

Martial Unity 691

Chapter 691: Outcome

The patriarch of the K'ulnen Tribe cursed his massive frame for the very first time in his life as he dashed across the sky as fast as he could, wishing he was faster. He pushed himself to the limit reaching where he had been before Senior Ceeran had expelled him.

BOOM!!!

"NOOO!" The patriarch of the K'ulnen Tribe dove into the fray desperately hoping to save his partner in time.

The devastating attack resulted in a wind blast that reached the ground from the clouds. Senior Ceeran narrowed his eyes as he prepared another set of attacks to launch at his enemies. He wasn't sure if he succeeded, after all, the patriarch of the K'ulnen Tribe may very well have protected his partner from Senior Ceeran's devastating attack.

"I'LL KILL YOU!!!" The patriarch bellowed as the attack subsided.

His voice was inflicted with grief and rage.

His body was wounded.

Yet he didn't care about that. His eyes were fixed on the heavily battered corpse in his arms. The attack had broken the matriarch's entire body, she had already been injured previously, and now he had bombarded her with his absolute most powerful attack. She had succumbed to critical injuries, passing away.

Even if she hadn't she would have been in a highly critical state, unable to fight at all. The battle would have likely ended then and there as the patriarch would have most certainly retreated.

"She's dead," Senior Ceeran smirked smugly. "And you're next."

The atmosphere grew taut, both literally and metaphorically.

If not for the fact that he was holding his wife's corpse, the patriarch would have rushed Senior Ceeran immediately. However, they were many kilometers above land and even farther away from the village. He did not want to just drop his partner's body down to the ground.

"I'll kill you when I'm done paying respects to my partner." The patriarch swore, struggling to choke out the words. "Be prepared. I will kill you if it's the last thing I do!"

His eyes were completely red, accentuating his intense glare. Yet he retreated slowly, never taking his eyes off the murderer of his partner.

"Where are you going?" Senior Ceeran asked with a puzzled expression.

"TO BURY MY WIFE!"

"And who said you could do that?" Senior Ceeran mercilessly asked with a mocking expression as he exhaled dense breath once more, weaving a barrage of powerful attacks.

The patriarch of the K'ulnen Tribe was dumbfounded. "How dare you desecrate the right to bury the dead?!"

The Martial Tribes regarded the warriors that fell in death with respect and honor. Martial Tribes allowed each other to collect the corpses of their warriors and return them home to give them honorable burials.

"This battle isn't over," Senior Ceeran declared.

WHOOSH!

Powerful wind currents slammed into the patriarch, pushing him back.

He gritted his teeth, forced to drop the corpse of his partner as he guarded his vitals.

"HOW DARE YOU?!" The patriarch's skin cracked as glowing red lines trickled across his entire body like rivers. The patriarch's aura grew more intense and perilous as his expression crumpled with rage and hatred.

He rushed forward, charging at top speed.

"You're no match for me alone just like your pathetic little wife," Senior Ceeran laughed brazenly, angering the patriarch.

"RARGH!" The man felt like his very sanity was being consumed by his rage. "I'LL KILL YOU!"

Senior Ceeran's expression grew serious as he exhaled a large volume of dense breath. He took a greater amount of time as he shaped and shifted around such that the resulting wind currents were extremely narrow and small. Their power was highly focused.

An entire second passed as Senior Ceeran continuously compressed and focused the power even further.

It may not have been much time to ordinary humans, but to a Martial Senior, it was enough time to cross the dozen kilometers that separated them.

The patriarch grew increasingly excited as he reached within ten meters of Senior Ceeran! Just ten more meters and he would be able to pound that wretched man who murdered his partner!

That was when Senior Ceeran opened his eyes.

The lines on his body glowed as his expression strained. A deep sense of peril radiated from him.

SWHOOSH

A tremendously powerful beam of wind flew towards the patriarch at a tremendous speed.

"HAH!" The man braced himself for an impact. He was extremely determined to withstand the attack and take the final step to get his hands on his opponent.

BAM!!!

The attack slammed into him as the largest blast of wind thus far rose, spreading far past the battlefield. An entire portion of the forest spanning a kilometer in radius was crushed, leaving a crater behind.

"Cough!" Blood spewed out of the patriarch's mouth.

Yet his eyes were fixed on his abdomen, where once there were flesh, muscles, and bone was now a gaping hole. He weakly glanced up at Senior Ceeran, who waved him goodbye with a pleasant smile, before darkness assailed his vision and his mind.

THUD!

His corpse struck the ground heavily.

"Huff..." Senior Ceeran sighed as he pulled out a healing potion, and quickly consumed it. He exhaled in relief as the potion wound through his blood, working its magic on his wounds as his tissue regenerated and healed the burns that the matriarch of the K'ulnen Tribe had inflicted on him.

"Well, that's that," He heaved a sigh, inspecting the battlefield.

His senses pricked as he sensed incoming figures in the distance.

"Congratulations on your victory, Senior Ceeran!" The Longranger Squires were ecstatic at the magnificent display of long-range prowess that Senior Ceeran had demonstrated.

"Why thank you," he smiled. "Will one of you fetch the corpses of the two Martial Seniors of the K'ulnen Tribe? The Martial Union will definitely want to have access to it for research purposes, that is for sure."

He glanced at another figure approaching the group, smiling when he saw who it was. "Rui,"

"Senior Ceeran," Rui smiled. "That was an amazing fight."

Chapter 692: Insights

"Haha, thanks. It's been a while since I had a fight that pushed me to the limit. Watching all you younglings get all the action had me impatient for my turn," He paused, before asking. "Do you think this will be enough to convince the G'ak'arkan Tribe?"

"I cannot guarantee it, but I would be surprised if they were still resolutely averse to obtaining our techniques," Rui replied thoughtfully. "With everything they have witnessed, there should be plenty of reason for them to be leaping at the opportunity of obtaining our techniques."

Senior Ceeran nodded, no longer pursuing the matter. He had done his part and he trusted Rui to do his. So far, Rui had not yet given him any reason to doubt him. The young man had proven his competence many times in the time that he had known him. In fact, Senior Ceeran doubted that anybody had figured out that Rui was not a high-grade Martial Squire. This was despite the fact that Rui had fought multiple times in battle, yet no one had realized that he was actually much weaker than he claimed to be.

This was because Rui's Martial Path and Martial Art were so potent and powerful that they gave enough credence to the mind mask that Rui was wearing, that nobody questioned Rui's prowess at this point in time.

"Why the long face?" Senior Ceeran raised an eyebrow as he noticed Rui's solemn expression sticking out of the excited and ecstatic Martial Squires.

"Hm? Ah, it wasn't much. I was just thinking about the K'ulnen Tribe," Rui replied. "We've killed their leaders as well as many of their warriors, including Martial Squires. Without their leaders and in their

dysfunctional state on top of their existing irrationality, I fear they may react adversely to this. Worst-case scenario, they may just decide to go all out in a suicide attack against us."

"Hm, that isn't much of a problem right?," Senior Ceeran shrugged. "After all, they're only left with Martial Squires and Martial Apprentices. They have zero chance of taking us down."

"That is true..." Rui smiled wryly. The issue was that it was unlikely that Senior Ceeran would fight Squire-level battles for them. This meant that if the Martial Squires and Martial Apprentices did decide to launch an all-out war, it would most likely be the Martial Squires and Martial Apprentices of the settlement doing all the hard work.

Of course, Senior Ceeran would definitely intervene if things were starting to get too ugly, still, Rui would rather they didn't have to deal with the K'ulnen Tribe at all. They had just finished accomplishing their goal, and now Rui was finally ready to move back into negotiations with the G'ak'arkan Tribe. Their schedule would be significantly delayed yet again if the K'ulnen Tribe if the latter lost their minds and decided to try and annihilate the Martial Union settlement.

('I should send Kane to wiretap the entire place,') Rui's lit up as he came up with a good plan. The reason they had to be careful with trying to send Kane into any Martial Tribe to try and gather information directly or indirectly was that Martial Seniors were too much for Kane to misdirect the attention of with Void Step, meaning that he wouldn't make it out alive.

Now that both the Martial Seniors of the K'ulnen Tribe were dead, Kane ought to have no problem infiltrating the K'ulnen Tribe and gathering information while bugging the place to hell and back.

Still, Rui wasn't too concerned by the K'ulnen Tribe. After all, the Martial Union's settlement was not the only enemy that they had. They were still engaging in active war against a few other Martial Tribes. Unlike the Martial Union, these Martial Tribes had an active interest in getting rid of the K'ulnen Tribe. Rui was sure that at this very moment, these other Martial Tribes were preparing an all-out war with the K'ulnen Tribe to completely crush and take everything that they wanted from the tribe.

Though Rui highly doubted that the Martial Tribes would massacre the non-combatants for no reason, he was pretty sure that all the Martial Squires and Martial Apprentices were as good as dead. They would be eliminated by the other tribes to ensure that none of them would ever reach the third rank; the Senior Realm to ensure that the K'ulnen Tribe would never return to power ever again.

Regardless, Rui didn't care about what happened to them as long as the Martial Union did not get dragged into the mess. He only wanted to ensure that their plan succeeded.

"Hm?" Rui paid more attention to the corpses of the two Martial Seniors that the Martial Squire found and dragged up.

The patriarch's body was still in a good condition aside from the gaping hole in his gut, but the matriarch's body was quite unsightly. Senior Ceeran had bludgeoned her extremely well, and the post-mortem time had not done anything good for it.

Still, there were insights to be drawn from their bodies. And Rui had already gained one when he inspected the bodies deeply.

('Their veins... are bloated and inflamed...!') Rui realized when his eyes widened with a particular thought. ('Could it be that those sharp red lines were in fact all part of the circulatory system?')

It was a shocking thought, but now that he tried recalling the exact position of those lines, which wasn't easy due to the distance between him and them and the fact that they moved blindingly fast, he could see that the positioning of the red lines was not inconsistent with the locations of veins and arteries.

('What exactly does that even mean?') Rui's mind was filled with all kinds of hypotheses, but none of them made too much sense at the moment. ('If they are the veins and the arteries, then that means that their veins and arteries are glowing inside the skin very brightly. Only then could any amount of light could pass through the skin.

Chapter 693: Considerations

The human body was not absolutely opaque. This was something that an overwhelming majority of people were not aware of. In reality, the human body was translucent; It allowed light to partially pass through it. This was partly because of the fact that seventy percent of the body of the human body was comprised of water, which was perfectly transparent. This was what largely gave the human body its translucence.

The translucence of the human body could even be tested and measured at any give point in time.

One need only place a bright and intense source of light behind one's thumb, and one would notice the thumb glowing red due to all the light passing through and bouncing off the red blood and flesh, becoming red.

('If that is what is happening with the circulatory system of Martial Seniors, then that would explain the red flowing lines across the body,') Rui realized in excitement.

The exact same thing would be happening if the veins and the arteries of the body also glowed bright white, for Martial Seniors.

('But that's so bizarre!') Rui tried making sense of why such a thing would be happening.

Why would veins and arteries starting glowing bright white in the middle of combat? How would such a thing even help at all? Why even bother trying to do that with them?

After all, they certainly did not directly intervene in the battle he just witnessed, did they?

('Well, maybe such a flash function is useful, but I don't know how,') Rui considered. ('But if they aren't useful...')

Then why glow bright white?

('Things that tend to glow super bright white are usually...') His eyebrows rose as he had an interesting thought. ('...filled with energy.')

If that applied to the strange phenomenon of the glowing veins and arteries of the Senior Realm the...

('Maybe I've discovered an important secret of the breakthrough to the Senior Realm.') Rui tried his best to suppress his excitement with the non-verbal communication control training that he had received in his training for serving as a diplomat of the Martial Union. Thankfully it played out, and nobody noticed his inner turmoil and excitement.

They quickly wrapped up and headed back to the Martial Union settlement once they had secured the two bodies. They needed to bring them back to the settlement as quick as possible where the medical team would be able to ensure that their condition didn't deteriorate.

On the way back, Rui couldn't help but comprehend the recent insights that he had made regarding the power of Martial Seniors. He continued to remain enraptured by the matter.

('If the glowing veins and arteries are a sign of extremely dense energy and power in their blood, then wouldn't that mean that the cells of Martial Seniors are supplied with a tremendous amount of power?') Rui considered the thought before frowning. ('I'm not sure how much sense this makes though, considering that the human cells generate power with ATP molecules. Blood vessels carry nutrients and compounds, not raw energy in a manner that inadvertently generates light.')

Of course, Rui was aware that his argument would have made perfect sense if it applied to the baseline human. It could not be applied to human beings that had undergone accelerated Darwinian evolution.

('It makes sense that this is a trait exclusive to Martial Seniors if the evolution breakthrough process is what allows it to be possible anyway,') Rui speculated.

Still, even if that was a plausible explanation, it did not address many other questions that Rui had. One of the biggest ones that Rui was that if they were supplying energy in some kind of form, then where was that energy coming from? After all, he highly doubted that Martial Seniors could break the first law of thermodynamics; the law of conservation of energy.

While Martial Artists were spectacularly and inhumanly powerful, he had yet to see an instance of them warping reality itself.

He wasn't able to answer that question, though he did have a few guesses.

Rui took a good look at Senior Ceeran. He knew that the man would not divulge the secrets of the Senior Realm to him, even if he did his best to persuade him.

Regardless, there was no way for him to verify what he had come up with. He would just need to get stronger until he qualified to know.

He recalled that a grade-five Martial Squire had once told him that upon reaching grade five, he would be told of the conditions that needed to be fulfilled to undergo the breakthrough to the Senior Realm. Without them, he would not be able to break through to the Senior Realm.

From what he had once been hinted at, the breakthrough to the Senior Realm was not like the breakthrough to the Squire Realm, which was entirely man-made instead of a natural phenomenon that naturally occurred. If anything, it was quite likely that the breakthrough to the Senior Realm was similar to that of the breakthrough to the Apprentice Realm, a spontaneous event.

Eventually, Rui overcame his rapture once they reached the Martial Union settlement. The Settlement was in a great mood, having heard that Senior Ceeran won the battle that broke out between himself and two native Martial Seniors of the indigenous tribe that the Martial Union settlement had been at war with.

When the members of the settlement heard that Senior Ceeran had been engaged in a battle against two Martial Seniors, they had grown quite worried. Not just for him, but also for themselves. If he died, then there was a good chance that their little settlement was doomed. After all, the K'ulnen Tribe would have an overwhelming advantage against them in terms of net Martial power. A single one of their Martial Seniors would be powerful enough to annihilate all of the Martial Squires of the Martial Union settlement.

Thus when they received word that Senior Ceeran won a solid victory, they couldn't all help but heave a collective sigh of relief.

It was good to be alive.

Chapter 694: Aftermath

Once Rui returned, he immediately began issuing orders to relevant personnel. They had acquired the corpses of two Martial Seniors whose conditions could not be allowed to deteriorate any further.

While Senior Ceeran could excuse himself and treat himself to a good hot bath for a job well done, Rui had immediately visited the intelligence team regarding some important matters.

"You want me to infiltrate the K'ulnen Tribe and bug the entire place? Sure, that's no problem now that those two looming threats are gone. I'll walk right past those Martial Squire chumps and place wiretaps right under their noses.

"Be careful though. Wiretaps lose their invisibility and imperceptibility once they leave your person," Rui warned him.

Kane himself was invisible and imperceptible to almost all other Martial Squires. However, the moment that an object left his small area of influence, it would immediately be perceivable. What that meant was that if there was any other Martial Artist in the immediate vicinity of the location where Kane was placing a wiretap, then there was a chance that they would notice the wiretap seemingly appearing out of thin air. In which case, they would definitely investigate the object.

"Relax, don't be such a worrywart," Kane reassured. "If I do this mission, it would be at night when at least a good portion of them will be sleeping."

This was true and definitely did alleviate the risks of the operation.

The rest of the meeting proceeded smoothly as he informed the intelligence team of his concerns regarding the more zealous Martial Artists of the K'ulnen Tribe that would choose to retaliate against the Martial Union settlement for having killed their highest leaders and most powerful warriors.

The intelligence team immediately formed several plans to implement greater surveillance on the K'ulnen Tribe to ensure that they did not even miss the faintest signs of anything the tribe might be planning that was less than desirable to the Martial Union.

Once that was done, Rui left them to their devices and their plans. He had a lot of people to talk to, after all. He reached the conference room and used his comms device to reach out to Martial commissioner Derun. She generally received reports of all happenings naturally, but the matters that had occurred today were significant enough that he felt the need to report it to her directly.

"Squire Quarrier," She picked up rather quickly, giving Rui a courteous smile. "To what do I owe the pleasure of this call?"

"Good news, mam," Rui smiled. "We have finally concluded the show-off plan just now as Senior Ceeran defeated the two Martial Seniors of the K'ulnen Tribe that we picked a fight to demonstrate the might of the Martial Art techniques of the Martial Union. We have also retained their corpses that have been adequately stored by our medical team."

Her eyes lit up as her smile grew more genuine. "That is indeed good news. I presume that now that the war is over you intend to go through with the negotiations talks once more?"

"That's correct," Rui nodded. "I do not dare to guarantee success, however, I am not pessimistic about our chances. We have truly performed really well."

"So I've read," She nodded. "The fact that you took down a Martial Squire with a single attack, and a relatively high-grade Martial Squire all by yourself makes it hard to believe for a Martial commissioner like myself that you are technically a low-grade Martial Squire at the moment."

Rui could sense that she was being genuine. It was to be expected, after all. His prior feats did not measure up to the ones that he had performed during his participation in the war effort against the K'ulnen Tribe.

He had killed Martial Squires before, but they were in the same grade as him when his Martial Path was taken into account. And that was also after an intense battle.

In this conflict, however, Rui had taken down one low-grade Martial Squire with a single attack and had taken down a relatively high-grade Martial Squire despite her receiving assistance from another Martial Squire.

These were feats that far exceeded what one would expect of a grade-four Martial Squire.

"Well, I've been putting my latest technique to good use," Rui smiled humbly. "With good preparation, one can exceed their limits in a given situation, and that is mostly what I did to ensure that my facade of being a high-grade Martial Artist did not fail. After all, the G'ak'arkan Tribe will give me much less respect if they realize that I am only average, maybe a bit above average by their standards."

"Hm, I see," She said. "Regardless, I'm sure you didn't call me just to tell me that, correct?"

Rui smiled. "That's right. I wanted to inquire about the approval and authorization of my proposed failsafe plan."

The martial commissioner took a moment to consider his words, before responding. "I decided to authorize the plan if it is needed,"

Rui raised an eyebrow at her words. "I see... Thank you. Frankly, that is a little bit unexpected."

"It was to me as well," She sighed. "After all, it is a plan that necessarily guarantees losses to our side regardless of the outcome. We'd be planning a disaster that would affect the Martial Union settlement on the Vilun Island..."

"Then why..."

"Why did I authorize it nonetheless?"

Rui nodded with an expression of curiosity on his face.

"It's because your conduct and execution of this mission has been impeccable and assuring, young Squire," She told him. "Your Martial prowess is not the only attention-drawing aspect about you. You have handled the settlement quite professionally and aptly. I do not know if you realize the significance of this matter, but it is quite reassuring to see that you are capable and competent."

"You flatter me," Rui smiled wryly.

"Regardless," She moved on. "In addition to that, we have invested a lot in obtaining those techniques. We must have them no matter what. Be sure to succeed."

"That is my intention, mam."

Chapter 695: Rejection

"Good," She nodded. "The competence and knowledge that you've demonstrated in your role as a diplomat, and as the interim leader of a settlement of the Martial Union is quite impressive and desirable. The Department of Foreign Affairs has informed me that you most likely meet the qualifications to become a qualified entry-level ambassador of the Martial Union. A Martial Artist that also satisfies the expertise and competence requirements to become an officer of the Department of Foreign Affairs is a greatly valuable asset."

She gave him a measured look, before asking. "What do you think?"

Rui raised an eyebrow at her question, a little at a loss for words. "I think that the Department of Foreign Affairs might be overestimating my capabilities. I have no formal education at all. I was home-schooled by my mother and older brother. I certainly have no higher education in diplomacy, foreign affairs, and international politics."

"Oh, it is probably true that, at the moment, you lack a foundation in some of the aspects that we expect from our foreign affairs officers," She casually replied, nodding. "However, given your demonstrably high ability to absorb information, that isn't much of a problem is it?"

Martial commissioner Derun had received reports from the Department of Foreign Affairs that stated that the assistant diplomatic team that they had assigned to Rui had reported that he was the most knowledgeable out of all of them when it came to understanding, and knowledge regarding Vilun Island.

She had been considerably impressed by this considering that the assistant diplomats assigned to the mission had been studying Vilun Island for more than a year. Yet Rui, in the span of one month, had already reached a level where he could be considered one of the foremost experts of Vilun Island and the G'ak'arkan Tribe.

A Martial Artist who could also serve as an ambassador was a desirable asset for the same reason that it was needed in this particular mission. This was the Age of Martial Art and Martial Artists were by far among the most respected and exalted beings in human civilization. Just by being a Martial Artist, he would be able to accomplish more as an ambassador than another with a similar level of competence.

"Are you sure you don't want to consider this line?" She asked gently.

"I am," Rui replied unhesitantly. "I do not regret this mission that I undertook or my role in it. However, in the past four months, I haven't gotten the opportunity to train or fight all too much outside of the conflicts that I participated in against the K'ulnen Tribe. That is a huge gap for someone who is accustomed to constantly fighting or training. Now, this mission has been helpful and insightful in many ways, but at the same time, I cannot say that it is something that I would be willing to do more than one time,"

"I see, for what it's worth, I agree," She nodded. "I was merely passing on the suggestion from the Department of Foreign Affairs. Personally, I believe that Martial Artists should stick to what they're best at, and leave the rest to others who are qualified."

"I agree with that as well," Rui nodded.

It was one of the most effective and efficient divisions of labor. Society could not afford specialists practicing in another field that was entirely separate from their field of expertise. Civilization would only progress if the people did what they were best at, and continuously got better at it.

Rui quickly concluded his call with the Martial commissioner, before growing absorbed in his thoughts. It would seem that his execution of the mission thus far was quite satisfying to the Martial Union. Perhaps there was a chance that he would be able to earn extra credits.

He put the matter aside, after all, he had actual urgent matters to tend to.

It was time to roll up to the G'ak'arkan Village once more and request an audience with the leaders of the tribe. He quickly sped to the diplomatic office, gathering the entire team.

"Alright, as you all have surely learned by now. The war against the K'ulnen Tribe has come to an end; our victory. The two leaders of the K'ulnen Tribe are dead, and every long-range Martial Squire in our settlement has participated multiple times, demonstrating the prowess of our techniques thoroughly." Rui announced to all of them. "We have finished our little sales pitch, and now it's time to actually conduct the sale. The intelligence department has supplied us with all the information that they can gather on the G'ak'arkan Tribe, and it is your duty to go through it all, gain a good grasp of the impact that our war with the K'ulnen Tribe has had on the G'ak'arkan Tribe, and then formulate a course of action that will serve as our negotiation strategy. Once that's done, we'll refine it before executing it. Get to work."

The assistant diplomats scrambled once more as they went through the stacks of documents and files consisting of the intelligence reports of the Intelligence department. Now that the war had ended, the spotlight once more fell on the diplomats of the Martial Union. They would be taking action once more.

Honestly, Rui felt quite confident that if they walked up to the G'ak'arkan Tribe right at this very moment, then there was a very good chance that they would immediately jump at the opportunity to trade techniques. Yet Rui had still chosen to take a cautious and thoroughly prepared route anyway because he didn't want careless overconfidence to ruin what was otherwise a slam dunk opportunity.

There was more to negotiation than merely getting both sides to be invested in cooperating, which was the stage at which they were right now. After the actual trade that was going to take place was training the Martial Artists in their techniques while having their own Martial Artists be trained in the techniques of the G'ak'arkan Tribe.

Chapter 696: Barriers

For example, when conducting the trade, both sides would not want to be short-changed and be given techniques the net value of which were inferior to the techniques that they gave the other side.

That meant both sides needed to agree that the value of the techniques exchanged needed to be agreed to be equal by both sides.

This was where the complications arose.

For starters, what decided the value of a technique?

The Martial Union already defined the value of a technique objectively, using several parameters that it valued in a technique. Rui had already learned about it when he submitted the Pathfinder technique to the Martial Union.

The Martial Union judged the value of techniques based on four parameters; individuality, potency, difficulty, and dissemination viability.

Individuality was a parameter that was a measure of both uniqueness and originality. The value of a technique was low to the Martial Union if it had zero originality and zero uniqueness. It would mean that the Martial Union most likely already possessed such a technique in its vast database of techniques, and thus there was no point in purchasing the technique that was being offered.

Potency was a measure of how effective and impactful the technique was in combat in whatever field the technique was of. High-grade techniques excelled in the field they were in and produced much greater results than low-grade techniques. It was the foundation of the value of techniques.

Difficulty and dissemination value were both similar parameters that generally measured how difficult it was to spread a technique. The easier it was to spread a technique among Martial Artists, the more valuable the technique was, since such a technique would singlehandedly be able to increase the Martial prowess of the Martial Union.

However, it was possible that the G'ak'arkan Tribe had different conceptions of what was valuable in a Martial Art technique and what wasn't. It was entirely possible that what the Martial Union deemed to be junk was quite valuable to the G'ak'arkan Tribe.

Of course, it was unlikely that there would be drastically different values. At the end of the day, power was power. Power was what all Martial Artists sought, and was what set them on their Martial Path.

With that common value, it would be possible to come to an agreement in trade.

The problem wasn't the big picture, the devil was in the details. Being able to cleanly form a trade that both sides would be satisfied with was not going to be easy.

That was one of the things that the diplomatic team had to handle.

In this particular matter, Rui took the initiative to iron out the structure of the trade all by himself. Since he was a Martial Artist and a competent diplomat, he was by far the most qualified to work on this particular matter.

('Firstly, the trades need to be simplified. Rather than doing a singular large bulk trade of techniques, it is best to proceed with a large number of simple and smaller trades. Ideally, we can trade one technique for a technique that both sides agree is a fair and acceptable trade,')

Of course, Rui knew that it was not quite so simple. But it was definitely far simpler than if they tried to trade a group of ten techniques for another group of ten techniques.

('Of course, it is best to remain flexible, rather than forcing a one-for-one technique exchange rate. It's not bad to obtain two mid-grade techniques for one higher-grade technique as long as the net value on both sides is generally the same.')

What both sides would consider what comprised the value of a technique would need to be negotiated with the G'ak'arkan Tribe. But Rui was relatively sure that that was also manageable.

One thing that could potentially be problematic was the training of the Martial Artists of the G'ak'arkan Tribe in the techniques of the Martial Union. This was an issue that the Martial Union would not be able to easily solve.

For example, almost all of the training methodologies of the Martial Union were centered around specially developed training equipment, gear, machines, and facilities that were used to efficiently and effectively train the Martial Artists of the Martial Union.

What that meant was that for every technique that was traded to the G'ak'arkan Tribe, the Martial Union needed to ensure that it had the facilities, faculties, and resources needed for the Martial Artists of the G'ak'arkan Tribe to train and obtain the techniques of the Martial Union.

This was not simple, while the Martial Union settlement already possessed some training and sparring facilities and infrastructure, they were quite paltry and underdeveloped. The Martial Union would need to build the infrastructure needed and transport the supplies and resources needed for the settlement to be equipped with the many things needed to train the Martial Artists of the G'ak'arkan Tribe in their techniques.

Another issue that the G'ak'arkan Tribe might have would be the propagation of these techniques once the Martial Union left. Rui wasn't sure whether the Martial Union would choose to continue having a

settlement on the island once his mission concluded, but even if they left, the G'ak'arkan Tribe needed to ensure that they could train their future Martial Artists in these techniques.

That was the biggest problem that the Martial Union would need to overcome. Of course, it wasn't as though training these techniques would be impossible without the training resources of the Martial Union, it would definitely be much more difficult. Maybe Rui would need to consult with some experts and provide them with the best training methodologies that are devoid of technology.

Though, given that the G'ak'arkan Tribe was used to training in this manner, Rui could be relatively confident that they would probably find a way to train their Martial Artists in those techniques regardless. They might be irked, however, to find that the way that they would be trained was not the way that their Martial Artists would be training it in the future.

Chapter 697: Audience

Another problem was the language barrier. Training the Martial Artists of the G'ak'arkan Tribe was going to be a complete pain in the ass for the Martial Union. Rui was truly thankful that his role in the mission was only to serve as an ambassador and get the G'ak'arkan Tribe to cooperate with the Martial Union.

He would rather avoid serving as a trainer if he had the choice to. Though he suspected that he would not be able to avoid it at the moment.

After all, he was currently the only master of the Pathfinder technique. It had been a little over four months that the Martial Union was in possession of the technique, after all. That was probably not long enough for a long-range Martial Artist to have mastered it. Hell, he highly doubted that any Martial Squire had even attempted to master it at the moment. As far as he knew, the only Martial Artist who had attempted to master this technique was Senior Ceeran.

And thus far, it looked like he hadn't mastered it yet at all, from what Rui could tell. He was relatively certain that Senior Ceeran would inform him, given their relationship, if he did successfully master it.

('And he would be insanely powerful if he had successfully mastered it.')

Not that he wasn't already insanely powerful, but Rui meant that even by the standards of the Senior Realm, he would have been extraordinarily capable, he would have most likely been able to fight the matriarch and the patriarch of the K'ulnen Tribe from across the island!

('I can see why he wants to master it, the synergy between the Pathfinder technique and his techniques is quite incredible,')

Combining the ODA system with his ability to manipulate trajectories of attacks after they've been launched would allow him to accurately hit targets that he wouldn't be able to hit with just the ODA system alone since it meant that he would be able to make adjustments to the shifts in the trajectories of the already highly accurate attacks, thanks to the ODA system, to ensure that he could correct any mistakes he made over extremely long distances.

('Given how much range he already possesses by virtue of being a Martial Senior, it is entirely possible that Senior Ceeran would be able to accurately snipe people from across the entire island!')

Such a feat was so far beyond what Rui was capable of that it wasn't even funny. He could only sigh at the power that Senior Ceeran would obtain if he successfully mastered the Pathfinder technique.

However, until he did, Rui was the only Martial Artist that had mastered the Pathfinder technique. Furthermore, Rui already possessed a good foundation in training other Martial Artists, on top of that, he had also become fluent in the Vilun language. He was literally the perfect trainer for the Martial Union to have trained the martial Artists of the G'ak'arkan Tribe.

He sighed, shaking his head. He could think about this matter later, for now, they needed to focus on establishing the intent to cooperate full-fledged for mutual benefit.

A few days passed as the diplomatic team came up with a final negotiation strategy, along with Rui. The reason they were able to hurry up the process was that the diplomatic team had not been sitting on their thumbs doing anything. They had been quite busy as the intelligence team supplied them with intelligence on the G'ak'arkan Tribe.

What that meant was that the foundation for the negotiation approaches for the G'ak'arkan Tribe for various outcomes was already established at its core. They simply needed to refine it.

And soon enough, they had.

It was time for Rui's second visit to the G'ak'arkan Tribe.

"Ready, Zeyra, Stemple?"

"Yes sir," The two of them replied confidently.

"Good, then let's get going."

They headed out, getting into the prepared motorized carriage that immediately began driving off.

On the way there, Rui wondered whether it was a good idea to leave Senior Ceeran behind. After all, the native indigenous Martial Artists of the island respected power above all else. Senior Ceeran would most certainly obtain far more respect than Rui would.

Still, Rui was sure that the G'ak'arkan Tribe had already figured out that things were working differently for the Martial Union's settlement. Rui was the interim leader, and that technically included Senior Ceeran as well.

They had already seen Rui act as the diplomat when it turned out that a Martial Senior had been with them the entire time.

At this point, he highly doubted that they would give him the cold shoulder, especially when Rui himself had merit even as a Martial Squire.

It took a while for the carriage to tread up the mountain. It gave the G'ak'arkan Tribe plenty of warning that they were coming so that the G'ak'arkan tribe didn't feel caught off-guard or disrespected.

Rui could already sense a distant scout maintaining surveillance from a distance as they followed them up the mountain. Rui bet that if he made any threatening actions, they wouldn't hesitate to launch an attack on them.

Nothing of the sort happened.

Even before Rui and his assistants got off when they arrived, they had already been faced with a rather large crowd that had left the boundary of the village to take a good look at the outsider.

At the foremost were Martial Squires that sought to shield the civilian villagers that stared at him with awe and fear.

('Looks like my feats are making the rounds in the village,') Rui smiled pleasantly at all of them even as his high-grade mind mask amplified the sense of power he radiated.

Suddenly, a far greater presence weighed on everybody's mind as a figure descended down from the sky.

"Outsider." She said with a mild smile. "Welcome to our village once more. I am K'Mala, one of the leaders of the G'ak'arkan Tribe. What brings you to our village?"

('She's a bit stronger than the Martial Senior I dealt with last time,') Rui noted as Primordial Instinct gave him an impression of her power.

Chapter 698: Concerns

"Thank you for welcoming us," Rui began. "I am Rui, representative of the Martial Union. We are here to facilitate successful cooperation and trade between our villages. We hope that the G'ak'arkan Tribe will heed us and accept our offer to engage in a mutually beneficial relationship."

Rui stared at Senior K'Mala as she processed his words. He could immediately tell that she was not averse to the offer that the Martial Union had made. Although she did not do anything overt to reveal her thoughts on the matter, Rui was relatively certain that she did not possess any disregard for his offer.

Her subconscious non-verbal communication betrayed her interest in his offer.

"We are interested in listening to and considering what you have to say, warrior Rui," She replied carefully as she reached the ground. "Has the rank-three warrior not chosen to accompany you? Do you truly represent your village when he is a part of it?"

Rui was aware that the G'ak'arkan Tribe assigned numbered ranks to each Realm, ascending with the power of the Realm. Rank three Martial Artist was nothing but a Martial Senior, while he would be considered a rank two Martial Artist.

"As I'm sure you have long been made aware of, the rank-three Martial Artist and myself are both part of a group that is extremely large and powerful," Rui smiled. "Both the rank-three outsider and I are following orders. I am the leader of the village, and he is the rank three guardian and protector of it."

"I see..." Her eyebrows knitted briefly as she tried wrapping her head around the matter. She couldn't imagine why the group that they claimed to be a part of would ever order a rank-three Martial Artist. She especially couldn't imagine why a rank three Martial Artist would willingly bow his head to a rank two Martial Artist like Rui, yet she was open-minded enough to understand that they were outsiders with customs and norms that were entirely different from that of theirs.

They had already taken him seriously last time, and now they took him even more seriously after witnessing what he could do. Thus, it wasn't nearly as much of a problem as it would have been.

It spoke volumes about how impressed they were with Rui.

"Come with me," She said as she turned around and walked toward the village. The crowd parted ways for her as Rui and his assistants quickly followed suit.

Not much had changed in the village since Rui's last visit four months ago. There was greater greenery as it was the season of spring, it seemed. Yet everything else had more or less remained the same.

She didn't say a word until they reached the larger hall that they used for important discussions and meetings.

"Have a seat," She gestured at a large table in the room. The room was heavily guarded with several Martial Squires at every corner and on both sides of the entrance.

Rui waited as a servant placed clay cups of water on the table for all of the four seated members.

"Now then. Please begin."

Rui smiled. "As the G'ak'arkan Tribe is very well aware, our Martial Union has offered all of you the opportunity to engage in a trade of techniques between both sides. We believe that both sides have unique advantages, ensuring that both sides stand to gain power from this trade. We see every reason to proceed with this trade and no reason not to. Today, we are here for that very reason. We hope that the G'ak'arkan Tribe will acquiesce this time."

"..." She stared at Rui wordlessly for several seconds, before opening her mouth. "We... are not unwilling. But we wish to ensure that this trade of Martial Art techniques is truly beneficial to us in the way that you claim it is. We do not wish to rashly give our word in an agreement that is exploitative or deceptive of us. If you are able to truly convince us beyond any shadow of a doubt that our tribe truly benefits no less than your so-called Martial Union, then and only then will we accept your offer to engage in trade with us. If you are unwilling to accept this, then there is no possibility of cooperation.

This was the very first time in all of the diplomatic interventions with the G'ak'arkan Tribe in history that the Martial Union had managed to not get rejected by the G'ak'arkan Tribe. Rui and his assistants were unfazed to the eye, yet they were celebrating inwardly.

Of course, their response was far from affirmative. But this was already a really good result considering history.

Finally, a mutual intent to cooperate had finally been established, with that out of the way, Rui could slowly and surely break through every last compunction and shred of reluctance with compelling arguments. Now that they were finally going to be actively engaging with what the Martial Union was offering, they could finally get to the heart of the issue.

"Of course, most certainly. We are very much willing to address any and all concerns that you may have," Rui smiled. "Please do not feel troubled to share any and all concerns you may have on this matter."

She nodded blankly. "The first concern we have is our confidence in your commitment to this trade. We are aware that you possess the ability to leave the island with all of the villagers of your village. What is to stop you from leaving our island the second we give you all of the information regarding our techniques? Information that may very well be enough for your so-called Martial Union to recreate our techniques based on it."

Rui had somewhat expected this concern. After all, it was a fundamental issue with the very nature of trading with the Martial Union. It was true that he was very much capable of leaving with the employees of the Martial Union any time he wanted with some preparations ahead of time.

Chapter 699: Assurances

"This is an entirely valid concern of yours," Rui nodded. "It is absolutely true that we possess the ability to leave this island at any point we want."

Senior K'Mala's expression relaxed slightly at those words. She was afraid that the outsiders would deny this in an attempt to deceptively hide their capabilities and placate the G'ak'arkan Tribe.

However, the fact that Rui openly admitted to this straightforwardly was a good sign, it meant that they did not have any intentions of deceiving the G'ak'arkan Tribe by leaving the moment they got their hands on the techniques of the G'ak'arkan Tribe regardless of whether they had paid their end of the deal or not.

"We have accounted for this concern that you have brought up," Rui continued. "One way can accommodate it is by fulfilling our part of the bargain before you do yours, regardless of what agreement we come up with. This way, we cannot ever deceive you by swiftly evacuating from this island at any given point."

K'Mala raised an eyebrow at that. It was quite relieving for her to hear that they were willing to make that concession. By fulfilling their end of the agreement before the G'ak'arkan Tribe, it was indeed impossible for them to get away with deceiving the G'ak'arkan by retreating from the island at a particular moment.

On the other hand, it meant that they were supremely confident that the G'ak'arkan Tribe would not use that advantage to their benefit.

('Is it that they believe that we wouldn't, or that we couldn't even if we wanted to?') She couldn't help but wonder.

It was true, but the G'ak'arkan Tribe did not possess the ability to trick the Martial Union in the same way. After all, they did not possess any ability to retreat from the island, they possessed no naval capabilities whatsoever. They were going nowhere, and the Martial Union knew it.

Of course, the Martial Squires and the Martial Seniors did have the ability to leave the island by sky-walking, the Martial Union could rest assured that these Martial Artists wouldn't even dream of leaving the Martial Apprentices and the civilians of their tribe as they escaped away from their island. The G'ak'arkan Tribe possessed an immense amount of cohesiveness with each other. They had to, who else could they rely on on an island where everybody else was trying to kill them?

That was why the diplomatic team had few compunctions granting this condition to the G'ak'arkan Tribe. It was of no consequence.

"If you of the Martial Union are truly willing to make that concession, then I can only be relieved by the sincerity that you are showing in this agreement," She said with appreciation. "We will graciously accept your offer."

Rui nodded, smiling. "That's good to hear. Then is that also an indication that the G'ak'arkan Tribe is accepting our trade offer?"

"Not yet..." She admitted. "One concern that we have is whether you are willing to disclose all of the techniques that we have witnessed your Martial Artists using in the past. Particularly the more powerful ones that we are interested in."

"Of course, we are willing, on the condition that the G'ak'arkan Tribe also reciprocates all of its techniques," Rui smiled. "We will reciprocate the sincerity that you show us. I hope that we can come to an agreement for a full-fledged exchange between both sides. Doing so will only be of greater benefit to both sides."

"Do you want all of our techniques?" She frowned.

"Not exactly... We are hoping that you will be willing to exchange any or all of your techniques without restriction. It would be troublesome if after confirming the intent to exchange techniques, we discovered that the minority of techniques that you are unwilling to disclose happen to include all of the techniques that we do desire, while the techniques that you are willing to disclose to us are of no interest." Rui explained. "As long as you are willing to exchange any of the techniques that you have, you can rest assured that the Martial Union will also be open to exchanging any of the techniques that we have demonstrated in the past few techniques."

"I see..."

"Of course, we will still want to make fair and equal trades regardless."

"What are the techniques that you desire?" She asked with some degree of uncertainty.

"We are willing to disclose what techniques we seek, but I think it would be more productive if both sides are aware of what the other side wants," Rui stated perfunctorily. "I believe it is best if we make a simultaneous exchange of the lists of techniques that we desire from each other."

Rui did not want to disclose the specifics of what they wanted too soon. Handing over that information to them prior to establishing a final agreement to cooperate would be giving them undue initiative in the discussions. Once the means of exchange were confirmed and ironed out, only then was it fit to talk about the actual trades and exchanges that would be occurring.

Of course, if the G'ak'arkan Tribe was willing to divulge the techniques that they were interested in, then Rui didn't mind also doing the same.

"How do you want us to exchange techniques exactly?" She asked. "We pass on our techniques to our descendants by personally training them in it. We do not possess any physical form containing the techniques."

"I see... In that case, training our Martial Artists will be just fine." Rui nodded. "We are also willing to train your Martial Artists."

"But we do not speak the same language..."

"We have translators on our side. It will be difficult and long. However, once it is completed, then both sides will permanently become stronger than ever before. Thus, it is worth it," Rui nodded.

"Hm..." She considered the matter, losing a bit of apprehension.

The meeting proceeded as Senior K'Mala went through the list of issues and concerns that had already been discussed in the village some while ago.

Chapter 700: Evaluation

Rui was glad that he had come thoroughly prepared, for many of the concerns and issues that Senior K'Mala brought up were things that he perhaps wouldn't have been able to confidently provide a solution for. But thanks to having fleshed everything out with the diplomatic team, he could be grateful that they could present a strong first impression.

Well, it wasn't really a strong first impression considering this was far from the first time that the Martial Union or Rui had had an audience with the G'ak'arkan Tribe. But it certainly was the first time that the Martial Union had had a serious and fruitful discussion with the G'ak'arkan Tribe over the trade that the former was proposing. Being able to account for all of the concerns and accommodate them gave the G'ak'arkan Tribe much more confidence that the trade was a good idea.

"How do you propose that we come to an agreement on whether a particular trade is fair or not?" She asked, getting closer and closer to the heart of the trade with her concerns.

The fact that she had already reached the stage where she was most concerned with the fairness of the trades was a good sign, it meant that Rui had probably addressed all of the more fundamental concerns that dealt with the foundations of the trade such as the lack of trust that she wasn't able to poke holes in them at the very moment.

"It is best that we agree upon a general means by which we can evaluate the value of techniques. If we can agree upon that, then it will be possible to ensure a deal is fair to both sides." Rui explained.

Of course, the way Rui framed it was a little different from the way it actually was. For example, both the G'ak'arkan Tribe and the Martial Union had been in possession of Martial Art techniques for a long time. This inevitably meant that both groups had developed their own thoughts on what distinguished valuable techniques from those that weren't particularly of any value.

There was no saying whether these were going to be the same or not.

Of course, there certainly would be a lot of overlap. Both sides certainly valued potency and ease of mastery. These were highly foundational areas that every Martial Artist would undoubtedly value. The G'ak'arkan Tribe would have to be utterly insane to deviate from this particular standard.

However, beyond that, things got a little hazy. Things like individuality were not necessarily to be guaranteed to be valued by the G'ak'arkan Tribe. Thus it was possible that techniques that the Martial Union appraised to be high partly because of their individuality would not necessarily be appraised.

That was one thing that could potentially impede the trading.

"The Martial Union generally tends to evaluate a technique's value with three parameters," Rui told them. "Power, difficulty, and dissemination viability."

In reality, there was an additional parameter: individuality. However, Rui had chosen to discard this variable for several reasons. For one, the reason this variable was considered when the Martial Union evaluated techniques was that if a Martial Artist in the Kandrian Empire submitted a technique with very little individuality, it usually meant that said technique or something extremely similar already existed in the Martial Union's database.

After all, that's what individuality stood for. It was a combination of originality and uniqueness. If a technique submitted by a Kandrian Martial Artist did not even have a shred of originality or uniqueness, then it meant that this technique was shamelessly copied since it wasn't original, and it also meant that the technique was probably very common; since it wasn't unique. That was why the Martial Union cared for individuality.

However, this only applied to Kandrian Martial Artist. If a Kandrian Martial Artist submitted a technique without individuality; then it was a cheap knock-off that the Martial Union already possessed. However,

that wasn't true for a G'ak'arkan Martial Artist. Even if one of the G'ak'arkan techniques that the Martial Union sought was a cheap knock-off of another G'ak'arkan technique, its value did not decrease since the Martial Union did not possess it. Individuality was a filter to ensure that the Martial Union did not purchase what it already had, G'ak'arkan techniques were techniques that the Martial Union did not have, thus there was no fear of purchasing techniques the Martial Union already had. Thus individuality was not a large concern when it came to evaluating unique foreign techniques.

Furthermore, by getting rid of it, there was less of a chance that the G'ak'arkan Tribe would have an issue with the means of evaluation that Rui had just proposed.

"Dissemination value...?" Senior K'Mala raised an eyebrow.

Rui nodded. "Essentially, it depends on how easy it is to spread a technique amongst a large group of Martial Artists. The greater the number of Martial Artists that are able to master the technique, the greater the value of the technique. After all, it is able to provide a huge boost in power if you consider the number of Martial Artists that have received a boost in power after mastering the technique."

"Perhaps that is where our two groups differ slightly," She remarked. "In the G'ak'arkan Tribe, we do not try to spread techniques as much as possible, but rather encourage our Martial Artists to create their own techniques the second they discover their Martial Path."

Rui raised an eyebrow at that, surprised.

That was very different from how the Martial Union dealt with guiding their Martial Apprentices forward. At the Apprentice Realm, individuality was definitely important, but it wasn't as vital to growing stronger. It was mostly a means to become Squire candidates since individuality was a necessity. At the Apprentice level, individuality did not make one stronger than techniques that were purchased from the Martial Union. Not by any solid degree.

Rui suspected that that was why the Martial Union did not place as much of a heavy weight on the individuality, relative to the Martial Apprentice, of the techniques that Martial Apprentices chose to master.