

## H. Academy 481

Chapter 481 108.1 - Monster

SWOOSH!

As I stepped into the room, I was greeted by the sight of Kael and Lyra, who were both lounging around, seemingly in the middle of a conversation. Lyra was the first to notice me, and she immediately perked up.

"Hey, you look a bit shinier now, for some reason," Lyra commented with a playful grin.

"Is that so?" I replied, raising an eyebrow. I hadn't realized any noticeable change in my demeanor.

"It is!" Lyra insisted, leaning forward with curiosity. "Did something happen? You seem... lighter, I guess? Happier?"

I paused for a moment, considering her words. It was true; I did feel more at ease, perhaps even content, after the conversation with Irina. But was it really that obvious?

"I guess I just had a good conversation," I said, keeping my response simple.

Lyra's eyes sparkled with intrigue. "A good conversation, huh? Who with? Don't tell me you've been chatting up a secret admirer?"

I shook my head, amused by her teasing. "Nothing like that. Just catching up with someone important. It's been a while since I've had the chance to talk freely, I suppose."

"So, you are not talking with us freely."

"Isn't that normal? You are not talking to me without hiding anything either."

"...."

Kael, who had been quietly observing the exchange, chimed in with a nod of approval. "Talking with someone you trust can do wonders for your mood. It's good to see you looking more relaxed."

It seems he wanted to change the flow of conversation, and that made sense. While these guys were not bad, they were also people whom I had recently met.

Lyra pouted slightly but then shrugged, accepting my point. "I guess you're right. Still, it's good to see you more at ease. We're all in this strange place together, so it's nice to have some normal conversations every now and then."

'Your conversations are definitely not normal.' I wanted to say, but I refrained from doing so. Since that would definitely upset her, and there was no reason to do such a thing.

"You definitely thought something rude."

"Please don't assume things on your own."

"Humph....Kael, he is bullying me."

Kael chuckled, shaking his head. "I don't think that's bullying, Lyra. If anything, he's just being his usual self."

Lyra crossed her arms, still pouting but clearly not too upset. "You're supposed to be on my side, Kael."

"I'm on the side of truth," Kael said with a grin. "And the truth is, you're just fishing for reactions."

Lyra finally broke into a smile, her pout fading. "Fine, fine. I'll let it slide this time. But Astron, you owe me a proper conversation one of these days."

"We'll see about that," I replied, keeping my tone deliberately vague.

Lyra rolled her eyes but laughed. "I'll take that as a yes."

Kael just shook his head, a smile still on his face. "Well, at least we're all in good spirits. Let's keep it that way—tomorrow's going to be another tough day, I'm sure."

'Well....It will indeed be a rough day....Dakota is returning after all.'

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<Combat Training Arena, Eighth Day of Training, 7.46 A.M.>

The training hall was filled with the sound of clashing strikes as Astron and Dakota moved in a blur of motion, their bodies executing the [Gale Stance] with precision and power. Sweat dripped down Astron's face, but his focus remained unbroken as he met Dakota's attacks head-on, his strikes more fluid and controlled than ever.

Dakota's eyes gleamed with approval as she matched him strike for strike, pushing him to his limits. Each clash was a test, and each time, Astron adapted just a bit faster and moved just a bit sharper.

Finally, Dakota stepped back, signaling the end of the session. She looked at Astron, a hint of a smile on her face. "You're getting better, Astron. I can see the improvement."

Astron nodded, catching his breath but feeling a sense of accomplishment. "Thank you, Master."

Dakota wiped the sweat from her brow, her expression serious but with a glimmer of excitement in her eyes. "If you keep this up, we can start training a new stance tomorrow. You've got the [Gale Stance] down pretty well."

Astron's eyes lit up. After all, he was itching to learn more. "I'm ready."

Dakota chuckled, her voice light but filled with pride. "We'll see about that."

With that, she gave him a nod of approval and gestured him to come once again. "Let's continue."

SWOOSH!

And Astron dashed forwards.

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<Acrobatics Training, 11 A.M, Eighth day of training>

Tianna stood with Astron at the base of a towering wall in the training area, her expression serious. "Today, Astron, I'm going to teach you a new spell that will be crucial for your advanced training. It's a spell that allows you to stick to walls, enabling you to climb without falling. However, maintaining this spell will drain your mana quickly, so control is key."

She demonstrated the spell, her hands glowing with a soft blue light as she pressed them against the wall. Her feet followed, and within moments, she was walking vertically up the surface as if it were flat ground. "The spell works by using your mana to create a magnetic-like force between you and the wall, keeping you adhered to the surface. It's effective, but the mana consumption is high, so you'll need to practice managing your energy."

Tianna descended the wall effortlessly, landing back on the ground beside Astron. "Now, it's your turn. Focus on channeling your mana to your hands and feet, and try to maintain a steady flow as you climb."

Astron nodded, his eyes narrowed in concentration. He mirrored Tianna's movements, pressing his hands against the wall as he channeled his mana. Slowly, he felt the familiar pull of the spell take hold, and he began to ascend the wall. The first few steps were smooth, but he quickly noticed the rapid drain on his mana reserves.

As he continued climbing, he felt the strain of maintaining the spell. The mana consumption was indeed intense, and the longer he held the spell, the more unstable his grip became. Halfway up the wall, Astron paused, his mind racing as he analyzed the situation. He could feel the spell's pull weakening as his mana fluctuated.

'This spell... it's effective but flawed,' he thought, his grip on the wall wavering. 'It relies entirely on using mana to cling to the surface, but the drain is too high to maintain for long periods.'

An idea began to form in Astron's mind as he considered the properties of the spell. 'What if I were to use adhesion instead? Something that doesn't rely so heavily on mana consumption...' He could almost see the possibility of a different approach that might allow for a more efficient use of energy.

Carefully, he began to adjust the flow of mana, experimenting with altering the spell's structure. Instead of simply using mana to create the force, he focused on manipulating the natural adhesion properties of his energy, trying to create a bond that required less active maintenance.

Slowly, he felt a change. The pull became more stable, and the drain on his mana lessened. Astron's grip on the wall grew more secure, and he continued his ascent, this time with a more controlled and efficient use of the spell.

Tianna watched from below, her eyes narrowing as she sensed the shift in Astron's mana flow. 'What is he doing?' she wondered, intrigued by the sudden change in his climbing technique.

When Astron finally reached the top of the wall, he looked down at Tianna, a thoughtful expression on his face. "Instructor, I think I've found a way to improve the spell."

Tianna raised an eyebrow, impressed. "Already? What did you discover?"

Astron climbed back down, explaining as he went. "Instead of relying solely on mana to create the force, I tried using the adhesion property of my energy. It seems to require less mana and provides a more stable grip."

Tianna's eyes widened slightly as she processed what he was saying. "You... modified the spell while climbing?"

Astron nodded. "I'm not sure if it's perfect yet, but it feels more efficient. I'll need to experiment more, but I think this could be a better way to approach wall-climbing techniques."

Tianna could only shake her head in amazement.

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Stealth Training, 12 A.M., Eighth day of training

"You're ready for the seventh stage?" Kennet asked, a mixture of curiosity and anticipation in his voice.

"Yes," Astron responded confidently.

"You look confident. But I would not advise you to do so," Kennet cautioned, his tone firm.

"Why?" Astron inquired, his curiosity piqued.

"You are not ready. You've grasped the essence, but your body has not. You will need one more day," Kennet explained, his gaze steady.

"I see. If that is what the instructor advises, then I have no reason to refuse," Astron replied, accepting the wisdom in Kennet's words.

"It is good that you are not arrogant," Kennet remarked a hint of approval in his voice.

With that, Astron nodded, mentally preparing himself for the additional day of training, knowing that his readiness was just within reach.

'It seems he will be able to finish the training this week. Even if that was expected, it was still one week earlier than usual. And his main focus was not even this course.' \*\*\*\*\*

Astron approached the training room, his mind running through possible passwords. 'It could be Break the Limits,' he thought as he deciphered the psions.

"Surpass Your Limits."

The answer was different once again. He let out a small sigh, shaking his head. "Still not quite there," he muttered as he entered the room.

Reina stood waiting, her posture relaxed but her gaze intense. "Let's not waste time," she said, her tone brisk. She conjured a new set of psion lines, this time even more intricate, with multiple higher-ranked threads weaving through each other. "Today, you'll focus on handling the most complex combinations yet."

Astron nodded, immediately extending his mana threads. He had grown accustomed to the challenge, but today's task was another step up. The psion lines were more tightly interwoven, demanding even more precise filtering and assimilation.

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"Welcome, Trainee Astron Natusalune. Beginning body training session focusing on Everchanging Glyph optimization."

"Commencing with the heavy ropes."

"Trainee Astron's body limits are pushed to 85%. Increasing the intensity."

Another day ended just like that.

Chapter 482 108.2 - Monster

<Combat Training Arena, Ninth Day of Training, 5 A.M.>

Astron stood in the center, his mind focused and ready for the day's challenge. Today was different—he could feel it in the air, an electric anticipation that set his nerves on edge.

Dakota entered the arena with her usual confident stride, her expression serious but tinged with a hint of excitement. She had promised something new today, and Astron was eager to learn.

"Today, we're moving on to the [Storm Stance]," Dakota announced, her voice firm and clear. "This isn't like the [Gale Stance]. If [Gale Stance] is about flawless, smooth transitions, [Storm Stance] is more of a blast—a series of powerful, explosive attacks designed to break through defenses. It's about harnessing your mana and virtual core to their full potential."

As she had mentioned before, the [Tempest Fang] style had three different stances. The first stance was the [Gale Stance], which he had been practicing for a while.

And the second one was the [Storm Stance].

Astron's eyes narrowed with focus.

He had mastered the fluidity of the [Gale Stance], but he knew that this new stance would require a different mindset—one that focused on power and impact rather than precision and grace.

That was what Dakota had said before, after all.

"The [Tempest Fang] has three main stances. Each stance serves a different purpose and strategy. The first stance is called [Gale Stance]. It focuses on quick, successive strikes to overwhelm your opponent. The second stance is [Storm Stance], which emphasizes powerful, explosive attacks designed to break through defenses. The third stance is [Cyclone Stance], a more advanced form that combines speed and power to create a relentless assault."

Those were the words that she had spoken when she started teaching him the concept of virtual core.

Dakota stepped forward, her stance shifting into the [Storm Stance]. Her body was slightly more grounded, her muscles tensed and ready to unleash the stored energy. "Watch closely," she instructed. "The key to [Storm Stance] is not just physical strength but how you channel your mana through your virtual core. You need to focus on gathering your energy and releasing it in controlled bursts."

She demonstrated with a powerful forward strike, her fist exploding through the air with such force that it sent a shockwave rippling across the hall. The floor beneath them trembled slightly, a testament to the raw power behind the move.

Astron's eyes widened as he watched. The difference was immediately clear—this stance was about overwhelming force, a direct assault that left no room for subtlety.

"Feel the difference?" Dakota asked, a hint of a smirk on her lips. "This isn't about finesse. It's about breaking through whatever stands in your way. Now, your turn."

Astron took a deep breath, centering himself. He closed his eyes briefly, focusing on his virtual core, feeling the mana pool there, gathering strength. He could feel the energy, potent and ready to be unleashed. Opening his eyes, he shifted into the [Storm Stance], grounding himself just as Dakota had.



With a focused breath, he channeled his mana into his strike, visualizing the energy blasting outwards. His fist shot forward, and though the impact wasn't as devastating as Dakota's, he felt the power behind it—the force that was different from the fluid grace of the [Gale Stance].

Dakota nodded, her approval clear in her eyes. "Not bad for a first try. But you're holding back. You need to let the mana flow more freely, release it in bursts. Think of it as controlled chaos—power that's harnessed and directed, but not restrained."

Astron nodded, understanding the concept. He prepared himself for another attempt, this time pushing harder, allowing the mana to surge through him. He struck out, feeling the explosive force as the energy released, more potent than before.

"Better," Dakota said, her tone filled with encouragement. "But don't just think about the strike—think about the buildup. The [Storm Stance] is all about momentum. Gather your mana, let it build, and then release it in a powerful blast. Every strike should feel like it's breaking through something."

They spent the next hour drilling the movements, Dakota guiding Astron through the intricacies of the stance. She showed him how to utilize his virtual core to enhance the explosive power of each attack, how to ground his body for stability, and how to maintain control even when unleashing such force.

Astron practiced relentlessly, feeling the difference in every strike. The [Storm Stance] was intense, each movement demanding a precise balance of power and control. His body burned with exertion, but he didn't falter—he embraced the challenge, pushing himself to tap into the full potential of his mana.

Finally, after a particularly powerful strike that sent a noticeable shockwave across the hall, Dakota called for a pause. She looked at Astron, a proud smile on her face. "You're getting the hang of it. The [Storm Stance] does not suit you too much, as you are more of a swift fighter and strength-reliant one. But still, that does not mean it will not help you, as it seems you have recently got a good advancement in terms of mana capacity —there's a raw power there that just needs a bit more refining. Keep practicing, and soon, you'll be able to break through any defense."

Astron, though breathless and drenched in sweat, nodded. "I'll keep pushing."

Dakota's smile widened. "I have no doubt you will. Now, just as per usual, I am going to leave you alone to practice by yourself. The manual is here as well."

"Understood."

Just like that, Dakota had left him there, leaving him to train.

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<Acrobatics Training, 10.19 A.M, Ninth day of training>

Tianna entered the training area early, expecting to begin the day's session with Astron.

As she approached the towering wall they had used the previous day, she paused, surprised to see Astron already there.

He was climbing effortlessly, his movements smooth and controlled, as if he had been practicing for hours.

She watched in silence, her curiosity piqued. It was clear that Astron had not only refined the spell but had fully integrated his new approach into his training.

What intrigued her even more was how fluidly he moved, with no signs of strain or depletion. 'He's been at this for a while,' Tianna thought, noting the ease with which he scaled the wall. 'But he doesn't look fatigued at all.'

Unable to resist her curiosity, Tianna reached into her pocket and pulled out a small device designed to measure magnetic field levels. It was a device to test the strength of the spell so that they could be sure that it would work.

She aimed it at Astron as he continued his climb, expecting to see the usual readings associated with the spell.

The device flickered for a moment before showing a result that made Tianna nod her head. There was no significant magnetic activity. In fact, the readings were almost negligible. 'He's not using magnetic energy at all,' she realized. 'He really did what he said... He's using adhesion instead of the traditional method.'

To be frank, it was not that they had never thought of using different ideas to create the spell. They also thought of using adhesion property.

But while creating such a spell, one needed to understand the targeted audience. Not everyone who would be learning spells would be talented at manipulating mana and controlling the circuits.

And for properties like 'Adhesion,' where things rather happened in a microenvironment, much more precise control was needed to target the correct molecules.

However, that also meant that the user would be talented at quick calculations and understanding three-dimensional environments and visualization, and not everyone would possess such a talent.

That was why the spell would use [Magnetic Fields] as it did not require as precise control as it was needed.

That was why Tianna was amazed. The fact that Astron was able to do that meant he possessed those talents.

'Well... now that I think about it,' Tianna mused, her eyes following Astron as he effortlessly continued his climb, 'he had already shown that he possessed those talents... Maybe I should have expected it.'

She watched as Astron reached the top of the wall, pausing for a moment before descending with the same fluid grace. His mana levels, which should have been noticeably depleted after such an intense session, appeared nearly untouched. It was clear that his method was not only working but was far more efficient than the traditional spell.

'This boy...' Tianna thought, shaking her head in a mixture of awe and respect. 'He's not just talented; he's exceptional. To innovate so quickly and with such success... It's no wonder he's advancing at this rate.'

As Astron landed softly on the ground, Tianna approached him, a smile tugging at the corners of her lips. "Astron, I checked your spell work with the device. There's almost no magnetic activity. You've fully transitioned to using adhesion, haven't you?"

Astron nodded, his expression thoughtful. "Yes, Instructor. It's more stable and uses far less mana. I can keep this up for much longer without exhausting myself."

"I see." Tianna nodded. "It seems you have completed this stage as well."

"It sort of happened," Astron replied modestly, though the progress he had made was anything but ordinary.

Tianna regarded him for a moment, her expression turning serious. "Then... I have only one last thing left to teach you."

Astron waited in silence, sensing the weight behind her words.

"But," Tianna continued, "let's not do that today since you've already tired yourself out. And the seventh stage... It will be a little bit different."

"I see," Astron acknowledged, understanding that the final lesson would likely push him beyond his current limits.

"For now, I'm just going to let you use the training grounds for self-training. Is that okay?" Tianna asked, her tone lighter.

"I don't mind."

"Good," Tianna said, nodding with approval. "Then, I will start the preparations."

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<Reina's Room, 3 P.M, Ninth Day of Training>

Astron approached the training room, his mind already analyzing possible passwords. 'It could be. Embrace the Unseen,' he thought as he deciphered the psions.

"Beyond the Horizon."

The answer was different once again. He let out a small breath, his eyes narrowing in thought. "She's keeping me guessing every time," he muttered as he entered the room.

Reina was waiting, standing in the center of the room with an air of quiet authority. "Today is crucial," she said, her voice steady. She conjured a new set of psion lines, more intricate and complex than any before. "This will be your final test with these higher-ranked threads. You'll need to combine everything you've learned."

Astron nodded, his focus sharp as he extended his mana threads. The psion lines before him were dense and tightly woven, each one resonating with a different rhythm. He had no room for error.

He began the process, filtering out the ambient noise and honing in on the unique flows of each thread. The challenge was immense, but Astron's movements were precise and controlled, his earlier training guiding him through the complexities.

Reina watched intently, her eyes narrowing as she observed his every move. 'This is the culmination of all his efforts,' she thought. 'If he can master this, he'll be ready for what lies ahead.'

The room was filled with a subtle hum as Astron worked, the ambient mana synchronizing with his own. He filtered, assimilated, and wove his energy through the psion lines, his pace quickening with each successful connection.

In what seemed like a shorter time than expected, Astron completed the task, his breathing even as he turned to face Reina. "It's done," he said, his voice calm but filled with quiet satisfaction.

Reina met his gaze, a rare smile touching her lips.

"You've exceeded my expectations, Astron. Tomorrow, we'll move on to something new—something far more advanced. Something that you have been expecting, most likely."

Astron nodded, a spark in his eyes. "I'm ready."

Chapter 483 108.3 - Monster

<Combat Training Arena, Tenth Day of Training, 5 A.M.>

The air in the training hall crackled with energy as Astron stood in the center, focused and ready for another intense session.

The previous day's introduction to the [Storm Stance] had left him eager to learn more.

Dakota entered the arena with her usual confident stride, but there was an extra spark in her eyes this morning. "Today's going to be a bit different, Astron," she began, stopping in front of him. "We're going to focus on refining your control over the [Storm Stance], specifically how you expel your mana using different strikes."

Dakota gestured for him to watch closely. "In the [Storm Stance], it's not just about releasing mana in a single, powerful blast. There are different ways to channel that energy, each with its own purpose and method of circulation. I'm going to teach you five specialized strikes, each one with a unique way of circulating and expelling your mana. But to pull these off, your control over your virtual core needs to be precise."

She took a deep breath, her expression serious as she demonstrated the first strike. "The first one is called [Thunderclap]." She moved into a stance, grounding herself firmly. "With this strike, you gather your mana in your virtual core and then release it all at once in a sudden burst. The key here is to channel the energy into a single point, creating an explosion of force."

–BOOM!

Dakota's fist shot forward, and the air around her seemed to shudder as she released the pent-up mana in a single, devastating blast. The force of the strike sent a shockwave rippling through the hall, the impact echoing like thunder.

Astron watched, understanding the technique but recognizing the difficulty. "The timing needs to be perfect," he muttered to himself, already visualizing how to execute it.

"Exactly," Dakota said, catching his words. "The mana needs to be released in one precise moment. No hesitation, no leakage. Your virtual core control is critical for this one."

She moved on to the next strike. "The second is [Typhoon Burst]. This one's different. Instead of a single point of impact, you're going to circulate the mana throughout your limbs, building up

momentum and then expel it in a sweeping motion. It's more of an area attack, meant to clear multiple opponents."

Dakota demonstrated, her body spinning fluidly as she gathered her mana. As she completed the motion, she released the energy in a wide arc, the air around her shimmering with the force of the attack. The strike created a powerful gust that spread out in all directions, mimicking the destructive force of a typhoon.

"[Typhoon Burst] is all about control and flow," Dakota explained. "You need to keep the mana circulating evenly until the moment you release it. It's perfect for when you're surrounded or need to break through a group."

Astron nodded, already visualizing how he would adapt his movements for this technique. "I'll need to balance the flow carefully, making sure the energy spreads evenly."

"Exactly. Now, the third strike is [Quake Fist]." Dakota's stance shifted again, this time lowering her center of gravity. "This one is all about grounding. You channel your mana into the earth through your legs and then release it through your strike, creating a shockwave that travels through the ground. It's a great way to destabilize your opponent."

She stomped the ground, her mana flowing into the earth. As she punched forward, the ground beneath them trembled, a ripple of force spreading out from the point of impact. The floor cracked slightly, showing the sheer power of the technique.

"[Quake Fist] requires you to be fully grounded," Dakota said. "Your connection to the earth needs to be solid, and your mana control needs to be steady. It's not just about the punch—it's about how you direct the force."

"The fourth strike is [Tempest Wave]. This one is similar to [Typhoon Burst] but more focused. You're going to channel your mana into a wave that travels through the air, cutting through anything in its path. It's perfect for long-range attacks."

She moved into the stance, gathering her mana in her virtual core before releasing it in a powerful, focused wave that shot through the air like a blade of wind. The force of the strike cut through the air with a sharp whistle, demonstrating its precision and power.

"[Tempest Wave] is all about focus," Dakota explained. "You need to keep the energy contained until the moment of release, then direct it in a straight line. It's like wielding a blade of wind."

"And finally, the fifth strike is [Stormbreaker]. This is the most powerful of the five. You're going to gather all your mana into your virtual core, compress it, and then release it in a massive, all-out attack. It's a finishing move, meant to break through even the toughest defenses."

Dakota took a deep breath, centering herself. She gathered her mana, compressing it into her virtual core. Then, with a powerful shout, she released the energy in a devastating strike that sent a shockwave through the entire hall. The force was immense, the air around her vibrating with the sheer power of the attack.

"[Stormbreaker] is all or nothing," Dakota said, her voice serious. "You put everything into this one strike. It's risky, but when done right, it's unstoppable. Your control over your virtual core needs to be perfect—you can't afford to waste any energy."

Astron watched, his mind racing with possibilities. These strikes were powerful, but they required a level of control and precision he had only begun to master.

'Interesting....So, that is what she meant by Virtual Core control.'

Astron thought to himself.

In a way, if the [Gale Stance] was more focused on the fluidity of body movements, this one was focused on the fluidity of the mana.

Dakota stepped back, giving him space. "Now it's your turn, Astron. Start with [Thunderclap] and work your way through the strikes. Take your time—focus on your virtual core, control the flow of mana, and release it at the right moment."

Astron nodded, his expression one of intense focus. He closed his eyes, centering himself and visualizing his virtual core. He could feel the mana gathering, ready to be unleashed. Opening his eyes, he moved into the [Storm Stance] and began with [Thunderclap].

His fist shot forward, the mana bursting out in a powerful strike. It wasn't as strong as Dakota's, but it was a solid start. He continued, moving through each of the five strikes—[Typhoon Burst], [Quake Fist], [Tempest Wave], and finally, [Stormbreaker]. Each one required a different approach, a different way of channeling and releasing the energy.



By the end of the session, around one hour later, Astron was drenched in sweat, his muscles burning from the effort.

But he had made progress—each strike was stronger, more controlled than the last. It was also thanks to Dakota's feedback. While he instantly absorbed the knowledge, there were still some minor body adjustments that he needed to make, and Dakota's help was crucial.

Dakota watched with a mixture of pride and approval. "Not bad, a solid start," Dakota mumbled as she looked into Astron's body. "For the time being, you will practice on your own."

She left Astron to train further after saying that.

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As Dakota left, she had expected him to train those strikes and virtual core control more.

But Astron's thoughts were elsewhere, drawn to the nuances he had noticed while practicing the [Storm Stance].

The way the mana moved through his body, the methodical yet powerful flow—it had sparked something within him, a realization that made his heart race with excitement.

While he had trained with the virtual core, he had always been aware of its limitations. It simplified the process of mana circulation, yes, but it also came at a cost. The processing speed of his energy was significantly slowed, and the more complex the technique, the more noticeable the delay. It was as if the centralized control of mana was creating a bottleneck, restricting the full potential of his movements.

But during the [Storm Stance], something had clicked. Each of the specialized strikes—[Thunderclap], [Typhoon Burst], [Quake Fist], [Tempest Wave], and [Stormbreaker]—had followed a systematic method of mana circulation. The energy flowed through his body in precise patterns, each strike utilizing similar points but in different directions and intensities.

'What if...' Astron thought, his mind racing. 'What if instead of relying on a single virtual core, I created multiple, smaller judgment points? Nodes that could control the flow of mana more efficiently spread throughout my body.'

The idea was tantalizing. If he could create these smaller control points, the mana wouldn't have to travel as far or wait for commands from a single location.

It could be managed more locally, allowing for faster, more precise control. His movements could become smoother, and his strikes were more powerful and immediate.

He closed his eyes, focusing inward, visualizing his body's internal energy pathways. The virtual core he had been using felt clunky, centralized, and slow.

He began to dismantle it mentally, breaking it down into smaller segments, each positioned at key points in his body—his shoulders, elbows, knees, and the center of his chest.

He imagined these points as miniature cores, each capable of processing and directing mana on its own.

The energy would flow through his body like a network, each node working in harmony with the others, reducing lag and increasing responsiveness.

Slowly, he began to circulate his mana through these new nodes, feeling the difference immediately.

The energy moved faster, more fluidly, without the bottleneck he had experienced before. His body felt lighter and more responsive as if a weight had been lifted.

Astron's eyes snapped open, but something was different. His purple eyes, usually sharp and focused, now carried a faint glimmer as if reflecting a light from another world.

'.....This is....?'

Inside his mind, a scene began to unfold—a vivid vision under the bright moonlight.

A solitary silhouette moved with deadly grace across a desolate landscape. The figure's every step was smooth and precise, yet filled with an ominous power. The air around him seemed to hum with tension, each movement calculated and lethal.

Astron watched, entranced, as the figure executed a series of movements that were both familiar and alien to him. The silhouette's hands and body were covered in a translucent energy, its edges sharply defined.

Though the color of the mana was transparent, its presence was undeniable—a force that seemed to bend reality around it.

This wasn't just any combat technique; it was a manifestation of something far deeper, something primal and instinctive. Astron could feel the connection, the resonance between this vision and the breakthrough he had just experienced.

His combat art, Lethal Arsenal Ascendancy, was reacting to his newfound understanding and control over mana.

The figure moved with an eerie silence, each strike more powerful and precise than the last. The energy around him pulsed and shifted, adapting seamlessly to his every command.

Astron recognized the fluidity of the [Gale Stance] and the explosive power of the [Storm Stance], but there was something more—an integration of these stances into a seamless whole, elevated by the perfect harmony between body and mana.

As the vision continued, the silhouette launched into a series of attacks that seemed to defy the very limits of what Astron thought possible.

Each strike was executed with a lethal precision that left no room for error. The energy around the figure shifted in perfect synchronization with his movements, creating a deadly arsenal that was both overwhelming and inescapable.

Astron's eyes never left the figure as he absorbed every detail, every subtle shift in the figure's technique. This was the pinnacle of what he had been striving for—a level of mastery where every aspect of combat was honed to perfection, where the distinction between the fighter and the energy they wielded blurred into nothingness.

'Lethal Arsenal Ascendancy...' Astron thought, his mind reeling from the realization.

This was what his combat art was revealing to him—a path forward as a [Martial Artist].

'Translucent Energy....That is....

His thoughts paused as he recalled the various forms of moon mana he had learned about, each corresponding to different phases of the moon and imbuing unique qualities when wielded.

'The energy of the Waning Crescent Moon...'

And now, the form of mana he needed to use for such blasting strikes materialized in his head.

'Just the raw energy and most primal form with only increasing the strength of the attack and the body.'

At that moment, Astron discovered a new energy and a method of controlling his [Lunar Mana].

Chapter 484 108.4 - Monster

Astron's eyes snapped open, the faint glimmer in his purple irises fading as he returned to reality.

His heart was pounding, not from exertion but from the vivid vision that had just unfolded in his mind. The memory of the silhouette moving under the moonlight, the translucent energy that radiated with deadly precision—it all felt so real, so attainable.

For a moment, he stood still, processing the revelation. The breakthrough he had experienced wasn't just about the virtual core; it was something far deeper, something connected to his very essence as a [Martial Artist]. The vision had shown him a path forward, a way to integrate everything he had learned into a new form of combat.

'Lethal Arsenal Ascendancy...' he thought, the name of his combat art echoing in his mind. The vision had revealed the potential locked within it, a level of mastery that transcended anything he had known before. And it wasn't just about the stances—it was about the energy he wielded, the moon mana that pulsed through his veins.

He closed his eyes once more, focusing inward, feeling the familiar surge of his lunar mana. But this time, he didn't let it flow through the usual virtual core.

Instead, he began to mentally map out the multiple judgment points he had envisioned, positioning them at key locations throughout his body.

He imagined the energy flowing not from a single source but from a network of nodes, each one controlling a specific part of his body. The memory of the translucent energy from his vision—the energy of the Waning Crescent Moon—guided him as he directed his mana through these nodes.

'The energy of the Waning Crescent Moon,' he recalled, understanding now that this form of mana was raw, primal, designed to increase the strength of his attacks and enhance his body's physical capabilities.

He took a deep breath, centering himself, and prepared to test this new method. Moving into the [Storm Stance], Astron began to circulate the energy through his body, directing it through the newly established judgment points.

At first, the process was not as smooth as he had envisioned. The mana flow was uneven, the energy hesitating at certain points as if unsure of where to go.

His first strike—a [Thunderclap]—lacked the explosive power he had seen in his vision, the energy dispersing too early, the force diminished.

But Astron didn't feel discouraged. Instead, a rare small smile crept onto his face.

'Interesting...Why do I feel like challenged?'

It was not something that was too weird. Whenever he had a hard time doing something that Silhouette would do, he would feel a weird sense of competitiveness rising. It was a weird but subtle feeling that he would rarely feel.

Most of the time, he never felt the competitive urge, aside from some rare moments, and this was one of those.

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'The problem is not about the idea.....I just can't execute it.'

He could sense the potential, the underlying power in this new method, even if it wasn't fully realized yet.

The problem wasn't with the concept—it was with his execution. The complexity of managing multiple judgment points simultaneously was a challenge, but it was a challenge he welcomed.

He reset his stance, this time focusing more intently on the flow of mana, ensuring that each node received the energy it needed at precisely the right moment.

He visualized the translucent energy, the raw power of the Waning Crescent Moon, and how it had moved so seamlessly in his vision.

His next strike was more controlled; the energy flows slightly more even. The [Typhoon Burst] he executed carried more power, and the sweeping motion of his mana was sharper and more defined. It wasn't perfect, but it was progress.

'It's working,' Astron thought, his excitement building. 'It's not easy, but I'm starting to understand how it works.'

He continued practicing, repeating the sequences over and over, each time adjusting the flow of mana, refining the process.

The energy began to move more fluidly through his body, and the judgment points became more responsive and synchronized with his movements.

As the minutes passed, Astron felt himself improving. The strikes became more powerful, and the energy was more concentrated.

The initial clumsiness gave way to a growing confidence as his body and mind adapted to the new method.

He tried a [Quake Fist], focusing on grounding the energy through his legs and into the earth. This time, the strike sent a noticeable tremor through the floor, the mana circulating through his body with greater efficiency. The ground beneath him cracked slightly, the force of the strike much closer to what he had envisioned.

Astron's smile widened. He could feel it now—the connection between his body, his mana, and the new method of control.

'It may not exactly be like [Tempest Fang] as the style was different.....But, for the time being, first figuring out how to get rid of the Virtual Core is definitely more important.'

He thought. The vision had shown him the way, but it was nearly impossible for him to instantly imitate and learn the [Martial Art] that was shown there. He tried it, but he was unable to, as there was something missing.

And now, through trial and effort, he was beginning to walk that path.

He took a deep breath, centering himself for another attempt. This time, he would try the [Stormbreaker], the most powerful of the five strikes.

Gathering his mana into the multiple judgment points, he focused on compressing the energy, feeling the raw power of the Waning Crescent Moon within him.

With a powerful shout, he unleashed the strike. The energy surged through his body, flowing through the judgment points and into his fist. The impact was explosive, the force radiating outwards in a shockwave that shook the entire training hall.

It wasn't perfect—the timing still needed work, and the energy could be more focused—but it was a significant step forward. Astron could feel the potential, the raw power that he was beginning to harness.

"Haaah.....Haaah.....This is....just insane...."

Panting from the exertion, Astron stood in the center of the hall, his body thrumming with energy.

"The fact that the Everchanging Glyph also makes me adapt inside is even a bonus. I feel like the moment I figure it out everything....this will become something that can be applied in everything."

The path ahead was clear now, and he was eager to continue down it. The fact that he could apply this to any other method made both the challenges great and the rewards. He knew that with time, he could refine this new method, integrating it fully into his combat art.

He was on the cusp of something incredible, and he wouldn't stop until he had mastered it completely.

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<Acrobatics Training, 11 A.M, Tenth day of training>

Tianna stood in the center of the training area, her expression serious as she prepared to teach Astron the final lesson.

This time the training grounds had been changed a little.

This last spell was one of the most advanced techniques in their repertoire, and she knew it would complete his transformation into a truly exceptional operative.

"Astron," Tianna began, her voice steady, "today I'm going to teach you one last special spell. It's designed to reduce the impact of a fall by increasing the spring sensitivity of your legs and body, making the bending process more efficient and reducing the risk of injury. With this spell, you'll be able to jump from the highest buildings and land without making a sound or receiving any damage."

Astron listened intently, already visualizing the possibilities. "That sounds incredibly useful, Instructor."

Tianna nodded. "It is. This spell works by enhancing the natural elasticity of your muscles and joints, allowing you to absorb the impact of a fall as if your body were a spring. It also helps distribute the force evenly across your entire body, reducing the strain on any single point."



She demonstrated the spell, her body glowing faintly as she jumped from a nearby platform, landing softly and silently on the ground below. "You had already mastered all those things, so you should be able to see how my body is now much more efficient."

Just as she said, the landing process was far smoother than anything that Astron had seen.

"Indeed." He replied, nodding his head. He watched closely, his analytical mind already breaking down the steps. "The spell...I kind of understand the thought process. It works in a way that, when you land, the spell directs the mana to absorb and redistribute the force of impact evenly across your body. This prevents any single point from taking too much strain, which is what allows you to land softly and without injury. The key seems to be in how the mana interacts with the physical properties of the muscles, making them more efficient at bending and recoiling. "

"Yes," Tianna confirmed. "But there's one more aspect to this spell that's just as important: breaking air resistance. By controlling the flow of mana around your body, you can reduce the drag as you fall, increasing your speed and making your descent more controlled."

Tianna raised her hands, demonstrating how the air seemed to flow smoothly around her as she moved. "This technique allows you to maintain balance and control during a fall, ensuring you land exactly where you intend."

"I understand, now." He nodded.

For most of the parts, air resistance was something that would be more and more dangerous for strong hunters because the faster one would get, the stronger the resistance would become.

Of course, for a horizontal type of movement where a Hunter would use their own physical abilities, their supernatural body resistance would cancel the negative effects since for them to reach such a high agility stat, they would naturally be a high-ranked Awakened.

But, for a vertical fall, where one was falling from the sky....Things would be different, as even without being strong, one could easily reach higher speeds and eventually damage one's own body.

Tianna stepped back, giving him space. "Focus on channeling your mana to enhance your legs and body. Feel the elasticity in your muscles and joints, and let the energy flow through you. Then, as you fall, direct your mana to break the air resistance."

Astron closed his eyes for a moment, centering himself. When he opened them, he began to channel his mana as Tianna had instructed. He felt the energy coursing through his legs, making them feel lighter and more responsive. With a deep breath, he leaped from the platform.

As he fell, he instinctively directed his mana to reduce air resistance. He could feel the air parting smoothly around him, his descent steady and controlled. In a way, what he was doing was the same thing that he did when circulating his mana this morning.

But this time, rather than creating a mana force around his hands, he did right before his body in a sharp way, imitating the shape that Tianna had created.

When he landed, his knees bent effortlessly, absorbing the impact without a sound. He straightened.

Tianna's eyes widened slightly, though she quickly composed herself. "Astron, that was perfect. You've grasped the spell instantly."

"Grasped?"

"Yes. Grasped. That movement was flawless. But something about your mana was different."

"That.....It was thanks to my own trait."

"Ah....Trait.....I see." Tianna's eyebrows twitched for a split second, but she composed herself.

"Well, now you have completed everything. If you wish, you may train here the spell. The gravity here is adjustable. While we can't access the high-buildings that you would normally jump down, you can train them in the simulations."

"Understood."

"I am going to register the training as finished. A new instructor and class will be assigned in my place. Congratulations," Tianna said, a note of finality in her voice, though her pride in his achievements was evident.

"Thank you for your guidance, Instructor Tianna," Astron responded, his tone sincere. He knew that her teachings had been instrumental in his progress, and he was grateful for the knowledge and skills he had gained.

Tianna gave a slight smile, a rare expression of warmth. "It was an honor to teach you, Astron. I'm confident that you'll excel in whatever comes next. Keep pushing your limits, and you'll achieve even greater things."

With that, Tianna turned to leave, her thoughts lingering on the young man she had trained. As she exited the training area, she couldn't help but feel that she had played a certain role in a special person's journey.

Chapter 485 109.1 - Chamber of Deception

Stealth Training, 1.12 P.M., Tenth day of training

"Are you ready to take the exam for the sixth stage?" Kennet asked, his voice carrying a note of seriousness as he studied Astron.

"I am," Astron replied.

This time differently, Kennet gave a curt nod, stepping aside to allow Astron to begin.

'He is now good to go.' Astron's body finally had mastered it.

The room was silent, the atmosphere thick with anticipation. Astron moved with calculated precision, his presence nearly imperceptible as he navigated the complex obstacles of the sixth stage.

Each step was deliberate, and every movement was harmonized with the ambient mana. Kennet observed closely, noting how Astron's body and mind were now working in complete unison.

There was no hesitation, no faltering—just a fluid execution of the skills he had honed over the past days.

At least, while it looked like that, there was a slight change in his movements. In a way, Astron looked strangely in control of everything.

'In control.....What is this new change?'

Kennet asked himself.

Astron continued through the course, his presence so finely tuned that it seemed as if he was manipulating the very environment around him rather than just adapting to it. It was as if he had crossed a threshold, reaching a new level of understanding.

When Astron finished the course, Kennet stepped forward, his eyes narrowed in curiosity. "Astron," he began, his voice measured, "it seems like you've experienced something... different. A breakthrough, perhaps?"

Astron met Kennet's gaze, his expression calm but with a certain light in his eyes. "Yes, Instructor," he replied with a nod. "That was the case."

Kennet's suspicion was confirmed. "That is what I thought."

"You can tell? That easy?"

"Of course...I have been training you for ten days. I can see the changes in my teachings."

"I see." Astron nodded, his head thoughtful. It was expected from the Instructor, especially Kennet, who had once belonged to a special stealth organization; at least, that was what Astron speculated.

"The thing you are doing....It reminds me of old times...." Kennet mumbled.

"Old times?"

"That's right," Kennet confirmed. "The way you're controlling your mana... that's where you broke through, isn't it?" Kennet remarked, his eyes sharp, observing every subtle nuance in Astron's demeanor.

Astron hesitated for a moment before nodding. "Yes, Instructor. That's exactly where it happened."

Kennet's gaze softened as he continued, "The way you're handling your mana now... it reminds me of someone I knew a long time ago."

Astron's interest was piqued. "Someone like me?"

Kennet nodded, his expression distant, as if he were looking back into his memories. "Yes, someone who was also exceptionally talented at using mana. He had a natural affinity for it, much like you. He could sense and manipulate mana with a finesse that most could only dream of."

"Where is he now?" Astron asked, his curiosity deepening.

Kennet paused, a shadow crossing his face. "Somewhere far away," he said quietly, his tone indicating that the subject was not one he wished to delve into further.

"I see." Astron nodded without prying any further. But in his mind, he had already filled some places from the words and mimics alone.

Kennet gave a small nod, his eyes returning to the present. "You've come a long way, Astron. This breakthrough is as significant as it looks. You only have one course left, which is the seventh course. After completing that, your Stealth Training will be over, and another instructor will be assigned to you."

"Understood."

"Then, let's start."

Just like that, Kennet made him take his position and started displaying to him what he needed to do.

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Astron sat in his quarters, mentally preparing for the day's training. He expected the usual routine—a message with the password to enter Reina's training room. But today, there was no message.

His communicator chimed softly, and a new notification appeared on the screen. It wasn't the usual password prompt but rather a set of coordinates and a short message from Reina:

[Today's training will be at a different location. Follow the coordinates. Be prepared.]

Astron raised an eyebrow, curiosity piqued.

This was the first time in his training that they would be changing locations.

'Something different,' he thought, standing and grabbing his gear. 'This should be interesting.'

After all, that was what Reina had promised him yesterday, as she had said that all of the training of deciphering and filtering that he had done for the past ten days would now become helpful.

He quickly followed the coordinates, navigating through the complex corridors of the facility. The location led him to a secluded part of the building, an area he hadn't explored before.

The atmosphere felt different—more intense, as if the very air carried weight.

'Weight?'

Thinking that he sensed something. The air was now a bit pressured, different from last time.

'The mana here is the reason why I feel like this....Just what?' Finally, he arrived at a large, reinforced door with intricate patterns etched into the metal. It was clear that this room was designed for something far more advanced than the training he'd been doing up until now. As he approached, the door slid open silently, revealing a vast, dimly lit chamber within.

Reina stood in the center of the room, her stance relaxed but her presence commanding. The chamber was different from anything Astron had seen before—massive, with walls lined with intricate runes that pulsed with a faint, eerie glow.

The air was thick with a powerful energy, making the hairs on the back of his neck stand on end.

"Welcome to the next stage," Reina said, her voice echoing slightly in the vast chamber.

'Huh?'

But she was nowhere to be seen. He activated his [Perceptive Insight], and in an instant, an immense amount of information flooded his head.

The chamber's energy patterns, hidden psion lines, and intricate mana flows all bombarded his senses at once, threatening to overwhelm him.

His vision swam, and the world around him blurred as the deluge of data assaulted his mind. Astron gritted his teeth, instinctively anchoring himself to stabilize his thoughts. He focused on a single point within his consciousness, grounding his mind and preventing the overwhelming information from fracturing his focus.

Slowly, the world around him began to stabilize, though the chaotic mass of data still pressed against his senses, relentless and unyielding.

Then, suddenly, he heard it—a calm yet commanding voice cutting through the chaos. "Filter everything aside from what your normal gaze will perceive without closing your [Eyes]."

Astron recognized the voice instantly—Reina. But the meaning behind her words hit him a moment later.

She wasn't talking about simply closing his physical eyes; she was referring to his [Perceptive Insight]. She wanted him to filter out the overwhelming influx of information and focus only on what his normal vision would perceive, but without shutting off his ability completely.

He took a deep breath, steeling himself for the task ahead. 'Focus,' he thought, 'filter out everything that isn't necessary.'

He began the painstaking process of narrowing his focus, filtering out the extraneous details his [Perceptive Insight] was picking up. It was as if he was trying to silence a deafening roar in his mind, reducing it to a manageable whisper.

But as he did so, an intense headache began to spread across his temples, sharp and unrelenting.

The pain intensified, his head pounding as if a vise were tightening around his skull. But Astron refused to let it break his concentration.

He continued to filter, blocking out the unnecessary layers of mana patterns and energy flows, focusing solely on what his normal gaze would perceive.

His vision cleared, the overwhelming flood of information receding into the background. It was a vastly different style of training compared to what he had experienced before—more challenging, more intense.

But as the chaos in his mind settled, Astron realized that this was exactly what Reina had intended. She was pushing him to a new level of control, teaching him how to harness his abilities without being consumed by them.

Gradually, the headache dulled to a throbbing ache, manageable but ever-present. Astron's vision stabilized, the world around him coming into sharp, clear focus.

He could see the chamber for what it truly was now, the intricate designs, the subtle energy flows, all within the realm of his perception but not overwhelming him.

"Good," Reina's voice echoed once more, this time with a hint of approval. "You are really good at getting rid of the information entering your head right now."

Astron allowed himself a brief moment of satisfaction, but it was cut short as Reina continued. "But this is not the end," she said, her tone growing more serious. "Can you see where I am right now?"

Astron scanned the room with his [Perceptive Insight], but no matter how hard he looked, he couldn't find her. "No, I can't see you," he replied.

Reina's voice carried a slight amusement as she responded, "That's to be expected because I'm not in your direct line of sight right now. At least, not in a way you can perceive normally."

Astron's brow furrowed. "Normally? That means I could see you by doing something different?"

"Exactly," Reina said, her tone shifting into that of a teacher about to impart an important lesson. "In this world, our eyes perceive the environment by using light as the medium. Light reflects off objects, and we register that reflected light as visual information. But just because we perceive light



doesn't mean we see everything. There are countless moments when light hits an obstacle, and what we perceive is that obstacle, not what lies beyond it."

She paused, letting her words sink in before continuing, "Just like what's happening here. I'm somewhere behind an obstacle, and because of that, you can't perceive me with normal sight."

Astron's mind raced, connecting the dots. "But... does the same hold true for mana?" he asked, the realization dawning on him.

Reina's voice held a note of approval. "Exactly. Mana doesn't behave like light. It isn't bound by the same physical rules. While light can be blocked or reflected, mana can flow through, around, and even within objects. It's not constrained by the same limitations."

She stopped for a second, and then the engravings around Astron changed a little. "But at the same time, that does not mean the mana does not interact with the physical world or the living beings."

When she said that Astron indeed understood what she meant, just before he had entered this place or after he did, there was a weird weight in the air even while it was the same. The change was due to the mana in this place.

"And each interaction leaves a trace."

"And those who can read those traces and fetch the information can see the world beyond the eyes."

Astron now understood what Reina was trying to do here.

Chapter 486 109.2 - Chamber of Deception

"And those who can read those traces and fetch the information can see the world beyond the eyes."

The moment Astron mumbled this, he understood what Reina was trying to come at.

He knew his eyes were special, capable of perceiving the flow of mana in the environment with an extraordinary level of detail. But was that all they could do? What if there was more to their potential than simply seeing the patterns of energy around them?

He let the idea take root in his mind. 'What if,' he thought, 'I could use mana as the medium for my eyes? Instead of relying solely on light to perceive the world, what if I could read the world through the flow of mana itself?'

His thoughts raced as he considered the implications. He had already learned to decipher psion lines, to trace the intricate patterns of energy and extract information from them.

The process was complex, but it had become second nature to him. If he applied the same principle to the environment around him, wouldn't he be able to decipher the changes in the mana that he himself manipulated?

It was like using X-ray lights, but instead of light, he would use mana as the medium.

By sending out his own mana, he could read how it interacted with the surroundings and how it was altered by obstacles, objects, or even people. The feedback from these interactions could then be processed by his [Perceptive Insight], allowing him to see beyond what light could reveal.

Astron's eyes widened with the discovery. He focused inward, summoning a thread of his mana and allowing it to flow outward, gently dispersing it into the surrounding environment. He closed his eyes—not to block out sight, but to fully concentrate on the flow of energy as it spread through the chamber.

The moment his mana made contact with the surfaces around him, he felt it. Subtle shifts in the flow, tiny resistances where the mana encountered something solid, slight deviations where the energy was redirected or absorbed. It was a complex web of interactions, each one leaving a trace that could be deciphered.

He opened his eyes, but this time, instead of relying on the light, he let the traces of mana guide his vision.

The chamber's physical features became secondary as his focus shifted to the flow of energy.

The walls, the air, even the hidden obstacles—all were outlined not by light but by the paths his mana took as it moved through the space.

The sensation was unlike anything he had experienced before. He could see the energy currents wrapping around objects, the faint echoes of interactions with the physical world.

And then, as his focus sharpened, he saw her—Reina—standing behind a large pillar, her presence revealed by the way the mana curved around her form.

'There you are,' Astron thought, seeing the outline of her body. The color or other things were not visible, but at the same time, her figure was outlined behind the wall.

'As if seeing things through the wall and darkness.'

It was subtle. Everything....The training he was doing now started to make sense.

Reina stepped forward, her figure now fully visible through the haze of mana that filled the room. "You've done it, Astron," she said, her voice carrying a note of genuine admiration. "You've taken the first step in seeing the world beyond the limitations of ordinary sight."

Astron felt a surge of pride, but he quickly tempered it with focus. This was only the beginning. "By using mana as the medium for perception, I can see what light cannot," he said, the realization settling into place. "It's like deciphering psion lines, but applied to the entire environment."

Reina nodded, her eyes gleaming with approval. "Exactly. The world is filled with hidden truths, with layers of information that ordinary sight can never access. But by using your [Eyes] in this way, you can see through those layers, uncovering what lies beneath. That is something only those with the [Eyes] like you can do."

Astron hesitated for a moment, then finally decided to voice the question that had been lingering in his mind. "Miss Reina, what exactly is this eye you keep talking about? What is its true nature?"

Reina's expression softened, but she shook her head. "It's too early for you to learn that, Astron," she said, her tone gentle but firm. "In time, you'll understand. But for now, focus on mastering the abilities you've already begun to unlock."

Before Astron could press further, Reina suddenly vanished from his sight. Her voice echoed through the chamber, distant yet clear. "You've taken the first step, but you're still not there yet. There's much more for you to discover."

Astron immediately activated his [Perceptive Insight], focusing on the mana around him. He knew Reina was limiting herself, concealing her presence in a way that required a different approach to detect. He began to decipher the subtle shifts in the mana flow, adjusting his perception to pick up on the new patterns.

After a few moments of concentration, he caught a glimpse of her—just a faint outline at first, but enough to confirm her location. Reina had altered the way she interacted with the mana, creating a new challenge for him to overcome.

She smiled as he found her, a hint of approval in her gaze. "Good," she said. "You're starting to understand. From now on, you'll be practicing here every day until you find the exit on your own. This chamber holds many secrets, and it's up to you to uncover them."

With that, Reina's form began to fade, leaving Astron alone in the vast, dimly lit chamber.

The intricate patterns of mana around him seemed to pulse with a life of their own as if the room itself were alive with hidden knowledge.

Astron took a deep breath, steeling himself for the task ahead.

He knew this was not just about finding the exit—it was about mastering his abilities, pushing himself to new heights, and uncovering the truths that lay hidden within the world of mana.

As Reina's presence fully disappeared, Astron closed his eyes. He was ready to face whatever challenges this chamber held, knowing that each step he took would bring him closer to mastering the mysterious power of his [Eyes].

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<Outside the Chamber>

The corridor outside of the chamber was dimly lit, the cold stone walls reflecting only the faintest glimmers of light from the few torches that lined the way. Reina stood quietly, her expression thoughtful as she considered the progress of her pupil. The chamber's heavy door loomed behind her, sealed shut, protecting the intense training taking place within.

A soft, metallic clink echoed down the corridor as Anchor Steelclad approached, his presence as commanding as ever. His towering frame, clad in his signature steel armor, seemed to absorb the dim light, giving him an imposing and almost indomitable aura. He halted a few steps from Reina, his steely gaze fixed on the door behind her.

"Reina," Steelclad began, his voice a low rumble, "is he really ready to challenge the [Chamber of Deception]?"

Reina turned to face him, her expression calm but with a hint of satisfaction in her eyes. "He is, Anchor. More than ready, in fact. Even I wasn't expecting him to learn everything this fast. But that kid... he's grasped the basics of his [Eyes] quicker than anyone I've seen."

"Really? In just ten days?"

"Yes," Reina confirmed, a slight smile tugging at the corners of her lips. "He can handle stage-3 psion lines with ease now, and the only thing holding him back is his current level of Magic Power. His progress has been remarkable."

Steelclad released a heavy sigh, his stern gaze softening slightly though concern still clouded his eyes. "The [Chamber of Deception] is no ordinary trial. It's designed to test not only one's skills but also their ability to see through the illusions and misdirections that can break even the most seasoned warriors."

Reina nodded, fully aware of the chamber's dangers. "I know. Though it's only stage one, I'm confident he'll finish it today."

"Today?" Steelclad raised an eyebrow in surprise.

"That's right," Reina replied with certainty. "He's been catching up quickly on his body training as well. I expect him to complete the first stage of the chamber by 9 P.M."

Steelclad glanced at the time displayed on a small device strapped to his wrist. "You're saying he'll conquer the first stage in just five hours?"

Reina's expression remained firm. "That's what I believe... At least."

Steelclad studied her for a moment, then nodded slowly. "I see. If that's what you believe, then I have no reason to stop you. But you know I'm still not fully convinced, right?"

Reina gave a slight nod, understanding his skepticism. "That's understandable, sir. But I suggest you start preparing the rewards for him... Before he finishes his training here, he'll reach at least the first stage's threshold."

Steelclad's eyes narrowed thoughtfully. "Rewards, huh?"

Reina nodded, her tone now more serious. "There's something I haven't mentioned to Astron yet. Whenever someone passes a stage in the [Chamber of Deception], they're rewarded. And each stage has its own unique rewards tailored to the individual's progress."

Steelclad's expression shifted, showing a mix of interest and caution. "You've kept that from him?"

Reina crossed her arms, her gaze steady. "It wasn't the right time to tell him. He needs to focus on the task at hand, not on what might come afterward. But once he completes the first stage, he'll learn about the rewards. It will be a significant motivation for him to continue."

Steelclad let out a low hum of consideration. "I see. Then, it's crucial that he succeeds. The rewards could be the key to pushing him beyond his current limits."

"Exactly," Reina agreed. "And knowing Astron, once he realizes what's at stake, he'll only push himself harder."

Steelclad looked back at the door to the chamber, a flicker of determination in his eyes. "Very well. I'll make the necessary preparations. But Reina, make sure he's ready. The rewards are valuable, but they're only as good as the person who earns them. Especially after all the resources spent on him...."

Reina nodded, her confidence unwavering. "He's ready, Anchor. And soon, everyone will see just how far he can go."

Chapter 487 110.1 - Whose intention whose fate

<Inside the Chamber of Deception>

The [Chamber of Deception] was a labyrinth of illusions and shifting walls, a place designed to break even the most disciplined minds.

The air inside was heavy, thick with a tension that seemed to press down on Astron's shoulders as he navigated the maze. Every step he took felt like a test, each turn an invitation to lose himself in the disorienting environment.

For the past four hours, Astron had been pushing his limits—mentally, physically, and spiritually. The chamber was relentless, its tricks and traps growing more complex the deeper he ventured. It wasn't just a test of his [Perceptive Insight] but a challenge to his very willpower.

He moved cautiously, every sense heightened as he attempted to decipher the shifting patterns of mana around him. The walls seemed to pulse with energy, blurring his vision with false paths and hidden dangers.

With each step, the chamber's illusions grew more convincing, more insidious, as if it were adapting to his attempts to see through it.

'Stay focused,' Astron reminded himself, his breath steady but his mind weary. The mental strain of filtering out the deception from reality was immense, but he couldn't afford to falter now.

He had to trust in his training, in the newfound understanding of his [Perceptive Insight], and in his ability to see beyond the physical.

His eyes narrowed as he reached out with his mana, letting it flow through the chamber, searching for the true path hidden among the false leads.

The chamber responded with a surge of energy, trying to confuse him, to overload his senses with conflicting information. But Astron had learned to filter, to sift through the chaos and find the underlying truth.

It was like solving a complex puzzle where the pieces kept changing shape, but he was beginning to see the patterns, the hidden threads that tied the illusions together. The chamber wasn't invincible; it had weaknesses and cracks in its design that could be exploited.

As he moved deeper, the physical demands of the chamber began to take their toll. The ground shifted beneath his feet, forcing him to react quickly and maintain his balance as the terrain itself seemed determined to throw him off course.

Sweat dripped down his brow, his muscles aching from the constant strain of navigating the treacherous environment.

But Astron refused to give in. Every time his body screamed for rest, he pushed forward, drawing on his inner reserves. This wasn't just about reaching the exit; it was about proving to himself that he could overcome anything the chamber threw at him. He would not let this place break him.

Suddenly, the chamber shifted again, the walls around him blurring and twisting as a new wave of illusions assaulted his senses. He staggered, his vision swimming with false images—doors that weren't there, paths that led to nowhere. The mental exertion of filtering through the illusions was immense, like trying to hold back a tide of chaos with sheer willpower.

'Focus,' he reminded himself, grounding his mind with an anchor of calm. He could feel the mana around him because of the way it interacted with the chamber's tricks. Slowly, he began to decipher the new wave of deceptions, picking apart the lies to find the truth hidden within.

Then, amidst the chaos, he sensed it—a faint, steady flow of mana that cut through the illusions like a beacon. It was subtle, almost imperceptible, but it was there—the true path.

Astron followed the flow, ignoring the distractions that tried to pull him away. Each step felt like a battle against the chamber's relentless efforts to mislead him, but he pressed on, his eyes locked on the mana flow that guided him forward.

The chamber's attempts to deceive him grew more desperate, the illusions more elaborate, but Astron had found his rhythm. He moved with purpose, his mind clear as he trusted in the mana to lead him to the exit.

Finally, after what felt like an eternity, the illusions began to fade. The chamber's tricks grew weaker, the walls around him solidifying into their true forms. Astron could see the end in sight—a large door, unadorned but radiating a sense of finality. The exit.

He took a deep breath, steadying himself as he approached. His body ached, and his mind was exhausted, but he had made it. He reached out, placing his hand on the door, feeling the cool surface beneath his palm.



The door opened with a low creak, revealing a passage beyond—bright, clear, and free of the chamber's oppressive energy.

Astron stepped through, his breath escaping in a relieved sigh as the tension of the past four hours finally began to ease.

He had done it. He had found the exit.

As he emerged from the chamber, the heavy door closed behind him with a final, resounding thud. The silence that followed was profound and simple....

GROWL!

At that moment, his stomach ached....

'I really am hungry.'

He could not help but shake his head.....

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<Combat Training Arena, Eleventh Day of Training, 5 A.M.>

The first light of dawn filtered through the high windows of the training hall, casting long shadows on the polished floor.

Dakota entered the arena, expecting another day of rigorous training with Astron.

She had seen him progress rapidly over the past few days, but today felt different—there was an unspoken tension in the air, something that made her pause as she stepped onto the mat.

Astron was already there, standing in the center of the hall, his posture relaxed yet exuding a subtle intensity.

He turned to face her, and for a moment, Dakota was taken aback. There was something different about him, something fundamental that had shifted since she last saw him.

His purple eyes, usually sharp and focused, now carried a depth that hadn't been there before—a faint, almost imperceptible glimmer that hinted at something more.

His entire presence seemed more controlled, more centered as if he had tapped into a reservoir of power and understanding that hadn't been there before.

Dakota's eyes narrowed slightly as she approached, her instincts alert. "You look different," she said, her tone laced with curiosity. "Something's changed. What happened?"

"I had a bit of a breakthrough yesterday," he replied, his voice calm but carrying an underlying intensity.

"Breakthrough?"

"Indeed," Astron replied as he threw a punch.

—BOOM!

The energy behind the strike was a little bit different, as was the feeling it gave.

"I realized that the way I was circulating my mana was holding me back. So, I made some adjustments."

"Adjustments?" Dakota repeated, her interest piqued. "What kind of adjustments?"

"Instead of relying on a single virtual core, I've started using multiple judgment points throughout my body," Astron explained. "It's made a huge difference in how I control my mana and how it flows during combat."

"Show me," Dakota said, her voice firm but tinged with curiosity. "I want to see what you've been working on."

Astron nodded, stepping back to give himself space. He closed his eyes for a brief moment, centering himself as he activated the multiple judgment points within his body. The energy began to circulate faster and more fluidly than ever before, flowing through the network he had created.

When he opened his eyes, the faint glimmer in his purple irises seemed to intensify, and Dakota could feel a shift in the air around him. It was as if the very atmosphere had changed, charged with a new, potent energy.

Moving into the [Storm Stance], Astron began with [Thunderclap], his fist shooting forward with explosive force. The impact was immediate and powerful, the energy radiating outwards in a controlled burst that sent a shockwave rippling through the hall.

Dakota watched in astonishment—the speed and precision of the strike were far beyond what she had seen from him before.

But Astron didn't stop there. He moved into the next strike, [Typhoon Burst], his body spinning fluidly as he released the energy in a sweeping motion. The mana circulated perfectly, spreading through his limbs with no hesitation, creating a powerful gust that swept across the arena.

Dakota's eyes widened as she observed him, the realization dawning on her that this wasn't just a slight improvement—it was a complete transformation.

'What? In just one day?'

The way Astron moved, the way he controlled his mana, everything was different. It was as if he had unlocked a new level of mastery overnight.

'Haha...This kid.....Just one breakthrough, and he is already here.....Just what the hell is this...?'

As he moved through [Quake Fist], [Tempest Wave], and finally [Stormbreaker], each strike was executed with a level of control and power that left Dakota in awe.

The energy around him responded instantly to his commands, flowing through his body with a fluidity that belied the complexity of the technique.

When Astron finished, the training hall was silent, the echoes of his strikes still reverberating through the air. He stood there, breathing steadily, his body radiating a calm but intense energy.

Dakota slowly approached him, "You brat....." and then slapped him from his back. "You really are a beast of a different breed."

Astron's eyebrows twitched a little, showing a reaction. But before he could respond, Dakota's grip tightened on his shoulder, her eyes burning with fierce determination.

"But it seems this has made you a bit cocky, hasn't it?" she said, her tone dropping into something more serious, more intense. Her gaze bore into him, challenging him in a way that made Astron straighten up instinctively.

Dakota's expression hardened a dangerous glint in her eyes. "Don't think for a second that just because you've made a breakthrough, you're invincible. You've done well, but you're far from finished. With how you're doing now, I think it's time to push you further. You're ready to learn the last two techniques of the [Storm Stance]."

Astron's kept his composure.

He knew that with every compliment Dakota gave, there was always a new challenge waiting right behind it. That was her character, so he was already expecting this to come.

"The next techniques aren't about offense," Dakota continued her grip still firm. "They're defensive, but don't think for a moment that makes them any easier."

"Defense?"

Astron mumbled.

"Brat.....Don't come at me with the words, 'The best defense is offense.' Real life does not work like that all the time. There will be situations where you will be forced to defend, whether or not. Be disciplined, don't be narrow-minded."

"I did not say anything."

"Your eyes told me what I needed to know."

"I see." Astron nodded. Dakota was right, as Astron had never learned any type of defensive techniques before, nor did he want to do so.

"Now, let's start."

Chapter 488 110.2 - Whose intention whose fate

"Now, let's start."

She took a step back, giving him some space but not relaxing her intense gaze. "The first technique is called [Tempest Sphere]. It's a defensive move where you expel your mana in a sphere around you, creating a barrier. It's not just about raw power—it's about timing. The barrier lasts only for a second, but in that second, it can block or deflect any attack that comes your way."

Dakota moved into a stance, gathering her mana in an instant. Her body tensed, and with a sharp exhale, she released a burst of energy that formed a shimmering, translucent sphere around her. The air within the sphere seemed to hum with concentrated power, and then, just as quickly, it dissipated.

"You see?" Dakota said, her eyes still locked on Astron. "The key is to release just the right amount of mana and at the exact right moment. Too much, and you'll waste your energy. Too little, and it won't protect you."

Astron nodded, his mind already racing with ideas on how to integrate this into his own combat style. He understood the importance of precision in this technique—just like with [Thunderclap], but on a more complex level.

"The second technique is [Aegis Guard]," Dakota continued, shifting her stance slightly. "This one's a bit different. Instead of creating a full barrier, you condense your mana into a specific part of your body—your arm, your leg, wherever you need it most—and use it to defend against an attack. It's like wearing armor but made entirely of mana."

She demonstrated, gathering a concentrated amount of mana into her forearm. The energy pulsed, wrapping around her arm like a second skin, glowing faintly as it solidified. "The trick here is

control. You need to condense the mana just enough to block the attack but not so much that it weighs you down or drains your energy."

Astron watched closely, understanding the complexity of what she was showing him. [Aegis Guard] wasn't just about raw defense—it was about adaptability, being able to protect any part of his body with precision and timing.

Dakota's eyes never left his as she finished the demonstration. "These techniques are the final steps in mastering the [Storm Stance]. If you can integrate them with what you've already learned, you'll have a complete arsenal at your disposal—both offense and defense."

She crossed her arms, her expression softening slightly but still intense. "But don't think this will be easy. It's going to take a lot for an offender like you to defend."

"Offender....Master, your choice of words is really subtle...." Astron mumbled, shaking his head.

"Did you say something?" As Dakota glared at him, he could only shake his head.

"I just said you have a way with words," he replied, trying to keep a straight face.

Dakota narrowed her eyes at him for a moment before letting out a short, amused snort. "Focus, brat. You've got a lot to learn today."

With a nod, Astron refocused his attention on the task at hand. The first technique, [Tempest Sphere], was straightforward enough in theory. By expelling his mana in a burst, he could create a barrier around himself, blocking incoming attacks. However, as he began to experiment with the technique, it quickly became apparent that its effectiveness was limited.

He closed his eyes, gathering his mana at his core before releasing it outward in a controlled explosion.

A shimmering sphere of translucent energy formed around him, pulsating with power. But as he tested its strength by visualizing various levels of attacks, he realized the barrier's limitations.

'It's spread too thin,' Astron thought, his brows furrowing. The [Tempest Sphere] covered a wide area around him, but because of this, the energy was diffused.

While it could block weaker attacks, anything beyond that—especially strikes from stronger Awakened—would likely penetrate the barrier. The lack of concentration in any specific area meant that its defensive capability was inherently compromised.

'This kind of defense... it's more of a last resort, something to use when you're surrounded or need a moment to regroup.' Astron understood that while [Tempest Sphere] had its uses, it wouldn't be the technique he relied on in the heat of battle if he could perceive the enemy.

He dispersed the barrier and took a moment to consider the second technique, [Aegis Guard]. This technique was more promising. Unlike the [Tempest Sphere], [Aegis Guard] allowed for the concentration of mana in a specific part of the body, making it much more resilient.

Astron took a deep breath, visualizing the flow of his mana. Instead of spreading it out, he focused on directing the energy to his right forearm, condensing it into a protective layer. He could feel the mana coiling tightly around his arm, forming a dense, resilient shield.

He raised his arm, testing the feel of the condensed energy. It was heavy but powerful, the mana acting like a second skin that hardened upon contact. He could already tell that this technique would be much more effective in a real battle.

By focusing the mana on a single point, he could withstand far more force than the [Tempest Sphere] could handle.

'This is not bad....'

Astron thought as he felt the mana condensing around his body. He experimented with different parts of his body, shifting the mana from his arm to his leg, then to his chest, and back again. The process required intense focus and control, but the results were undeniable.

With practice, he knew he could master [Aegis Guard] and make it an integral part of his combat strategy.

Dakota observed his progress with a keen eye, nodding in approval as Astron began to grasp the nuances of the technique. "That's more like it," she said, crossing her arms again.

"The [Aegis Guard] is all about precision. You're getting it but remember—timing and control are everything. In a real fight, you won't have the luxury of taking your time."

As she had been constantly telling him, timing was really important for a [Martial Artist]. They fought using their mana, constantly circulating it, and that would increase the consumption if unchecked.

That was why Dakota emphasized this a lot. With his unique condition of [Everchanging Glyph], Astron knew it was really important for him to keep an eye on this constantly.

"I understand, Master. [Tempest Sphere] has its uses, but [Aegis Guard] feels more reliable for actual combat. I can see how it could make a difference when dealing with stronger opponents."

Dakota's lips curled into a smirk. "Exactly. The [Tempest Sphere] is more of a tactical move—use it when you're overwhelmed or need a quick breather. But [Aegis Guard] is where your focus should be. Master it, and you'll have a solid defense against just about anything."

Astron took a deep breath, his mind already racing with ideas on how to incorporate these new techniques into his fighting style. The breakthrough he had experienced with the multiple judgment points had opened up new possibilities....each of them waiting to be explored.

"I'll keep working on it."

"Good. Because the next time we spar, I won't be holding back. You've shown you can handle the offense—now it's time to see if you can take a hit."

With that, Dakota stepped back, leaving Astron alone to continue his training.

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Astron began with the [Aegis Guard], concentrating on how to internalize the technique. The concept was clear—condensing mana into specific parts of his body to form a resilient barrier—but mastering it required finesse.

He closed his eyes, visualizing the flow of mana through his newly created judgment points, focusing the energy into his forearm.



The familiar sensation of the condensed mana wrapping around his arm returned, but this time, Astron experimented with maintaining the barrier while simultaneously preparing for an offensive move.

He shifted the energy, allowing a portion of his mana to remain in a defensive state while the rest circulated for an attack.

'By keeping a portion of my mana reserved for defense, I can adapt more quickly,' he thought, his mind racing with possibilities.

The judgment points allowed him to distribute the energy efficiently, ensuring that his defenses were always ready while still maintaining his offensive capabilities.

As he continued to practice, moving through different stances and integrating the [Aegis Guard] into his routine, Astron felt something shift within him.

It was subtle at first, a slight tug at the edge of his consciousness, but it quickly grew stronger.

He paused, frowning as a strange sensation began to build.

The shadows around him, usually still and silent, started to churn and swirl, gathering around his feet and slowly rising like a living entity.

'What...?' Astron's thoughts trailed off as he realized that his [Shadowborne] ability was reacting to something deep within him.

The shadows seemed to pulse with a life of their own, resonating with his mana in a way they hadn't before.

The sensation intensified, and then, without warning, Astron felt a surge of information flood his mind. It was like a dam had broken, releasing a torrent of knowledge and instinct that he hadn't known he possessed.

'This... this is another breakthrough!' he realized, his heart pounding in his chest. The information that flowed into his mind was clear and precise, detailing a new way to utilize his shadows in a manner similar to the [Aegis Guard].

He could see it now—how the shadows could be materialized, forming a protective barrier around specific areas of his body, just like the mana in the [Aegis Guard].

But there was more. The shadows weren't just limited to his own body; they could be extended, enveloping others as well, shielding them from harm.

'This... this is incredible,' Astron thought, the realization hitting him like a shockwave. The shadows weren't just a passive ability—they could be actively controlled, shaped into a defensive tool that was both versatile and powerful.

His eyes snapped open, the swirling shadows responding to his will, wrapping around his arms in a dark, protective embrace.

The feeling was similar to [Aegis Guard], but there was something more—a presence that made the shadows feel alive.

Without hesitation, Astron called up his status window to see the changes happening around him.

And just as he expected, something had indeed changed.

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 Traits:

Perceptive Insight (Epic)(Unchanging)

Lunar Enigma (????) (Growth Type) (Stage 1)

Shadowborne (Legendary) (Growth Type)(Stage 3)

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It was at that moment he saw that his trait [Shadowborne] had reached the third stage.

'I see....'

Then Astron realized what Kennet had said about the [Traits].

"Not every trait follows a linear improvement. There are some things that will not completely be linked to the concept of the [Trait]. Never forget that." As he remembered what Kennet said about that, he realized what he meant, looking at the description of the [Shadowborne].

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Shadowborne: The innate trait bestowed by the Mistwraith grants the ability to harness and manipulate shadows with great proficiency. It enhances the user's control over darkness, enabling them to bend and shape shadows to their will.

Stage 1 Shadow Veil: The user gains the power to blend seamlessly with shadows, becoming nearly invisible in dimly lit environments. This grants them enhanced stealth and the ability to move undetected.

Stage 2 Umbral Step: With further mastery, the user gains the ability to teleport short distances through shadows. They can traverse between shadows effortlessly, disappearing from one spot and reappearing in another, allowing for swift movement and surprise attacks.

Stage 3 Shadow Embrace: The user can envelop themselves or others in protective shadows, creating an impenetrable barrier that shields against physical and magical attacks. This defensive ability grants enhanced durability and resilience.

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'So, the third stage of the [Shadowborne] was not about stealth at all.'

It was at that moment that Astron had a breakthrough once again.

## Chapter 489 111.1 - Two weeks

### <Two Weeks of Training in the Chamber of Deception>

The following two weeks were a relentless journey of growth, pain, and discovery for Astron as he continued his training with Reina in the [Chamber of Deception]. Each day was a new battle, and each stage of the chamber was more demanding than the last. But with every challenge, Astron pushed himself harder, driven by a deep-seated desire to master his [Eyes] and unlock the full extent of his abilities.

#### First Stage: Mastering the Basics

In the days following his initial success in the first stage, Astron honed his ability to filter and decipher mana flows. The first stage had taught him to see through the chamber's illusions, but now he needed to perfect that skill. Reina guided him through increasingly complex scenarios where the chamber would alter the flow of mana in subtle, almost imperceptible ways. The goal was to sharpen his perception, to detect even the faintest shifts in energy.

Astron's progress was steady. He learned to conserve his mental energy, filtering out unnecessary information with greater efficiency. The headaches that had plagued him at the start began to fade, replaced by a calm focus that allowed him to navigate the illusions with increasing speed. By the end of the first week, he could complete the first stage in a fraction of the time it had initially taken him.

#### Second Stage: Refining Control

The second stage introduced new elements to test his control over his abilities. The chamber's illusions became more dynamic, with shifting walls and moving obstacles that forced Astron to adapt on the fly. Here, it wasn't just about seeing through the deception; it was about maintaining control while under constant pressure.

Reina introduced exercises that pushed Astron's mana manipulation to new levels. He learned to alter the flow of mana in real time, creating his own paths through the chamber's chaos. This stage was both mentally and physically exhausting, but Astron began to notice a significant improvement in his stamina and resilience. His body grew stronger, more attuned to the demands of his training, while his mind became sharper, more focused.

By the time he completed the second stage, Astron had developed an instinctive understanding of how to manipulate mana flows to his advantage. He could now navigate the chamber's challenges with a fluidity that came from deep within—a blend of intuition and skill that Reina knew would be crucial in the trials ahead.

### Third Stage: Expanding Perception

The third stage was where the real challenges began. The illusions in the chamber became more intricate, layered with multiple levels of deception that required Astron to expand his perception beyond what he had previously thought possible. This stage was about seeing not just the surface of things but the deeper connections between them.

Reina pushed Astron to use his [Eyes] in ways he hadn't before. He was tasked with perceiving the underlying structure of the chamber's energy, tracing the connections between different mana flows to uncover the hidden paths. This required him to process vast amounts of information at once, filtering out the noise while focusing on the critical elements.

It was during this stage that Astron's understanding of his [Eyes] deepened significantly. He began to see the chamber not just as a series of obstacles but as a living entity with its own patterns and rhythms. He learned to anticipate the chamber's tricks, predicting where the next illusion would appear and adjusting his approach accordingly.

This stage took longer than the previous ones, but by the end of the second week, Astron had mastered it. He could now perceive the chamber's deceptions on multiple levels, seeing through the layers of illusion to the core of the truth.

### Fourth Stage: Enhancing Speed and Precision

The fourth stage introduced a new element: time. The chamber's illusions became more aggressive, shifting rapidly and forcing Astron to react with lightning speed. This stage was about precision under pressure, about making split-second decisions while maintaining absolute control.

Reina's training focused on enhancing Astron's reaction time and his ability to filter information instantly. She set up scenarios where he had only moments to decipher a complex web of illusions and find the correct path before the chamber shifted again. It was grueling work, mentally taxing and physically draining, but Astron's determination never wavered.

With each passing day, his speed and precision improved. He learned to trust his instincts, to let his training guide him without overthinking. By the time he completed the fourth stage, Astron could navigate the chamber's challenges in a fraction of the time it had taken him at the start of his training.

### Fifth Stage: Integrating All Skills

The fifth stage was the culmination of everything Astron had learned. The chamber combined all the elements from the previous stages—complex illusions, shifting obstacles, time pressure—and added a new layer of difficulty. The mana flows within the chamber became more chaotic and more unpredictable, challenging Astron to integrate all his skills into a seamless whole.

This stage was the most mentally and physically exhausting of all. The chamber seemed to throw everything it had at him, testing his limits and pushing him to the brink. But Astron had grown stronger, more resilient. He had learned to adapt, to remain calm under pressure, and to trust in his abilities.

Reina watched closely as Astron navigated the fifth stage. She could see the progress he had made—the way he moved through the chamber with a confidence born of hard-earned mastery. He no longer hesitated when faced with new challenges; instead, he attacked them head-on, using every skill at his disposal to overcome the obstacles in his path.

It took longer than the previous stages, but by the end of the second week, Astron had conquered the fifth stage. He emerged from the chamber, exhausted but triumphant, having integrated all the skills he had learned into a cohesive whole.

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On the other hand, aside from his training in the [Chamber of Deception] Astron continued training with Dakota as well.

Over the next two weeks, Astron underwent increasingly intense training with Dakota. Each day presented new challenges, but with each challenge, Astron felt himself growing stronger, more capable, and more attuned to the intricacies of the martial arts he was mastering.

The first week was dedicated entirely to mastering the [Storm Stance]. With his breakthrough in using multiple [Judgment Points], Astron quickly adapted to the complexities of the stance. The

new method of circulating mana made his movements more fluid, his strikes more powerful, and his defensive techniques more reliable.

Dakota pushed him hard, making sure he perfected every aspect of the [Storm Stance]. They focused on integrating both the offensive strikes—[Thunderclap], [Typhoon Burst], [Quake Fist], [Tempest Wave], and [Stormbreaker]—with the defensive techniques—[Tempest Sphere] and [Aegis Guard].

By the end of the first week, Astron had not only mastered the individual strikes and defenses but had also begun to integrate them seamlessly into his combat style. His control over the [Judgment Points] allowed him to switch between offense and defense with unprecedented speed.

With the basics of the [Storm Stance] firmly in hand, the end of the first week was dedicated to sparring.

Dakota knew that mastery in training was one thing, but applying it in a real fight was another. They spent hours every day sparring, each session more intense than the last.

Her goal for Astron was to increase his battle awareness using the [Storm Stance]. Dakota pushed him to his limits, forcing him to adapt to her unpredictable attacks.

She mixed up her fighting style, switching between different stances and techniques, testing Astron's ability to respond under pressure.

And at the last training of the first week, Astron had achieved a level of mastery in the [Storm Stance] that left Dakota impressed.

"You've done it, Astron," she said her voice firm. "You've mastered the [Storm Stance]. Your control, your awareness, everything is where it needs to be."

Astron, though breathing heavily from the exertion, nodded.

"But we're not done yet," she added, her tone taking on a more serious edge. "Now that you've mastered the [Storm Stance], it's time to move on to the final and most complex stance in the [Tempest Fang] style—[Cyclone Stance]."

He had heard of the [Cyclone Stance], the pinnacle of the [Tempest Fang] style, where the offensive power of the [Storm Stance] and the fluid precision of the [Gale Stance] were combined into a single technique.

"The [Cyclone Stance] is the culmination of everything you've learned," Dakota explained. "It's a stance that requires perfect harmony between your body, your mana, and your mind. You'll need to blend the explosive power of the [Storm Stance] with the fluid transitions of the [Gale Stance]. It's about overwhelming your opponent with a constant, relentless assault while maintaining complete control."

Dakota's expression became intense as she continued. "This stance is not easy to master. It will push you to your absolute limits, but if you can do it, you'll be twice as strong."

Dakota stepped back, giving him space. "We'll start tomorrow. Rest up tonight, because once we begin, there's no turning back. The [Cyclone Stance] will demand everything you have and more."

Just like that, the second week of training began with an intensity that surpassed anything Astron had experienced before. Dakota wasted no time, diving straight into the intricacies of the [Cyclone Stance]. The training sessions were grueling, but the challenge only fueled Astron's determination to master the final and most complex stance in the [Tempest Fang] style.

The [Cyclone Stance] was a blend of everything Astron had learned—the explosive power of the [Storm Stance] and the fluid, precise movements of the [Gale Stance]. It required perfect harmony between offense and defense, an unyielding flow of energy that never stopped, never faltered.

Dakota began by breaking down the stance into its core components. The [Cyclone Stance] was all about maintaining momentum, using the power of the [Storm Stance] to fuel the fluid transitions of the [Gale Stance]. Each movement flowed seamlessly into the next, creating a continuous barrage of attacks that overwhelmed opponents while leaving no openings.

At first, the training was overwhelming. Even with his newfound mastery of [Judgment Points], Astron struggled to maintain the balance between power and fluidity. The constant shifts in energy required an unprecedented level of control and focus, and any lapse in concentration could disrupt the entire flow of the stance.

But Dakota was relentless. She pushed Astron to his limits, forcing him to adapt, refine his techniques, and perfect his control over mana. The training sessions were brutal, with Dakota sparing no effort in testing Astron's capabilities.



By the end of the second week, Astron's progress was undeniable. The [Cyclone Stance] was no longer an elusive goal but a reality he was beginning to master. His strikes were faster, more precise, and carried a destructive power that left even Dakota impressed.

The training sessions became a dance of power and grace, with Astron moving seamlessly from one strike to the next, his mana flowing effortlessly through his body.

Dakota watched his progress with a mixture of pride and amazement. Each time they sparred, Astron grew more confident and more capable; by the end of the week, Astron could even hold his own against Dakota in their sparring sessions for quite a long time.

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<Twenty-first day of training, 5 A.M>

The turning point came in one of their final sparring sessions of the week. The air was thick with tension as they squared off, both aware that this was a test—a final assessment of everything Astron had learned.

After all, at that moment, both of them had been informed of one simple fact.

Today was Astron's last training.

Dakota launched into the fight with her usual ferocity, her movements a blur of speed and power. But this time, Astron was ready.

And, after what felt like hours, Dakota called a halt to the fight. Both fighters were breathing heavily, their bodies covered in sweat, but there was a look of satisfaction in Dakota's eyes as she studied Astron.

"You've done it," she said, her voice filled with pride. "You've mastered the [Cyclone Stance]. I never thought I'd say this, but you're on par with me now—at least when it comes to the [Tempest Fang]."

He finally graduated from his [Martial Arts] training.

"But don't think this is the end."

At least for the time being.

Chapter 490 111.2 - Two weeks

Of course, while he was training with Dakota and Reina, this was not all he had done. At the end of the 12th day of training, Astron had already finished both Stealth Training and Acrobatics Training.

That was why he was assigned to three different lessons.

With how he needed to train his new weapons, his program had been changed.

His schedule had shifted, and with the arrival of the Everchanging Glyph, the focus of his training was about to expand.

Updated Training Schedule:

5 A.M.: Four hours of one-on-one training with Warden Dakota as her official disciple.9 A.M.: Two-hour break.11 A.M.: Three hours of Weapon Mastery Training(Greatsword, Axe, Spear)2 P.M.: One-hour lunch break.3 P.M.: Training with Reina.7:30 P.M.: Body training session focusing on Everchanging Glyph optimization.

Weapon Mastery Training:

The next phase of Astron's training would focus on weapon mastery. With his Everchanging Glyph, which adapted his body to optimize the use of any weapon, it was essential for him to gain a basic proficiency in a variety of combat styles.

The three-hour period previously dedicated to Stealth and Acrobatics training was now allocated to learning the basics of handling different weapons.

The reason why he had not chosen sword, bow, or dagger was he could already learn them in the academy.

The [Federal Swordplay] was something that was taught in the academy already, and being the most used weapon, the sword was something the academy was putting a lot of importance on.

The same was true with dagger and bow, as from the next semester, the students would be put into a more refined and personalized training schedule.

He would be trained at using bows and daggers, especially as they were already weapons that he had been registered with.

That was why he decided to go with more strength-oriented weapons to challenge himself and his body, as he wanted to squeeze as much training as he could.

### Hour 1: Greatsword Training

The first hour of the new training schedule was dedicated to the Greatsword. Astron found himself facing a large, intimidating blade—a weapon that required strength, control, and precise movement. The instructor, a grizzled veteran of countless battles, was quick to demonstrate the fundamentals.

"This isn't about finesse," the instructor said, his voice rough but steady. "The Greatsword is about power. You've got to be able to control the momentum of the blade and use its weight to your advantage."

Astron took the Greatsword in his hands, feeling the heft of the weapon. It was heavier than anything he had wielded before, but his Everchanging Glyph had already begun to adapt his muscles and tendons, optimizing them for the task. The first few swings were clumsy, but with each pass, he felt his body adjusting, learning how to harness the power of the massive blade.

### Hour 2: Spear Training

The second hour shifted the focus to the Spear. A weapon that required a completely different set of skills—precision, reach, and timing. The instructor, a tall and lean warrior with a hawk-like gaze, emphasized the importance of distance and speed.

"With the Spear, it's all about control and timing," the instructor explained. "You've got the reach, but you need to know how to keep your opponent at bay. It's not just about thrusting; it's about knowing when to strike and when to pull back."

Astron grasped the Spear, feeling the length of the weapon in his hands. His Everchanging Glyph adapted his grip and posture, optimizing his body for long-range strikes and defensive maneuvers. He practiced thrusts, sweeps, and quick retractions, gradually understanding the rhythm of Spear combat.

### Hour 3: Axe Training

The final hour of the training session introduced Astron to the Axe. This weapon required a balance between the raw power of the Greatsword and the precision of the Spear. The instructor, a burly warrior with a scarred face, taught him the fundamentals of Axe combat—how to generate power through rotation and use the weapon's weight to cleave through defenses.

"The Axe is all about commitment," the instructor said, demonstrating a powerful swing. "Once you start a strike, you've got to see it through. It's a weapon for close combat, where every hit counts."

Astron took the Axe, feeling the balance between the heavy head and the shaft. His Everchanging Glyph worked to adjust his muscles and coordination, optimizing his body for the brute force and quick shifts in momentum that Axe combat required. He practiced powerful swings, chops, and quick recoveries, learning how to use the weapon's momentum to his advantage.

By the end of the first day of Weapon Mastery Training, Astron was physically exhausted but mentally energized. The variety of weapons required different techniques and strategies, each one expanding his understanding of combat. Though he was far from mastering these new weapons, the Everchanging Glyph ensured that his body adapted quickly, allowing him to gain a basic proficiency in each.

In the following days, the pattern continued. Astron honed his skills with the Greatsword, Spear, and Axe, each session building on the last. He knew that he wouldn't become a master of these weapons in such a short time, but that wasn't the goal. The purpose was to become versatile, to be able to pick up any weapon and wield it effectively in battle, making him a more adaptable and dangerous fighter.

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Over the next two weeks, Astron's body training regimen intensified, each day carefully planned to push his physical limits and force his Everchanging Glyph to adapt at an accelerated pace. The Training Assistant monitored every aspect of his progress, adjusting the program in real-time to ensure that he was constantly challenged.

#### Day 1-3: Baseline Reinforcement

The first three days focused on reinforcing the initial muscle and bone density improvements. The Training Assistant maintained the intensity of the exercises at a level that would allow Astron's body to solidify the gains from the previous sessions.

**Heavy Ropes:** The resistance was gradually increased, with the Training Assistant encouraging longer sessions to build endurance.

**Weighted Climbing:** The weight of the vest was increased incrementally, forcing Astron to develop greater strength and coordination.

**Compound Exercises:** The weights were increased slightly each day, focusing on perfecting form and enhancing overall power.

**Gravity Room:** The gravitational force was maintained at a high level to continue building bone density and muscle resilience.

**Herbal Baths:** The bath formula was slightly adjusted to enhance muscle recovery and detoxification, allowing Astron to recover faster between sessions.

"Body limits pushed to 130% on Day 3. Bone density increased by 6%, muscle density increased by 5%," the Training Assistant reported.

#### Day 4-7: Introduction of Progressive Overload

The next phase introduced the concept of progressive overload, where the intensity and complexity of the exercises were increased to force adaptation.

**Heavy Ropes:** The ropes were replaced with thicker, heavier versions, demanding more power and endurance from Astron's muscles.

**Weighted Climbing:** The climbing routes were altered to include more challenging holds and overhangs, increasing the difficulty of each ascent.

**Compound Exercises:** The Training Assistant added supersets to the routine, combining exercises like squats and overhead presses to fatigue multiple muscle groups simultaneously.

**Gravity Room:** The gravitational force was increased in intervals, pushing Astron's body to adapt to sudden changes in intensity.

**Herbal Baths:** The duration of the herbal baths was extended to allow for deeper muscle reconstruction, and the formula was enhanced to increase the efficiency of toxin expulsion.

"Body limits pushed to 140% on Day 7. Bone density increased by 8%, muscle density increased by 7%. Mana reserves depleting faster; administering additional high-rank mana potions," the Training Assistant noted.

#### Day 8-10: Complexity and Variation

To prevent plateauing, the training program introduced complexity and variation in the exercises.

**Heavy Ropes:** The Training Assistant introduced timed intervals, where Astron had to perform high-intensity bursts followed by short recovery periods, simulating combat conditions.

**Weighted Climbing:** Dynamic movements were added, requiring Astron to leap between holds and maintain balance under increased weight.

**Compound Exercises:** Unstable surfaces were introduced, such as balance boards, forcing Astron to engage his core and stabilize muscles more effectively.

**Gravity Room:** The gravity fluctuated unpredictably during sessions, forcing Astron to adapt to sudden shifts in weight and balance.

**Herbal Baths:** The baths now included rapid temperature changes, alternating between hot and cold to shock the muscles and promote faster recovery.

"Body limits pushed to 150% on Day 10. Bone density increased by 9%, and muscle density increased by 8%. Increased complexity of movements observed," the Training Assistant reported.

#### Day 11-12: Maximal Effort

The final phase of the two-week training involved maximal effort sessions, where Astron was pushed to the brink of his physical and mental limits.

**Heavy Ropes:** The sessions were extended to near-exhaustion, testing Astron's ability to maintain power output under extreme fatigue.

**Weighted Climbing:** The routes were made nearly vertical, with minimal holds, demanding maximum grip strength and endurance.

**Compound Exercises:** The weights were pushed to the upper limits of Astron's capacity, with forced repetitions and negative reps added to maximize muscle breakdown.

**Gravity Room:** The gravitational force was set to its highest level yet, requiring every ounce of strength Astron had just to move.

**Herbal Baths:** The baths included additional minerals and compounds to promote rapid healing, as the intensity of the training pushed Astron's body to the edge of what it could handle.

"Body limits pushed to 160% on Day 12. Bone density increased by 10%, muscle density increased by 10%. Trainee Astron has adapted to the maximum intensity currently available," the Training Assistant concluded.

#### Day 13-14: Recovery and Consolidation

The final two days were focused on recovery and consolidation, allowing Astron's body to fully adapt and absorb the gains made during the previous sessions.

**Light Ropes:** The heavy ropes were replaced with lighter ones, focusing on technique and fluidity rather than raw power.

Weighted Climbing: The weight was reduced, and the focus was on perfecting form and efficiency.

Compound Exercises: The intensity was dialed back, with an emphasis on stretching, mobility, and injury prevention.

Gravity Room: The gravitational force was returned to normal levels, allowing Astron's body to consolidate the gains made.

Herbal Baths: The baths were now purely for recovery, with a focus on relaxation and reducing muscle soreness.

"Training complete. Final body limits stabilized at 160%. Overall, bone density increased by 40%; muscle density increased by 40%. Trainee Astron's body has fully adapted to the Everchanging Glyph's influence," the Training Assistant concluded.