

NEW EDEN: LIVE TO PLAY, PLAY TO LIVE

Chapter 10 Non-Elemental Magic, Part 2

"First, can you tell me how many elements you know of?" The mage asked Astaroth.

"I can think of six. Earth, Wind, Fire, Water, Light, Darkness." Astaroth answered.

"That is a good start." The old man nodded.

"Can you tell me how many orbs there were for the affinity test I told you to do?" He continued.

Astaroth tried recalling, but he had been in a hurry.

"A dozen maybe?" He answered, uncertain.

"Close, but still off the mark. You'll have to work on your memory if you ever want to become a good mage. It's not all about talent. There is hard work too. And lots of memorization." The mage reprimanded slightly.

"There were fifteen orbs. All of which are associated with an element or energy of this world. From those six you have named correctly." The old man started.

"Fire, water, earth, wind, light, and darkness are all the basic elements that compose the world. But you can also mix some of these, to make less esoteric elements." He continued.

"Mud, for example, uses earth and water elements. Lightning would be another example, combining fire and wind. There is also magma, mist, and

sand, using fire with earth, water with air and fire, and sand, combining earth and wind respectively." The mage lectured.

The old man took a slight break so that Astaroth could internalize the information.

"But master, there are still four elements missing." Astaroth said, after digesting the information.

"Yes." The old man nodded.

He took a moment to ponder. Was the young man ready to know everything?

'Ahh, what does it change, it already attuned to him. Knowledge of these can only be a boon at this point.' He thought.

Astaroth waited patiently. He was nervous now.

The old man was clearly reluctant to share this part, so he could guess the knowledge was heavy with burden. But he wanted to know, especially since the man had still not pointed out what element he had an affinity to.

The old man sighed.

"The next four are not so much elements, as they are energies. Energies that fuel most of the world." He started explaining.

"This is not knowledge fledglings should have before having a good grasp over their own mana and power. But you seem like a sensible young man, and I can see that you have the potential to grow into a force that rivals many high-court mages." The old mage said, finally sitting down in front of Astaroth.

"The first two are energies fueled by the mind, mental power, if you will. The first one is the power to contort perception, the power of illusion. It is mostly available to the Fey race, although some humans can develop it too. One requires a good amount of willpower to resist illusions, even cast by oneself."

"The second is the power to bend thoughts and forge memories, psychic power. This power is a bit more prevalent than the first." He kept going.

"Although still mostly used by Feys, other races can develop it with some training. It is a dangerous power, as it can force people into doing things they wouldn't do normally. Empires have fallen to the whims of just one powerful psychic user."

"Something orders of magnitude stronger fuels the two next energies. The power of the soul. The first one, the one you attuned with, is spiritual energy." He said as he paced back and forth.

"It is the power to sense and interact with spirits. Spirit users start weak but become monstrously strong. It all depends on how many spirits you contract and how much your soul can handle."

"Wait, did you say contract? As in, bond with spirits?" Astaroth interrupted him and asked, befuddled.

The old mage looked at Astaroth disapprovingly for the interruption. He answered his question.

"Yes. I said contract. The reason Spirit users become so strong is that when they can contract an elemental spirit of great power, they can use elemental magic far beyond their elemental affinity. It is like an instant affinity boost to them." He said.

"They can let the spirits merge with them temporarily to upgrade their affinity and become leagues stronger in that element. Do you understand the power nature has gifted you with, young man?" The old mage asked, raising a brow.

Astaroth just sat there, jaw dropped, for a few seconds. Then he closed his mouth and gulped.

This was it! His way of becoming the best! He would finally climb to the top! But the cold shower hit him right after. He still needed to find and bond with powerful spirits.

"I guess there is also a risk to bonding with spirits, then?" He asked, calming down his mind.

"Very much so." The old man said, happy to see the youth understand the stakes.

"The risk is just as high as the reward. Bonding with powerful spirits yields incredible power, but the soul must be equally strong. Failing the bond means dying and having your soul damaged." The old man said.

"If the damage is severe enough, you might even break bonds that are already established and further damage your soul." The old man said, waiting for the reaction.

Astaroth sucked in air. This was a huge gamble.

If he could pull it off, it meant attaining his dream. But failing meant getting further from it and maybe even killing his chances.

"I shall always keep that in mind, Master." Astaroth said, bowing slightly.

The old mage nodded and smiled. This youth wasn't too brash after all.

"Now. The last one. It is magic almost all living things ban and frown upon in this world. It also uses the power of the soul, but it is not of oneself. Demonic magic." The mage said, his mood becoming somber.

"It is magic that uses rituals and souls of innocent people to bind higher forces to the caster's soul. Binding demons, forming contracts with eldritch creatures, and, god forbid, sometimes, contracts with evil gods." The old man said, anger visibly flaring in his eyes.

Astaroth could see the mana around the man become turbulent as waves of rage rolled off of him. The before calm and composed, teacher-like man now looked like a volcano ready to unleash its wrath.

But it didn't last. The old man quickly reined himself in.

'How unsightly of me.' He thought.

He cleared his throat and continued.

"Ahem. Where was I? Ahh, yes. Demonic magic. It is a practice that no one should do, and I have seen destroy entire settlements and kill people by the thousands." He warned.

"Had you exhibited a high attunement to such magic, I would have killed you on the spot!" The old man said, anger still apparent in his eyes.

Astaroth shivered. He had picked up the orb of spiritual magic because it resonated more with him.

But the second highest reaction he got was from a pitch-black orb with a sigil on an eye painted in red on it. He could guess which one that was now. 'I dodged a bullet!' He thought, panting inwardly.

"Have you questions for me, young man?" The old man asked, after letting the poor boy internalize all this information.

"Ahh, yes I do." Astaroth said after snapping out of his thoughts.

"I would like to know what spirits there are. I want to know which ones can strengthen me and how. Do you hold that knowledge, Master?" Astaroth asked expectantly.

"I have a smidge of knowledge regarding spirits. But it is very limited." The man said, smiling slightly.

And so they spent the next few hours discussing how certain spirits empowered specific stats or affinities. Creatures of great strength might leave spirits at death that would boost his strength.

Some wizards would die and leave behind their fragmented souls, which he could contract to boost his intellect. Others were elemental spirits that could boost affinities.

They even spoke of a method that the old man called 'Barbaric', which forced one's soul into submission after death, to temporarily boost his stats by a margin of the soul's highest stat. He had called that ability 'Soul Steal'.

The name was ominous, but it was only a temporary thing. The soul could not be bound against its will indefinitely.

After all this talking, Astaroth had gained a clear view of the path he needed to take. His passion flared and his will steeled.

Now all he needed to do was find a way out of this blasted high-level zone. But how would he achieve that?