking about the actual objective of the mission thoroughly and deeply, before naturally shifting to basic diplomatic theory and its relevancy here. We will also look at the broad and basic information and the facts surrounding the mission, including information about Vilun Island, and the martial Tribes, including your target; the G'ak'arkan Tribe. We will also touch upon the constraints that you will be expected to abide by as a representative of the Martial Union."

"I see," Rui nodded. "That will set up a good foundation in aiding me to actually understand what is necessary to succeed, and how I can ensure those conditions are fulfilled."

"Indeed," Carl smiled. "I have prepared a presentation for you focused on ease of assimilation of the understanding that I aim to convey."

Rui nodded. "I shall endeavor to learn as much as possible."

Rui didn't try to disrupt the plans that Carl had made by pointing out that he had already memorized and considered pretty much all the relevant data surrounding the mission. Carl's familiarity and

expertise on all relevant matters were much greater than his, and there were plenty of insights that he could gain from Carl's presentation.

Although Rui was aware that he was very intelligent, he was not arrogant enough to assume that he could beat a veteran specialist in their intellectual field of a specialist. Intelligence alone was far from enough to beat education and experience.

The only reason he somewhat broke that rule when talking to Julian about research and science was that he had spent a lifetime as a researcher and a scientist, thus he had the qualifications to speak to Julian as an equal on this matter. Of course, he restrained himself as he did not want to expose his alien degree of understanding of science beyond cutting-edge Kandrian theoretical physics.

"Have a seat," Carl gestured.

The room was large with many chairs and tables facing the podium where Carl promptly walked over to as his assistant faculty prepared the table with the necessary stationery.

"Today we will begin the training and briefing program that we have prepared for you, Squire Quarrier" Carl began with a solemn tone. "I have personally gone through your profile and created a training and briefing program that is best suited for you. I was very pleased to learn that you have particularly high cognitive parameters, this makes both our tasks much easier and greatly increases the probability of success. Your mission requires your finesse more than it needs the standard parameters that you are most accustomed to using in Martial missions. Acknowledging and completely accepting this fact is the first step that you need to take."

Chapter 627: Breakdown

He was right.

Rui walked into missions knowing that his Martial Art would allow him to overcome hurdles and obstacles that ordinary humans couldn't even dream of doing so. Although he was conscious enough to know that his combat prowess did not have any direct role in this mission besides from being taken more seriously, it was not easy to alter his subconscious attitude.

Still, Rui's attitude was driven by his conscious thought, since he put a lot of thought into each and every one of his decisions when completing missions, so this wasn't too much of a problem.

"One of the biggest issues with the previous Martial Artists who had been appointed as the diplomat was that they were largely unable to shake the subconscious attitude that physical power was the answer to all missions, in a way. Or at least necessary for all missions," He sighed. "In this mission, any displays of your combat prowess will only reduce the chances of success of your mission."

"I understand that sir," Rui nodded. "Fear not, I do not intend to act in a manner that will jeopardize the mission."

"I am glad to hear that," The man nodded. "Of course, there will be some degree of psychological training regardless, but it is already a very good sign that you have so easily agreed with this."

Rui felt a tinge of sympathy for the man. How incompetent were the previous Martial Artists when it came to diplomacy for the man to be relieved by something so basic?

Of course, since he had gone through the reports so he knew exactly how incompetent they were. But he could only imagine the heat and flack this man must have gotten for the incompetence of others.

"With that out of the way, I intend to go deeper into the briefing and training program that we have put you through." The man nodded as he pulled out a device from his coat, fiddling with some buttons.

The board behind him lit up differently before an image of a flowchart occupied the screen.

"This is the progression of your briefing program," The man nodded as he pointed to the first box in the flowchart containing the word 'objective'.

"The most fundamental part of this mission is, of course, the actual objective. What is your objective when you serve as a diplomat for the Martial Union to the G'ak'arkan Tribe? I'm sure Martial commissioner Derun has informed you that the Martial Union wishes to obtain its techniques. But which techniques, exactly? What exactly about them do we wish to obtain?"

These were good questions, even if they seemed silly and pointless on the surface. The first question wanted to precisely establish the techniques that the Martial Union wanted. After all, the Martial Union did not want each and every single Martial Art technique that the G'ak'arkan Tribe was in possession of. Some of them were extremely poor that the Martial Union would rather not obtain them at all, while there were several key gems that the Martial Union sought after the most.

"The Martial Union is interested in these particular techniques," Carl nodded as he pressed a button, the slide changed and a brief list of techniques and a brief explanation for each of them covered the screen. "These techniques were observed and reported by our sensory and stealth techniques who managed to catch the occasional employment of these techniques despite the distance that was between themselves and their surveillance targets."

Rui scanned the list quickly, nodding. This list has more or less abided by his understanding of why the Martial Union was bothering with the mission at all.

"Furthermore, we want the techniques, their mechanisms, and principles as well as the training methodology used to train this technique," Carl added. "All of these are part of the goal to obtain those techniques."

"The Martial Union has ruled out a forceful approach for reasons we will go into later, although I am told that you have been briefed about that to a certain extent. But for now, that means we will be relying on a peaceful approach that involves the G'ak'arkan Tribe giving us their techniques voluntarily. The most immediate and basic question that arises is, how can we accomplish such a thing?" The man patiently explained.

"And this is where the necessity for diplomacy arises," the man continued before switching the slide to another one. "Why would the G'ak'arkan Tribe willingly divulge their Martial Art techniques, when they seem, as you have already been informed, quite protective about their Martial Art techniques?"

The man asked. "In a broader sense, why would anyone give up anything that they possess a strong attachment to and are unwilling to give up?"

Rui bore with the man's somewhat patronizing lecture because he understood why the man was beginning with something so elementary and simple, as far as Rui was concerned. It was probably the case that the previous Martial Artists were so shit at these topics that the man realized he needed to start the basics of the basics.

"Because they could be provided with incentives greater than their attachment to their belongings or given disincentives that are greater than their desire to not give up their belongings," Rui noted. "In this case, the Martial Union has already ruled out forceful methods that include threats and forceful coercion. Thus, we can effectively say that for my mission, we cannot get them to divulge their techniques via disincentives like the threat of death or pain and suffering for their loved ones. Instead, we need to levy enough a number of high-enough incentives in order to get the G'ak'arkan Tribe to willingly hand over their techniques."

Carl's eyebrows rose as he realized that Rui actually had a much more thorough understanding of the basics of diplomacy than he had given credit to the Martial Squire. He seemed remarkably sharp and had already given what was effectively a perfect self-framed answer that encapsulated the core philosophy underlying diplomatic theory very well.

Chapter 628: Interests

"That's correct," The man nodded, evidently pleased with Rui's answer. "Everybody has needs, interests, and issues. These can be and are leveraged to foster mutually beneficial relationships between two parties."

He turned to Rui. "Can you figure out what are some of the most universal interests that are frequently leveraged in diplomatic negotiations and deliberations between two parties such as sovereign nations on the Panama Continent?"

Rui nodded. "The most universal interests that are likeliest to be leveraged are the fundamental necessities of every sovereign nation. Things such as sufficient food supply and security are absolutely necessary for the sustenance of any viable society. These are primary needs that are required for any form of human civilization."

Regardless of the culture, traditions of a society, the surrounding geo-political landscape, and other parameters of said state, food, and security were absolute necessities for human sustenance.

"On a secondary level," Rui continued. "Technological sophistication is also vital for maintaining a baseline modern lifestyle and is a highly desired asset. Things like the communication sector and networks that the most important significant sectors and institutions of our empire use to function

viably. Without it, our empire would almost certainly be crippled immediately. As such, every nation prioritizes building a sustainable communication sector within the nation."

While remote communication technology had not spread as far as to reach the average common citizen, it was still quite important in the functioning of the nation. All executive branches, ministries, and departments of the entirety of the government frequently relied on esoteric communication tech for remote coordination across the entire country.

Even the Martial Union frequently used it all the time for the remote coordination of Martial Artists, clients, and within the Martial Union between branches and employees.

"That is quite true," Carl nodded. "In fact, I once negotiated a highly favorable agreement for the Kandrian Empire with one of the surrounding satellite nations that I was, at one point, the appointed Kandrian representative and ambassador for, thanks to the universal interest that is sustained communications."

Rui's eyebrows rose in interest. "That sounds interesting, and confidential."

Carl chuckled. "I have been authorized to share personal anecdotes and experiences if it aids in your training, within a certain limit by Martial commissioner Derun. This thanks to the fact that you are a Martial Squire, that too one of interest, to the Martial Union."

"I see," Rui expected as much. "You were saying?"

"This nation lacked a sustainable supply of Ire Slagpowder, which is an esoteric substance that is one of the most commonly used battery fuels for communication devices. Because the nation needed it so desperately, I was able to negotiate remarkably favorable terms for the Martial Union, including but not limited to heavy annual remuneration, significant reductions in import tax, and tariffs imposed on the Martial Union's Martial goods and services as well as highly favorable amendments to the extradition treaty between the Kandrian Empire and said nation, among other things."

Rui raised an eyebrow at his words.

Those were considerable concessions!

The heavy remuneration was guaranteed, and Rui was relatively certain that the price paid by the nation was not low, given this was nothing short of a strategic resource. The nation must have bled dearly to obtain it. On top of that, they had to lower the import tariffs that were imposed on all imported goods from foreign nations. This clause would cause the Martial Union's international business to boom in the nation. After all, the price of international goods factored in the import tariffs and duties, this meant that they were generally pricier than the equivalent of the same goods in the local economy in order to maintain standard profit margins. However, with a reduction in import tariffs, the Martial goods and services that the Martial Union could provide would outcompete its other international competitors.

This would stimulate the Martial Union's internal economy surrounding Martial Artists and other departments that earned secondary streams of revenue.

What Rui didn't understand, however, was the third clause that Carl mentioned. "Why negotiate for favorable amendments in the extradition treaty between the Kandrian Empire and said nation? Isn't that a clause that benefits the Kandrian Empire more than it does the Martial Union?"

"That is true," The man nodded. "We internally negotiated with the Kandrian Empire and obtained concessions and compensations before proceeding with the deal. It also makes the environment safer for completing missions because we can recover our Martial Artists who are compromised to the nation. It also serves as a good training ground for younger and more inexperienced Martial Artists who don't have much experience in foreign and international missions."

"I see..." Rui thought about it. "That sounds like it must have been an exceedingly complicated negotiation and lobbying effort on your part."

"It took a few months to settle, but it is one of my more significant and prouder accomplishments," The man nodded.

"Which nation is this, by the way?" Rui wondered, curious.

"It is a nation you are actually familiar with, as far as your record goes," The man smiled. "The Commonwealth Duchy of Vinfrana."

"That actually makes a lot of sense," Rui nodded.

He had always wondered why the Martial Union deployed him and a few other Martial Apprentices on such a mission. It made a lot more sense if the Martial Union viewed the territory of the Commonwealth Duchy of Vinfrana as a somewhat safer zone.

"Coming back to the main point, you aren't incorrect in your analysis of the most common interests of nations that are frequently levied to negotiate agreements between two parties," The man smiled.

"Thank you."

"But unfortunately, your worldview is a bit oversimplistic," The man pointed out.

Rui raised an eyebrow. "How so?"

"It is true that food and security are absolutely paramount. But is also true that most nations are able to fulfill this interest to a much larger extent than you suspect. It is actually rarely the case that food and national security are interests levied in negotiations between two parties. This is because there is a correlation between the fundamental importance and necessity of a certain interest and the ability to obtain it."

Rui narrowed his eyes as he absorbed the information that Carl divulged to him.

Chapter 629: Estimate

"If we humans were unable to obtain things like food and security that are fundamental to survival with a certain degree of ease and certainty, then we would not have prospered to the degree that we have," He commented. "It is because they are important that nations do everything to make sure that they have enough of both. While there are certain impoverished and vulnerable nations that make heavy concessions to obtain one or both of these interests from foreign parties. Most nations have obtained satisfactory national and food security. Or to be more accurate, most nations have acquired enough of the two to, at the very least, not be in a crisis."

"I see..." Rui nodded as he understood his error. "That definitely makes sense."

"If anything, it is the secondary set of interests that you mentioned that are levied in diplomatic negotiations. Things like securing enough resources to maintain highly vital technological sectors,

institutions, and foundations of the country usually play a much bigger role when trying to incentivize foreign parties to engage in a trade with you. You mentioned communications, which is certainly very important. Another important sector of modern society is transport, the ability to move to distant locations in relatively short amounts of time and with no personal effort is an important ability that has become a sector that is akin to the blood of the country," The man noted. "Development and maintenance of infrastructure is yet another highly important aspect of modern society. The fulfillment of each of these interests is much more difficult and thus can be used as powerful incentives in negotiations."

The man paused before continuing. "That is the underlying driving force of diplomacy, negotiation, and trade. Different parties have different needs and desires. One nation may be lacking food security, another may lack national security. Giving food to the latter and protection to the former is, of course, foolish. In order to offer what they want in return for what we want, we need to know what they want in the first place."

He turned to Rui. "How would we go about knowing what they want? After all, most parties will not divulge their weaknesses and shortcomings so easily to others. It gives an advantage to other parties in negotiations. If a man trying to purchase water were to reveal to me that he hasn't drunk water for days due to being stranded in the desert, then I may very well raise the price of water since I know that that water is priceless to him. I know that he will be willing to pay a fortune for just a mug of water."

Rui smiled wryly as the man droned on about ruthless and dubious ethical practices. Of course, Rui was cognizant enough to recognize that that was the way the world worked.

"That is where one of the foremost steps of diplomacy and negotiations come in," The man continued. "We have just discussed how you can levy the fulfillment of others' interests to fulfill your own. However, you cannot do this if you do not know what the interests of said parties are. And as I just mentioned, other parties will not come out and tell you what their interests are, because it generally puts them at a disadvantage at the negotiation table. So, you do not know what their interests are, and they are not willing to tell you... How do you find out about them, then?"

"Recognizing the signs of deficiency of one of the primary or secondary interests in a country through signs that cannot be hidden that would inevitably arise if such interests were not being met, or on the verge of not being met," Rui replied quickly, having already anticipated the conversation to go this way.

"That isn't incorrect, but let's get specific. What exactly does that mean in practice? What signs are you talking about? How will you even come to recognize such signs even if they do occur? What signs would

we see were there, say, a chronic food shortage problem in a certain country that the country was doing its best to compensate for and cover up?"

"That's simple. We rely on data gathered through various means. Part of it would originate from public records, another part of it we would no doubt have to rely on our intelligence department," Rui replied.

"What data specifically?"

"We would need several things. First, we need to estimate the annual food consumption of the nation. This is rather simple to obtain as we can easily estimate this from the population and population demographics of the nation that should be easy enough to obtain. Then, the important question is whether the domestic food production sector of the nation is able to produce the necessary food needed to sustain the population's food consumption." Rui explained.

"And how would you go about finding out?" The man asked, curious to the degree to which Rui understood this matter.

"It's complicated, but there are still ways and means to do this. We can estimate the size of their crop and animal agricultural industries by gauging the amount of land that is used for these two sectors. This is also something that can't be hidden. Estimating food production from fishing or other broad sources of food is also not difficult. Together, they can be used to gauge the limit of the food produced by said nation. With that estimate, we can then learn whether or not there are signs of a chronic food shortage problem or not." Rui replied, before continuing. "We can also look at the price of food and food ingredients. That allows us to also gauge the balance of supply versus demand. If food production is less than that of consumption while the price of food is reasonable, then it can be concluded that the problem is being averted through imports from foreign parties."

The man beamed as he nodded. "This is all correct, and in fact, these are the steps that we go take and have taken. It is quite remarkable that you have such a thorough understanding of economics. If I did not know better, I would have assumed you were a promising trainee of our foreign affairs department!"

Chapter 630: Warped

"You flatter me," Rui smiled.

"No no, I'm quite optimistic about your prospects of successfully completing this diplomatic mission based on our discussion up to this point alone," The man shook his head. "Coming back to the main point, as I said, you are correct about the means by which we identify how well a third party is able to fulfill primary interests such as food security. However, I did choose food shortage as hypothetical for a reason. It is, by far, the easiest to identify and recognize through the means that you have identified and more. However, identifying the degree to which other interests are fulfilled is not nearly as easy. Even other primary interests such as national security are more complicated than the hypothetical that I gave you, mainly because it is easier to hide."

Rui nodded. He was aware of this fact.

National security depended on factors such as the size of the military, the quality and quantity of militaristic technology, the Martial prowess of a nation; the number of Martial Artists it has, and its demographics as far as Realms went. These were far more difficult to estimate. For such complicated matters, it was safer and more reliable to directly rely on intelligence-gathering agencies and departments to directly gather such facts through espionage, surveillance, and infiltration among other things.

"However, this alone isn't enough," The man explained. "Yes, it's true that we can utilize a variety of means to understand whether or not a third party is able to fulfill a particular interest, it is also important to verify whether or not that particular interest is even an interest in the first place. Do you understand what I mean by that?"

Rui nodded. "I do. Not everybody will value all things equally. Still, there should be a broad intersection. Food and physical security are absolute. Even the secondary interests are largely universal."

Carl smiled. "Largely, yes. But not absolutely universal. Take examples that we have discussed earlier, for example. Technological sectors like communications, motorized transport, development and maintenance of complex infrastructure, and military and defense technology are all almost universal interests among all sovereign states on the Panama Continent. Yet there are examples of third parties that do not fall into this paradigm."

Rui had a feeling he knew what the man was talking about.

"What if there was a somewhat isolated society that is devoid of technological development in most sectors? What if there was an ecosystem of parties that each led a lifestyle that is so deviated from what you and I are familiar with, such that technological sectors and industries such as communications, transport, and military tech are all entirely irrelevant to them?" The man smiled knowingly. "In this case, you would be dealing with parties with highly warped interests that fall outside of standard and classical paradigms that we deal with regularly. How should we proceed in such a scenario?"

Rui smiled. "We should do our best to understand their interests thoroughly before proceeding to levy the fulfillment of them to get them to fulfill our interests."

"Correct," Carl nodded. "I'm sure you've already figured out the reason that I have brought this up."

Rui nodded. "The G'ak'arkan Tribe perfectly fits the hypothetical that you gave me. They are part of an isolated ecosystem and have developed a highly warped culture and society that is highly divergent from modern civilization. For example, their little quasi-society has not developed any dependence on technology to sustain itself. This alone would be very rare on the Panama Continent."

"That is very aptly put, Squire," Carl nodded. "The G'ak'arkan Tribe has been very inscrutable to us for quite some time, and still is, to a certain extent. Their highly unique and warped culture and mentalities have rendered most of our negotiation chips, tactics, and capital to be useless. They reject our technology vehemently as they perceive it as a threat to their culture and way of life, as well as a primal aversion to what they don't understand. This is problematic because that means that they not only reject technology but also many esoteric natural resources that are valuable because of their high utility in technology. For example, what value is Ire Slagpowder to people who reject remote communication technology in the first place? To them, this otherwise valuable resource is no more than a strange form of dust. Vilun Island is quite rich in its natural resources, yet the indigenous natives have not extracted these resources from the land, the fauna, and flora all that much because they simply do not use it."

Rui nodded. These insights matched those of his own. Diplomacy, trade, and negotiation were highly developed fields with rock-solid paradigms built upon universal traits and interests that everybody possessed. This led to a framework within which everybody operated. Diplomats and ambassadors were trained to excel within this framework, Rui had no doubt that it frustrated the Martial Union to no end that the G'ak'arkan Tribe did not play with these rules and within this framework at all whatsoever.

Perhaps that was another motivating reason to deploy Martial Artists as diplomats to negotiate with the G'ak'arkan Tribe.

"So, coming back to the main point," Carl continued. "The G'ak'arkan Tribe's interests are warped and are considerably deviated from expectations. As you promptly said earlier, we should learn as much about their interests as much as we can. In order to learn about their interests, we inevitably have to learn about them intimately, their history, their culture and values as well as their surrounding circumstances."

Carl paused, looking at Rui. "I was informed that you were given the case files and documents surrounding everything related to the G'ak'arkan Tribe."

"True," Rui nodded.

"How much of them have you gone through?"

"All of it," Rui smiled.

To his credit, Carl did not display any outward sign of surprise. Perhaps he was able to control his body just that well. Or perhaps, he wasn't surprised at all, having studied Rui's profile before their meeting no doubt.