

Martial Unity 641

Chapter 641: Kane

"Kane?!" Rui blurted out in surprise.

"What's up Rui?" Kane grinned, as he walked forward. "Didn't expect to see me here, huh?"

"At all," Rui laughed.

The two clasped hands, exchanging a hug.

"What are you doing here?" Rui asked.

"Well, after re-mastering the Void Step technique and some others in the past ten months, the Martial Union gave me an internal commissioned mission very recently," Kane shrugged. "I was highly inclined to apply for a decline... until I learned that the mission was surrounded around you. So I accepted, and here I am."

He opened his arms with a smirk.

Rui's eyes lit up at that story.

"Of course, how could I possibly forget? You would be highly invaluable on this mission," Rui realized.

Rui wouldn't be surprised that out of all the possible Martial Squires that could be deployed with the intelligence gathering team, Kane was probably one of the most attractive candidates due to his mastery of the Void Step technique. It was no wonder that he was offered the spot, especially considering that he had most certainly shown a pattern of picking international missions in order to spend as much time away from his family's sphere of influence.

"This just makes things much better," Rui grinned. He would have a friend tagging along with him.

The four of them exchanged some words before Rui and Kane walked away from the conference room.

"So you've come here in your capacity as an infiltrator... Interesting," Rui noted. "I thought they'd send a long-range sensor."

"Well, they already have esoteric tech that can do that," Kane shrugged. "But infiltrating into the base camp of the G'ak'arkan Tribe is something that it can't."

Rui nodded. That was definitely a good asset to have at hand.

"You've improved," Rui told him. "Even right now, I can't sense anything but a normal human. This technique..."

"Mind Mask," Kane nodded. "You'd told me about it a long time ago, and frankly, it's too relevant to me for me to ignore it. So I did master it."

This meant that sensing Kane had just gotten much harder.

Rui recalled how effective the fusion of the Mind Mask technique and the Shadow Step technique that he had back when he was a Martial Apprentice was. While it still was inferior to Void Step, Rui had managed to achieve a knock-off that was not too far off.

However, he wasn't sure that he would even be able to sense Kane at all now that he had mastered both techniques alone.

The two bantered along for a bit more, talking about certain matters before they reached their current mission.

"So, diplomat mission huh?" Kane mused. "Never expected you to take this kind of mission given how much you care about pursuing your Martial Path and elevating your Martial Art. These kinds of missions never see combat."

"You're right, they don't," Rui nodded. "But what they do see are things that you could never see otherwise. The Squire Realm is all about diverging your path, well, it helps to see what others who have diverged their lives from everybody else have accomplished. The G'ak'arkan Tribe may not be able to compare to the Martial Union at all, but given what they had, they sure have accomplished a hell of a lot."

"That is true, this is an interesting mission. Not to mention that is one hell of a distance away from the Kandrian Empire so I'm happy to be here too," Kane mused. "Hell, maybe I can consider this island as my hiding spot from my family. They sure as hell won't even think to look here."

"And what? Spend the rest of your life amongst warmongering tribes who will pester you worse than your family does?" Rui joked.

The two of them bantered for some more before finally splitting ways.

"I got some protocols to follow, so I probably won't be able to see you very often during this mission," Kane informed him. "Still, anything you need, let me know."

"Will do," Rui nodded before they went apart.

Rui sighed as he focused back on his mission.

Suddenly, he heard the speakers project a voice.

[This is your captain Crartas speaking, we will be departing right on schedule for the departure of mission code MU42Wi413... Please be sure to...]

"Finally," He sighed as he felt the cruise ship moving away from the port as it head deeper into the ocean.

The mission was a lot more complicated than almost any other mission that he had ever been a part of, except for the Serevian Dungeon wars. However, back then he was simply a strategically valuable foot

soldier. But now, he was leading this diplomatic mission, which meant the burden placed on his soldiers was much higher.

"Ah, Squire Quarrier," A familiar voice called out to him.

"Senior Ceeran," Rui turned, smiling. "What can I do for you?"

"Oh, it's nothing at all," He shrugged. "I just learned that you have seen fit not to put me on your counsel."

Rui sighed. "Look, with all due respect, Senior Ceeran, this is a decision that received near unanimous support from the diplomatic team. It was recommended against unless there were specific interests needed, and I'm afraid that this just isn't the case this time. Due to certain incidents, I'm afraid I really cannot change my decision."

There was silence.

Rui was relatively certain that he had been the first Martial Squire that had been this blunt with him since he became a Martial Senior.

Still, Rui was relatively confident in his decision to be straightforward and honest with the man. Based on everything he understood about him, he was quite certain that Senior Ceeran was not somebody who would lose his temper and leverage his political power or, worse, his Martial power to suppress Rui and jeopardize the entire mission.

Even if he was that kind of a person, Rui was relatively certain that he had very little wiggle room as far as what he could accomplish went in this particular mission due to the past.

Chapter 642: Week

To his credit, Senior Ceeran did not display even a hint of anger or suppression of anger. So unless his mastery over his non-verbal communication had reached a level similar to what Rui's was, it was highly likely that Rui had been right.

"That takes courage," Senior Ceeran smiled. "I hadn't expected you to be that firm."

"Well, it is my mission, not yours," Rui reminded him. "I do not want this mission being botched, and I certainly don't want it happening under my watch."

"Relax kiddo, I had no such intention. I don't want control over your mission or anything of the sort, believe it or not," Senior Ceeran huffed. "The reason I brought it up is that there was a reason that a Martial Senior like me was chosen for this mission. You're a Martial Squire. They won't take you as seriously. I don't think you'd even get to meet that bastard N'Kulu."

"Yeah well, that won't be an issue," Rui replied.

"Why not?" Senior Ceeran asked, curious.

"Because of this," Rui closed his eyes as he used an ability he truly had not used in a long time. He exercised his imagination as he created a powerful mind mask that would boost his projected power tremendously.

The atmosphere grew taut as the sheer amount of pressure that Rui gave out wrung it to the limit. The sheer amount of peril he exuded far surpassed anything a Martial Squire of his caliber should have been capable of.

This was the projected power amplification that the Mind Mask technique was capable of at its peak. Normally, the degree enhancement wasn't this exaggerated, however, Rui was far more capable of doing so that any other person that had mastered the technique.

However, despite all this, Senior Ceeran was completely unfazed. "Impressive, you're exuding the power of a grade nine Martial Squire, almost grade ten. Though you should not be above grade five. I had forgotten about this technique of yours, you had used it to bring us a great many victories for the Martial Union in the Serevian Dungeon wars. The favor for which we still owe you, by the way. But I see, that's how you plan to circumvent it,"

Rui nodded. "If I'm not wrong, then there isn't a single Martial Squire in the entire Martial Tribe. Which means that by their own standards, they're going to need to call in at least one Martial Senior to address me and that's a good enough start."

"...I see," Senior Ceeran accepted it with grace. "You genuinely seem to have it all covered, so I should probably stop getting in the way. Call me when you need me."

"Thank you," Rui bowed, expressing the respect that someone like Senior Ceeran deserved.

The journey was quite different from anything Rui had ever taken in the second life. In between breaks, he would stand on the deck, enjoying the ocean while he occasionally chatted up with Kane.

Most of the time he spent, however, went into solidifying everything about the case.

"Alright, let's go over the opening dialogue to the M'etkanun Tribe," Rui sighed.

The M'etkanun Tribe was a tribe that lived out on the outskirts of the island, forming a ring around it. They were largely beach dwellers that were particularly fond of water, wishing they were amphibian, if not aquatic.

The Martial Artists of this tribe also slanted entirely in the affinity of aquatic environments, and so did their Martial Paths and Martial Art. They were the first ones who originally attacked the original naval exploration team that originally discovered Vilun Island. The next several diplomatic endeavors from the Martial Union's side required extensive and severe peacekeeping efforts from the Martial Union until the relationship finally returned to neutral and the tribe left the subsequent ships of the Martial Union alone.

In order to enter the island, Rui would most likely need to interact with this Martial Tribe and would need to earn some degree of non-conflict with him.

"Sir, I think what we have is definitely the best," One of the assigned diplomats of his team informed him. "There is historical precedent, thus the Martial Tribe knows that to expect, having encountered this multiple times in the past from outsiders. They willingly play along because they are the only Martial Tribe that gets tipped in this manner and gets to benefit the most out of everybody,"

"That definitely makes sense," Rui nodded.

There was no need to fix what wasn't broken.

"Alright then, putting that side matter aside, let's go over our initial contact with the G'ak'arkan Tribe then," Rui nodded as he sat back down at the table filled with files and documents as he scrolled through his accouter. "Make sure we're missing nothing and that nothing is out of order. Even the slightest mistake can set us back indefinitely. If anybody here wants to be the reason that Senior Ceeran is delayed from returning home, then be my guest."

This motivated his team significantly as they went over all the information.

However, while they paced through the documents at a slow pace, Rui had already made sure to memorize every piece of information that could even possibly be relevant.

He closed his eyes as he opened his Mind Palace, scouring through the vast amount of information stored in it up to this point since he learned the technique all those years ago.

The week to Vilun Island was one of the most nerve-racking pre-mission time periods that Rui had ever come across as he checked and rechecked everything.

('How is a mission isn't even a threat to my life making me more nervous than all of the ones that did?') Rui wondered, before sighing.

Of course, he knew. The stake, the scale, and the responsibility that he bore were far greater than that of every other mission that he had come across ever before in his entire life. Still, he couldn't help but feel quite excited about the adventures that lay ahead.

Chapter 643: Gift

Rui tapped his feet as he waited in the cockpit.

"The island has come in view," Captain Crartas as he gestured, before turning around to the crew of sailors behind him. "Alright folks, let's slow down according to protocol,"

Rui ignored the surge in the bustling of the sailors behind him. "Why slow down when the island is that close?"

"It was protocol that came into play after we realized that they cooperate better when we aren't rushing at them at top speed. They're a paranoid bunch," The captain replied.

"They already know we're here," Rui replied.

Half of the coast of Vilun Island was sharp cliffs with dangerous rock formations that protruded from below the surface. The other half was more gentle beaches that the M'etKanun Tribe resided near.

The Martial Union had no intention of infringing on the territory of one of the Martial Tribes of Vilun Island with a cruise ship, thus the only route was to scale up the cliffs that were naturally uninhabited.

Of course, the intelligence made it clear that they would not be able to interact with the M'etKanun Tribe due to their frequenting the oceans around the island.

That was why Rui was waiting for the inevitable confrontation with the M'etKanun Tribe.

He had worn the attire that the Martial Union had given to represent them, and he also had his mind mask ready and prepped to put on the second he sensed something or was alerted of something.

Rui was actually quite grateful that he had other Martial Artists engaging in surveillance because his sensory techniques weren't of much use. Tempestuous Feel was utterly useless when it came to sensing phenomena underwater, while Seismic Mapping was largely useless due to how different sound waves propagated underwater vs how seismic radiation propagated on land.

Unless the M'etKanun Tribe was incompetent enough to generate tremendous amounts of noise underwater, he would not be able to sense them coming up to him.

This had really shown him how useless he was in aquatic environments.

('I can't allow that to remain this way in the long run," He sighed.

His Martial Path was adaptive evolution, and Rui had set high ambitions that he had no intention of reneging on. That meant that he would need to learn how to adapt to even aquatic-oriented Martial Artists even in their home element.

"Sir, they're here," Squire Kravis nodded when they reached close to the island. "A few seconds."

Time slowed down in their perspective as they exchanged a nod with each other while Captain Crartas was frozen mid-air. Rui walked out of the cockpit briskly as he headed toward the front of the ship.

"They're here, sir," Another Martial Squire seamlessly shot out of the ocean and onto the ship.

"Good work," Rui nodded. "You have 'it' prepared, right?"

"Of course, sir."

Rui gazed into the waters before the ocean. His sharp senses couldn't pick up a thing aside from a few fish, except for his eyes that saw several human figures emerge to the surface of the water, skywalking before the ship.

They wore garbs that seemed to be fashioned from the aquadynamic scales of aquatic animals and other adornments that all originated from the oceans. Rui spotted many corals and shells adorning necklaces on their neck and other parts of their body.

Their patterns and designs across their body were done with squid ink.

Yet what drew his attention was their eyes.

They were prepared and willing.

Rui knew that they, like all other Martial Tribes, had no problem with picking a fight with the entire ship if necessary.

They too had set their eyes on him as well. For he had long donned the most powerful mind mask that he could muster.

Even the Martial Artists around him felt bewildered at his tremendously overpowering presence.

The five Martial Squires of the M'etKanun Tribe could see that he was the most powerful Martial Artist on the boat. Of course, this was only because he had told Senior Ceeran to wrap his aura and vibe as deep as he could, Rui could only hope that his highly magnified aura would be able to hide and overpower his highly diminished aura as well.

Thankfully, it seemed to work out.

"Greetings, respected warriors of M'etKanun Tribe," Rui smiled at them as he spread his arms, speaking fluent Vilun dialect. "We come in peace,"

"What is your purpose for coming to this island, outsider?" The strongest Martial Squire standing at the lead asked him.

His voice was deep and his tone was detached. He didn't bear any hostile intentions, but he wasn't going to be particularly friendly with them either.

"We come in peace," Rui repeated, before continuing. "We come for friendship, and we have a gift to offer to the M'etKanun Tribe."

None of them were particularly surprised.

Rui waved his hand as one of his assistants gave him a large and ostentatious box. They swiftly accepted the box from Rui's hand unceremoniously, before opening it up.

"Hm," The man nodded. "We accept the gift. Thank you. Continue"

The five of them returned to the ocean as unceremoniously as they had arrived.

For several seconds, nothing happened.

"They're gone," The Martial Squire nodded.

"That was easy," Rui shrugged. "Hope the negotiations with the G'ak'arkan Tribe are that easy."

"They won't," Senior Ceeran's voice interjected from behind. "Trust me."

At this moment, Rui was not inclined to trust anything the man had to say regarding the case, but he was right. It was one thing to respect the general claim the M'etKanun Tribe had over the waters surrounding the island as outsiders. It was another thing entirely to manage to compel the G'ak'arkan Tribe to cough up their most valued techniques that were a heritage for centuries, most likely.

"Proceed towards the island, and continue as per protocols," Rui instructed once he stepped into the cockpit.

"Aye aye, sir," The man smiled, nodding. "Onwards we go, men,"

Rui breathed deeply as the ship reached the island.

Chapter 644: Contact

Once the ship hit the island, the protocols were to immediately set up an elementary preliminary security perimeter around the ship. The ship was the most important asset to the mission as that was

the only easy way back home. Thus the Martial Union had stuffed her up with enough Martial Artists to protect her at all costs.

The second step in the chain of protocols was to construct a temporary preliminary base on neutral territory.

The base, of course, was no more than a set of tents that would be guarded by the security team. The necessary supplies and personnel would be escorted by the cliffside by the skywalking Martial Squires.

"Just a day, correct?" Rui asked.

"Yes sir," A man behind nodded. "As soon as that is done, we initiate the diplomatic negotiations."

Rui nodded as he turned back to face the mountain at the center of the island.

The development proceeded quickly, as Rui and the diplomatic team completed the final steps of preparation for the diplomatic endeavor.

A day later, it was time

"Are you ready, Stemple, Zeyra?" Rui asked the two people behind him.

The two of them were dressed in highly professional attire themselves. They carried briefcases that contained files and documents that were translated into the Vilun Dialect.

Rui turned as he breathed deeply.

The time for the first swing had arrived.

The game plan had been set, and now it was time for Rui to make sure he executed it perfectly.

"Let's get going," Rui nodded as they headed out of the tent.

Waiting outside was a motorized chariot that was specifically meant to travel through narrower paths of the mountain. It would cause a minimal amount of damage to the surrounding environment.

Rui had made sure to not give the G'ak'arkan Tribe any reason to dislike their little convoy, and that included not harming the natural environment of the mountain that they cared so much about. It was narrow, flexible, and even far more silent than a standard motorized chariot that burned special esoteric substances that caused a lot of noise.

Rui could already sense motion in the surroundings with his sharp senses and techniques. Several humans.

('Scouts of the G'ak'arkan Tribe,') Rui noted silently.

They maintained their distance from the small convoy as they made their way up a path in the small mountain.

Rui just prayed that they wouldn't use long-range techniques to try and snipe them from a great distance away. The fact that they hadn't probably meant that the G'ak'arkan Tribe was not unwilling to meet with them.

The Martial Union had taken the initiative to build good decent, albeit superficial, relationships with all of the Martial Tribes, it had taken quite a long time of occasional but regular contact with the Martial tribes. Over many years, contact and communication slowly and painstakingly elevated from highly cautious and tense interactions to increasingly familiar interactions.

Only then did the Martial Union begin the diplomatic missions to try and negotiate a way to try and obtain their highly-guarded techniques. Which led to the history of diplomatic failures to succeed with the mission.

Rui had no intention of joining that list.

It quite some time for them to reach the top of the mountain. Rui could have skywalked to the very top very quickly, but he didn't want to leave behind his assistants.

The top of the mountain was scenic and picturesque, so much so that even Rui paused for a moment to admire it.

When he turned back, he saw several humans walking toward him.

Behind them in the distance were visible signs of a settlement.

Rui got off the chariot slowly, as he took slow and measured strides forward, as his assistants nervously followed.

The air was tense, so much so that one could nearly cut it with a knife.

Rui's demeanor was calm and relaxed, yet inwardly he was sweating bullets.

First impressions mattered, and they mattered a lot.

That was why he hadn't retracted his mind mask since he put it on. He was basically a glowing beacon that irresistibly drew the attention of the warriors of the G'ak'arkan Tribe.

All of them were Martial Squires, yet every Martial Artist knew that they were all weaker than him.

Or, at least, so they thought. Rui was the only one who knew that wasn't necessarily true.

"What brings you here?" An older man stepped forward amongst all of the approaching warriors of the G'ak'arkan Tribe.

('He's the strongest without a shadow of a doubt,') Rui noted.

The man exuded a combination of power and experience, a dangerous combination that Rui didn't want to be on the receiving end of.

"We come in peace," He smiled.

His voice was clear and calm, and his speech as fluent as a gentle ebbing stream.

"We bring gifts," He waved his hand as his assistants brought forward boxes similar to that which was given to the M'etKanun Tribe. "We wish to talk,"

Rui bemoaned the lack of formal synonyms in the Vilun Dialect inwardly.

"Speak about what?" The man didn't budge as he peered down at Rui.

"An important matter," Rui replied, unyielding as he continued walking slowly towards the man.

"Speak about what?" The man insisted as he enunciated each word. "

"You are not qualified," Rui calmly stated out loud for everybody to hear. "We will negotiate with an equal, or a superior."

The man's expression soured.

Yet Rui didn't hesitate. He would not have dared to utter such words against any other dignitary of any other group or state, but with the G'ak'arkan Tribe, it was truly the right approach, and that was one of the truly remarkable things about the tribe. Their hierarchy depended on power. Unlike with other groups where Rui would rely on standard negotiation tactics, Rui needed to double down. He was not going to earn their respect without the acknowledgment that he was stronger.

This, of course, was a bit of a gamble, but they had long decided that it was worth it.

Chapter 645: Hospitality

It was more important to take a not entirely probable success versus a relatively certain failure.

"What did you say?" The man stepped forward.

The air changed as his expression crumpled in rage. His aura became more aggressive and savage.

"I respect you. I'm asking for you to respect my power," Rui replied. "Are you a warrior who cannot sense the truth?"

Rui waved around. "Because the truth is clear to everyone except you. Any warrior can see this is as plain as day."

The man followed the gesture as he looked around.

Their expressions were clear.

According to Rui's senses, he probably was a grade-six Martial Artist at most. His own projected power was leagues superior. The man-made eye-contact with his fellow tribesmen as his expression turned sour.

"We come in peace," Rui replied. "We respect your strength,"

He paused, before turning to all of them. "We respect all of your power. That is why they sent someone as powerful as me."

He gestured to himself. "We came to the G'ak'arkan Tribe because its proud and powerful warriors are the most powerful warriors of the entire island."

Had he been conversing with a trained diplomat, or even a normal Martial Artist of modern society, none of them would have fallen for flattery that shamelessly obvious.

Unfortunately for them, both Rui and Carl came to the agreement that even the age-old classics of communication and manipulation tactics would be utterly useless against people extremely aware of such tactics.

The same could not be said for the warriors of the G'ak'arkan Tribe with no culture of refined communication, no education in the field, and almost no experience in negotiating with genuine outsiders.

Of course, they weren't too stupid, but Rui's words had clearly spoken to all of them and had tickled their pride in the process. Still, that didn't make them chummy with the outsiders, however, their hostility had reduced.

"We want to talk to the G'ak'arkan Tribe because it is the most powerful Martial Tribe on Vilun Island," Rui nodded, before pausing. "But, just as we have given you the respect that all of you mighty warriors deserve, we deserve the respect of speaking with an equal, or superior."

This time, the old man was a lot more pliable.

('Don't fight the pride, harness it,) Rui smiled inwardly.

Just as he opened his mouth to respond, things changes rapidly.

A mightily powerful presence exerted itself on every sentient being. If not for the two Martial Squire bodyguards that gave them mental protection with their own auras, they would have very well fainted.

"My lord," All of the Martial Squires bowed deeply in the presence of the newly arrived figure.

The atmosphere that had previously warmed up a bit quickly crawled to a freezing halt as the gears ground and jammed.

The unadulterated might of a Martial Senior washed onto his body. Rui smiled unchangingly as he bore the mental pressure that the man unscrupulously had thrown all over him.

Rui felt more pressure put on him than he ever did before.

('Martial Senior,')

This was the first time that he had seen the mental force of the Martial Senior laid and bared out in the open.

Neither Colonel Geringan nor Senior Ceeran had demonstrated their own prowess to him in their talks. Rui never bothered asking, but he was quite curious regardless.

Suddenly, the pressure disappeared.

"He's right," The man lightly nodded, with a hint of respect. "He is stronger than all of you, and we will not leave him with someone not fit. No one in the second rank is fit to take him on."

The comment hurt, and Rui could feel that the older Martial Squire did not appreciate it.

Still, it did not matter.

The Martial Senior had already overridden his authority and control with the discussion with the diplomatic team of outsiders that had approached their Martial Tribe.

('The first objective, achieved,') Rui smiled inwardly.

The first objective in the initiation of contact with the G'ak'arkan Tribe was to enter diplomatic talks with one of the three Martial Seniors of the G'ak'arkan Tribe. The Martial Squires were pawns or, at best, slightly more valuable pieces.

Rui hadn't expected it to be this easy to obtain what he wanted, the Martial Seniors were the only ones who had the influence and power to make a decision such as trading the Martial techniques of the Marital Union.

('I pressed the right buttons and it happened.') Rui nodded.

"But, you are guests," The man straightforwardly informed Rui. "Take some rest. We will talk later."

"Thank you, we have traveled very far, thus we are tired,"

Rui didn't need the rest, but he needed to build a friendlier relationship with the G'ak'arkan Tribe. Declining an invite for hospitality would be an especially bad choice considering it was not necessary.

The Martial Squires reluctantly escorted all of them closer toward the G'ak'arkan Tribe settlement.

Soon enough, they arrived at the village of the G'ak'arkan Tribe.

Rui kept his eyes wide open, not wanting to miss a single detail. Unfortunately, he wasn't allowed to join the village, he was given a small hut at the corner of the small mini-village.

('The intelligence did not paint the most accurate picture of their nomadic lifestyle, or their lack thereof.') Rui noted.

Of course, not every piece of intelligence was one of high confidence, the Martial Union probably had the highest rate of credibility, and not everything could be accurate all the time.

('Thankfully, this doesn't change anything of my plan,') Rui noted.

"You two, get back down and back to the case, inform them that I have accepted the hospitality of the G'ak'arkan Tribe.

They needed to engage in all the detail-oriented technical stuff to be approved. While Rui played along with his hosts that had gone out of their way to show him some hospitality. He was willing to do whatever he could as long as it primed the future discussion with the G'ak'arkan Tribe in his favor.

Chapter 646: Initiation

Rui wasn't a fool, and apparently, neither was the G'ak'arkan Tribe.

('Let me, a Martial Squire rest because I'm a guest?') Rui chuckled.

Currently, he was inside a hut in the village of the G'ak'arkan Tribe, sitting on a bed, contemplating what had happened.

('As I'd expected, the Martial Squires were aggressive and prideful, but that man... He kept his cool and smoothly delayed my plans after he confirmed that I was too strong to be dealt with by them,') Rui noted.

Of course, he recognized that Martial Senior.

Even without the Mind Palace technique, he would not possibly forget one of the three youngest Martial Seniors of the G'ak'arkan Tribe.

('Hm, there may be some deviations from expectations, this early...') Rui sighed.

The intelligence on Senior F'ahru, the youngest Martial Senior out of the three Martial Seniors of the G'ak'arkan Tribe was limited. Unfortunately for Rui, there wasn't too much data on the man in previous diplomatic negotiations with the G'ak'arkan Tribe.

The problem was that the Martial Union jumped from directly dealing with the Martial Squires of the G'ak'arkan Tribe to dealing with the leader of the tribe, N'kulu. The issue was that while the previous Martial Squires that had been chosen to delegate dealt with Martial Squires, Rui was portraying himself as too strong to be dealt with any of the Martial Squires of the G'ak'arkan Tribe.

However, that did not necessarily mean he would be dealing with the Martial leader of the tribe immediately. If Rui was understanding what the intervention of the third and the youngest Martial Senior meant, then that would be the person that the G'ak'arkan Tribe was sending to negotiate with Rui.

This was a little sub-optimal for Rui because he knew the least about the man out of the three Martial Seniors.

('He seems a lot calmer and rational than the other Martial Artists of the Martial Tribe,') Rui sighed. That was exactly what he didn't want.

He would rather deal with someone more simple as far as their mentality went, than someone who could retain their composure.

Of course, Rui didn't think it was too big a deal. Part of it was because the man was a Martial Senior, and that meant there was a limit to how much Rui could impact his emotions. Rui had already long begun to feel this way about Martial Apprentices. There was very little that Martial Apprentices could do that would shake his composure.

"Only time will tell..."

And time did intend to follow through.

Soon enough, a Martial Apprentice informed Rui that the G'ak'arkan Tribe was willing to meet with him at any time. All Rui had to do was inform his assistants to hurry themselves up, and eventually, the diplomatic team reunited as they were led through the village.

Rui ignored the piercing stares from the many members of the G'ak'arkan Tribe. People of all ages came forward and out as they stared at the striding diplomatic team.

Rui was only grateful that their gaze wasn't filled with fear or contempt, but mostly curiosity. It was a good sign that the tribe did not have a strong bias against the ambassadors of the Martial Union.

Soon, the team was led towards a larger hut closer to the center of the village.

Rui didn't even need to walk in to know who was in there.

"Senior F'ahru," Rui smiled as he walked in. "I'm honored that you have chosen to hear us out."

"Have a seat, ambassador," The man gestured to the stools on the opposite side of the table. "We will humor you, even though we know what this is all about."

"What this is about..." Rui said as he took a seat. "...Is the mutual benefit of both G'ak'arkan Tribe and our Martial Union."

"Your Martial Union has failed to convince us of this matter numerous times in the past. Enough is enough." The man scoffed.

"Our Martial Union is invested in pursuing this matter and seeing it through to the end. I hope to succeed, as long as you give me a chance," Rui smiled.

"A chance, yes," The man replied smoothly. "But I assure you, getting our techniques will be nearly impossible."

"We are aware," Rui nodded. "Your techniques are highly precious to you."

"They are sacred," The man insisted. "They are the foundation of our power."

"Entering an agreement with us will strengthen that foundation," Rui explained. "What was sacred before will become divine, if you agree to cooperate with us."

"And you think your techniques are so much more special, do you? Do you think you're so much ahead that your techniques will strengthen ours? Is that what you're saying?"

The man stood up and he leaned forward with a stern expression.

To his credit, Rui remained fearless in the face of a Martial Senior glaring at him even as his assistant diplomats were shivering below the table.

Both Rui and F'ahru could sense it, but neither of them cared. They were irrelevant to the outcome of the diplomatic meeting, and they both knew it.

Rui paused for a moment as he considered his situation.

This was the tricky part that every Martial Artist that had been chosen as an ambassador for the G'ak'arkan Tribe had come across, and one that none of them had managed to overcome.

It was at this point that Rui hit an important crossroads.

He had two conventional choices at hand.

He could either refute that assertion and go down the route where he got into a pissing contest over which side had the better Martial Art techniques, challenge their pride and provoke their competitiveness and aggression and most likely get into some kind of physical conflict or competition by the end of it.

Or, he could concede that point in order to not do that, but end up devaluing the Martial techniques of the Martial Union and perhaps end up chalking up a deal where the martial Union is forced to trade thrice the number of techniques that the Martial Union was going to receive.

Chapter 647: Confrontation

"How our techniques compare, I cannot say. I certainly have not mastered all of the long-range techniques of the Martial Union, and I have but a shallow understanding of the sacred techniques of the G'ak'arkan Tribe." Rui replied. "Unfortunately, there is not a single person in the world who can say which side has better techniques."

"Then how can you say that your techniques will benefit us to the same level that ours will benefit you?" the man asked.

"Each technique can be individually evaluated by both sides and be traded with other individually evaluated techniques from the other side," Rui let him know.

"And who gets to evaluate the value of techniques in this plan?"

"We can form an evaluation board of Martial Artists on both sides that will together come to a fair consensus or compromise," Rui explained.

He knew that the Longranger Sect would celebrate in joy if that ever happened.

Although learning a new language was difficult, the Martial Union would have no problem would getting a few volunteer Martial Artists to undergo tutelage in learning the language. And although Rui did breeze through his tuition fast, it was not easy learning a new language, especially when they were Martial Artists.

This was one of the preliminary routes that Rui had created when confronted with the very dilemma that caused numerous failures in the past.

"We do not trust your Martial Artists to be fair with our techniques," The man retorted sternly.

"There are other measures that can be implemented to ensure that that won't happen," Rui explained.

"Maybe, but that still requires us to place a certain degree of trust in your so-called measures." The man shrugged lightly.

Rui paused for a moment as he considered his opponent.

"Our techniques when used along with the techniques of that of the G'ak'arkan Tribe can result in tremendous results. Results that would directly benefit your entire tribe."

Rui leaned forward towards F'ahru. "You will dominate the entire island, and all the other Martial Tribes on it,"

This was not a small claim, it was bold, but did not an unsubstantiated reasonable cause of doubt meant that it was something seriously concerning. The truth was that F'ahru could not afford to dismiss Rui's claims regarding the techniques being able to strengthen the entire clan to the point that it could overwhelm the entirety of the Martial Tribes on the entire island.

"But, it gets better," Rui explained. "You can offer greater to the protection of the most vulnerable part of the Tribe."

"We protect them just fine as we are now," He snarled.

Rui nodded. "Yet, is there such a things as too much protection for the ones that we care about most and fight for the most."

"That's not enough, I'm afraid," F'arhu declined Rui's advanced once more.

Rui sighed as he sat back in his chair.

Of course, Rui could continue in that regard, but he paused for a moment.

(If he's playing this hard to me at the face of every proposal, then this is more than just a simple disagreement.

He thought back to the three interests that he headed done deep into his talks with Carl. He needed to harness their desire for domination of the other Martial Tribes of Vilun Island. Of course, he did not expect that it would fail to be effective at all.

Rui got the faint feeling that he was probably missing something. These kinds of situations usually meant that his gut was onto something.

"Well, with the techniques we give you, then you could easily fight multiple wars at once with your newfound power," Rui offered. "You could pick a fight with all of them and still come out on top."

The man stared at Rui hard.

Rui smiled magnanimously.

He had already revealed to the man two of his three opening arguments to win over the three abstract interests of the G'ak'arkan Tribe. Unfortunately, they did not seem to be as shocking as Rui has hoped it would.

"That... is still not good enough reason for us to part with the techniques that we hold sacred, ambassador," The man gritted his teeth as he stared at Rui. "Unless you have something more?"

"I don't understand..." Rui leaned in forward as he dropped his diplomatic front for a moment. "You don't want our techniques even though it is going to help you dominate the various Martial Tribes on Vilun Island. It is a technique that will allow the G'ak'arkan Tribe to eternally engage in war with how many ever martial Tribes you wish. Furthermore, despite the solution of allowing Martial Artists working together to ensure that each technique, regardless of which side that they were on, would allow you to foster greater exchange with the techniques of both sides. Yet you seem very determined to decline my offers."

The man snorted, waving his hands.

"I don't know... because it seems to me like you're rejecting our offers due to the fear of something else," Rui wondered, asking out loud

"What did you just say to me?" The man stood up as he towered Rui.

Rui's two diplomatic assistants shivered at that.

Yet Rui was as cool as a cucumber. He was highly certain that the Martial Senior would not do anything to him for any reason.

There were far too many friendlies in the surrounding area, for whom Rui had gotten all of them to serve as a passive shield.

Rui was too strong for a Martial Squire of his projected caliber, for F'ahru would require to exert himself far too much to kill Rui that would also cause a lot of casualties in the village. A senior-level attack is no joke.

This was, of course, a high-level attack that be far too overpowering, especially when he was a long-range martial Artist, and that meant that he could not turn act on his any towardly desire that he may have momentarily been overcome by the fact that Rui had chosen his tactics well.

Chapter 648: Outcome

Of course, Rui knew what he was doing.

His dedication and training had paid off.

"I'm afraid that it truly does seem to me that maybe you don't think that the Martial Artists of your Martial Tribe could master our difficult techniques?" Rui shrugged.

"That is not true!" The Martial Senior insisted. As he gritted his teeth, glaring down at Rui.

"If you say so," Rui sighed. "Because it would be a true insult to the mighty warriors of the G'ak'arkan Tribe if they were implied that they couldn't handle something as simple as the training required our techniques."

At this point, Rui was not even talking to him at all.

He was talking to every Martial Squire that was listening to the conversation.

This was, once again, triggering their pride. The more he riled them into potentially believing that the Martial Tribe did not think they were capable of doing so. After all, why else would they refuse the offer?

Rui graciously built up a good image of the warriors of the G'ak'arkan Tribe with swifter smooth talking.

"Unfortunately, this doesn't seem to be going anywhere," Rui shook his head, sighing.

He had already coaxed them with numerous offers and incentives, but Senior F'ahru rejected him every time, straightforwardly.

"I would like to hold these conversations later on once more." Rui smiled. "If you would be so gracious."

"If it's nothing new, don't bother," He huffed.

Rui and his assistants quickly got out of there, descending the hill.

"I'm sorry sir, but it seems the initial negotiations are a failure," They sighed.

"Yeah, but... what's more important is why it happened," Rui sighed. "Why exactly did they reject the so many favorable terms that I brought up."

"Ah, regarding that, sir. You stepped a bit out of bounds with some of those officers. You were not authorized to offer several things that you did make the offer to them.

"I know," Rui nodded. "It made the deal that much harder to resist, yet he did it regardless. What I am more interested in is what is it that keeps him from agreeing to our deal. Are the techniques they have truly something they genuinely consider to be sacred?" Rui wondered.

None of them had an answer to that question.

"I get the feeling that he didn't have enough trust in us to abide by our words," Rui frowned.

Rui's eyes narrowed.

"That's probably one of the reasons, at least," Rui sighed. "Still, if we want to obtain success on this, then we need to do better than this next time."

"Next time, sir?" One of them asked. "What's the point of trying again?"

"Why do you say that?" Rui frowned.

"Sir you tried the primary opening offers and arguments and even went into the deep end of the stuff that I don't even entirely understand,"

"We can still succeed with this mission, alright?" Rui nodded. "Have faith in us,"

The two of them looked at him dubiously.

"What?" Rui returned with a disapproving look.

"How can we possibly succeed after this failure?"

"By figuring out a new way to make them want to voluntarily trade their techniques," Rui replied.

In fact, he had already come up with a few plausibilities.

"We need to work harder in earning the support of every stakeholder in that goddamn Martial Tribe," Rui narrowed his eyes.

"Sir, I'd suggest that go back ho-

"No, not yet," Rui shook his head. "We're gonna get those techniques together,"

BEEP BEEP

It was a call with Senior Ceeran.

"Yes sir?" Rui sighed.

"I got your message, it didn't go that well, did it?"

"Not at all, sir."

"Well, I don't blame you, my first time was not that good either."

Rui's eye twitched as he smiled sardonically.

Rui had merely failed to compel them, whereas Senior Ceeran had come near provoking a war.

"Never mind, there's nothing that can be done. For now, we can only-" "I'm afraid I can do that right now, sir. I believe I can succeed with just some time." Rui replied.

"How do you plan on doing that?"

"Long story sir, for now, I just plan on refining and altering my approach.

"I don't know how much longer Martial commissioner Derun will tolerate this mission if it isn't yielding meaningful results, Rui."

"I understand,"

"Also, if this becomes something of an extended operation, then I will have to return back to the Martial Union." Senior Ceeran informed him. "I cannot afford to spend so much time away from the Martial Union not accomplishing much. However, if and when you ever need me, I'll be sure to return to the mission, just like that?"

They spoke for some more time before their conversation finally ended.

Once he left, there was a lot less peace of mind with what was happening. The fact of the matter is that the reason he felt confident in poking people if he needed to was that he knew that Senior Ceeran has his back, professionally and personally.

"Looks like I'll have to be looking to become more cautious," Rui nodded.

Of course, he wasn't averse to this.

"What exactly are you planning to do, sir?" One of his assistants frowned.

"I need to find a way to lower their trust, and also strengthen their incentives to agree to our deal. We will get our hands on those techniques no matter what happens.

One thing Rui needed to do was gain more information on the timing.

"Information will allow me to make more accurate decisions," Rui straightforwardly informed them. "Oh man, I am so glad that Kane is here, he is really useful for things like that."

Infiltration was a highly useful niche. And Kane was extremely good at it. Rui would need to only worry about him getting caught, which may happen in the vicinity of Martial Seniors. However, as long as Kane avoided some really dangerous spots, Rui was still quite confident that he could get him what he wanted

Chapter 649: Obstacles

"You're telling me those idiots refused us again?" Senior Ceeran frowned. "Why can't they be objective and rational about this? No matter how you spin it, it's a great deal! They're lucky we in the Martial Union have decided not to pursue a forceful approach!"

He turned towards Rui. "So, what are you planning on doing?"

Rui considered the question for a brief period, before sighing. "The most important matter to understand is the core reason, or reasons, that they do not want to engage in a trade. If we can understand that, we can come up with a better plan."

His fingers drummed on the table as he was deep in thought. "Still, there are measures we can undertake regardless."

"And what might that be?" Senior Ceeran asked inquisitively.

"The G'ak'arkan Tribe does not have a good idea of what our techniques are capable of," Rui stated. "At the very least, they do not have as much of an idea of what it is we are capable of as we do of their capabilities."

"That is true, sir," Stemple, one of his assistant diplomats, said before continuing. "However, this is usually not a problem as we readily demonstrate the basics of what we are offering once the intent to cooperate has been established. The issue here is were unable to even reach the stage where we can arrange for a demonstration of our techniques to them,"

"That is definitely one of the issues here," Rui nodded. "The impression I got is that the G'ak'arkan Tribe definitely thinks their techniques and Martial Artists are superior, regardless of how true it is or isn't. I suspect their ignorance of our capabilities is definitely getting in the way of productive exchange."

"Then all we have to do is show them what we are capable of!" Senior Ceeran declared.

"Yes, but we cannot be too direct and overt about it. That will be interpreted as a challenge to their capabilities. At the very least, we cannot walk up to them and rub our prowess in their face. That would definitely be seen as an affront to their pride and a challenge, based on what happened in previous negotiation talks."

Rui gave Senior Ceeran a measured look, who, to his credit, noticed and even understood what Rui was trying to convey.

They both knew that in his previous negotiations with the G'ak'arkan Tribe, Senior Ceeran had rashly used a long-range technique in the middle of the negotiations with the G'ak'arkan Tribe. It had instantly caused hostilities to break out and the G'ak'arkan Tribe came close to war with the diplomatic convoy that had been dispatched to the G'ak'arkan Tribe.

Rui found it truly astonishing that even after going through some diplomatic briefings under the experienced and wise Carl, he still thought using a powerful Senior level technique in the middle of an official meeting was not a bad idea.

"Well, if you're not going to go up to them and shove the technique in their faces, then how are you going to solve this problem?" Senior Ceeran.

"There are other ways to demonstrate our long-range capabilities implicitly," Rui informed him.

He got up abruptly before Senior Ceeran could respond.

"I need to speak to Martial commissioner Derun, I'm afraid. The plans I have in mind cannot be implemented without her help," Rui informed them.

He walked away to his own quarters briskly as he considered the matters at hand.

('It's not just a matter of demonstrating our techniques blindly. We need to make them feel the need for our techniques otherwise they will never truly accept our deal," Rui had carefully paid attention to the demeanor of Senior F'ahru.

The man was either ignorant about the Martial Union's techniques or also deluded that theirs were better, or both. Furthermore, the G'ak'arkan Tribe did not have a pressing need for what the Martial Union had to offer, thus there wasn't a pressing incentive.

('They neither know, are too proud to express care, nor need to care,') Rui summarized three of the intangible barriers that had gotten in the way of a successful negotiation.

These problems had not been highlighted during his briefing program under Carl, and Rui could understand why.

('The problems I had faced are problems that had never been faced before, probably because no one had even reached the stage I have,')

This wasn't a statement coming from arrogance. It was a rational observation and inference. The first set of diplomats sent were normal humans who earned no respect from the G'ak'arkan Tribe which only respected Martial prowess. The second set of diplomats sent were Martial Artists who botched the negotiations by triggering hostilities due to crude negotiation approaches.

Rui had faced neither problem. He was powerful enough, or at least appeared to be thanks to the Mind Mask technique, to earn the audience of one of the most powerful Martial Artists and leaders of the G'ak'arkan Tribe. Furthermore, he had directed the negotiations in an ultimately safe manner. While he did provoke Senior F'ahru, he had shielded himself by cleverly appealing to the pride of the G'ak'arkan Tribe, while his predecessors had wounded their pride foolishly.

Rui would need to come up with a plan to bypass all of those barriers and obstacles to eventually get them to agree to engage in a trade of techniques with the Martial Union.

('One thing is for sure, negotiations alone aren't going to pierce the barriers of ignorance, pride, and aggressive competitiveness of the G'ak'arkan Tribe.')

He sighed.

Just talking to them was not sufficient. Senior F'ahru had sternly ended every attempt at alluring the G'ak'arkan Tribe to the trade. He even crossed the line and promised things he wasn't necessarily allowed to as an experiment, yet even those were shut down.

Which meant he needed to implement measures outside of the diplomatic negotiations to get the G'ak'arkan Tribe to acquiesce.

('This will be fun,') Rui smirked as several ideas popped into his head regarding how to handle and overcome these issues.

Chapter 650: Plan

"Commissioner Derun," Rui smiled as her image popped upon his comms display.

He had been issued a premium comms device that allowed him to communicate with the Martial Union reliably despite being a great distance away for the duration of the mission, for mission-related purposes only.

"Squire Quarrier, good of you to contact me, I just finished the report that your diplomatic team filed. Good job, your execution as a diplomat was better than had been anticipated." She smiled ruefully. "It's a shame that the diplomatic missions failed, engage with them a bit more, and increasing your offers by a certain margin is the only option left. And if that fails... then I'm afraid we will have to question whether this mission is even worth pursuing in the first place."

Rui raised an eyebrow at those words. "Is the Martial Union willing to give up on obtaining those techniques?"

She considered his question. "That's outside of purview, officially at least. However, the Martial Union is cognizant enough to distinguish which avenues of approach are worth investing in, and which aren't. There have been numerous attempts at negotiating for the techniques of the G'ak'arkan Tribe. Granted, those missions failed for foreseeable reasons that could be rectified on our end, and you managed to avoid those reasons for the most part, it seems. Yet you failed to achieve any success at all beyond that. It is clear that talking to them over and over again is not going to help."

Rui smiled. "Those were my thoughts exactly. However, I am quite convinced that any further negotiation is meaningless toward actually convincing them, actually. I would rather not spend any time on it. I certainly wouldn't rely on it."

She raised an eyebrow at that statement. "It seems you do not intend to go for another negotiation session."

"Not any serious one, anyway," Rui nodded. "As I said, it's futile."

"Then what are your intentions?" She asked, curious.

Rui paused for a few seconds before replying. "The biggest problem is their ignorance of what it is we are actually offering because demonstrations in these kinds of negotiations only come after a mutual interest to cooperate. However, we cannot be overt and direct in demonstrating the power of our techniques the way Senior Ceeran did, otherwise we will trigger their pride in their own techniques and their aggressive competitiveness. Then it won't matter how valuable our techniques are, they will refuse to cooperate. I have a better idea to implicitly and passively demonstrate the complete and whole value of our techniques."

"And what would that be, Squire Quarrier?"

"It's simple. We inhabit a part of the island, self-sustain, and flourish purely on the merits of our techniques," Rui simply explained.

"Excuse me?" She frowned.

"What I'm saying is... we show them exactly what we are offering through and through by putting ourselves in their situation and environment, and demonstrating that the techniques we are offering perform far better in the parameters and avenues that they are weak at, allowing us to solve mutual issues that plague us both," Rui explained.

Her eyebrows widened, as she considered his suggestion.

It was beginning to make sense, in theory at least.

After all, the 'value' of a technique as far as utility went was nuanced and multi-layered. Pure numbers on the parameters of a technique alone could not convey the practical long-term benefits and utility of a technique.

In reality, it was impossible to predict the entirety of all direct and indirect benefits and impacts a new widely adopted technique might have without actually doing so and observing the results.

Thus, such intangibles were generally not accurately conveyed, not as explicitly and objectively as numbers of the performance parameters of a technique were.

But what Rui was offering was a way to convey both the explicit and the implicit value of the techniques that the Martial Union was offering.

"I see..." She mumbled as her eyes widened as she shrewdly understood exactly what Rui was trying to achieve. "That's actually a great plan, better than any non-forceful measure that we have come up with."

She turned to Rui with an amazed expression. "You came up with this all by yourself?"

Rui nodded.

"Did you have this in mind before the diplomatic negotiation with the G'ak'arkan Tribe?" She couldn't help but wonder aloud.

"I came up with it fifteen minutes ago as I considered the various measures that we could take to make them more pliable to our demands."

"Quite remarkable," She nodded. "Thus far, you have completed your role as a diplomat of the Martial Union quite professionally. As professional as our actual professionals, dare I say."

"Thank you. Still, I haven't gotten to why I actually called you," Rui told her. "If this was something that could easily be achieved with our own prowess, then I would have straightforwardly gone and implemented it. After all, I possess the authority to do so since it is my mission. However, this plan requires measures that I do not possess the authority and means to execute."

"And you need my authority to help you fulfill your plan?" She smiled.

"That's right," Rui replied to her.

"You are aware that the moment I exert my authority to cede to your demands as a Martial Artist fulfilling your mission, then I become more liable and responsible for the outcome of the mission than I already am?" She asked him with a raised eyebrow.

"I am aware of that, commissioner Derun," Rui nodded. "I can only request you to aid me on this mission."

She considered the matter for several moments before looking back at him. "Alright, Squire Quarrier, I am willing to give you some leeway. What is it that you need exactly?"

Rui smiled.

The fact that she acquiesced to his request meant that his plan had likely earned her confidence and that Rui himself had earned a bit of her trust, as far as his capability went. That was optimistic to Rui as far probability of success went. A rank-three Martial commissioner was anything but incompetent.