

## Martial Unity 731

### Chapter 731: Hiding

Rui found it to be quite refreshing. Heading out and exploring of his own volition rather than the commission of the Ministry of Ecology and Environment or the Martial Union was something he hadn't done much of.

He had to admit, that this mission had given him a taste for independence. He had complete control over the diplomatic approach to the G'ak'arkan Tribe. And he also had complete control over the settlement.

He had to admit, the freedom was relieving, although it certainly came with its fair share of responsibilities and burdens. Since he was taking care of others.

However, this venture would most likely come with all of the freedom of the former, and few of the responsibilities that had come with this diplomatic mission.

The only people they would be responsible for were themselves.

"Well... Now that you mention it, that does sound interesting," Kane admitted. "It will be very dangerous though."

"Oh come on, we're Martial Artists. That is par for the course," Rui shrugged.

Neither of them was wrong, of course. Considering that the dungeon would be attracting Martial Squires from all over their section of the Panama Continent, it was no doubt going to be fierce in competition.

"Regardless, that's not happening any time soon," Rui shrugged. "It's just an idea I threw out there. We could choose to do something else. Or if you have your own plans, that's fine too. We can talk about it when the time comes."

"Yeah,"

The two parted ways after talking some more. Rui had students to mentor, after all.

In the past six months since Rui had begun mentoring his two students, they had made a lot of progress. It had been grueling and brutal. But he had managed to get his students to work hard and get past a lot of the hardest parts.

Senior Ceeran fared better for the earlier part of the education session, but Senior K'Mala not only caught up to him, much to his dismay but also surpassed him.

This was very impressive considering he had already been studying it for quite some time by then. He simply needed to get her up to speed. He had suspected that this would happen, K'Mala was quite bright and while the culture shock and a drastically different worldview had held her back at first, it had begun to grow on her as she immersed herself in studies. The only concepts of mathematics that both of them studied were ones that were necessary for the execution of the ODA system.

He did not even go one hair beyond what was necessary. He knew damn well that being able to master what they were learning at the given moment was going to be difficult as all hell.

"You're late," Senior K'Mala grumbled.

"Sorry, I was caught up with my own training," Rui smiled.

"Working on that new technique, are we?" Senior Ceeran's eyes twinkled. He had noticed that Rui was using the long-range facilities quite frequently. It was entirely clear that he was working on something new.

"Perhaps," Rui shrugged it off. "I am not relevant at the moment. But what is relevant are the elementary first-order differential equations you solved." Rui handed out papers to both of them. "You both did decent, congratulations."

At that moment, one would find it hard to believe that these were both vaunted Martial Seniors. The feeling of cracking an exam was a universally good feeling.

"I think you have reached the proficiency that I require you to have," Rui remarked. "Your calculation skills have grown better as well."

Rui had them do their calculations on an abacus. Abacuses were great means to improve mental math calculation capabilities. The instrument allowed for quick calculations, and once they reached a high level of mastery, they would be able to essentially envision the abacus in their mind and solve large calculations instantly. This was a modern method of improving mental calculations back on Earth that had very promising results.

He didn't need it himself, compared to the Mind Palace that serves could serve as RAM, Random Access Memory, for him. He could complete even greater calculations extremely rapidly through means of processing that resembled that of computers. Abacuses were primitive to him, but they were just what the two Martial Seniors needed.

Their growth was appreciable when considering that they were elder adults. Younger adults and adolescents would not have taken nearly half a year to get to where they currently were. Rui in his previous life as a student would have completed it in less than a month.

Still, it wasn't bad, all things considered.

"Alright," He smiled. "It's time."

"For what?" Senior K'Mala raised an eyebrow.

"To learn the ODA system," Rui's smile remained unchanged.

Senior Ceeran's expression grew more solemn and yet more enthusiastic. He had seen the ODa system before since Rui had submitted all the data to the Longranger Sect. However, he had to admit, that its complexity greatly surpassed his wildest imagination. He had immediately come to learn that he was vastly unfit to learn the so-called ODA system. Looking at the equations and protocols, he may as well have been reading languages that he didn't understand.

He could only laugh at how unworthy he was of the technique back then.

('Things are different now, however,') His eyes narrowed. His understanding of algebra, exponents, trigonometry, calculus, and differential equations was much better than they were when he had first attempted to try and master them. Maybe, this time he could pull through.

He couldn't help but gaze at Rui with respect and admiration for having created such a technique. The more Senior Ceeran had learned about the relevant math and physics in the past nine months, he had to admit, the more he found it absurd that an eighteen-year-old Martial Squire had come up with that technique. It was mind-boggling and simply didn't make sense. Yes, Rui had a proven mind that was extremely capable in any endeavor of the human intellect, but Senior Ceeran had a nagging suspicion that that alone was not the whole truth.

There had to be something else, something Rui was hiding from everybody.

#### Chapter 732: Mind matters

"You're telling me you perform all these calculations in the middle of combat every time you use the Pathfinder technique?" Senior K'Mala asked him with a horrified expression.

('More actually,') Rui smiled. "Just about, yes."

The Martial Union and the G'ak'arkan Tribe knew about his remarkably potent Martial Path, but nobody besides from him knew about the VOID algorithm. Nobody knew the sheer amount of calculations that fired through his mind and the Mind Palace every time he created an anti-style to counter his opponent.

Senior Ceeran just sighed with a wry smile. He had already gone through this shock a long time ago and had gotten used to this truth, but the same could not be said about Senior K'Mala who had been presented with the ODA System for the first time.

Up until this point, she had been entirely unfit to even learn about it. The G'ak'arkan Tribe's mathematics had not progressed beyond the four basic operations of mathematics. However, she had finally gotten up to speed where she could read the ODA system protocols and calculations and not feel like a fool.

Yet, when she realized that Rui had executed all these protocols continuously in his fights against the K'ulnen Tribe but also in that impressive demonstration of the technique that he had given, she couldn't help but lose her composure for a brief moment.

"How?" She narrowed her eyes. "You're just a rank two Martial Artist, your mind should be slower than that of ours! Yet you can perform this technique faster than we ever could!"

Rui couldn't help but smile awkwardly at that outburst.

His mind went back to what his brother Julian had told him regarding some of the empirical research that had been conducted regarding the neurological enhancements that Martial Artists received.

Martial Artists possessed superhuman mental faculties and cognition when it came to mental and/or physical activities surrounding Martial Art. The further away the activity they were performing was away from that of physical combat with their Martial Art, the less superhuman their mental faculties and cognition were.

That meant that even the most powerful Martial Artists would not be able to read sophisticated literature faster than a human scholar or make mathematical calculations faster than a human. But if it came to processing their opponent's attacks and the battle, Martial Apprentices and Martial Squires were dozens and thousands of times superior to baseline humans.

Rui had strongly suspected that this was due to the fact that only some parts of the brains of Martial Artists were augmented and enhanced. He suspected that out of all the regions of the brain, almost all of the augmentation went to the parts of the brain that were relevant in combat such as the cerebellum, the occipital lobe, and the parietal lobe. This would explain why Martial Artists were extraordinarily superhuman mentally in combat but otherwise normal when it came to ordinary mental activities. The parts of the brain being used for the two activities were different and mutually exclusive, and only the parts of the brain used for one activity were vastly superhuman while the other one was normal.

At this point in time, he hadn't figured out whether the VOID algorithm and the ODA system fell into the non-combat or combat group. The two were mental systems that involved a lot of mathematical and statistical calculations which were certainly not related to the combat parts of the brain. However, their purpose was for combat, and it ultimately was performed in the midst of combat, thus it could not be said to be non-combat related. It was most likely leaning toward the latter.

As far as Rui could see, his intellect and extra-grown mind most likely made up for any gap it had.

However, the same could not be said for Senior Ceeran and Senior K'Mala. The calculations of the ODA system were daunting to them because they did not have his remarkable intellect.

He knew that in a direct comparison between him and them, he would most likely fall back a bit because their minds were still vastly faster, but that was purely because of their rank. They would not be able to use it as smoothly as he did, against other Martial Seniors.

And that was fine. Their goal was to merely use the ODA system as a contributing element in the long-range techniques that they themselves would be developing.

"I have an affinity for these techniques because I built them for me and my strengths and weaknesses. It's part of the reason that the technique has so much individuality," Rui explained patiently. "It is obvious that the two of you won't use it as well as I do. Now, get to memorizing this. You need to embed the ODa system into your bones otherwise you have no chance of mastering it."

And so the grind began as Rui had begun the third course of his education program, pushing them through rigorous and tough education and testing.

Senior K'Mala gritted her teeth as she did her absolute best to keep up. Every time she even remotely felt like giving up, Rui reminded her of her haughty statement regarding being able to handle everything he threw at her. Her pride and ego would not allow her to let Rui force her to swallow her words back.

It was frustrating because Rui even seemed to enjoy it to a certain extent. It put a fire under her ass and drove her to learn everything he gave her as fast as she could. She was determined to master it and prove herself right.

Though, she half suspected that that was exactly what Rui was after every time he teased her. He did not seem like a needlessly cruel or vindictive person, and with how shrewd he was, he may very well have figured out that this was the best way to motivate someone like her. With how sharp he had proven himself to be, she knew that this was probably the case. She had always been one of the few intellectual and rational people of her tribe, yet she felt slow in front of Rui.

## Chapter 733: Faulty

While Senior K'Mala and Senior Ceeran slogged hard to master the ODA system, Rui had been furthering his depth with Project Wavestack.

He had reached a point where he could comfortably do double superposition at any point in time after more than a year of hard work since he first began learning the Mighty Roar Flash Blast technique.

However, he had quickly run into some of the disadvantages of the technique.

('It requires a lot of attention and focus,') He sighed.

Of course, this was expected to a certain degree, but it still was a constraint that he had to work with. Even if the technique did not require active calculations once he memorized the launch conditions of the two sound projectiles such that he could launch them in exactly the right way to constructively superimpose with each other, it still required attention and focus.

Which meant that he could not use the ODA system to the same degree when he was using constructive superposition. The more he used it, the shorter his maximum range grew. He found that simplifying using double superposition had cut his max range by half. Successful triple superposition cut his max range by sixty-six percent.

And he had yet to get even a single successful quadruple superposition attack off. Though he was slowly getting better at triple superposition. He suspected that quadruple superposition would reduce his range to roughly about two hundred and fifty meters.

One of the things that he had underestimated how drastic the power boost he got was, he had expected there to be discrepancies between his predicted values and reality due to things like inefficiencies and loss of energy, but in reality it was even better than what he had expected from it.

('This technique... it's ridiculous. If I theoretically superimposed ten attacks atop each other, then I would be able to launch quasi-Senior level attacks!') Rui gaped at the thought.

He had seen what Martial Seniors were capable of, launching quasi-Senior level attacks was an incredible accomplishment. At the very least, he was certain that grade-ten Martial Squires probably were not ten times above him in offensive power.

Still, when he witnessed Senior K'Mala and Senior Ceeran training with the VOID algorithm, it became all too clear that he was far, far behind them.

THWOOM!

BOOM!!

"TSK!" Senior K'Mala tutted as she tried hitting a target five kilometers away.

Because their inherent accuracy and senses were so much greater than that of Rui's their baseline was still greater than Rui's greatest range limit even though their proficiency of the ODA System was faulty and far below that of Rui's.

Admittedly, Rui felt proud about the fact that two Martial Seniors wanted his technique, but after seeing that even with a highly primitive and elementary use of it, they were still way better than he probably ever could be as a Martial Squire, he had to admit that he was humbled to a certain extent.

It was hard to tease Senior K'Mala when she was launching powerful attacks that would break his body if they hit him.

"Why am I missing?" She turned toward Rui.

"Your execution of the first phase of the ODA system isn't bad, honestly. It's still far from perfect given that you are a Martial Senior and should be able to do better. The problem with you arises from the second phase of the ODA System, I'm afraid," Rui explained.

The second phase of the ODA system was related to the prediction of atmospheric conditions such as pressure and temperature shifts, and air currents. The importance and significance of the second phase



of the ODA system increased the greater the distance the target was from the user. After all, wind currents could significantly affect the trajectory of a sound projectile over the course of a kilometer.

This was less true for shorter ranges. Rui had even discovered that he didn't need it most of the time for targets lesser than a hundred meters away. His attacks would cross that distance in a split second and that was too little time for any atmospheric factors to throw the sound projectiles off trajectory.

"I'm actually a little surprised at the power of your projectiles, however," Rui scratched his head. "Though I suppose holding back does make it easier?"

She considered his words a bit before nodding. "You're right, I was restraining myself from the power of the third rank, but my goal is to be able to use this technique with my full power, not without it."

Suddenly, the atmosphere grew heavier.

Rui's felt a chill crawl up his spine as a heavy wave of pressure crashed over him. Red light emerging from deep within her skin glowed as it trickled across her body.

She opened her mouth, and an incredibly dense attack emerged rushing forward at a tremendous pace!

**BOOM!!!**

A gigantic crater in a barren part of the island several kilometers away emerged.

Rui's eyes widened, as he wiped away some sweat from his forehead. "Maybe... You should dial back the power. Now we don't know if you actually hit it or not because everything within hundred meters from that point has been destroyed..."

Senior K'Mala scrunched her eyes as she studied the site. "Tsk! You're right..."

The red glowing lines subsided.

Rui, on the other hand, had seen enough.

('I was right!') He grew excited inwardly. ('Those are glowing blood vessels!')

He hadn't been able to make out last time because they were too far away from him. But now that he had been given the opportunity to study it up close, he could clearly see that the red lines traced the circulatory system inside. This strongly supported his hypothesis that the red lines that were blood vessels that were glowing for some unknown reason. That would explain this strange and peculiar visage that all Martial Seniors possessed for some reason that clearly had to do with the Senior Realm.

Although this didn't add to his understanding of the Senior Realm, it did bolster his suspicions.

Chapter 734: End

He still had no idea what they were, or why Martial Seniors had those, and no way of knowing yet. He knew that neither of the Martial Seniors was going to breathe a word to Rui, most likely.

('Although Senior Ceeran did let slip that the breakthrough to Martial Senior was a spontaneous event that could even occur in the middle of combat,') Rui recalled.

Perhaps that information was too trivial for Senior Ceeran to care to bother hiding. Furthermore, he was recounting his own breakthrough to the Senior Realm which had occurred in the middle of a battle according to him.

Regardless, when he glanced at the Martial Senior, things weren't looking too good. Senior Ceeran was having much greater difficulty than Senior K'Mala. He was not the type that was suited for the ODA system. In fact, Rui was sure that if he did end up adopting the ODA system in some new technique, he would probably use a portion of it.

And that was fine.

The point of learning the ODA system was to gain access to a unique and powerful ingredient and building block for new techniques that could have higher accuracy than what they used to have prior.

"Senior Ceeran," Rui addressed the struggling Martial Senior gently. "Perhaps you should consider ignoring the second phase of the ODA system and focus on just the first phase alone. In reality, I only created the second phase because I had very high expectations of the ODA system in the first place and because I was capable of handling even greater difficulty when it came to mental requirements and burdens.

"You're probably right, young man," Senior Ceeran sighed. "In reality, the second phase is not all that relevant to me because I can manipulate the trajectory of my attacks really even after launching them," He shrugged. "So I can make corrections to my trajectory of attacks that may be displaced by atmospheric conditions. In reality, I had already resolved to master the first phase more than anything. The second phase is not bad and would help, but it is not that deep of a matter if I cannot master it."

Rui nodded, agreeing with his logic.

The two continued training hard as Rui overlooked their training. Every day, they would start training their executions of the ODA system, growing better at it as time passed.

In time, Senior K'Mala's rate of calculations with the first phase of the ODA system had soon reached a stage where she could apply them in combat against other Martial Seniors. She had begun bullying her little brother in fights as she firmly kept him out of range. Her accuracy had risen tremendously and she could hold him off further away than he could attack her, creating a situation where she steadily accumulated damage on him while he could not even hurt her in the slightest.

Her mastery of the second phase of the ODA system was still imperfect, and it seemed that after many months of training it, she had finally hit her deadlock. She was unable to master it perfectly the way Rui had, yet it was still viable to the point that it helped her greatly.

Rui himself had made great strides in Project Wavestack. He had come to a point where double superposition was effortless, and triple superposition was consistently successful. He had even managed to get a fluke with quadruple superposition, but it was far too difficult for him to even consider mastering at the moment.

Pursuing superposition could go on infinitely, thus Rui decided to temporarily put an end to Project Wavestack as a success. A powerful technique that could amplify his offense by a factor of two or three had been created and it was finally time to give the technique a name.

('Transverse Resonance,') Rui spontaneously came up with a name.

The name was a bit ironic since sound wasn't transverse waves, it was carried by what was known as longitudinal waves.

Regardless, it was a cool name, so Rui didn't particularly care. Ten months had passed since the contracts had been signed between the Martial Union and the G'ak'arkan Tribe. Every single technique had been successfully exchanged and traded.

The mission objective was achieved, in every way possible. He had to admit that it was one of the most satisfying missions that he had ever completed and was certainly the longest he had ever undertaken, and also the most unique all combined into one.

"We have accomplished our objective," Rui calmly informed Senior K'Mala in an official meeting between the Martial Union and the G'ak'arkan Tribe. "We are grateful to the G'ak'arkan Tribe for cooperating with us in an exchange of techniques. We hope to maintain our good relationship with the G'ak'arkan Tribe."

He had told her with a pleasant smile as they shook hands and bade each other goodbye. There was a very good chance that he might not see her again or any of the other Martial Artists of the tribe.

They exchanged a final smile before the migrating process began. The members of the settlement transferred all movable valuables. They left the infrastructure as it was, after all, there was no need to break it down. The Martial Union didn't give a damn what the native indigenous Martial Artists of the island did with it once they left. If they ever decided to come back, it could make another settlement process much easier than the first time since they could rely on the foundation that they had left behind.

The migration process proceeded swiftly. Rui had been discharged from his duty as the leader of the settlement, and specialized personnel had been dispatched by the Martial Union to ensure that the various personnel and supplies, and inventory would be transported back to the Martial Union appropriately.

Soon enough a dozen large cruise ships sailed away from Vilun island, heading straight towards the Kandrian Empire that very day.

Had anyone asked how Rui was feeling that day, he wasn't he would be able to reply.

## Chapter 735: Plans

"Missing them already?" Kane asked Rui was gazing back at the island.

"It's not like I spent too much time with any of the Martial Artists, in all honesty," Rui replied.

"What about that one Martial Senior chick though?" Kane asked uncouthly.

Rui furrowed his eyebrows in response. "Yeah, I suppose I am going to miss her."

"Hehe, do you have a crush on her? Did you guys have a thing going on? Rui and K'Mala sitting on a tree..."

Rui shook his head with a resigned smile. He was too old mentally to be bothered with juvenile jests. "By the way, have you figured out what you're going to do next?"

Kane grew more serious upon hearing that. He knew why Rui was asking that question, it was regarding the proposal that he had made to Kane a while back on Vilun Island. It was one proposal that he had to give credit to as being alluring.

Kane didn't know much about the dungeon.

But he did know a lot about Rui. If he thought that visiting the dungeon was a good idea for both of them, then Kane definitely thought it was a good idea as well.

"Alright, I'm in," Kane shrugged. "What was the dungeon called again?"

Rui threw a disapproving look at his friend. "You should have familiarized yourself with the dungeon before agreeing to it straightforwardly. You're prone to getting exploited with an attitude like that."

Kane shook his head inwardly. He would have instantly rejected almost anyone else had they suggested partnering up with him and diving into a dangerous dungeon with immense competition from other Martial Squires across this section of the continent.

Yet it was different from when it was Rui who was the one making that proposal. Not only was the man sharp and shrewd, but he was also someone Kane trusted deeply.

That was why he had accepted Rui's proposal. In reality, he had accepted the moment Rui had made it months ago inwardly, this was the first time that he was informing Rui about it.

"I'm glad you're willing," Rui turned back towards the ocean. "It definitely reduces the risks than if we went alone."

Rui was confident in his capability, however, at the end of the day, he was only one person. He could make mistakes, he could be caught off-guard. It was always better to have another person with you.

Kane was reliable in his eyes, and quite trustworthy. There were very few Martial Squires he could say that for.

"But unfortunately, neither of us is ready yet," He sighed.

"Hm?" Kane raised an eyebrow.

"The dungeon is a gathering ground for some of the most accomplished Martial Squires in this section of the continent. We're not going to be dealing with any low-level Martial Squires. I highly doubt anybody below grade five is going to be able to compete effectively."

"True that," Kane nodded.

He had broken through a lot more recently than Rui did and was two grades below him. He was especially unfit to be partaking in an endeavor as crazy as this one.

"Also, I need to gather as much information regarding the Shionel Dungeon as well," Rui pointed out. "We can probably purchase detailed information and intelligence on the dungeon from the Martial Union. But just that isn't enough. We'll need to analyze that information and come up with a strategy and course of action that will allow us to maximize our fruits from the venture."

Rui was not someone who undertook ventures like this without preparation. Getting to know everything relevant that he had to do.

The dungeon was probably like the one in the Serevian forest, except its underground system was firmly intact because it was not forcibly filled with land to prevent security holes. It would extend deep underground.

He needed to find information surrounding its structure, the level of competition, and the esoteric material yields that could be taken up for grabs. Furthermore, he needed information surrounding the beasts that occupied the dungeon, those would greatly factor into his evaluation of the difficulty of delving into the dungeon of the Shionel Confederation.

"We also need to get stronger," Rui noted. "While we gather and analyze information we should go ahead and increase our power to the bare minimum degree."

Kane nodded, sighing. "That's not gonna be so easy, you know. Becoming stronger as a Martial Squire is so much more complicated than it was as a Martial Apprentice. Back in the Apprentice Realm, you could just master techniques that weren't your own and call it a day. But in the Squire Realm, without the synergy that comes with using techniques that you have an affinity for, your growth will be stalled. And without the individuality that comes with having created, even partially, your own techniques, one can forget about trying to reach the Senior Realm."

"If it was easy, everybody would do it," Rui replied calmly.

He didn't necessarily disagree with Kane. He was right in saying that growth in the Squire Realm was different than it used to be in the Apprentice Realm.

To Rui, however, this was a good thing. He had suspected it before, but recently he had confirmed it. But he was great at developing his own strength.

He had a lifetime of experience and knowledge from another world. He could apply it to create techniques that nobody else could fathom creating. Because of the knowledge about the human being and the mechanics of reality that he had inherited from his previous life, he had plenty of fuel and source material to build techniques out of.

Where other Martial Squires struggled, Rui thrived. He was certain that no Martial Squire of his youth and experience, or lack thereof, in the Squire Realm, could have come up with so many powerful techniques.

He recalled one of the Martial Squires he had sparred with when creating one of his techniques told him that the path to the Senior Realm was difficult and hard. Well, Rui realized that may not entirely apply to him.

#### Chapter 736: Return

The climate changed as the days passed. It was a sign that they were getting increasingly closer to the main continent. The journey was more cumbersome because there was a lot that needed to be transported back, after all.

Yet, eventually, they finally reached their destination; the port town of Farund that they had set out from.

Even from a great distance away, Rui could experience the familiar feel of the Kandrian Empire. The site of modern civilization, alone, felt relieving and refreshing. While living on Vilun Island was an experience unlike any other, it was not familiar nor comforting.

It had been only days since he had been relieved from his duties, yet Rui felt quite relaxed and comfortable. While the freedom that he got in his G'ak'arkan Tribe mission was great, the responsibilities; were not so much.



Now, he was back to being just another Martial Squire.

And that felt natural.

('I can't wait to see everyone back in the Orphanage now,') Rui's smile grew more eager.

He hadn't seen his family for ten months. He had to admit, that he was sorely missing them.

('That reminds me, they said that they had a surprise waiting for me back home,') Rui was curious about that. He wanted to know what it was that they were keeping in store for him.

('Well, post-mission protocols first,') Rui groaned.

The post-mission protocols for this mission were going to be painful, that was for sure. He highly doubted he could get away with just an hour of paperwork like he normally did.

The second that they reached, he immediately leaped off, reaching the dock.

He breathed deeply, taking in his first breath of the Kandrian Empire in a long time. The Martial Artists quickly followed suit, each getting off even before the bridge between the ships and the dock had been made yet.

"You heading for post-mission protocols too?" Kane asked as he walked to Rui.

"Yeah, best to finish it off as quickly as I can and then head home in peace," Rui nodded. "Let's get going,"

The two stepped into the air as they sky-walked at a swift pace, heading towards the Mantian Region and the town of Hajin.

The two of them quickly passed through the familiar old security check-ups before letting them pass through.

It wasn't long before they began filling up the statements and reports of the entire mission.

This was an extensive process for both of them. They had to go over ten months' worth of events and they couldn't skip out too many details.

Although the Martial Union had received routine reports from all of the teams and departments of the settlement on Vilun Island, they still required thorough details from the two of them.

Rui had to describe the initial negotiation hearing between the Martial Union and the G'ak'arkan Tribe, the coldness of Senior K'ahru, and their swift rejection of any offer that Rui made in regard to them.

He had to describe his actions and executive decisions during the settlement construction on the island. This was the period that he was the most busy in. What followed was the decision to trigger a war with the K'ulnen Tribe.

There had been a lot of thought that had gone into the strategy and approach that they would employ with the K'ulnen Tribe. He especially needed to describe his battles in detail, which he had no problem doing.

After that, Rui went on to describe the success of the negotiation deliberation with the G'ak'arkan Tribe, and eventually the exchange of techniques and the training phases.

About four hours later, he was finally done.

Kane had long bade Rui goodbye because his report was far smaller and lesser than that of Rui's. He was merely acting as a shadow-class Martial Artist; a covert agent and an operative. He also had been largely free and jobless for much of the time that he had spent in this mission compared to Rui.

"Ughh..."Rui groaned once he left the Hajin branch of the Martial Union. "At least I can go back home now."

He didn't want to waste any time.

And he didn't.

He crouched with one leg stretched back before he dashed off at top speed towards the Quarrier Orphanage.

In less than fifteen seconds, he had already arrived.

A loud gust of wind announced his arrival to all of the members of the Quarrier Orphanage.

"RUUUUU!!!" Alice immediately greeted him the second she saw him, leaping to embrace him. "It's been so long! You've grown taller!"

"I've missed you too Alice," He earnestly returned her embrace. It took him a while before he could extricate himself from her tight hug.

Soon enough, the rest of the adults came out to greet him.

Farion, Mica, Myra and the many adults who had looked after Rui when he was just a little child couldn't help but fawn over him after having not seen him for nearly a year. Lashara indulged herself by cupping his face with an affectionate expression, before embracing him gently.

The children were no different in their enthusiasm to see him either. Most of them had begun to hit their growth spurts by now and were growing taller rapidly.

"Big brother, you're back."

"You have to tell us about your adventure this time."

Rui smiled. "Of course, I will... By the way. Where are those two?"

"Ah... Max and Mana? They're training in the woods right now at their usual spot," Lashara smiled. "Can you go call them? It's about time for lunch. Besides, they have been dying to meet you and show you something."

"Sure, not a problem," Rui put his belongings inside before taking off to the sky toward the training space that he had prepared for them nearly a year ago after their attempt in the Martial Union entrance exam.

"There they are..." Rui smiled as he spotted their figures. Yet suddenly, his eyes widened. "Wait a minute... This feeling? It can't be that those two have..."

Chapter 737: Surprise

"This feeling..."

How could he not recognize it? He had sensed it countless times in his life.

"Martial Apprentice..." He murmured as he rapidly reached their location.

The two of them paused their sparring match as their senses picked up his approach. They turned to meet him with smiles on their faces.

Even before Rui could talk to them, he had already noticed how much they had grown. Their energy was calmer and more composed. They had lost their childish and immature demeanor. Their eyes, which used to be filled with wonder and curiosity, were not filled with determination.

Rui felt his heartache at the thought that he missed their breakthrough to the Apprentice Realm. It was a shame, but alas, it could not be helped.

STEP

He landed before them.

"The two of you..." He smiled. "To say that you have made me proud is an understatement. Congratulations, you are now Martial Artists."

He ruffled their head in adoration, though perhaps they were getting too old for it, admittedly.

"Thank you, big brother," Mana beamed at his praise.

"Thanks, big bro!" Max grinned.

"This must have been the surprise, eh?" Rui chuckled. "It's not nice to keep secrets from your big brother, you know?"

"Hehe... We wanted to tell you about the news in person," Max smirked.

The three of them shared a chuckle.

"Now then, tell me about your Martial Paths," Rui instructed.

Their expressions grew more serious.

"My Martial Art is centered around dynamic maneuvering," She explained. "My style of combat focuses on three-dimensional maneuvering for defensive and offensive applications. No attack must touch me, and no defense must restrict me."

"Interesting..." Rui nodded.

It made sense given how she had fought all this time. She always placed and timed her movements to position herself most appropriately. Thus he could see her Martial Path leaning in that direction.

He turned to Max, he had a feeling he knew what his Martial Path was as well.

"My Martial Art is cumulative momentum strikes!" Max grinned. "I rush, gather as much energy I can, and break my opponents with one big crash!"

"As expected..." Rui nodded. Max loved rushing in and throwing every ounce of energy that he had gathered into a single crash.

In a way, his Martial Path was pursuing the Flowing Canon technique that Rui used to have, to the extreme. Of course, this meant that his Martial Art was extremely narrow and extremely focused. This was not a bad thing.

He knew of Martial Artists who had reached fearsome heights purely focusing on a singular specialty.

The first one that came to mind was Hever.

Hever had, to this day, only mastered a single technique. He had incorporated elements of other techniques into it to elevate the technique. But it was still considered part of one technique.

Thus Rui did not dare look down on singular and focused Martial Art. It was because they gave everything to that one singular thing. Dedicated everything they had to offer in one direction, and they were able to accomplish feats that were simply incredible.

If Max kept pursuing a path to maximizing the lethality and dangerousness of his bullrush strikes, then he would no doubt become a fearsome Martial Artist.

"By the way, big brother?" Mana interjected his thoughts. "Our senses have grown so much better, and yet why can't I still sense even a shred of your power?"

Rui had still put on his human-level Mind Mask. He did not like drawing attention from others, after all. He had no interest in being the object of attention of normal human beings.

This was especially the case when considering the fact that he had been walking around with the aura of a grade-ten Martial Artist for ten months!

He had spent every day instantly attracting the admiration or fear of onlookers continuously for that long all because he needed to maintain the illusion of his strength. Now that he had returned back to the Kandrian Empire, he no longer needed to do that and could peacefully return back to not walking around as what was effectively a blindingly bright light to ordinary humans

"It's because I'm using a technique to suppress my power from being projected," Rui sighed replying. "It's not something I'm fond of."

"Enough talk brother. Let's spar!" Max was really excited to spar against Rui ever since he had broken through to the Apprentice Realm.

"Hehehe... You have been dying for this haven't you?" Rui smiled. "Who knows, even if you are Martial Apprentices, two against one might be too much."

He tried getting their hopes up a bit, hoping they did not understand the disparity between the Apprentice and Squire Realm.

"Don't fool us, big brother," Mana pouted. "We fought our hardest against our Apprentice Verema. But we were utterly helpless against him!"

"Ah... right," Rui had almost forgotten that he had hired a number of Martial Apprentices of different Martial Paths to expose his two siblings to different kinds of Martial Art. To show them what was possible. "Haha, I hoped I could pull a fast one over you."

The duo had been surprised at how helpless they had been against a Martial Apprentice, even if they were older.

"The Apprentice Realm is wide. It is divided into grades, ranging from one to ten," Rui explained. "The two of you at this moment are not even grade one, as you have not yet mastered a single Apprentice-level technique. Your Martial Apprentice mentors and trainers are all around grade-five."

"Is the gap between grade one and grade five that big?" She frowned. "It's two on one you know!"

They were still limited by their human experience. Generally, two-on-one between trained human-level fighters was a decisive victory for the two. Especially, if the fight was a fair duel. Humans did not have the ability to reach such high levels of skill that they could overcome a numbers advantage that also had skill themselves.

The same was absolutely not true for Martial Artists, and they were soon coming to learn that.

#### Chapter 738: Spar

"Of course it is large," Rui smiled. "The difference between the bottom of the Apprentice Realm and the peak of it is immense."

The two of them were quite surprised by this.

"So we have a long way to go before we can reach the Squire Realm?" Max heaved a sigh.

Rui couldn't help but be amused. These two did not have any idea about the difficulty of breaking through to the Squire Realm, clearly. He did not intend to divulge all of it, either. He had not been told about the evolution breakthrough process to the Squire Realm for multiple reasons, and he could understand why in hindsight.

For starters, the power that it provided was too alluring, while Martial Apprentices were generally young and inexperienced, and lacking in maturity. The evolution breakthrough gave the Martial Artist a Martial body; a body that had transcended the limits of humanity through Darwinian evolution. It was a dreamlike power that any normal Martial Apprentice would feel an immense amount of greed and lust for. There was the fear that if divulged too early, their greed for this power would warp their Martial Paths to revolve around their body, rather than molding their body to revolve around their Martial Path.



That was why Martial maturity was one of the conditions for Squire candidacy. It was to ensure that the Martial Apprentice had developed their Martial Art to a certain degree and had set it in stone so that an excessive amount of corruption of it due to greed would not occur.

Rui could appreciate this, even though he did believe that he would not have been corrupted regardless.

There was another reason for not disclosing the secret of the breakthrough to the Squire Realm. The breakthrough to the Squire Realm was a man-made way to allow Martial Artists to climb higher Realms. It was not something that could naturally be obtained. Thus it was a way for the Martial Union to ensure that others did not get their hands on it by some young and immature Martial Apprentice spilling the beans by some foreign power like the Commonwealth Duchy of Vinfrana.

He had faith that the Apprentice and Squire instructors of the Martial Academy would take good care of them. He was especially reassured by the fact that Headmaster Aronian was watching over them.

"By the way, big brother," Mana drew his attention back. "What does it take to become a Martial Squire? Can you tell me? It could help us become stronger quicker."

Rui smiled, shaking his head lightly. He reached out for the top of her head, ruffling her hair a bit. "Focus on your Martial Paths. Grow stronger. Make sure your Martial Paths truly belong to you and not to anybody else. Remember these words, okay?"

They nodded solemnly. They had an immense amount of faith in their older brother. His words, especially regarding Martial Art, were

He said the latter half with a pointed tone, making allusions to the concept of individuality. He had considered explaining the concept of it to them but ultimately decided against it. Individuality in their Martial Path was not such a dire necessity in the Apprentice Realm.

Besides, the creativity needed to add individuality to your Martial Art by creating your own techniques with uniqueness and originality needed some foundation to come from. These two had not yet mastered a single technique, how could they be expected to create their own techniques? He did not want to burden them with information that they not only could not make use of in the short to medium term but would only serve as a thorn of insecurity as they grew stronger.

"You're not gonna tell us about what the breakthrough process for the Squire Realm is either, are you big brother?" Max remarked with an unsatisfied expression.

"Most certainly not," Rui smiled pleasantly.

"Figures. But I don't care about that right now," Max shook his head. "I just want to fight you as a Martial Apprentice at least once."

"Hehe..." Rui smiled. "Alright, enough talk it is."

He stepped ten meters away from them, before raising an arm and gesturing them to attack. "Come, let's begin."

The two of them did not even hesitate.

They lashed out towards Rui, Mana reaching him a beat earlier. Her sprint was efficient and rapid, she reached him in an instant before launching a driving kick straight toward his torso.

WHOOSH

Rui simply sidestepped gracefully as he twirled out of the way of the attack.

Yet as soon as he finished that maneuver, Max had already arrived. His right arm was coiled beside his ribs lashing forward as he channeled all of his momentum straight towards Rui.

Rui's eyebrows rose as he studied Max's form in slow motion.

('This attack is good enough to match the Flowing Canon technique,') Rui noted with pleasure.

He wasn't too surprised considering the concept of the Flowing Canon technique was what Max's Martial Path was related to. Max would be able to wield that technique, and techniques similar to that far better than Rui ever could due to his Martial Path's affinity towards it.

While Mana was outside of his field of vision behind him, he could sense that her agility and fluidity were much better than that of his when he had broken through, for the same reason; it was her Martial Path. She rapidly turned all of the missed momentum of her first attack a complete one hundred and eighty degrees before throwing it back at Rui once more from behind. The two had times their attacks that he would end up facing their attack from opposite directions simultaneously.

('Their coordination has improved yet again,') He smiled as he leaped slightly.

BANG!

Their fists cleanly crashed into each other as the two of them grimaced.

STEP

Rui landed on both their fists gracefully, looking down at them from above with an amused, yet proud smile. "That was a good combo, did you prepare it just to use it against me?"

Chapter 739: Accelerate

A few hours later, the two of them were flat on the ground, exhausted.

"Man... Huff... We couldn't land a proper strike on you even after we became Martial Apprentices!" Max complained.

"That too... Huff... He was moving slower than us... And we still couldn't even touch him," Mana panted. "How is that even possible?"

Rui, who was enjoying the rare pleasant weather of spring, smiled at their words. "It's a matter of timing and placement, my cute and adorable siblings."

"What does that even mean?" Max furrowed his eyebrows. He was much bigger than he was before, and he disliked being treated like a child. Unbeknownst to him, Rui found this part of him to be the most adorable.

"I can evade everything you throw at me because I can see it coming, and because I pick and choose the right evasion move in response," Rui replied. "Which is why even if I delay my response and reaction time to be slower than yours, I can still handily evade you with ease for the most part. I see your attacks coming sooner than you realize, thus I make the necessary preparations to avoid them sooner."

"Does this have anything to do with your Martial Path, big brother?" Mana asked, curious. "Your Martial Path was... adaptive evolution, correct? Are you adapting to us? Allowing you to do what you just described?"

That was a nuanced question. Mana had always been smarter of the two, though she was more tactically indecisive in combat compared to Max.

"My Martial Path is indeed adaptive evolution," Rui nodded. "But... what I did now is not an application of Martial Art..."

The truth was that his normal and natural insight had grown to a level where he could easily see through their moves even without using predictive models of those two. This wasn't particularly shocking or surprising. Any decent Martial Squire with enough experience would be able to do that more or less. Their movements were far less refined than what he was accustomed to fighting.

They stared at him dumbfounded.

"Don't look at me like that," Rui couldn't help but feel a little proud of the admiration that they were showering him with. "When you go to the Martial Academy, you'll meet even more amazing Martial Squires."

"Even more amazing than you?!"

"I'm not even all that special in the Squire Realm at this very moment," Rui shook his head, trying to downplay himself. He didn't want them to have an over-inflated view of their brother. When they joined the Martial Academy, they would come to learn that their big brother was a bit of a celebrity in the Martial communities of the Kandrian Empire. Currently, Rui had come to find that almost all the people he had come to interact with within this community had heard about him, directly or indirectly. Fame from being the dark horse finalist of the previous Martial contest more than five years ago, fame from his win streak in the Martial Games, fame from killing a Martial Squire and achieving unprecedented power as Martial Apprentice that forced the Martial Union to re-evaluate their power grading system, and the man who had singlehandedly won the Kandrian Empire victory in the final battle of the Serevian Wars.

He had never informed them, or anyone in the Orphanage about it, mostly because he was far too self-conscious to brag so blatantly and because it did not truly matter. But now that the two of them would be going to be passing the Martial Entrance Exam that was less than a month away and attending the Martial Academy, he suspected that his reputation would be of use to them.

"Anyways, the two of you had made great progress and have become remarkably strong... remarkably quickly." He said that with a proud smile, but inside he was absorbed deep in thought.

('Did these two possess the talent needed to breakthrough at the age of thirteen?') Rui couldn't help but wonder. In reality, he more or less knew the answer to that question. ('...No, they did not.')

It was unfortunate, but they were above average as far as talent went. Yet, they broke through to the Apprentice Realm earlier than Fae had. Fae herself was a renowned talent, even if she wasn't in the genius-level territory like Fiona, Kane, and Ian, who all broke through even well before they had begun to go through puberty.

This made them very favorable prospects since they broke through nearly five years earlier than the average age to break through to Martial Apprentice.

So what had changed? They hadn't shown dominant talents for combat from a young age, yet now they had broken through to the Apprentice Realm at the age of thirteen. Something had to have caused that.

Rui already had a strong suspicion as to what it was.

('The VOID algorithm must have accelerated their self-awareness since they got to witness themselves in me when I copied their movements with the predictive model, and when I showed them their strengths and shortcomings when I mildly adapted to them.') Rui sighed.

The breakthrough to the Apprentice Realm was one born from self-discovery. Self-awareness was vitally important and decisive among other things. Rui suspected that the VOID algorithm had facilitated the self-awareness that was needed to break through to the Apprentice Realm.

('First Crea... Now these two...') Rui noted.

Back when Crea had abruptly broken out of seemingly nowhere in the middle of the Martial entrance exam, he had only suspected that perhaps the VOID training had something to do with it, but now he had two more cases.

It was a lot more convincing and likely that his Martial Path could accelerate the rate of discovery of other Martial Paths of aspiring Martial Artists. That made his Martial Path and Martial Art that much more valuable.

('If the Martial Union found out...') Rui shook his head.

The Martial Union was very careful about extracting techniques from Martial Artists. It had worked hard to develop a reputation for being fair.

#### Chapter 740: Consequences

However, they found that Rui had a way of vastly increasing the number of Martial Artists in the country over a longer period of time by a factor of ten, then they would do anything and everything in their power to get that technique.

The first thing that would happen would be that Rui would likely be secured by two powerful defensive Martial Masters. In the case that information about his ability leaked to the rest of the world and unscrupulous parties decided to try and kill him before he breaks the balance of power, the Martial Union would definitely secure his life and well-being with their very best.

It would not be absurd for even a Martial Sage to take responsibility for protecting him.

They would probably begin by trying to compel him to voluntarily divulge the technique of his own accord. That way, a mutually beneficial deal could be established that satisfied both parties. Rui could end up obtaining a fortune worth of wealth with ease. He could end up gaining a huge number of highly beneficial privileges and status that only Martial Artists that stood at the peak of the nation could obtain.

The Martial extremists would start worshipping him since he had the ability to bring fruition to their ambitions and dreams in the long run.

However, if he refused to divulge the technique, then things would take a turn for the worst very easily. Their policy of not forcing or coercing Martial Artists to divulge their techniques be damned, they would do everything they could get his technique. Rui highly doubted that they would not go as far as taking the entirety of his orphanage hostage to compel him to divulge the technique.

Regardless, they would get the technique. They would have Rui personally train as many trusted Martial Artists in that technique as they could, or develop new training technology based on the VOID algorithm. They would do everything in their power to become stronger through the new way that Rui's VOID algorithm will have shown them.

Rui probably would lose his freedom for a long time, and that absolutely was not something that he wanted.

('I cannot have any more of my pupils to break through to the Apprentice Realm,') Rui shook his head.

Three was already suspicious, but not unheard of. There were experienced mentors and teachers who've had far more pupils become Martial Apprentice. The issue might arrive due to his one hundred percent success rate thus far.

He needed to abstain from training pupils or at least ensure that he doesn't use the VOID algorithm training for them if he does mentor them. These were the bare minimum precautions that he had to take.

Eventually, the three of them returned back to the Quarrier Orphanage.

"Rui, I told you to get them back immediately."

"Ah, my bad. Haha..." Rui laughed with an apologetic expression.

He had been caught off-guard by the breakthrough of the two siblings that he had completely forgotten that he had been sent to get them back in time for lunch that he ended up inadvertently missing as well.

"Now now, I'm sure he must have been too absorbed by Max's and Mana's breakthroughs, let us cut him some slack," Julian smiled.

"Right right," Rui turned towards Julian. "It's been a while."

Julian had gone to work, and Rui hadn't seen them in the morning. The two of them exchanged a hug, they had always been particularly close with each other thanks to the many extensive conversations that they had with each other over topics that they had common interests. Julian engaged in research of all kinds, and he did specialize in the research of Martial Art as well. While Rui was a Martial Artist who had researched martial arts and combat sports for most of his life back on Earth.

That gave them expertise and understanding over many areas that only they had in the orphanage.

"How was your mission, Rui?" Julian asked. "This has been the longest mission that you have ever undertaken, correct?"

"True," Rui nodded. "Honestly, it was quite difficult and tiring, but at the end of the day, I managed to succeed."

Julian's eyes glinted with curiosity.



Rui had informed him of the gist of what he was up to. When Julian heard that Rui had been chosen as an ambassador of the Martial Union to negotiate the deal with the native indigenous Martial tribes of a faraway island, he couldn't help but be surprised. Yet he was shrewd enough to immediately recognize the merits of the idea and why the Martial Union had made this decision.

Although he had maintained correspondence with Rui, the latter had not been specific about the information that he had relayed.

"Sounds like quite the adventure," Julian smiled as they took their seats opposite each other. "What were they like?"

"They were barbaric and warmongering," Rui sighed. "They waged war against other Martial tribes on a daily basis. We had to carefully and delicately navigate them with scrupulous care, and it was tedious and patience-consuming, really. But quite satisfactory when we succeeded in the end. I managed to learn one of their technique and become stronger myself, I even created a new technique on the island."

Julian knitted his eyebrows in surprise. "You had time to train when you were the leader of the entire diplomatic operation?"

"...I delegated all the troublesome work to other more qualified personnel," Rui shrugged.

Julian sighed with amusement and resignation. Of course, considering that Rui succeeded, the Martial Union probably couldn't care less, especially since he was a Martial Artist.

"Tell me all you can about it," Julian urged Rui.

He was not an anthropologist, but even he had a lot of curiosity regarding other Martial Artist models. The fact that the Martial Union had deployed Rui probably meant that the natives had Martial Squires, in that case, he was quite curious as to how technologically inept had managed to stumble on the breakthrough to the Squire Realm.