

Martial Unity 631

Chapter 631: Profile

"That's quite proactive of you," Carl nodded. "I had suspected that you might have read and remembered a bit of it when I read through your profile and saw the Mind Palace technique, but it is quite impressive that you have managed to get through it all."

The man looked quite impressed at Rui.

"It's not all that much, I didn't have much to do, after all," Rui modestly replied.

"If you have gone through it all, then we can begin by going through your thoughts on the G'ak'arkan Tribe," Carl nodded.

Rui paused for a second, gathering his thoughts as he considered it. It was one thing to read through and store all the vast information in his mind palace, and it was another entirely to infer all relevant important information and present it in a neatly tied package. Of course, since this was just a preliminary class in his training and briefing program, it was okay even if he wasn't being as concise as possible.

"The Ga'ak'arkan Tribe possesses a highly diverged culture and sets of values due to their extreme history and circumstances," Rui nodded, beginning by revisiting this basic fact. "This warps their interests greatly as well, albeit not entirely."

Carl gazed at him silently, unwilling to break his train of thought.

"The one universal interest that they share with us, by virtue of being human, is survival. Outside of this, there are far too many divergences from the norm," Rui stated. "However, surprisingly enough, it is not their greatest interest. The extreme willingness to provoke and engage in conflicts with the other tribes of the Vilun Island despite victory not necessarily being guaranteed shows that surviving, while still desirable, is not the most important thing to them. I believe it is because of this trait that the Martial Union has chosen not to antagonize them."

Carl nodded slowly, acknowledging Rui's points.

"When I read through the diplomatic dialogue with the G'ak'arkan Tribe, I was able to get a better understanding of why the G'ak'arkan Tribe is so extremely warmongering with the other tribes of Vilun Island," Rui mentioned. "It isn't entirely clear, perhaps due to linguistic barriers and inaccuracies in translation, but it does seem that they are primarily motivated by a desire to assert supremacy and dominance, as well as battle lust and pride. These three abstract interests are so strong to them that together they even trump their desire to survive! This is why they are so incessantly warmongering. These are their greatest interests without a doubt."

Carl smiled. "That's a very apt albeit slightly incomplete profile that you have created there. Well, follow up with logical conclusion of the premises that you just have included with the diplomatic theory that we went over prior. What can we do with the information that you have just inferred?"

"We can offer aid to them with fulfilling these abstract interests. We can help them achieve dominance on Vilun Island, we can help them fulfill their intense battle lust. But..." Rui paused, sighing.

"But?"

"But we have already tried that according to the diplomatic records of our negotiations with them," Rui shook his head. "The problem is the third abstract interest that I identified earlier; their pride. They possess an immense amount of pride. Too much to accept our help in defeating the other indigenous tribes of Vilun Island."

"Exactly," Carl nodded, sighing. "They are extremely prideful and have vehemently rejected any aid from us in their eternal conflict with their rivals and enemies. Sometimes I personally cannot help but wonder whether they actually want to win at all, as opposed to maintaining this deadlock of conflicts that they currently have."

Rui could understand that sentiment.

"Regardless," Carl continued. "Your analysis is spot-on; their pride prevents them from accepting the aid of any kind in their conflict with the other Martial tribes. They do not care for our tech and our resources. Currency is utterly meaningless to them. I'm sure you can understand our frustrations. However, despite this, there is one resource that we offered them that they showed some interest in. Can you tell what that is?"

"Martial Art techniques," Rui replied immediately.

"And what makes you say that?"

"The negotiations where we deliberated regarding the techniques that we had to offer lasted the longest, and had the greatest amount of engagement and initiative from the G'ak'arkan Tribe," Rui replied. "It can be surmised that out of all our attempts at attempting to levy their interests to earn their cooperation, our Martial Art techniques had the greatest degree of success."

"Shrewd of you to notice that," Carl nodded with a pleasant smile. "And can you discern why they failed?"

"...Not through my own merit, no. Martial commissioner Derun informed me about the reason." Rui admitted. "The measure of respect they have for those they interact with is entirely dependant on one's Martial prowess. Many of our attempts to negotiate with them were doomed simply because our diplomats were normal humans and were thus entirely dismissed despite representing the Martial Union."

"That is indeed what happened," Carl nodded. "Our foreign affairs department had to grind against a wall as we dealt with members who simply did not possess as much power or influence within their tribe. It was only after that we switched to the nearly unprecedented decision of sending a Martial Artist as our main diplomat. I can assure you that this was not an easy decision to make. From my perspective at the time, it was nothing short of insanity. You do not send Martial Artists for diplomatic negotiations for the same reason you don't send diplomats to complete Martial missions. It is a suicidal idea that will lead to heavy losses in nearly every case."

Rui smiled wryly. "'Nearly' being the keyword here."

"Yes, the most important word there," Carl heaved a resigned sigh. "In these particular circumstances, sending in Martial Artists to negotiate with the G'ak'arkan Tribe was quite remarkable in so far as how effective it initially seemed to be turning out."

Chapter 632: Failures

"They took our diplomatic team much more seriously when we first trained and sent a Martial Squire to head the negotiations," Carl continued. "Our diplomatic team was even able to negotiate with one of their most powerful and influential Martial Squires. However, we had never managed to draw the attention of the shot callers of the G'ak'arkan Tribe. The three Martial Seniors are considered the three leaders of the Tribe. They regarded our Martial Art technique offers with curious intrigue, but never took us too seriously because of the gap between their ranks and ours. We were not able to give those three particular individuals anything they considered worth their time, since they were Martial Seniors."

"Why didn't they consider the benefits it would bring to the rest of their tribe? Even if they can't use it, surely the rest of the Martial Squires would benefit from such a trade." Rui frowned as he scoured through the transcripts of the negotiations in his mind palace, looking for the relevant files.

"That is a painfully rational and logical reason, and one I completely agree with," Carl sighed once more. "Unfortunately, as you may have noticed, rationality is, well, lacking in this particular ecosystem. Leadership in this tribe is merely a consequence of being the strongest and is not considered to be a burden or a responsibility. They rejected it because their attachment to their techniques was higher than their desire to strengthen the rest of their clan. Another part of it is paranoia since their Martial Art techniques are their lifeline in not getting overrun by their rivals and enemies. They rejected disclosure of their techniques when we deployed Martial Squire diplomats. Another part is also the fact that our Martial Squires acted out of order when they experienced the disrespect that they were shown despite being the diplomats of the Martial Union. They may have partially succeeded if they kept their cool."

Rui could easily imagine this happening. While Martial Seniors were stronger than Martial Squires, Martial Squires had their own pride. Furthermore, there was the fact that they were representing the Martial Union. Rui could easily imagine Martial Squires who was used to commanding respect and had no conception of the mindsets of diplomacy losing their temper and spoiling negotiations.

"But things weren't the same when the Martial Union finally tried sending a Martial Senior to try and get them to take us seriously," Carl sighed once more. "It is absolutely unprecedented and wild, mind you. That decision. It is one thing for Martial Artists to converse with foreign Martial Artists over highly specific matters. It is absolutely another to send Martial Seniors as an ambassador to alien third parties."

"I can imagine that this decision sparked a lot of controversy within the Martial Union," Rui smiled wryly.

"You are quite correct. Martial Sects and factions got embroiled in the controversy, but ultimately, we decided to go forward with sending a Martial Senior."

"I read the transcripts. The Martial Seniors were definitely taken seriously. The problem was that their pride and competitiveness got in the way. It created an atmosphere where the G'ak'arkan Tribe would effectively be admitting inferiority and defeat if it accepted our deal at the time."

Both of them sighed.

The problem was how the Martial Senior handled it. It was almost the textbook example of how not to conduct diplomatic negotiations with the G'ak'arkan Tribe to exchange and trade techniques. The Martial Senior deployed had turned into a competition by aggressively touting the techniques of the Martial Union and claiming superiority, thereby triggering immense competitiveness and wounding the pride of the Martial Senior leaders of the G'ak'arkan Tribe. If not for the fact that the diplomatic team accompanying the Martial Senior had managed to cut off the negotiations and had one of the Martial Masters of the Martial Union directly order the Martial Senior to retreat, a fight may have broken out then and there!

It also helped that the Martial Seniors of the G'ak'arkan Tribe did not break out into a fight then and there because their devastating power would have annihilated almost all of their tribe.

Rui wasn't even surprised that this happened as recalled the identity of the Martial Senior that had been sent as a diplomat.

"Senior Ceeran is a Martial Senior that is highly competent and powerful when it comes to long-range techniques... But unfortunately, his immense pride and passion for long-range techniques drove the negotiations downhill," Rui chuckled amused.

"Correct," Carl nodded. "Senior Ceeran was chosen because he is the deputy director of the Long-range Research Department of the Martial Union as well as the fact that he is in the upper echelons of the Longranger Sect. That has worked against the diplomatic mission. But it makes little sense to send Martial Artists from other Martial Sects."

"I was made an exception because of my personal profile, I imagine," Rui noted.

"True, but anyways, coming back to the big picture. Let us revisit the things that we have discussed until now. We have discussed the elementary diplomatic theory. Levying other people's primary and

secondary interests to fulfill your own interests. We discussed specific examples in the most common types of such occurrences, such as food and national security, and the maintenance of the technological sectors. Then we recognized that while these interests are almost universal, there are exceptions such as the G'ak'arkan Tribe. We then proceeded to form a profile of them and laid out their most important interests, before proceeding to discuss why our diplomatic endeavors with them have failed up to this point due to this reason and others. Is there any part of this that you have any doubts, questions, or issues with?"

"No, you are a great instructor and have made complicated matters easier to digest," Rui replied earnestly.

"I believe your remarkable understanding and foundation in the humanities and social sciences despite no formal education in them is what has facilitated our discussion to be smooth," Carl replied with a smile. "It has taken me weeks and even months to reach this point with some of your predecessors."

Chapter 633: Solutions

"Regardless, we've gone into the basics of general diplomacy, the uniqueness of the G'ak'arkan Tribe as well as their warped primary interests, how we could negotiate with them based on these warped interests, and finally, the reasons for why those negotiations failed," Carl paused, for a few seconds, inhaling and exhaling deeply. "That brings us to the heart of our talk; your mission. Your goal is to successfully trade techniques with the G'ak'arkan Tribe. Based on the conversations we've had all this while, how would you go about the diplomatic negotiations of the G'ak'arkan Tribe?"

...

Rui's eyes wandered as he spent some time considering the question.

It was a difficult question to answer, even for Rui.

"The principle of the negotiation strategy that we have previously employed isn't necessarily wrong... The issue is the execution that has caused previous failures. Specifically, we need to execute our negotiations in a way that leverages their competitiveness and pride in our favor," Rui carefully stated. "Senior Ceeran caused their competitiveness to be riled up against us while wounding their pride with his aggressive insistence on superiority. That needs to be avoided at all costs."

Carl nodded as he waited for Rui to continue.

"Let us consider their primary interests that we have established so far," Rui said as he raised three fingers. "The desire to dominate their enemies, the desire to engage in physical conflict, and the desire to take pride in all their decisions and actions. These are the three primary interests that we will have to contend with. We need to appeal to each of these interests strongly in our negotiation strategy."

He paused for some more time as he gathered his thoughts. "The desire to dominate their enemies is the easiest interest to levy in our favor. The power that our techniques in combination with that of theirs will produce should allow them to become overwhelmingly stronger in the long run."

Any third party that desired more power to dominate its enemies could not resist the allure of new and powerful Martial Art techniques as long as it was handled properly. The foolish Martial Artists that went before he screwed up by clashing against their competitiveness and pride.

Rui did not intend to do that.

As long as he demonstrated that he could give them the power they desired to dominate their opponents, he will have already taken a major step toward earning their cooperation.

"The desire to engage in physical conflict isn't something we can necessarily directly levy, unfortunately. But the good news is that it cannot work against us as long as we are careful. It will most likely work out to be a neutral variable," Rui noted. "In ideal circumstances, it could work in our favor if they recognize that they can engage in a much greater amount of conflict by gaining more power. But that will depend on whether I am able to effectively paint a compelling picture for them."

It could not be leveraged in a direct fashion since it wasn't as though Rui could fabricate new and more native tribes out of thin air for the G'ak'arkan Tribe to fight against. In the worst-case scenario, if their desire to engage in physical conflicts would turn against the diplomatic team of the Martial Union, then this diplomatic endeavor would be as good as screwed.

This was one of Rui's biggest concerns.

On the flip side, if he could create an alluring image of even greater and more successful physical clashes with their enemies, then it could be leveraged as a positive force that would drive the G'ak'arkan Tribe further into cooperating with the Martial Union.

"The last element is, of course, the trickiest out of all of the three abstract interests of the G'ak'arkan Tribe," Rui sighed.

Their pride was the least understood variable out of all the three. Their pride caused them to deny military aid from the Martial Union despite possessing a strong desire to defeat and dominate their enemies and rivals. It also caused previous diplomatic endeavors to fail, Rui understood all of this, but it still wasn't clear what exactly might offend their pride in a detrimental fashion and what wouldn't.

At the very least the previous variables were well understood. Rui wasn't entirely sure what he ought to say to manipulate them such that their pride would work in his favor. He was highly intelligent, but he wasn't some mastermind manipulator!

"I'm not entirely sure how to levy their pride in our favor. I guess we can pretend their techniques are superior. That feels extremely insulting and disrespectful as a Martial Artist of the Martial Union though," Rui sighed. He wasn't the most prideful of people, but even he found it very unpleasant to have to lower his head to this degree.

"Your predecessors reacted along the same lines, except they were intensely vehement to employing such measures," Carl mused. "It is unfortunate and even a bit strange to me personally because if I were in your position, I would have been extremely happy and joyful rather than insulted."

"Why's that?" Rui frowned.

"Because if all it takes is lowering pride to achieve our goal, then we diplomats would have done so without hesitation. One of the key necessities of being a diplomat is knowing when to drop your pride and humble yourself when representing your group or nation in certain circumstances. Pride is not as important as concrete benefits from success. While you find pretending our techniques are inferior as a strategic means to achieve our goal, we diplomats are trained extensively to have no problem and even consider such means a boom because of how simple they are," Carl sighed. "It seems that even for rational and intelligent Martial Artists like yourselves, such a thing is still not possible. It's a shame."

"Well, sorry about that," Rui smiled wryly.

"Oh, it's no matter. Besides, that strategy still isn't the best at hand. Though it probably wouldn't hurt to employ to a minor degree."

Chapter 634: Confidence

"Not the best strategy?" Rui raised an eyebrow. "Why do you say that?"

Rui was sure that the strategy, although infuriating, would definitely appeal to their pride. He wasn't able to think of a singular better way to do so than to give their techniques greater esteem.

"Although it does leverage their pride well, it does so at the cost of the perceived value of our techniques," Carl explained. "If they perceive our techniques to be much less valuable than their own, then their trade will inevitably become far too skewed in their favor. What we desire from the G'ak'arkan Tribe is an equal and fair trade, not a scam."

"That definitely makes sense," Rui nodded.

"Besides, Senior Ceeran will never tolerate the downplaying of the long-range techniques of the Martial Union and, by extension, all of the techniques of the Longranger Sect. As one of the upper echelons of the Longranger Sect, he would rather declare war against the G'ak'arkan Tribe than tolerate the techniques of his sect being diminished. If he hears you go in that direction during the negotiations, he may even pick a fight then and there."

"You make it sound like he will be part of the diplomatic team that will be deployed to the G'ak'arkan Tribe," Rui raised an eyebrow.

"You need an expert on long-range techniques with you. You are far from sufficient; you have only mastered three long-range techniques in your career as a Martial Artist. If the negotiations proceed favorably, then we need someone who can demonstrate the techniques that we will be trading." Carl explained patiently.

"Is it wise to send the previous diplomat who failed spectacularly?" Rui sighed.

"The wisdom of the choice of the Martial Artist chosen for this role is up in the air. However, Martial commissioner Derun was the one who made the decision. I was told that you and Senior Ceeran have a good relationship, which probably factored into her decision. The diplomatic mission is hard enough already, we cannot afford disunity in our diplomatic team."

Rui sighed. He suspected as much himself, it couldn't be a coincidence that Senior Ceeran was the one appointed as the long-range expert and consultant. Martial commissioner Derun was probably aware of the submission of the Pathfinder technique that Rui had given to the Longranger Sect.

"How much diplomatic training did Senior Ceeran undergo when he was chosen as a diplomat?" Rui asked.

"He tried going through all of it, to his credit." Carl sighed. "However, by the time the negotiations took place..."

"He may as well have not gone through any training or briefing," Rui chuckled, saying what Carl was reluctant to say out loud. "Well, putting that aside. I guess we should place just enough weight on their techniques to tickle their pride but not to the point we stand to make a loss," Rui noted.

"Right, there other things you can that will incentivize their cooperation with us," Carl said, before continuing. "For example, and this is risky if misapplied, if you make it so that their pride compels them to master our techniques, you could make a fruitful exchange likelier."

"True, but that won't be easy to accomplish," Rui sighed.

"Don't worry, you'll undergo some training on how to address their pride in their Martial prowess in my training program," Carl assured.

"Also, I noticed something when I was going through the reports I was given on their techniques," Rui noted. "They have a lot of remarkable techniques that allow them to accomplish impressive feats given the Realm of the Martial Artist performing them, but at the same time, what we would consider being fundamentals, they're actually quite lacking from our perspective. I think rather than bombarding them

with our most powerful techniques to impress them, they would likely be more receptive to techniques that may not be the ones we're most proud of, but would actually address some of their shortcomings. Senior Ceeran should have definitely been aware of their shortcomings, but I don't know why he didn't think of this tactic."

"Senior Ceeran is not the most rational person when it comes to long-range anything, let's just say," Carl sighed. "Your tactic sounds quite useful. You should flesh it out more when you go through my training program. Which should be significantly shortened by the fact that you have already memorized all the files surrounding this case."

Rui nodded as he gathered his thoughts.

Appealing to the pride of their techniques, appealing to their pride in their ability to learn difficult techniques, and offering techniques that would specifically shore up all of their strengths and weaknesses.

These were three mini-objectives that Rui had come up with in order to make the negotiations with the G'al'arkan Tribe go smoothly.

Of course, this wasn't everything, but it was a start. He had plenty of time to flesh out the strategy once he began his training. Furthermore, his strategy would get naturally refined as time passes due to the communication training that he would receive from the training program. Verbal and non-verbal expression were avenues that any diplomat needed to master, and with the high cognitive parameters that Rui had demonstrated, he would probably be judged to be able to handle much more rigorous training than his predecessors.

They spoke for quite some more time until the conversation finally winded to a halt.

"This has been the fruitful of discussions, Squire Quarrier." Carl smiled, getting up. "This discussion was meant to gauge the depth of your understanding and capability in several areas to judge where I would have to begin and to finetune the training and briefing program to suit your needs. But you have made my job considerably easier, you cannot imagine how difficult it was to train your predecessors to a bare minimum acceptable degree, and ultimately, I failed, clearly. But I am quite optimistic about you, I look forward to seeing the outcome."

Rui smiled, getting up himself. "I appreciate your confidence in me, and I will strive to do my best."

Chapter 635: Chieftain

Rui's training began in earnest. Yet for what was perhaps the first time in his second life, he was not training in his Martial Art. Instead, he dedicated most of his time to verbal and non-verbal communication as well as the most optimal communication tactics with the specific high-profile members of the G'ak'arkan Tribe.

"This is tribe leader N'Kunu," Carl brought up an image that the previous diplomatic team managed to snag of the unsuspecting fellow.

It was an image that Rui had seen before, just looking at it gave him an impression of power. The man had light skin and an imposing figure. His face and body were vividly colored in a manner that was traditional to the indigenous tribe he wore several adornments in addition to the traditional garb of the G'ak'arkan Tribe, indicating his status as the tribe leader.

"As I'm sure you know, N'Kunu is ninety-seven years old and has been the leader of the G'ak'arkan Tribe for the past thirty years, taking over from the previous tribe leader." Carl rehashed the facts. "It has taken us quite some time to form a profile on him, but we have managed to do so. Contrary to our expectations that we have of the leader of a highly militant, aggressive, and proud tribe, chieftain N'Kunu is more stable than the other Martial Artists of his tribe, relatively speaking. There have been several instances in previous negotiation sessions with the G'ak'arkan Tribe that were quite dire and could have easily deteriorated for the worst. It is not an exaggeration to say that the composure that chieftain N'Kunu displayed is one of the greatest reasons that hostilities didn't break down between the G'ak'arkan Tribe and our diplomatic team."

Rui nodded as he recalled the transcripts of the diplomatic meeting between the Senior Ceeran and N'Kulu. There is no doubt that the man was being highly considerate of the fact that a fight breaking out at that point in time would end up causing a lot of damage to the G'ak'arkan Tribe. Even if he had, like the rest of his tribe, grown up possessing their highly aggressive, warmongering, and proud temperament, he needed to have greater awareness and foresight as the leader of his tribe. Otherwise, his poor decisions would lead to the destruction of his own tribe.

"He is the greatest stakeholder of the G'ak'arkan Tribe," Carl pointed out. "As the peak of the only hierarchy that is centered around power, his word possesses the greatest weight. He is the oldest and the strongest, and that is why he's the leader. If the negotiations go poorly such that he refuses any

possibility of a trade, then you can rest assured that it doesn't matter what the rest of the tribe thinks. Even the other two younger and weaker Martial Seniors are unlikely to question him."

He turned to Rui. "In addition to the set of interests of the G'ak'arkan Tribe that we have gone through in previous conversation, what additional interests do you think this man possesses?"

"It seems clear that his desire for the survival of his tribe is greater than that of his fellow tribesmen. I'd say that the responsibility that he bears has been made less insane than the rest of the tribe he leads. He's probably the reason that this tribe is doing as well as it has," Rui analyzed as he stared at the image of the man. "Still, that's by their standards. From what it seems like, he still has demonstrated highly militant and aggressive tendencies, it's just that he's likely much more careful. In fact, I would venture to guess that the reason hostilities haven't broken out between us is that he has realized the fact that someone as strong as he has been deployed as a mere diplomat means that the 'tribe' that we represent is unfathomably stronger than the G'ak'arkan Tribe. While he has still demonstrated highly aggressive tendencies towards us despite likely realizing this, he has never crossed a line. I believe that he should be most receptive to our negotiations. It is a shame that the Martial Union is unwilling to divulge the secret to the Master Realm to Chieftain N'Kulu. I'm sure he would agree to our dealer in a heartbeat, just based on that alone."

"Martial commissioner Derun has been exceedingly clear and explicit with the negotiation capital that you possess as a diplomat," Carl replied with a measured look. "She has, in no uncertain terms, made clear that the secret to the Master Realm is more valuable than every single technique of every Martial Tribe on Vilun Island, and cannot be used as a negotiation chip. Even if you did bring it up as a negotiation chip, you would be penalized and the Martial Union would never follow through. So forget about it."

Rui wordlessly stared at Carl as he tried to reign in his curiosity.

Of course, he highly doubted that Carl knew anything about the secret to the Master Realm. He was a diplomatic and foreign affairs trainer and was only a mid-level ambassador in the prime of his career. Hell, he was sure that even Martial Commissioner Derun was unaware of this highly sensitive piece of information. At best, she was informed of its value.

Of course, Rui could also understand why they had chosen not to divulge it. Martial Masters were strategic assets of extremely high value. They were significant forces to be reckoned with by every nation. Handing over the path to the Master Realm to forces that didn't possess the secret was a reckless move.

It was no different from nations on Earth freely teaching other nations on Earth how to construct short-range ballistic missiles in exchange for a few hand grenades!

Rui put this matter aside as they discussed the profiles of the most significant personalities of the G'ak'arkan Tribe. Rui had to keep track of all the significant stakeholders of the tribe, which happened to be the strongest Martial Artists of the tribe.

Chapter 636: Concerns

"You're pronouncing it wrong!" A woman hissed at Rui. "It's H'ahmatouoho, not H'ahmatooho!"

"H'ah-H'ahmatouoho?" Rui stuttered.

"Not bad but do better!" She glared at him, seemingly uncaring of his status as a Martial Artist.

If not for the fact that Rui retained the patience and maturity that came with fifty-nine years of life, he may very well have lost patience with his highly passionate linguistic trainer in his training of the Vilun dialect.

Rui struggled with the tongue-twisting number of syllables that every word seemed to have. Even a simple greeting had as many syllables as a normal sentence in the Kandrian language.

"I would like to revisit the wisdom of relying on a translator." Rui straightforwardly told Carl.

"Nice try, but no," Carl replied, amused.

"Senior Ceeran could rely on a translator," Rui pointed out. "Why can't I do the same?"

"Senior Ceeran easily has enough clout to do away with having to learn a dialect," Carl honestly replied. "Learning new languages is too difficult for him and is far too not worth his time as a Martial Senior. The

first point entirely does not apply to you, and the fact that you're an external member of the Martial Union does not help you either."

Rui sighed as he resumed his training with the linguistic trainer.

Thankfully, it appeared that the dialect was much smaller, simpler, and less sophisticated structurally. This was reflected in the state of their development as a society. They were highly primitive in every sense. Their developments as far as theoretical, esoteric science and technology were practically non-existent with the sole exception being their mysterious and albeit much inferior version of the Squire evolution breakthrough.

Asides from that, the very concept of economics was non-existent, their geography was limited to that of the island, their history was not well documented and recorded, and their sense of sociology was highly warped and limited.

This meant that their language was equally limited because their communication was also highly limited. As a citizen of the Kandrian Empire, there were vast amounts of information that could and was communicated regarding matters of the world they lived in and their lives in it.

The same couldn't be said for the Martial tribes of Vilun island.

Their conception of reality was fundamentally far more limited.

Nouns and verbs could be listed down on a single page, if one really tried hard. They fought, they ate, they slept and they built families.

This made Rui's job easier, had it been a highly complex and sophisticated language of the Panama Continent, Rui didn't think that he would have agreed to the mission if they had insisted on learning the language. However, its simplicity managed to compel him.

"You have a meeting with Martial commissioner Derun soon if I'm not wrong," Carl mentioned to him once the Vilun dialect learning session came to an end.

"Indeed," Rui sighed.

The two chatted informally for a bit. They had grown more familiar with each other and had dispensed with formalities as they focused on preparing Rui as much as possible for the diplomatic mission.

Rui simply headed for Martial commissioner Derun's office when the time for the appointment came.

"Squire Quarrier, you're here right on time," She smiled as Rui walked in.

"Hello, Martial commissioner," Rui walked in.

"Please, have a seat," She waved at it. "I've heard your training and briefing program has been going quite well."

"I'm just doing my best," Rui modestly offered.

"And yet Carl has informed me that at the rate that you're growing, you will achieve the desired results within a third of the total projected time," She smiled.

"Part of it has to do with the fact that the Mind Palace technique has allowed me to memorize all the data that would otherwise have to be painstakingly studied," Rui shrugged. "Still, it is optimistic nonetheless, I suppose."

"Indeed," She nodded. "I called you here today to finalize your team. I figured you ought to know."

"I thought that had already been decided," Rui raised an eyebrow.

"Not officially, no," She shook her head as she pulled out a document from her desk, handing it to Rui.

"Much of your team are diplomatic assistants and employees who partook in the previous diplomatic endeavors with the G'ak'arkan Tribe. Including, of course..." She gave another document.

"Senior Ceeran..." Rui muttered as he opened the document, detailing the profile of the man.

"I heard you may have had some apprehensions with Senior Ceeran," She mentioned. "I wanted to hear your thoughts from you personally."

"I have had a decent dynamic with Senior Ceeran, though I do not possess any working relations with him at the moment. He evaluated my technique and was quite pleased by it, and we got along well enough thanks to that. It's truly nothing special," Rui clarified. "I did have some concerns. I understand that a long-range Martial Artist is needed to demonstrate techniques, after all, the G'ak'arkan Tribe is not going to take us at our word for this matter. However..."

"You can speak freely," She said, noticing a hint of hesitation from him.

"I am fearful of the impact Senior Ceeran can have on the mission," Rui sighed. "He is a prestigious Martial Senior, I can easily see him becoming the spiritual leader of the diplomatic mission and hijacking my position as the lead diplomat due to this. I also fear for him triggering a conflict with the leaders of the G'ak'arkan Tribe due to his extreme pride in his techniques and the techniques of his Martial Sect. I have gone through the transcripts of his interactions with the chieftain, and let's just say they are not the most reassuring."

"Your concerns are very valid," Martial commissioner Derun nodded. "However, you can rest assured. Senior Ceeran has taken responsibility for his failures as a diplomat and has fully conceded the role. He has also, in writing, guaranteed his cooperation with an assisting role."

Rui's skeptical expression revealed that he did not find her reassurances very reassuring.

Chapter 637: Month

"You seem skeptical," Martial commissioner Derun noted.

"Writing isn't much of a guarantee. Especially when we're thousands of kilometers away from the Kandrian Empire," Rui replied, with a measured tone.

"That is true, but you can rest assured about Senior Ceeran's sincerity. He has vowed not to overstep his boundaries to his direct superior, Master Haloen, the co-leader of the Longranger Sect," She informed him. "I can assure you that Senior Ceeran would not break his word against that personage for any reason."

Rui raised an eyebrow at her words. The fact that Martial commissioner Derun went this far to obtain a guarantee for his compliance meant that the Martial Union had considerable interest in the mission succeeding.

"Alright then," Rui shrugged. "I suppose I'll just have to be content with that."

He turned towards the first document that she had given him. "And how do I know that these members assigned to my team are going to respect my authority? What if they naturally defer to Senior Ceeran?"

"You can rest assured that that won't happen," She reassured him. "Those diplomats were present when Senior Ceeran nearly jeopardized any chance of the mission succeeding. And it was they who did their best to prevent that from happening. They do not have any natural inclination towards following Senior Ceeran's leadership, instead, as long as you show them that you are level-headed and are going to execute this mission rationally, they will undoubtedly follow your lead and support you when you need it."

Rui nodded.

It wasn't as though there was anything else that he could do in the first place at all.

They conversed for a bit more before the conversation ended.

Time passed as Rui continued his briefing and training. With each passing day, he would become increasingly adept at the Vilun dialect. The biggest problem with him was not memorizing the language and the script but being able to fluently pronounce all the words. He simply gritted his teeth as he bore the tough and harsh linguistic training from his passionate tutor.

The other aspects were far easier and quicker. Communication was an important field that he spent a lot of time on. Gaining a greater degree of awareness of his demeanor, tone, facial expressions, as well as his micro-expressions, allowed him to learn to exert an appropriate amount of control over them at all times.

He found the process of learning to exert fine control and manipulation to be quite fascinating. His tutor would engage in a number of honest and earnest discussions with him at all times. Each discussion was meant to evoke certain emotions and reactions out of Rui to record and measure what his authentic non-verbal communication looked like when he was angry, happy, sad, and a number of other more elementary reactions.

Then the training team took those recordings and created an extensive training program that was aimed at teaching Rui how to bring up those authentic facial expressions and micro-expressions identically. Rui not only learned exactly what he looked like when he was genuinely experiencing a particular emotion or particular sets of emotions but also learned to replicate it on demand.

Much to the surprise of the training team, he absorbed the lessons and training like a sponge. It was just a matter of time before he reached a level that was competent even by their standards.

Rui also fleshed out his negotiation strategy and tactics with Carl in long and extended meetings with the man. They had already fleshed out the broad big picture with him long ago, but now they filled in every chink they could find to the best of their abilities. Rui had come up with plans to buy the support of every major stakeholder of the G'ak'arkan Tribe.

They focused on opening statements, initial persuasion, and negotiation tactics as well as the initial presentation of their case. By the time they were done at the end of the month, Rui was actually proud and confident in what they had managed to hatch up.

He had also gotten acquainted with his team before his briefing and training program ended, and they soon became part of the program to establish an understanding between everyone on the team.

Even Senior Ceeran showed up when Rui's training and briefing ended.

"To think we would meet again under these circumstances," The man eagerly greeted Rui. "When I heard that you had been chosen as the new diplomat, I had to admit it was a great choice. Given how shrewd you are, you have a better chance of succeeding than I did!"

"Haha... Thanks for your vote of confidence, Senior Ceeran," Rui laughed awkwardly as he observed the man.

To his surprise, he didn't show any reluctance in his position on the mission.

"Any help you need my boy, you need only ask, those idiots got mad when I pointed out that they had much more to gain from this transaction because our techniques shit all of theirs. I hope you'll get those uncouth savages to see reason," He nonchalantly insulted them with a contemptuous expression. "Honestly, even to this day, I do not understand why I failed. It's a wonder, really."

"Yeah, I wonder why," Rui sighed.

He would have worded that stronger, but Senior Ceeran's immensely powerful aura, even when suppressed so as to not knock out all humans in the vicinity, was a glaring reminder that he could eradicate Rui with the slightest exertion.

"Never mind, it's all in the past. This time, we will succeed," His eyes narrowed as his restrained aura grew sharper. "I will get my hands on their techniques no matter what happens."

('Oh boy,') Rui once more questioned the wisdom of getting Senior Ceeran on board the mission.

He mentally prepared himself for constantly being aware and alert of Senior Ceeran, he could already sense that he ought not to let his guard down around Senior Ceeran, the man was simply not someone who could be trusted at all at this point in time.

Chapter 638: Driving Force

"How do I look?" Rui asked as he adjusted his Kandrian version of a tie.

"You look good, sir. It appears that the suit fits just fine" One of the attendants of the assistance team assigned to him replied.

He had just been provided the formal wear that he would have to wear for his role as a diplomat. It was different from the one that was normally provided to diplomats. This particular set of clothes had been specially designed to incorporate Martial elements to it, making it seem more like the ceremonial battle garb of a warrior king.

"I haven't been this formally dressed since..." Rui's eyes glazed over as he recalled the interviews he had given back when he first announced the completion of the first iteration of the VOID algorithm. It was one of the few times that he had truly gone all out with his grooming for the momentous occasion.

"Are there any discomforts or anything else of the sort, sir?" His personal attendant asked politely. "Alterations or replacements can be swiftly issued."

"None at all, it fits just fine," Rui nodded as he looked at himself in the mirror.

He glanced at his suitcase. "How much more time until boarding time is ready?"

"A little under three hours sir. The crew aboard the Veomine Starling are nearly done with their final preparatory protocols," She informed him with a courteous tone.

"Hm," Rui nodded as he glanced over at the suitcase lying at the other end of the suite.

He had been staying at a coastal branch of the Martial Union for the past day as the final preparations for the diplomatic expedition were being completed.

He spent the remaining time he had in the Kandrian Empire making sure that he had missed nothing. None of his personal belongings that he needed, and most certainly none of the documents and other things that he needed to complete the mission.

"Proof of identification... check, proof of authorization of representation of the Martial Union... check, four sets of official diplomatic uniform... check," He murmured as he meticulously ruffled through his oversized suitcase.

Sure enough, everything was in order and it was finally time to leave for Vilun Island.

"Squire Quarrier," Senior Ceeran grinned excitedly, exerting faint pressure on Rui with his elevated excitement alone. "It's time. I presume you have done everything needed to nail this diplomatic endeavor?"

"Of course," Rui nodded, maintaining a perfect façade of casual friendliness. "I intend to succeed without a doubt."

"Good to hear!" The man nodded with an approving expression.

The two made their way to the harbor, sky walking through the air.

Rui breathed deeply as he enjoyed the distinct odor of the ocean. It was easy for Rui to forget that the Kandrian Empire was a coastal nation of the north-eastern side of the Panama Continent due to the constant cold that the town of Hajin experienced.

The town of Farund was a town that was very different from that of the town of Hajin. For one, it was the only town he had seen that was busier and more bustling than the town of Hajin, barring the capital of the nation; the town of Vargard.

It was also a commercial trade hub, however, unlike the town of Hajin, it was also a coastal seaport. There was an immense amount of traffic in and out of the town. Rui could simply feel the brimming energy in the town as he skywalked towards the Farund seaport.

What drew his attention was the sunrise over the ocean. The rising sun's reflection flickered over the morning ocean.

"Good view, isn't it?" Senior Ceeran said with a surprising degree of calmness.

"The best," Rui nodded.

"You know... One of the best parts of being a Martial Artist is the ability to escape the confines of land," Senior Ceeran sighed, appreciating the beautiful visage. "It was actually one of my greatest driving motivations to become a Martial Artist, if I'm being honest."

Rui turned to him in surprise. "Is that so?"

"It certainly is," He nodded. "I used to look up at the sky and feel a burning desire to walk across it."

Rui felt quite surprised. He had always thought Senior Ceeran was a simple man with a singular motivation and objective not too different from his own at all. A person who single-mindedly pursued a single objective; his Martial Path.

Perhaps there was a greater nuance that Rui wasn't aware of, people were complicated.

"Of course, that was just one reason," The man sighed.

"Does that mean you grew less motivated after you became Martial Squire?" Rui asked.

"Perhaps..." The man admitted, surprising Rui once more.

"That's hard to imagine," Rui admitted. "Given how driven you seem to be,"

"Thank you, it's reassuring to hear that from you," The man smiled. "It gives me more hope for reaching the Master Realm. Perhaps, I still meet the threshold to cross into the upper Realms."

Rui's eyebrow furrowed as he considered the implications of his words. "Did you... just inadvertently reveal the breakthrough condition to the Master Realm?"

"Haha, no." The man chuckled, amused. "It's more like one of the implicit necessities for eventually reaching higher Realms."

Rui raised an eyebrow at those confounding words.

"It makes sense when you think about it," The man explained, noticing Rui's confusion. "How far one can go, in any field of pursuit, depends on how strong their driving force is. The stronger the driving force, the further you can go before you stop. The same is true for the Martial Realms,"

Rui wordlessly listened as the aged Martial Artist candidly offered valuable insights.

"People strive to be Martial Artists for various reasons... Power, money, prestige, and love. These motivations, desires, and objectives are our driving forces. Unfortunately, most driving forces, regardless of which category they're in, aren't strong enough to drive them to the upper Realms. Do you understand?"

Rui nodded. "You need strong motivations to reach the upper Realms."

"Well yes, but that wasn't what I meant," He shook his head. "The truth is, not only are they not strong enough to reach the highest of Realms, but they're too weak to even survive beyond a certain level."

Chapter 639: Surpass

Rui's eyebrows knitted at those words. Unlike his previous words, they didn't make any intuitive sense to Rui. Driving forces of Martial Artists being too weak to survive beyond a certain level?

"I don't understand," Rui interjected. "What does that mean?"

The man remained silent for a few seconds, before finally replying. "Take, for example, one of the examples I just gave you; money. You would be surprised by the number of people that pursue Martial Art to gain greater wealth. After all, Martial Squires like yourself can earn an income in the top five percent to the top one percent of incomes in the entire nation."

Rui nodded. Lashara had even refused the significant sums of money that Rui offered her, it was so much money that the Quarrier Orphanage didn't know what to do with it! Lashara did not want to aggressively expand the Orphanage's scale because there was no way that the current caretakers would be able to handle anything drastic. She was extremely reluctant to rely on hired aid, causing her to reject any such notions.

"However, if one becomes a Martial Artist in their pursuit of wealth. What do you think happens to their motivation once they obtain wealth? As I said, Martial Squires like yourself are quite wealthy. A person whose objective to obtain money is their driving force will lose motivation to grow stronger and pursue their Martial Path after they have accomplished that objective, naturally. After all, they have completed the objective of the pursuit which caused them to grow stronger. They will no longer have reason to grow stronger, and thus no longer have a driving force to grow stronger." Senior Ceeran explained. "That's what I mean by their driving force not even surviving past a certain stage."

"That actually makes a lot of sense," Rui grew absorbed in thought. "Unless the person has extremely difficult ambitions with wealth, like becoming the richest person on the entire continent or something, they will lose their driving force long before they reach higher Realms."

"Exactly," The man sighed. "That is the true core reason why so few Martial Artists reach the highest of Realms. It takes a truly powerful and resilient driving force to push through the restrictive barriers within each Realm and the gigantic walls that stand between each Realm. Martial Masters are all truly powerful beings with driving forces that drove them all the way past three Martial Realms and into the Master Realm. These personages possess driving forces that are much stronger than any shallow objective such as wealth."

"I haven't met many Martial Masters, I've only spoken to one more than once, a retired one." Rui sighed.

"You shouldn't underestimate him just because he's retired," Senior Ceeran gave him a measured look. "The old man didn't become a Martial Master by sitting at his table doing nothing. He isn't a headmaster because he wants to kick back and relax. The old man has grand ambitions and designs for the Martial world that cannot possibly be achieved without the power that he possesses today."

Rui grew extremely curious at those words. In all the time that Rui had known Master Aronian, he had never learned anything truly significant about the man, besides from the fact that he held Rui with high regard.

"And what exactly is he trying to achieve?" Rui asked.

Senior Ceeran shook his head after a few seconds "It's not for me to say. The point is that while there are strong impediments that Martial Artists face within each Realm, the true reason that many of us don't overcome them is because of ourselves."

Rui processed his words. "Is that why you're willing to go far to accomplish your goals?"

Senior Ceeran nodded. "It's reaffirming my own conviction and ambition."

Rui felt that he had come to understand the man much better in the span of this small conversation than he did before. The man drove himself far, perhaps too far sometimes, in order to ensure that he never got too comfortable with what he currently possessed. He did not want to let his driving force grow dull and soft. He primed himself to never let that happen.

He also felt better about his own situation. That was because his driving force was extraordinarily difficult to achieve.

('It's not so simple though,') Rui shook his head.

On a fundamental level, Rui simply wanted his pursue his Martial Path for as long and far as he could, preferably forever!

This desire was open-ended and could never be fulfilled no matter how strong he became, intrinsically.

On the other hand, he also did possess a more specific objective; fulfilling Project Water. The project that he set out to achieve a lifetime ago. Furthermore, he had upgraded the difficulty of the project astronomically more difficult by expanding it to include everything in this world too, which was exponentially harder than if he had just limited it to Earth standards.

These two desires served as his greatest driving forces in his pursuit of power, and he was very confident that they were powerful enough to drive him to much greater Realms of power and much deeper down

his Martial Path. Up to this point, his rate of growth was truly spectacular and didn't seem to show any signs of slowing down, if anything, it had only accelerated the stronger he got!

It was a good reaffirmation that he was on the right path. As long as he gave himself time, his driving forces would propel him to heights that even he couldn't fully imagine!

"That's good," Senior Ceeran suddenly said with an approving nod as he watched Rui. "You possess what it takes to enter the Senior Realm, at least. I can't say if you'll go any further, but I'm certain that one day you will surpass me as I am today. Truly, I cannot wait to see that day."

"Neither can I," Rui replied.

The two of them silently sky-walked slowly towards their destination.

Chapter 640: Surprise

"Welcome aboard the Veomine Eagle, sir," A man wearing a naval cap with the emblem of the Martial Union said as they boarded, bowing. "I am Captain Crartas, the captain of this ship."

"Pleasure to meet you, captain," Rui replied with a smile. "I believe the journey to Vilun Island will take ten days?"

"That's correct sir. This ship is an Eagle-class ship with an occupation capacity of five hundred passengers and a storage capacity meant to carry goods that would enable medium to long-term inhabitation aboard the ship. Furthermore, this ship possesses battleship grade hull and thus also weighs us down, slowing us down in the process" The man replied seamlessly. "Therefore its speed isn't its strong suit."

"I get it, it needs to be able to handle a hit or two in case the diplomatic mission goes awry," Rui instantly figured.

"Yes sir," The man gave Rui a measured stare.

After all, whether it took a beating or not depended on whether Rui was able to do his job as he was expected to.

"I presume we won't be able to take a straight route to Vilun Island, correct?" Rui asked as he looked at a map placed in the conference room.

"Not exactly, sir, there will be several deviations in our route to avoid the many landmasses in between the Kandrian Empire and Vilun Island," Captain Crartas turned towards the map, himself.

It was large enough that even though it covered the entirety of the Panama Continent, Rui was able to have a clear view of all the landmasses between Vilun Island and the Panama Continent.

There were countless such islands in the ocean.

It was as though the Panama Continent was a half-eaten cookie with eaten edges and the surrounding islands were chunks and smaller pieces of the cookie. They grew smaller the further they were from the main continent.

It was an interesting map.

It gave Rui the impression that there only was a singular continent once, but perhaps some major geological event happened that caused the edges of the continent to break off, causing all kinds of islands to form all around the Panama Continent. Some calamitous planetary events eons in the past with such tremendous power that the very continent suffered damage.

Rui thought about it for a few seconds before shrugging.

Regardless of what it was, it wasn't as though it would ever affect him, right?

"How much more time till the journey begins?" Rui asked.

"The ship crew have all long boarded and have assumed duty, the diplomatic team, the security team, and the intelligence team are nearly done with their final steps sir," The captain duly informed.

"Hm..." Rui nodded.

Each of these teams was there to facilitate the mission in their own way.

The diplomatic team, of course, was the only team that Rui was familiar with. These included assistants that would help him with any and all needs regarding the actual diplomatic mission. In the past month, he had spent some time with them just enough to get a bare basic understanding of each other so they didn't get in each other's way.

The security team was a team of Martial Squires meant to guard the Veomine Eagle against any damage of any kind. This was a considerable investment of Martial capital from the Martial Union, but Rui understood why they had offered such a degree of security.

Without the security of a Martial Squire team protecting them, Rui and Senior Ceeran would not be able to focus on the mission of worries about their security. Furthermore, neither of them was particularly effective at underwater combat that involved fighting against powerful underwater creatures, unlike aquatic-oriented Martial Artists.

Admittedly, Rui did feel safer and at ease. Especially when there were Martial Squires engaged in constant surveillance so that he didn't have to.

The intelligence team was there to help Rui obtain any information that he might seek in the middle of the completion of the mission in order to successfully complete it. It was reckless and stupid of him to try and obtain them himself, thus there were specialists who were assigned for this specific possibility.

The best part was that because both the technology and diversity of Martial Art of the G'ak'arkan Tribe were highly limited compared to that of the Martial Union, the technological measures and systems that were employed to gather intelligence were going to be much more effective than they usually were. The best part was the lack of awareness on their side, thus they would not take the measures that they could take with what they had and what they could.

"Ah..." Captain Crartas looked at his comms device. "The assigned heads of the diplomatic and the security team are on their way here, sir, I imagine they'd want to meet you as well,"

"Of course," Rui nodded. "I look forward to meeting them, they are valued assets on this mission, after all."

Soon enough, a man entered the conference room where the two of them were. He wore a Martial uniform of the Martial Union, but Rui sensed his concealed Squire-level aura coming from a mile away.

"Captain Crartas, Squire Quarrier..." He nodded at both of them. "I am Squire Captain Vermeal Clonsky, a pleasure to meet both of you."

The two men greeted him, engaging in light topics such as the coordination of their nominal duties and teams before Squire Vermeal turned to Rui.

"Oh yeah, one thing," He said, recalling something. "I heard that one of the Martial Squires of the intelligence team wanted to speak to you. He's coming along with the captain at this moment."

"Is that so..." Rui frowned. "Are you sure it's a Martial Squire?"

His senses told him there were only two humans walking toward the conference room.

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Rui turned towards the door, before widening his eyes in shock.

"Captain, Squires. I am special agent Cravis," She said with a completely neutral tone. "And this is the Martial Squire assigned to our team..."

She gestured to the green-haired and green-eyed young man standing beside her.

"...Squire Kane Arrancar."