

The Storm King

#Chapter 11: Mana Glyph - Read The Storm King Chapter 11: Mana Glyph

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Leon spent the next week resting. He did train a bit, but Artorias mostly insisted on it as a way to keep Leon active and limber.

Leon's training mostly consisted of getting used to his new strength. With his newly adapted muscles, he was now far stronger than he was before the ritual. He estimated that he had more than doubled the amount of weight he could carry, and he wasn't even finished recovering yet.

But this light exercise wasn't the only thing Leon focused on. There were his meditations, lessons with Artorias on runes and enchantments, and he finally got around to skinning that stag the two of them had been ignoring.

He left the meat in the food shack but hung up the fur in the shack next door. The next time they were to trade furs with the tribesman was coming up; it had originally been planned for not long after the ritual, but Leon needed more time to recover than Artorias had initially thought. So, the journey was postponed, and Leon spent a good twelve to thirteen hours a day sleeping or meditating, to fill his soul realm with as much magic as he could.

After filling it up with magic, he would then pull it out and allow it to course through his body, through his extremities, and back out into the world. This process of filling up and then draining his soul realm was critical, said Artorias, so Leon could get used to the feeling of being drained as well as full of power. Most other mages wouldn't need to get used to it, as such dramatic increases in power were so rare.

This also counted as a form of training, as Leon was getting faster at filling his soul realm than before. He was learning to consciously prevent magic from being fused with his blood into mana, and instead channel it into his soul realm. He was also getting faster at calling upon that power, fusing it into his blood as fast as he could.

The following week, Leon went back to weapons training. Leon had been learning from Artorias for over a decade now, and there was little Artorias had left to teach, so the training was mostly just sparring so the two of them wouldn't let their skills get rusty. But there was another reason, to fix a problem that the hunt had made Artorias keenly aware of.

When Leon was about to shoot the snow lion, it had sensed his killing intent. No real mage would ever allow their killing aura to be so obvious, but Artorias had realized then that he had never taught his son how to restrain it properly. If he had, Leon might have succeeded in killing the lion with that first shot and would not have been left severely injured after the lion's counterattack.

But, this was easier said than done. Killing intent is exactly what it sounds like, just the intent and willingness to kill. However, for mages, this intent can manifest as an aura, and be extremely overwhelming to the unprepared. Unfortunately, if the mage's opponent is prepared, far stronger, or possesses a more potent killing intent, then the mage's own killing intent will be far less effective.

Artorias had raised Leon in a dangerous environment, where they had to hunt and kill to survive, all to instill in his son a powerful killing intent. But, he had neglected to teach Leon exactly how to control it and unleash it only at the best possible moment. This mostly comes down to keeping a tight hold over the magic that courses through the body and preventing it from leaking out.

Keeping a lid on killing intent isn't too difficult, even first-tier mages are taught how, but it still isn't a skill that is learned in a day. Artorias showed Leon a few techniques and exercises to help him restrain his killing intent, and moved on, trusting his son to practice and improve on his own.

Artorias also tested Leon's knowledge of runes and the glyphs they form when arranged in magical formations. Upon seeing Leon's results, he knew that his son was ready to start thinking about his own Mana Glyph.

A Mana Glyph is something that a mage creates after they reach the fifth-tier. Before then, a mage can only use magic by relying on enchantments or written spells. After reaching the fifth-tier, they are strong enough to use their magic without specific enchantments or spells, although those still have a place in any mage's arsenal.

Every mage has their own Mana Glyph. They create it themselves, and it ends up inscribed at the very center of their mind palace. It is a mark that comes to represent the mage and their impact on the world. If inscribed on a weapon, it can help the weapon become more in sync with the mage, strengthening its enchantments. If a mage grows strong enough, then their Mana Glyph can even exert pressure down on someone nearby or allow the mage to control spells and enchantments remotely.

A mage can use another's Mana Glyph if they acquire something inscribed with it and they are at least of the third-tier, allowing them to tap into some of the other mage's power. High nobles who are strong enough will often give their third and fourth-tier family members weapons and spells with their Mana Glyph upon them to allow them to use magic without enchantments.

The uses of a Mana Glyph are many, given that they represent their mage, and are typically only limited by the mage's imagination.

A mage needs to be at least of the fifth-tier to write their Mana Glyph, but those with inherited bloodlines are exceptions to that rule, as they so often are. The rules of magic for humans often don't quite apply to descendants of ascended beasts, as they are not entirely human themselves.

An ordinary mage creates their Mana Glyph to start work on their mind palace. A mage with an inherited bloodline can make their Glyph as soon as their blood awakens, though they still can't begin work on their mind palace until the fifth-tier.

Leon was still too weak to use a Mana Glyph in battle, even if he did make his own, but Artorias still wanted the former to start thinking about what he wanted the Glyph to be.

Mana Glyphs were usually runic symbols arranged into large circles, but could even be self-made symbols, and they often said quite a bit about the mage who made it.

For example, Artorias' Glyph was the end of a long story about a mortal who sought eternal youth. He journeyed all across the world, seeking the greatest mages and wise men, consulting the most renowned sages, and the most isolated hermits. Eventually, he found what he sought; a golden apple said to bestow eternal life upon the one who ate it. The mortal raised the apple to his lips, only to have it stolen from his hand by an eagle just as he was about to take a bite.

Artorias loved that story, as it reminded him that sometimes, no matter how certain your victory might be, it can always be taken from you at any time, so one should always prepare for every eventuality.

Life in the compound went on like normal for several more weeks before the two started to prepare to travel out of the Forest of Black and White, and head for the neighboring vale. They intended to trade their furs for more food and a few items Artorias wanted.

Leon spent these few weeks' meditations thinking about his Mana Glyph, though he hadn't a clue as to what it should be. Artorias told him to take his time, as it would accompany him throughout his entire life.

Neither of them had any idea that very soon, their relatively peaceful lives would come to an end.

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The palace in the capital city of the Bull Kingdom had always impressed Roland Magnus. From its shining towers of white stone to its marble halls filled with gold and silver, he never failed to marvel at the great estate.

He smiled as he crossed the long bridge across the lake towards the palace. It had taken no small amount of time and effort, but he had finally managed to be appointed as the sixth paladin of the Kingdom. Typically, paladins weren't appointed unless they achieved the seventh-tier of magic, but he was only a sixth-tier mage. Roland was only in his late twenties, so Prince August, who had arranged for his appointment, was able to use his great potential as justification.

Roland had been summoned by Prince August and was now on his way to meet him. This was to be his first mission as a paladin, and he was determined to live up to his new rank.

He calmly rode his horse up to the gate, while the guards there watched his approach. Roland was dressed in white formal wear, a short-sleeved silk shirt that was covered in silver runes, and cloth pants tucked into his dress shoes. His dark brown hair was cropped short, and his face was closely shorn. But all the guards saw was the sash across his chest, deep red with the golden paladin sigil, and his sword, a long blade in an ornate silver sheath.

The guard captain made a gesture, and the large iron gate began to move. It took a while for it to open, and a bit more time to lower the wards and defensive enchantments for Roland to enter, but he finally rode his steed past the six-foot-thick doors and into the royal estate. Behind the walls lay dozens of acres of forest and riding grounds. These were there for the pleasure of the king and his family, though they were devoid of human life at the moment.

Roland still felt pride as he rode along the royal road towards the guest stables. Here, even the road was worthy of being noticed. A pair of brilliant earth and fire mages had designed most of the roads in the royal capital, laying down bricks of enchanted stone, and melting them down until the seams disappeared. The road was smooth and without flaw, flanked by large trees, marble statues, and ivory archways carved into depictions of great victories by the kingdom's legions.

Roland arrived at the stable and gave them his steed. They led the horse into its designated building about a hundred feet away, and Roland began walking towards the main palace.

The palace complex was actually over a dozen different buildings, from the opulent royal apartments to the more humble guest house and the secluded royal harem, it sprawled out over the island in the middle of the lake.

Roland walked for several minutes before arriving at the main palace complex, an enormous building containing the throne room, the Assembly rooms, three courtrooms, innumerable offices, and a number of waiting rooms for visitors.

Roland walked through the large archway of polished granite and stepped into the courtyard. The floor was shiny black and white marble, with a fountain built around a

large statue. The painted statue depicted a charging bull, the very same Sacred Bull that had reached the eighth-tier of magic and transformed its shape into that of a human, the progenitor of the kingdom's royal family.

The paladin walked past this fountain, and into the palace itself. The building was made of perfectly uniform white stones with a roof of red ceramic tiles. It looked like a large villa, with little defensive value, but Roland could feel the magic flowing through the walls. It would take an incredible amount of power to even scratch the surface of those white stones.

The guards at the entrance recognized him, and let him through. There, an adjutant to the fourth prince saw him and led him to Prince August's office. Upon arrival, Roland was immediately led into a richly decorated room with red carpets and walls lined with filled bookshelves.

Behind a large desk of dark oak sat the young prince. He wasn't conventionally handsome; a young man barely twenty with a thin body and scholarly disposition, but he carried with him a dignity that only came from royalty. His pale face looked fresh and energetic, but the slight bags under his dark brown eyes betrayed his fatigue. He absentmindedly brushed his long dirty-blond hair away from his eyes while he finished reading the document in front of him.

A few seconds after he heard the door close, the prince looked up from his paperwork and smiled when he saw his guest. He rose from his desk, and after Roland made a respectful bow, he went over and embraced his friend. "Roland! It's good to see you, my friend! How has the capital been treating you?"

"Good, Your Highness. My family has settled in well, and are enjoying the warmer climate, to be sure."

"Wonderful. If they need anything, you only need to ask, and I'll have it taken care of."

"Your Highness is too kind. We want for nothing after you made me a paladin."

"Good, good. Can I get you anything?" The prince gestured at a servant in the corner who stepped forward, waiting for Roland's response.

Roland looked at the servant, and merely said, "Some water will do."

"Are you sure, we may be here a while." said the Prince.

"I'm sure, Your Highness."

"Well, I won't be so reserved. Bring me some apple soda and some of those orange crackers. The ones made of baked cheese."

Roland didn't say a word, but he gave his royal friend an odd look.

"What? They're delicious!" said the prince defensively. Roland forced himself to stifle a chuckle.

The servant bowed with a slight smile and left.

"Come now, my friend, have a seat." August and Roland took a seat in fancy mahogany chairs covered in red velvet, with a small table in between and a fireplace in front of them. They made more small talk while waiting for the servant to return. When he did, the prince dismissed him after placing a tray with what they ordered on the table.

"Now then, let's get to business."

Roland listened intently, ready to perform his duty.

"I need you to assemble a team of knights and their retainers, go north past the Frozen Mountains, and into the Northern Vales."