

NEW EDEN: LIVE TO PLAY, PLAY TO LIVE

Chapter 7 Mana

Astaroth quickly sat down, excited to learn something that would pull him out of his conundrum. The old man just walked around him for a bit, saying nothing.

"What I'm about to teach you, shouldn't be taught to fledglings like you. It is a higher concept of magic. Most mages first train their mana lobes for years, before getting to learn what I'm about to teach you." He said.

"For your own good, I recommend you never slack on training your mana control. Because the skill I will teach you requires a significant amount of control." The old man said, still walking circles around him.

"What am I gonna learn, sir?" Astaroth asked.

"Mana sensing and gathering. Two concepts that push magic to a higher level. But they are also putting you at risk if not under strict control. In the next hours, if I feel you losing control even once, I will knock you out." The man said, his eyes steely.

"Is it that risky?" Astaroth asked, doubting.

"It's insanely risky at your level. You might die if I don't intervene fast enough. Especially with your small mana capacity." The man said, sternly.

Astaroth gulped. If he died, he would take a massive penalty to his experience points.

Then he remembered he was still very low level. What would happen then?

The game never talked about that. No information could be found about dying at low levels because it wasn't supposed to happen at all. He became tense suddenly.

"Now, close your eyes and focus." The old man said.

"I want you to focus on your mana lobe. Once you can sense it, I want you to sense the mana swirling in it. Get used to that feeling. Get used to that energy coursing through you." The old man added.

"Yes, sir!" Astaroth simply said, closing his eyes.

It took him some time to calm down before he could even sense his mana lobe. He had to focus on his brain like he was trying to see in his head.

After a while, he started feeling a slight pulse coming from inside the center of his brain. Something like waves, slowly washing on shore, in and out.

He focused on that feeling and finally found a small ball-shaped mass of light in his brain.

The old man, noticing his focus increasing, knew he had reached the first part.

"Good, now that you have reached your mana lobe, focus on it. Feel the energy pulsating from it. Try to breathe with the same rhythm. Feel the mana inside you and rotate it slowly in your whole body to get used to the feeling of it. Only a little at a time." The man said, watching over Astaroth like an eagle eyeing its prey.

"Yes, sir." Astaroth simply answered.

He focused on the slow pulse, trying to match his breathing speed to it. After a few minutes, he finally synchronized his breath to the pulse.

More time passed as he tried to stay in this rhythm. Once he was confident in keeping this pace of breathing, he felt the energy.

To his surprise, it felt cool to his senses. Like fresh water on a hot summer day. He circulated it a bit within his mana lobe before trying to course it through the rest of his body.

He messed up the first few tries and felt the mana slip away from him. He needed to be careful, as he only had limited resources here.

He tried a few more times and got it to a full circle in his body after 4 times. He circled it again a few more times, for practice, and then he called out to the old man.

"What now?" He asked.

"Now we expand our scope." He answered.

Astaroth could feel the concentration in his voice. Even without looking at him, he knew the old man was fully focused on him as well.

"You keep channeling your mana inside yourself and coursing it. As you do it, I want you to expand your senses outside your body." The old man explained.

"Do NOT, and I repeat, do NOT under ANY circumstance, stop rotating the mana. If you do that as you expand your senses, you might experience backlash. If you feel your concentration slip, pull back your senses. Don't let go of the channeling. Do you understand me?" The old man said, stressing every word.

"Yes, sir!" Astaroth responded, gulping and focusing to the max.

And so it began. Long hours of channeling and expanding his senses.

Pulling them back at any sign of difficulty. Slowly but surely, Astaroth expanded further out. After about six hours of doing this tiring experience, he had finally reached the cave walls with his senses.

His eyes were closed, and yet, he could see everything in the cave in a kaleidoscope of colors. Every particle of dust. Every piece of loose rock.

All of it contained traces of mana. From that point of view, the old man was like a blazing sun in the middle of the cave.

He could see all the mana contained within him, clear as day. It mildly terrified him, so he looked at the shield artifact instead.

Then he looked at himself. He could see the mana floating around him. He could see the mana inside him, circulating in and out of his mana lobe. As his senses became accustomed to this, he heard a notification.

Ding!

You have developed 'Perfect Mana Sense'

"Master! I think I got the technique. What should I do next?" Astaroth asked excitedly.

"Now you siphon the mana around. Slowly pull it in. Not directly to your mana lobe. Circulate it through your body once before sending it there. It'll make it more compatible. And don't rush it. Just a little at a time!" The old man instructed.

Astaroth did as told. He sucked in a bit, let it rotate twice to be sure, then sent it to his mana lobe. He repeated that action many times until he felt like he was saturated. Two other notifications rang.

Ding!

You have learned passive 'Mana breathing'

Ding!

You have learned active 'Mana Siphon'

"I think my mana is full, sir." Astaroth declared, deciding this was enough. But before he could stop.

"Don't stop taking mana in." The man instructed.

"This time, send it to your body. Send mana to every fiber, every cell, and every atom of your being. Again, just a little at a time. Don't rush it. This is the most dangerous part." He added, fully focused on Astaroth.

Again, Astaroth did as instructed. He kept at it until his body felt like an atom bomb.

He felt energized, like he could split a mountain with one punch. A little after, it started hurting.

His body felt like it was dipped in hot water. Slowly, the pain got worse and worse. At some point, he felt like he was in a bath of lava.

Like his flesh would melt away at any moment.

"Argh! It hurts!" He suddenly yelled in pain.

"Keep going! You're almost there!" The old man encouraged.

"AAARRRGGGHHH!!!!!!" Astaroth yelled again, feeling like he was bursting.

And suddenly.

Kacha!

He heard a sound like chains were bursting. His whole body released all the mana accumulated inside it, and then he hurled.

Blergh

Thick black mucus was getting discharged from his mouth nonstop. It kept going for a few minutes.

The stench coming from the stuff was rancid. As soon as Astaroth stopped throwing up the gunk, the old man burned it with flames. The stench soon disappeared.

Astaroth lay on his back, sweating profusely, breathing roughly as if he had just fought for 2 days straight. And then a notification came.

Ding!

You have accomplished 'Body Cleansing'

"What is body cleansing?" He thought out loud.

"It is the art of purifying the body through mana purge. As your body takes in mana, it also gathers impurities stored in it. It would eventually reduce your mana affinity and control, resulting in smaller mana capacity and weaker magic." The old man explained.

"That is why you must purge it every time you upgrade your mana lobe. Every time you cleanse your body, the mana you accumulate becomes purer, thus resulting in stronger spells and less wasted mana. Do it every time you upgrade your mana lobe." He added.

"Now, if you don't mind, let's get you out of here and cleaned. You reek and you need to go sleep too. It's already well into the night." He added, before turning around and walking towards the tunnel.

The road back upstairs was arduous, as he felt utterly exhausted. Astaroth didn't even ask for any more tips or lessons. He just walked straight back to his alcove, stopping only shortly on the way, to have a dip in the river.

Once he got to his alcove, he just laid down on the cot and stared at the ceiling. He looked at his status window again.

Status:

Name: Astaroth

Race: Ash Elf

Level: 3 (30/60)

Stats:

HP: 80/80 MP: 180/180 Stamina: 100

Mana Regen: 1/second in combat, 5/second out of combat

Strength: 3 Agility: 3 Constitution: 3

Intelligence: 3 Wisdom: 3

Attack Power Str: 15 Attack Power Agi: 15 Magic Attack Power: 15 Healing Power: 15

Luck: 0 (Stat unaffected by Level up and free points)

Available stat points: 2

Available skill points: 2

Physical Condition: Normal

Mental Condition: Normal

Equipped gear:

Beginner clothes

Next, he checked out every skill description.

Passives:

Mana Lobe Lvl1: Your mana lobe is freshly created and can store a small amount of mana. +100 mana capacity.

Mana Control Lvl2: You have grasped the fundamentals of mana control. Keep practicing. 4% mana cost reduction.

Perfect Mana Sense: You have an immaculate ability to sense mana. It's like you were born to do this. Can toggle actively to notice mana flows.

Mana Breathing Lvl1: You have learned how to absorb mana through breathing. Mana regen 1/second in combat, 5/per second out of combat.

Body Cleansing Lvl1: You have done your first body cleansing mana purge. Mana flows more easily into you and it is purer. Mana capacity +50, Spell power +10%, HP +50.

Actives:

Propel: Launch an item in your hand or nearby with a strong wind controlled by mana. Base mana cost: 10 (Scales with the weight of the thrown object)

Ignite: Use your mana to ignite a flammable surface for 30 seconds. Base mana cost: 10 (Scales depending on material)

Mana Siphon: You can turbo charge your mana breathing to one breath, to restore a large amount of mana (25%). Side effect: nausea.

Looking at all that, he smiled. Even though he was sure that he was behind every other player on leveling, he knew he had a solid foundation from which to grow.

Astaroth was sure he could make up for the tardiness, eventually.

So he turned to his side and closed his eyes. Tomorrow was a big day for him, too.

He had to learn the way of the blade. He logged off and ate. Alexandre then took a shower just to stay clean, and rested for a few hours, before logging back in.