

Martial Unity 791

Chapter 791: Envelope

Of course, Chairman Deacon knew better than to argue and push for it any further than he already did. Guildmaster Bradt Patrick held the final say and had done far too good a job at painting Chairman Deacon's proposal as unreasonable.

('That miserable serpent...') He gritted his teeth. "Guildmaster Bradt, I am merely conveying a proposal centered around a potentially dangerous issue. It may be an unconfirmed fear, but I did not rise to the position and power that I possess today by having dull instincts and intuitions. I believe that this issue will escalate, and merely wanted to nip it in the bud. However, seeing as you have denied my proposal, you will naturally take full responsibility for what ensues. I apologize for wasting the precious time of the Guild Forum, please, let us continue down with the remaining agendas seeing as how much time my paranoia has wasted."

He could not hammer his proposal through, but, he intended to at the very least pin the blame for anything that occurred regarding this matter on the guildmaster. Furthermore, by self-deprecatingly pushing the matter away and moving the meeting along, he made it a little more inconvenient for Guildmaster Bradt to be able to strongly retort.

Optics and perception mattered, if Guildmaster Bradt pursued the matter any more aggressively than he already had after that, then it would reflect badly on him and would send the message that he most likely has a personal interest vested in the matter.

Guildmaster Bradt's eyes narrowed ever so slightly before he nodded pleasantly. "Of course, Chairman Deacon, you've always been a man of reason. Let us proceed with the next matter, then."

The rest of the forum proceeded along fairly smoothly and normally as the Shionel merchant Guild addressed the many agendas for the meeting. Several bills were passed, and several executive decisions were made before the meeting ended, and the many cabinet merchants constituting the Shionel Merchant Guild dispersed.

That went for Guildmaster Bradt Patrick as well. His distribution and communication empire was not going to run itself.

He walked past the guards in the main branch of his company, nodding the many guards that saluted him, before heading into his large extravagant office.

"Hm?" his eyes narrowed as he noticed a conspicuous envelope sitting on his table in the center with all of his other tabletop items and documents shoved to the side.

It was an incomprehensible sight.

He picked up the envelope with furrowed eyebrows.

[To: Guildmaster Bradt Patrick

From: The Voider]

There was no address on the envelope, indicating it did not arrive by mail. That meant that someone placed it in his mailbox?

('No...') His eyes narrowed as he looked at how someone had placed it bang in the center of the table, shoving the other things aside in a crude matter.

It was to gain his attention and interest specifically.

('Someone unauthorized placed it here in that manner to do that, without a doubt,') He realized as his eyes narrowed.

"Guards!" he bellowed to them.

"Yes sir!" They got down to one knee, bowing their heads.

"Who entered this office in the time that I wasn't there?"

"...No one sir," the guards replied.

"..." The guildmaster's expression grew colder as he realized that either his guards were bought, or someone had infiltrated his office and placed the envelope there without any of his Squire-level guards noticing.

Both outcomes were not good news.

"Bring me Feliton at this very moment." He instructed them to summon his personal secretary and chief of staff.

Soon enough, a short and petite woman entered the office. "You called for me, sir?"

"I want the log of all those who entered the premises today, and those that entered the inner section of this branch immediately," He commanded her. "Also, I want a detailed security check and a forensic analysis of this envelope, he gestured to it on the table.

He was not a fool. Opening a strange envelope that was illegally deposited into his office on his table, addressed to him was not safe. There were plenty of ways this could pose a threat to his life if he opened it. Maybe it would release a poisonous gas that was concealed in it, maybe it was a highly compact bomb.

He was the head of state and head of government. He could not afford to casually open such unknown items and objects in person. Assassination attempts on his life were routine, but this was a strange incident regardless.

He was always accompanied by Martial Seniors at all times, however, the culprit had infiltrated his office when he was away, along with the Martial Senior protecting his life.

('Is it really from the Voider?') He narrowed his eyes. Given that the Voider was clearly an individual with covert capabilities having avoided detection and leaving nothing behind that they could use for an investigation besides that he wielded a weapon, most likely.

He did not expect to be contacted by the person that had stolen from the guild that he was the leader of, that was something no criminal that engaged in this kind of crime would ever bother doing. There was a good chance that this was just someone impersonating him for some sort of scam.

Still, he couldn't help but wonder if this was the real deal. If it was, he could not help but be very curious as to why this person would go out of his way to not just contact him, but forcibly draw his attention in this manner.

('I should at least read it if it really is a letter and not some contrived way to try and kill me.') He thought to himself.

That possibility always was there, but he did not think that it was particularly likely. Making the assassination weapon stand out rather than blend in and catch him off-guard would be an extraordinarily foolish decision, and he did not believe that anybody who possessed the ability to infiltrate his office would make such a foolish decision.

Chapter 792: Contents

The presence of such an envelope stirred things up in his office's security. The head of security couldn't help but be extremely ashamed regarding the lacking security measures in the office, and security was immediately doubled. A thorough search of the office had been conducted to ensure that nothing had been stolen or otherwise tampered with. It took a while before Guildmaster Bradt could return to working again under normal circumstances.

Yet, he himself wasn't able to, or rather, chose not to, yet.

"Sir, the security check and the forensic analysis have turned up with nothing. There is no risk or threat from the envelope, and we weren't able to gather any data on the sender or the infiltrator," His secretary, Feliton, informed him about the results of the two processes while handing the related documents to him. "It has been deemed safe to open."

It was a good sign to the guildmaster that the forensic analysis had been unable to derive anything from the envelope regarding the perpetrators. That suggested a good level of care and caution on the side of the sender, which meant there was less of a chance that this was an idiot who wasn't worth his time.

"Hm," Bradt took a good look at the documents before nodding and putting them aside. "Then, I shall take the liberty to read it in private."

"Yes sir," She bowed before the letter was promptly delivered to him, and she left the room.

[To: Guildmaster Bradt Patrick

From: The Voider]

('I truly hope that's true,') He sighed while opening the seal and taking out the letter.

[Dear guildmaster Bradt,

I imagine finding this letter in your office must have come as a shock. And for that, I do apologize. I assure you, my only intention in leaving this envelope in such a conspicuous manner through, admittedly, duplicitous means was to draw your attention, interest, and perhaps even suspicion.

After all, the chances that you would take this letter seriously had it arrived through the post and into your, no doubt, large daily mail arrivals was close to zero. Unfortunately, I couldn't be sure that you would even see such an envelope under normal circumstances, and even if you did, I don't know if you would even pay it any mind.]

Guildmaster Bradt had to admit, that while he certainly disdained and disliked the infiltration of his office, the words of the sender were true. He would not have taken such a letter or that envelope seriously. It seemed nothing short of a silly prank, and at best was someone taking the effort to engage in a scam by pretending to be the person who cleared the second floor.

In that regard, he had a negative impression of the current chain of events that had come from the infiltration and the placement of the envelope on the table. Unless this letter ended up being positive and good news for the guildmaster, he would not be pleased with the choices that the sender made.

[Regardless, I understand that my choices may have led to the souring of your impression of me, still, I believe that may change with the contents of this letter. I urge you to read this letter with an open mind. I believe you will most certainly be interested in what I have to say, what I have to offer, and what can come to be if you decide for it to be.

The reason I have gone through such an effort to gain your attention and perhaps even your interest is simple.

I have a proposal for you. A business proposal.]

Guildmaster Bradt has suspected this, honestly. Now that the possibility of assassination had been dealt with, there were only a few realistic possibilities left. And they all fell into the category of the sender seeking something from him, while most likely offering something in return.

He could imagine what the sender wanted if the sender was really the notorious Voider that had taken the adventuring community in the Shionel Confederation by storm, at least, as far as gossip went.

He wasn't necessarily averse to cooperating with the Voider, however, that doesn't mean he would be open to any trivial arrangement that the Voider proposed.

At the end of the day, the Voider was a criminal, and not just a small one either. As the head of the Shionel merchant Guild, he could not afford for any engagement with such a criminal to be exposed, it would mean the end of everything. He would at the very least lose his position as the Guildmaster of the Shionel Merchant Guild, by law. Even if that didn't happen, he would lose the support of the stakeholders and shareholders of the Merchant Guild, and that was no different from losing the next election to that scoundrel Chairman Deacon.

The matters at stake were not trivial, unless whatever business proposal this individual claiming to be the Voider, something that wasn't even proven yet, truly appealed strongly to his interests, he could not afford to engage in any shady deals at this point in time.

He continued reading, with a mixture of interest, apprehension and even hope.

[Allow me to begin with what I'm offering. I'm aware of your predicament as the current guildmaster of the Shionel Merchant Guild. I am aware that the discovery of the Shionel Dungeon, while generally a very positive event for the Shionel Merchant Guild and the Shionel Confederation, has not boded well for your previously unshakable position as the guildmaster of the Shionel Merchant Guild.

I am aware that the dungeon has benefited your biggest rival and opponent, Chairman Deacon of Deacon Industries, far more than it has benefited you. The sudden and drastic increase in both the availability of esoteric resources as well as the corresponding demand has benefited the esoteric supplier market and the esoteric technology sector, both of which your opponent Chairman Deacon has an unshakable dominant position in. His rate of growth skyrockets, and there is very little you can do about that.

Well, what if I told you that there was something you could do about it? What if I told you that I have the ability to break his dominance in the esoteric supplies market with an unparalleled harvesting capability? Thereby reducing his growth drastically, and allowing you to secure political dominance.]

Chapter 793: Requirements

He had initially expected that the sender would fail to appeal to him strongly for him to cooperate with whatever the sender had in mind. However, the fact that the sender was able to pinpoint what was his biggest political problem at the moment was a good sign. I meant that the sender had a good understanding of the political situation of the Shionel Merchant Guild.

This was quite impressive as the happenings of the Shionel Merchant Guild were not publicized, and thus the actual political maelstrom that existed at the moment was something an overwhelming majority of the populous was mostly unaware of.

It showed that the sender had the right connections inside the Shionel Merchant Guild, or possessed an astute and shrewd mind, and was able to discern the political landscape of the Shionel Merchant Guild.

This was good, it was further reinforcement that the person really was at least not an idiot that was completely not worth cooperating with.

[Before I jump into my proposal, I need to lay out what I aim to seek from you rather straightforwardly. The first and foremost thing I seek is the ability to pay taxes anonymously and untrackably, I do not wish

to thief from the Shionel Merchant Guild, I simply wish to ensure that my identity will not be disclosed in the process as it inevitably would if I pay taxes according to legal protocols. The reason for this has nothing to do with the tax, itself, I had made this decision to not disclose my identity as the one who solo-cleared the Shionel Dungeon long before I didn't pay my tax, for reasons I'm sure you can understand why.]

He could, it wasn't hard to imagine why such an absurdly strong and capable Martial Squire, capable of singlehandedly clearing and plundering the second floor of the Shionel Dungeon would want to keep their identity mum for the time being.

If the Voider intended to apply their remarkable prowess in clearing floors to the rest of the floors of the dungeon, then there could easily be another force that perhaps even surpassed the S-rankers that were currently partaking in the clearing of the Shionel Dungeon.

However, doing so would earn him the ire of the many forces competing for the clearing and plundering of the Shionel Dungeon. It would be no different from declaring war against the established oligopolies that currently existed at the moment. That was an incredible burden and risk to life. If the identity of such a person was known, they would be fraught with covert and overt assassinations from all kinds of groups who would do anything against a person that was able to outcompete them all.

On top of that, their ability to clear dungeons was not proportional to their ability to fight against other Martial Squires outside of the dungeon. Success in an environment as strange and different from the norm as the Shionel Dungeon was most certainly not the same as being able to succeed against hordes of Martial Squire assassins if not even Martial Seniors.

The fact that the Voider went so far out of their way to hide their identity was only proof that they knew very well that they could not survive such a scenario. In comparison to certain death, tax fraud was an extremely alluring choice.

('Seems consistent so far, still, this alone isn't enough,') Guildmaster Bradt Patrick calmly analyzed all the information at hand. ('They still have not proved that they are the Voider, so all of this is just meaningless until then.')

He did not get swallowed up in fantasies about any collusion with the Voider, as much as a fruitful endeavor was desirable, at the end of the day, he was a man who operated in reality and not in fantasy. There were still far too conditions that needed to be fulfilled and issues that needed to be cleared up, before he could even consider engaging in such a venture.

Still, thus far the message that he was reading did not blatantly disqualify the sender of the letter as a candidate for a partnership of some sort.

[Secondly, I wish to be able to exercise my dungeon-clearing prowess without restriction. This may sound like a simple and trivial issue that already exists, but I'm sure you understand that any individual entity in the Shionel Dungeon that aims to dominate the supplies of the esoteric resources of the Shionel Dungeon without the corresponding political capital to do so without facing suppression, will not be able to come out unscathed. At the very least, I will become the target of many constituents of the Shionel Merchant Guild, I'm sure you have a far deeper understanding of this dynamic than I do.]

He definitely did. The Shionel Merchant Guild did not want to see a single oligopoly which referred to a monopoly over the market, that too of an outsider, in the esoteric resource supplier market. This was true even for Guildmaster Brat Patrick principally. A market with no monopoly was generally more desirable. At the moment, the Shionel Merchant unanimously preferred the latter, when purely considering the interests of the nation.

Of course, Guildmaster Bradt had his own interests to consider over the matter, considering his rivalry against Chairman Deacon and his desire to maintain his stronghold over the political landscape of the Shionel Confederation.

The sender had realized this and had taken the liberty to present a demand that required the president to act against the interest of the Shionel Confederation, for the sake of his own interests, which were greater.

[Thirdly, I wish to sign a partnership with Bradt Distribution Services to engage in the distribution of my esoteric harvest to the open market.]

Bradt Patrick's eyes widened at this condition as understood another reason why the sender, if they really were the Voider, had decided to contact Guildmaster Bradt Patrick and gain his cooperation over various matters. Guildmaster Bradt Patrick was perfectly in a position to aid the sender over his most difficult challenges.

In Guildmaster Bradt's eyes, one of the biggest issues that the Voider, whoever that was, had was being able to actually sell and distribute the esoteric resources that they had harvested from the dungeon. This was practically impossible when one considered the sheer number of obstacles that came with trying to do while still hiding their identity as the person who was clearing the floors of the dungeon and illegally embezzling them from the dungeon.

Forming a company in the Shionel Dungeon required registration of identity, among many other things. Although the restrictions and difficulty of forming a company whose goods or services were specifically related to the Shionel Dungeon had been exclusively lax by Guildmaster Bradt Patrick himself, for the sake of increasing the number of companies and businesses formed around the Shionel Dungeon.

Because there was an enormous amount of potential for business surrounding anything related to the Shionel Dungeon in the Shionel Confederation, a huge number of people wanted to start a business venture surrounding it in the Shionel Confederation. The lowered restrictions and difficulty made it far more appealing and inviting for foreigners to migrate to the Shionel Confederation and start up a business.

This change in policy allowed for a huge boom in any and all sectors that could even remotely be tied to the Shionel Dungeon, including things as distantly related as blacksmiths forging tools and weapons that were particularly useful in the Shionel Dungeon. However, despite this, registration of identity was required by law.

This policy would definitely be very problematic for the Voider, who was clearly very determined to keep their identity secret. Guildmaster Bradt still hadn't figured out how exactly the Voider intended to overcome that problem, but relying on the Bradt Distribution Services to handle the heavy lifting was definitely a clever idea, it would minimize involvement and prevent too much exposure.

The only way they could bypass this was if they was specifically deployed by conscription from a nation and were decreed to supply all of the harvests back to the nation, thus the limitations of the market were not all that restricting to the Voider in that case.

However, at this point, Guildmaster Bradt Patrick was around ninety-percent certain that the Voider was acting alone, or at best with a few limited associates. The measures and precautions taken by this individual were too cautious for a person with strong backing and protection. Nobody would dare attack a Martial Squire from a power Sage-level nation with plenty of protection even within the nation.

Assassinating such a well-protected superstar with Martial Squires would be damn near impossible and very costly, and deploying a Martial Senior is an extremely high-profile measure that would instantly expose the perpetrator behind such an assassination. Martial Seniors were far too high-profile. This applied to even the covert ones.

The identities would be revealed very quickly once the Senior-level techniques were used to identify the Martial Senior, and if the nation that the Voider belonged to was a bigshot like the Britannian Empire, Kandrian Empire, Sekigahara Confederate, or the Republic of Gorteau then they would interpret it as a declaration of war, and the perpetrating entity would have no choice but to brace themselves for their wrath.

Thus he was sure that the Voider was not from these nations, or at the very least, was not being conscripted and deployed by them, or anything other nation worth its weight.

[Specifically, I'm willing to concede half of all the profits to the Bradt Distribution Services for serving as a liaison between myself and the consumer market.]

That was quite the concession, this further reinforced the fact that the Voider did not have any third-party backing or patroning them, for that entity would not tolerate the concession of half of the profits earned by them. He could see why this wasn't enough.

[I do have one last demand. I would like to request you pass a bill that allows for anonymous registration and creation of a supplier company surrounding my esoteric resource harvests of the Shionel Dungeon.]

Guildmaster Bradt Patrick tilted his head as he frowned deeply, narrowing his eyes. Perhaps he misjudged the sender, maybe he was in over his head. Demanding the head of government to pass such a bill as a condition for cooperation that they themselves were proposing to him?

"Fuuu... And here I was getting a little interested and even excited to collaborate with someone who seemed shrewd and sharp. What a joke," He shook his head with disappointment.

The earlier bare basic terms and conditions that had been established were much more understandable and agreeable.

The sender claiming to be the Voider wanted anonymity as far as tax payments went, and cooperation with the distribution of their esoteric supplies to be handled by his distribution company.

In exchange, he would break Chairman Deacon's dominance over the supplier market of the esoteric resources supplied from the Shionel Dungeon with his demonstrably high ability to plunder and clear dungeons, while also conceding half the profits made from this venture to the Bradt Patrick.

This was a reasonable exchange of trades, however, the last condition was an absurd demand that far outweighed what he was giving Guildmaster Patrick in exchange. The leader of the Shionel Merchant Guild was not someone who allowed himself to be exploited and played for a fiddle.

"Hmph, to think he would demand such a thing given what he is offering," He snorted, a little irritated. He wanted to toss the letter into the bin, and immediately strengthen the investigation into the break-in, but maintained his composure. He ought to at least finish reading the letter.

In the following paragraph, the writer shamelessly described the condition for the bill that he had requested be passed, before finally moving on.

[Ah, I have yet to mention the final thing that I am offering. What I am offering is a detailed, fully scaled, accurate and precise three-dimensional map of the interior layout and structure of the Shionel Dungeon, featuring accurate information and depiction of all the floors and tunnels across the entire dungeon.]

Chapter 795: Shock

That day the Martial Squire guards of the chairman's office of the Bradt Distribution Services' main branch experienced something that they had never encountered before.

It was the Guildmaster raising his voice.

"WHAT?!"

The Martial Squires rushed to his office in shock and alarm. They, who had witnessed the good guildmaster and chairman being nothing short of cool as a cucumber in extremely dire circumstances, could not imagine what could cause their target of protection to exclaim in such a manner.

"Sir! Are you Ok?!"

In just a matter of milliseconds, they had already formed a defensive blockade. While his most trusted chief of the security detail made sure that the guildmaster was not afflicted by any external influence.

"Sir?" She asked with concern. "Are you alright?"

"I'm fine. Fine. I appreciate your alertness and diligence but return to your positions," He quickly dismissed them before turning back to the letter with widened eyes.

('A fully detailed and accurate map?') He couldn't help but be incredulous at such a claim.

As the largest gargantuan in the distribution and communication sector of not just the Shionel Confederation, but also the local international markets, he knew the importance of accurate and precise mapping more than anyone else within ten thousand kilometers.

It was absolutely paramount.

In a world where the internet, satellites, satellite world mapping, and GPS tracking did not exist, hand-drawn maps with high accuracy and precision were no different from a strategic resource! Information was power, and maps most certainly fell into this category.

He even prided himself in being one of the few elite entities in the world that possessed an updated, complete highly accurate, and detailed Panama Continent map, including the five inland oceans and the seven inland seas.

The only exception to this was the depths of the Beast Domain, but he did not give two hoots about the depths of the Beast Domain since there was no human civilization inside the Beast Domain that he could sell his distribution services to.

This was a map that only the most powerful countries across the nation had the power to acquire or create. In the eastside section of the Panama Continent, he estimated that the only entities that possessed this information were the four powerhouse sage-level nations, and himself.

This intelligence was part of the cornerstone and the foundation of his distribution empire that he had painstakingly built over thirty years. It took a considerable amount of skilled labor in the form of his cartography department, funds, and resources to not only obtain a highly accurate and precise map of the entire continent that stretched for many, many dozens of thousands of kilometers in any direction but also maintaining it as time passed.

Much of the continent was very much in chaos and flux, outside of the most powerful and stable nations.

Huge oceans of people migrated, villages, settlements, and towns appeared and disappeared over time, and topography was constantly changing at varied paces due to the natural elements that afflicted the continent. The larger a map, the more frequently it needed to be updated before it became inaccurate and irrelevant.

Yet it was worth it despite all of this difficulty.

The profits, influence, and political capital that he made and gained were directly proportional to the size of the market that his Bradt Distribution Service had access to. In turn, the size of the market that he had access to was limited by the size of accurate and precise maps that he was using.

His company was only as big as his maps!

That was why Guildmaster Patrick visibly shook when the author of the letter offered a detailed complete map of the internal layout and structure of the Shionel Dungeon with high accuracy and precision.

('Just how many of my attempts to accurately map even the most surface-level parts of the dungeon have failed or proved to be too taxing?') he wondered. He had lost count by now. Human cartographers could not enter the dungeon, and there was no such thing as a Martial cartographer, even if they were somehow given the necessary training, the commonly used instruments were completely useless in the

environment of the Shionel Dungeon. Even the most powerful and accurate of compasses were helpless against the jamming effects of the Shionel Dungeon.

That left extremely primitive analog methods such as literally measuring distances, directions, and dimensions using many kilometers of rope!

Such a primitive method of mapping would take decades to complete given that the Shionel Dungeon had a diameter and depth of sixty kilometers, effectively having the volume of a country inside of it.

Thus he had all but resigned, with grave regrets and pains, in trying to map the Shionel Dungeon. When he saw the author of the letter casually throwing in this offer, he could not help but lose his composure.

The person on the other side of the letter had dangled one of his greatest desires and deepest regrets in front of him after making such a titanic demand from him like passing a bill that affected the entire country and the hottest economy on the East side of the Panama Continent.

('There's no way a single Martial Squire can possibly map the entirety of the Shionel Dungeon,') His rationality kicked in.

The difficulty was so ridiculously high that singlehandedly soloing the dungeon was easier than mapping it!

How could he possibly take such a statement, no, a declaration, at face value? This had to be a scam!

[I understand that you no doubt strongly suspect this to be a scam. I understand that at the moment that you are reading this, you have no evidence of any sort to suggest that my words are the truth. I can provide you with proof, as long as we iron out the intent to cooperate under the many conditions the two of us no doubt have. However, this cannot be done with remote communication. Thus, I'd like to set up a meeting between you and me, face-to-face.]

Guildmaster Bradt had to admit that this was one of the most novel letters that he had ever read in his entire life. It was truly an experience in and of itself.

He suspected that the author intended for it to be that way, they could have been a lot more cut and dry regarding this matter, but they chose not to. He had gone in-depth into a lot of the other conditions and offers but lightly added the most shocking offer in the entire letter. Which was the offer of a detailed map of the Shionel Dungeon that was highly accurate and precise, allegedly.

He still wasn't convinced that the claim was true. However, if it was true, there really was only one way that such a thing was true.

"A Martial Art technique, hm?" He mused to himself.

It was one of the more frustrating things about trying to predict the future of civilization as a merchant. While he possessed the ability to evaluate sociological, cultural, commercial and economic, and even technological trends to a certain degree, he possessed very little insight into Martial trends.

This was because Martial Art, as a field and a sector, was far more prone to being influenced by individual influences than any other field of pursuit that currently existed. It was a highly exclusive field that denied entry and insight to those who were unworthy to enter this realm of Martial Paths.

Unlike in the fields of science, where scientific progress was generally hoisted by the scientific community at large, it was much easier for a Martial Artist to make radical progress by developing a powerful technique with high dissemination viability that shook up Martial trends out of the blue

He could look at scientific fields and make much more accurate gauges of their trends with some consultation, but the same could not be said for Martial Art. Sometimes he went to sleep afraid that some Martial Master would develop a revolutionary technology that would allow for instantaneous transport between great distances.

He had no indication that such a thing was particularly unlikely, he could only handle them as they came.

In this case, the sheer confidence with which this particular individual declared his ability to provide a highly accurate and precise map of the Shionel Dungeon would probably be based on a Martial Art technique, rather than through conventional means. This was still assuming that there was truth to this claim and it wasn't fabricated lies and nonsense.

[I'd like to set up a meeting in the Inner Ring of the Adventurer Ring town. Specifically, in the Guild office number thirty-two, at nine PM on the fortieth of Winter. I will offer you proof of my identity of the Volder, and proof of my claims regarding the map.]

The Guildmaster frowned at that date. That date was special as it was five days from now and also was the day that the native Martial Squires of the Shionel military would be attempting to raid the latest floor discovered, the thirteenth floor of the Shionel Dungeon.

Furthermore, the time of the meeting had been scheduled after the many Martial Squire adventurers of the Shionel Confederation would enter the dungeon.

Guildmaster Bradt couldn't help but feel suspicious. He also noted that the location of the meeting necessarily excluded the presence of Martial Seniors, since they could not be anywhere near the Shionel Dungeon. This was probably intentional and the reason for the location of the meeting since Martial Seniors would obviously catch him and Guildmaster Bradt would have an overwhelming advantage in any engagement that they then come to an agreement over.

"Clever..." He narrowed his eyes.

This was good because it meant that the person was competent, which meant the probability of failure of any such endeavor was very low. However, it was not good in the sense that it would be difficult to force an agreement that was disproportionately beneficial to him. Still, it was overall a positive thing. He would still rather deal with an intelligent and competent person than a careless idiot, especially when the person he was dealing with had a very important role in all of this.

"Hm..."

He had no choice but to go especially when proof of identities and proof of the dungeon map was guaranteed. Especially the latter, he absolutely could not allow a dungeon map to slip out of his hands under any circumstances whatsoever.

Still, he had some preparations to make, so he appreciated the few days that he had for the meeting. He had many considerations to go over as well.

For one, couldn't he just capture the Voider with force in that meeting?

True, the Voider was obviously powerful for soloing the second floor, however, could he really handle a huge number of Martial Squires outside the dungeon?

Probably not.

In that case? What was to stop Guildmaster Bradt Patrick from capturing them then and there once their identity had been confirmed under the charges of tax evasion and breaking and entering the guild master's office illegally?

Then he could use all forms of persuasion to use the Voider as he wished. Wasn't that a less risky route to go? Than to trust some random stranger into keeping their word, and ensuring that they act carefully and cautiously at all times.

He was not averse to engaging in such measures, certainly not for moral reasons. He had walked over a mountain of corpses, that he was responsible for, to reach where he was, and he did not mind adding one more to the list if necessary.

If necessary, of course. Frankly, it entirely depended on the Voider. If it turned out to be the case that the Voider had arrived in person with no countermeasures against such a foreseeable outcome, then Guildmaster Bradt Patrick was inclined to capture them alive than let such a moron run around freely.

However, if it turned out to be the case that they had fully accounted for this possibility, then he would be a lot more reliable and credible in his eyes.

Chapter 797: Preparations

STEP

"Alright, this should be far enough," Rui nodded. "Thanks, Kane."

Kane nodded, before sighing. "You sure you have this all figured out right?"

"Of course I do," Rui nodded. "I appreciate your concern, but trust me, I have spent an enormous amount of thought into this."

Rui had been extremely busy since they cleared the second floor, doing things that Kane couldn't even imagine.

He even had Kane help him a lot, even though his demands were quite shocking. Like when he asked Kane to deposit a letter crudely at the center of the table pushing everything aside and off after infiltrating the main branch office of the guildmaster of the nation. That was unnerving, but Kane had done a lot of such covert missions thanks to his Void Step technique. Even in Vilun Island, he had been tasked with infiltrating the G'ak'arkan Village to wiretap multiple locations despite the presence of a Martial Senior in the village, albeit sleeping.

Thus, it wasn't that big of a deal for him to infiltrate the guildmaster's office at all since there were only Martial Squires guarding the place.

What he didn't understand was the necessity of such a measure when Rui could have simply mailed the envelope to the guildmaster's office like a sane person. Still, he learned that Rui always had a reason for doing everything, so he simply decided to trust him with this matter.

"Still... Why the hell are you dressed in that manner?" Kane frowned. "It's giving my senses a really strange and annoying sensation like in the dungeon."

Rui was completely clothed in a seemingly thick black cloth that made it seem like he was wearing four layers of clothes at the moment.

"It's all part of the plan, my friend," Rui said.

"Alright," Kane shrugged. "Good luck,"

He vanished into thin air right before Rui's eyes.

"Fuuu..." Rui sighed before looking at all the things that he had brought along with him.

To his left were several bags filled with the edges of the tails of the bloodfury rabbits that he had slaughtered. He had barely managed to get them all before the Saberstrike Party happened upon the scene. He managed to escape with as many as he could having sensed them when they were kilometers away for him. He could not be caught off-guard by any being inside the Shionel Dungeon, it was absolutely impossible.

The tail ends of the bloodfury rabbit corpses ought to have served as pretty solid proof of identity. Considering the estimated time of death through the autopsies and the arrival of the Saberstrike Party, it would be inconceivable for anyone else to have cut their tails off.

Furthermore, only the Voider would feel the need to do such a thing. No sane adventurer would go through such a thankless task without an extremely good reason. Although there were still some potential objections that Guildmaster Bradt Patrick could raise, it was still pretty compelling, as far as he was considered.

Besides, he highly doubted that Guildmaster Bradt would be particularly pedantic about this point. Frankly, with the map offer in place, he was mostly certain that Guildmaster Bradt no longer gave a damn about whether he was the Voider or not.

If he was the Voider, and he did possesses a map, then Guildmaster Bradt would be eager to deal with him.

If he wasn't the Voider, and he did possess a map, then Guildmaster Bradt would still be quite eager to forge a deal with him.

"Still..." Rui glanced at the three books that he was carrying with him. Each book contained a folded map that formed its pages. Because the Shionel Dungeon was a three-dimensional structure, a single two-dimensional was inadequate to map it, since it could not account for the third dimension.

Thus, Rui had decided to create three maps, each map mapping the surface level of the Shionel Dungeon from two of the three dimensions. Together, they provided every ounce of information one could want from a map.

Rui had spent quite some effort in creating, and among the many preparations he had made back in the Kandrian Empire when he and Kane had yet to leave was gaining a good foundation in cartography. Cartography was not a discreet field and required many skillsets and an understanding of other fields to learn it. Thankfully, the presence of his power senses and the Mind Palace allowed him to dismiss several otherwise necessary skill sets in mastering it.

What he had particularly learned was the art of creating a map. With his learning cognition, it didn't take long before he developed a sufficient foundation with that particular skill. His maps were plenty adequate as far as detail, proportion and scaling, accuracy and precision went.

And that was good enough.

Soon enough, it was time. Rui pulled out a pocket watch, glancing at the time when he noticed some movement at guild branch number thirty-two. Several high-grade Martial Squires wearing the Shionel Confederation's emblem had arrived at the guild in a high-profile manner.

('That must be them,') Rui nodded.

THUD

He leaped out of the dungeon cave he had been hiding in, landing on the ground before walking towards the large gate that separated the dungeon from the inner ring of Adventurer Town.

Despite being completely covered in a thick black fabric from head to toe, he didn't draw too much attention. Surprisingly enough, that probably wasn't the most ridiculous thing a Martial Artist had worn.

He entered the guild branch, before simply taking a seat in the guest, picking up a newspaper while skimming through its pages, even though his entire face was covered with the unusually thick black fabric. He drew strange looks, but he didn't particularly care.

"Excuse me?" A powerful high-grade Martial Squire approached him, eying him sharply. "I believe you have scheduled an appointment in this guild branch, correct?"

"Oh, is it that time already?" Rui wondered aloud. "Time sure does fly."

"Please come this way, we have made the appropriate preparations to receive you,"

Chapter 798: Trap

He could tell why the Martial Squires that led him to the meeting room eyed him carefully, frowning mildly. He had carefully stuffed this makeshift with the same insulating esoteric substances that jammed sensing in the Shionel Dungeon.

He was not stupid, he was certain that the Guildmaster of the Shionel Merchant Guild would make at least one attempt to figure out his identity. He was pretty sure that there existed Martial Squires that could track his identity or his location through their senses. Thus Rui had gone to great lengths to ensure that that was not possible. He had taken multiple measures to ensure that there was no way that they could figure out his identity otherwise.

CLACK

They opened the door, before gesturing inside. "The meeting will be conducted inside,"

Rui found two other Martial Squires inside, as well as a strange and sophisticated contraption at the end of the room.

There was no sight of Guildmaster Bradt.

"Is this a trap?" Rui asked calmly and openly.

The two stared at him for a moment before one walked forward, pressing a few buttons.

FVOOM

Suddenly the device projected an image of an elderly man sitting on a chair on the other side of the table.

"If it was a trap, Voider, what would you do?" Guildmaster Bradt's projection asked.

('Three-dimensional projection, eh?') Rui's eyes widened as he admired the technology. This was definitely extremely advanced esoteric technology that probably required rare and powerful esoteric substances. He wouldn't be surprised if it had high-energy demands. That would explain why he had literally never heard of such technology before.

Still, he wasn't too taken aback. Three-dimensional technology was abundant in the vast fictional media industries of Earth.

He had predicted that Guildmaster Bradt would not be personally arriving, that was extremely dangerous, to an unnecessary degree

"Threaten you," Rui replied.

Guildmaster Bradt narrowed his eyes. The obvious question that was presented was how Rui intended to threaten him if he wasn't in the room, but it became evidently clear, that he was confident enough for whatever he had in mind.

"With what?" Guildmaster Bradt's stared at him sharply. "Are you hiding explosives under your thick full-body attire?"

"Hah, you already know that is not the case, don't you?" Rui chuckled, before shaking his head. There was no way that he had already undergone covert security checks the second he entered the guild branch.

"True," Guildmaster Bradt admitted. "It's also curious as to why I shouldn't order my men to capture you for tax evasion and breaking into my office illegally. Anything you have to say to me, I can hear after you're at my complete mercy, don't you think? I could legally make you my slave and force you to work for me against your will."

"You could," Rui admitted. "But you would lose a lot in the process."

"Like what? Enlighten me,"

"The Shionel Dungeon, and all of the Martial Squires inside," Rui replied.

"What?" The man's eyes narrowed.

His expression did not betray much emotion, but Rui could feel the tension in the room instinctively.

"Did you know... that there are a lot of special Martial Art techniques in this world?" Rui asked lightly. "They can do all sorts of things, you won't believe the kind of things that they allow us Martial Artists to do."

"Get to the point," The man growled.

"Among the many techniques that I have mastered. I have a technique that allows me to increase my projected power and sense of danger to other creatures that have an evolutionary sense of danger to them," Rui explained. "It allows me to project danger that exceeds the limits of the Squire Realm."

"You..." Guildmaster Bradt's eyes widened.

"Here's a question, Guildmaster Patrick, do you know what happens to a dungeon, when it faces a significant enough threat?" Rui asked as a smile formed under his mask.

The two Martial Squires grew increasingly tense as Rui began mounting a great amount of pressure reaching, reaching the peak of the Squire Realm. The sheer pressure he exerted was stronger than anything that they had sensed in the Squire Realm.

"When a dungeon faces a perceived threat that is evaluated to exceed its acceptable threshold... then it triggers a retaliatory response, it throws everything towards the threat until it's out of range, or eliminated. In doing so, it warps its structure, inevitably causing a lot of damage," Rui explained some common knowledge as he noted the increasing tension in the room, turning towards Guildmaster Bradt. "It would be a shame if something like that happened right now, wouldn't it?"

Then, for just the briefest of moments, he put on the most powerful Mind Mask that he was possibly able to produce. The ten months of continuously using this technique during his time on Vilun Island massively increased his proficiency with this technique due to the continuous usage of the technique.

On top of that, he had grown much stronger than he was when he first joined Vilun Island. Having mastered a technique and undergone strength training for the G'ak'arkan technique that he had mastered as well as the development of the Transverse Resonance and the new set of techniques and tactics that he created had put him well above where he was a year and a half ago.

If his strongest Mind Mask back then produce a grade-ten Squire-level aura, then what would his very best be currently?

For less than a millisecond, a powerful Senior-level aura descended in the area. The Martial Squires in the area shuddered as they felt a sense of danger that transcended the Squire Realm!

It disappeared as quickly as it appeared, yet before the Martial Squires could even feel relief, they felt a wave of light tremors through the ground.

RUMBLE

"You...!" Guildmaster Bradt's expression had turned severe as he understood what had happened from the tremors, as well as the reaction of his Martial Squires.

"Heh," Rui chuckled lightly. "That was dangerous. I only maintained it for the briefest of moments to prove I could do it, but it still reacted nonetheless. Looks like the Shionel Dungeon did not appreciate that. No sir, it did not."

He turned towards Guildmaster Bradt, leaning forward. "Now then, what was that about making me your slave?"

Chapter 799: Map

Rui was taking a bit of a gamble with his bold brashness, but he knew that it would be impossible to earn the respect and fear needed for the guildmaster to take him seriously. The latter was a tremendously powerful man with power, authority, wealth, and influence that far surpassed anything Rui could deal with in ordinary circumstances.

And they both knew that.

That was why Rui had decided that he needed to convey without a shred of doubt that this wasn't one of those circumstances. Rui would not tolerate being pushed around unduly, or being threatened.

Still, he put on a cool facade, but even his heart skipped a beat when the ground started trembling. He realized that he had underestimated how powerful the Shionel Dungeon was. Had he maintained for even half a second more, a calamity might have occurred.

"H..."

"Hm?" He focused on the guildmaster again with furrowed eyebrows.

"Haha... HAHAHA," The man started guffawing.

That made Rui quite nervous. He had expected that the man would grow unnerved, and would instantly put on a pleasant salesman facade to appease Rui. But instead, he not only seemed unperturbed but also emboldened.

"It's been a while since someone has had the balls to threaten me," He began speaking more informally as his toothy grin widened. He stared at Rui with an intense fixation reflecting in his bloodshot eyes.

Rui's eyes widened as he felt his nerves tingling.

('This man... is able to pressure me?')

He wasn't even physically present in the same room, he was supposed to be just a normal human that Rui eviscerate with ease. Yet that did not translate into the unshakeable confidence that Rui had with other humans, for some reason.

"I have to say, I'm impressed," He settled down as he regained the composure that he momentarily lost. "Rest assured, brave Squire, I have no intention of enslaving you. Instead, I am quite intrigued at the prospect of cooperating with you. Still..."

His eyes narrowed. "There are several issues that need to be addressed. First, your identity. That little trick earlier is noteworthy, but it cannot help you clear dungeons as spectacularly well as you claim you can. Are you the individual who cleared the second floor of the Shionel Dungeon?"

Rui replied by dumping the huge bags of bloodfury rabbit tail-ends on the table. "As you can see, I have collected proof for each rabbit I killed. You can conduct tests and verify that the time of death of the tissue is around the same as the time of death of the corpses, and I'm sure the missing tails have been noticed too."

Guildmaster Bradt had clearly expected something of this sort, he did not show any immediate reactions to the matter.

"I understand that this isn't necessarily absolute proof. Though I'm sure it is compelling given the timeline that you have, no doubt, constructed as well as the fact that I even bothered going through such a tedious task at all," Rui shrugged. "Though I can always provide greater corroborating proof in the future if need be. This should not be a contentious issue, I'm sure."

"You're correct," He simply stated. "Still, the fact that you went out of your way to gather this evidence when clearing the second floor, means that you had planned this well ahead of time, correct?"

Rui shrugged, not replying.

"Well, putting that aside," He said, seeing as Rui was not willing to talk about this matter. "I want to confirm the map."

Rui could feel that he had grown a lot more intense and serious regarding this matter. If Rui messed up in this particular regard, he would not laugh it off like when Rui pulled off that bold move earlier.

Rui pulled out three books and he tossed them onto the table. The Martial Squires in the room moved forward as they opened the various books, unfolding the pages as they each formed large maps that mapped the surface level of the dungeon and the vicinity of the first floor and second floors rather accurately and in a detailed matter.

The guildmaster's eyes widened as he beheld remarkably detailed and precise maps. The tunnels were drawn to detail, showing their varying and fluctuating diameters and directions.

The cardinal directions on the map allowed the man to know which dungeon was facing which direction, something that was almost impossible to do due to compasses not functioning properly inside the dungeon.

"This..." Guildmaster Bradt was unable to hide his greed and amazement. "... Is far more detailed and precise than I was expecting while also abiding by the norms of the field cartography, I can see that you're someone who is adept at cartography."

Rui did not respond to that, it was not as simple as he made it out to be since he was using his remarkable mental faculties to skip half of the work that came with drawing maps. Still, he had no intention of revealing that to the guildmaster.

"Still," he turned to Rui, staring at him with sharp eyes. "There is no proof these are accurate,"

Rui chuckled out loud. "The only way to confirm for a fact that a map is genuinely accurate is to verify it firsthand. You can keep those maps as a token of my sincerity. They constitute about two percent of the

Shionel Dungeon, although it did take me quite a long time before I was able to make those, only then did I proceed to actually clear the second floor."

That was a lie, and quite the believable one. He wanted Guildmaster Patrick to believe that he had been working on this particular venture for an extended period of time in the Shionel Confederation. This would throw off the investigation that Guildmaster Bradt would inevitably begin on finding out Rui's true identity. Regardless of his evaluation of Rui's competencies, he was still better off knowing the true identity of the person he was making such a significant deal with, than not.

Chapter 800: Verification

Guildmaster Bradt was a powerful individual. No matter how capable and competent Rui was at clearing dungeons, the second his identity was given away, he would be at a disadvantage when interacting with someone of his stature and power.

He had command over the intelligence, military, and agencies of the Shionel Confederation. He could easily have Rui assassinated if he knew his true identity, and Rui did not want to put himself in that position.

Thankfully, it seemed he believed Rui's words, for the most part.

"It's quite impressive that you managed to make this within a reasonable timeframe at all," The man nodded. "You have completed the task quicker than a team of cartographers from the intelligence department of my company would have, and you seem unbothered by the jamming effect of the dungeon. That would explain your ability to be able to gather the information needed on the layout and structure of the dungeon without too much difficulty."

He turned towards Rui, taking his eyes off the map.

"That's also why you have stuffed that ridiculously oversized attire with the esoteric substances of the Shionel Dungeon that also jam senses, correct?" The man gave Rui a knowing look. "I have been unable to gather any information on your appearance ever since you arrived at the guild branch."

Rui didn't reply, but his silence was an answer enough.

"I'm quite optimistic about the maps that I'm seeing here," He said, turning back to give them another look. "Although it is true that I cannot verify their accuracy this very moment, I cannot see anything that would cause me to discredit it, and the sheer amount of detail there is in it raises their value significantly if accurate."

He turned back to Rui. "All in all, I am quite appreciative of them as a token of sincerity. Now then, let's get down to business. How confident are you in your ability to dominate the supplier market of esoteric resource supplies?"

"I am quite confident of that," Rui shrugged. "I possess the ability to bypass monsters in the same way that I bypassed human surveillance when I sneaked my harvest uncaught. My combat ability is at the peak of the Squire Realm, and beyond those of any gathered here in the Shionel Confederation to raid and plunder the dungeon. I have already demonstrated what would take teams of Martial Squires to accomplish, I can accomplish by myself."

He did not even hint at the existence of Kane and was quite careful to not drag him into this particular matter. He knew that his friend was exercising a lot of trust by giving him free rein on such a sensitive matter.

"True, still, your ability is not as rigorously proven as I would be most comfortable with," Guildmaster Bradt replied.

"Perhaps," Rui shrugged. "That's an issue that can very easily be fixed, but regardless, it's not an issue in the first place."

"What?" The man stared at Rui.

"I have already proven my ability to map the Shionel Dungeon, or will have proven the moment you have confirmed it," Rui explained it. "That is a powerful bargaining chip that is worth making the deal over by its own merits."

Guildmaster Bradt did not deny Rui's words. In reality, he was already quite pleased with this meeting, regardless of what else he could make of it.

"If my ability does not nearly pan out as I so claim, you still gain a lot, after all, you gain fifty percent for handling all matters of ensuring that my esoteric harvests reach the consumer market and I get paid the remaining half. That's quite a profitable deal in and of itself. You stand to make a profit in all scenarios. If I live up to my claims, then you make a large sum of profit, and you also hamper your political rival's growth significantly, if I don't, you still stand to make a profit off the deal. In both circumstances, you stand to gain."

Guildmaster Bradt knew that that was true. "Yet your demands are not limited to distribution and transaction management, you also wanted a bill passed that allowed you to operate anonymously officially, and legally. That's an extremely high demand to make, and I cannot simply do something like that in return for appreciable but ultimately trivial profits."

"My condition for you to pass the bill is quite high, I admit," Rui nodded. "But would you truly say that the map is not worth it? That transaction exists separately from the transaction of obtaining fifty percent of the profits of the esoteric resource sales in exchange for managing distribution and the transaction itself. The latter also has the added bonus of hampering your political rival, which is actually quite the benefit."

"I still haven't verified the map yet," He pointed out.

"Then perhaps we ought to continue this conversation when you have verified the map," Rui shrugged. "Or to save time, why don't we draft a conditional agreement that can proceed once you are convinced of the legitimacy of the maps that I have provided to you?"

"That sounds agreeable, still, it will require convoluted conditions to objectively lay out the conditions for whether the map can be said to be legitimate," He remarked.

That was true, it was difficult to draw a clear line between whether the map could be considered legitimate or illegitimate. At what level of inaccuracy does the map become illegitimate? No one would say a map is illegitimate if its accuracy is at ninety-nine percent just because of the remaining one percent. However, everyone would agree that a map that is fifty-percent inaccurate was a worthless map.

The question was where the line was between one percent and fifty percent.

"I don't need an objective criteria laid out," Rui clarified. "As long as you're satisfied with it, I'm also satisfied. I believe you are more than capable of evaluating a map's value and coming to the right decision regarding whether this deal is worth it or not."