

Last System 256

Chapter 256 - Sway Of The Flames

If someone were to ask me how it felt to control my energy, I would be hardpressed to come up with an answer.

Even after everything that I came through, I still couldn't truly grasp the feeling of the mana itself.

Sure, I knew how to use it or how to calculate formations for it. Yet, no matter how hard I trained, it was still a foreign feeling, not something that I truly adopted.

But right now, when I recklessly pumped my own mana into the fires that I was supposed to quell...

For the first time in my life, I could truly feel the flow of my energy.

The fires around me exploded.

It was no wonder. I pumped them full of my fresh energy, after all. As a result, the blaze covered my entire body.

Right now, it was only a matter of time before I would burn alive, molten down by the very fires I helped to create.

'HOLD IT,' a single thought appeared in my mind.

A simple idea. Of not giving up. Something that often would be bloated up to some unnecessary heroics.

Give up, and you will die. Fight on, and you might survive.

Sure, the second option might be more tiring and challenging... but if one wouldn't fight for the survival of themselves, what would they ever fight for?

And then, just as my face was about to set on fire, the torture stopped.

The fires that so readily burned down my robes, the outer layer of the skin, and all the hair on it... They all suddenly turned calm.

For but a short moment, the wilderness of the blaze's energy that I couldn't control stabilized. The peaks receded, the gaps filled, turning the fire into a uniform medley of energy that I could freely access.

'Wait, was I right?' I thought, surprised to the end of it.

There was a discernable difference between expecting a result and actually experiencing it.

Sure, everything went exactly as I hoped it would; the results exceeded my wildest expectations. But I still needed a moment to process it when it happened.

This calm form of true energy appeared for but an instant. But it was just long enough for me to latch on and suck like a teenager on his cute girlfriend's tit.

An immense wave of mana washed through my body, filling me with more than enough energy to keep beating the fires into submission.

The image from before returned.

And what started as a singular explosion of immense power now turned into a constant torrent, overflowing my body with energy.

'How the hell is this possible?' Ackhart thought, his eyes locked on the shape of Arthur's back.

His hands were trembling with excitement as he watched the wrestle of his master and the flames.

Being the ascender himself, he could see what the young man was trying to do. It was different from the usual but still struck the same tones of the technique that he was a practitioner himself.

"What the hell is going on?" Andrea whispered by Ackhart's side.

She simply stared down at the display of Arthur's seeming madness, unable to comprehend the true nature of the events.

Despite being the highest rank within the auction hall, Andrea didn't boast high cultivation herself. Being just an adolescent enlightened, she didn't reach the level where she could perceive the detail of what was happening.

But hardly anyone could blame the woman.

Before her eyes, Arthur's body started to move.

He would swing around his axis, allowing his hands to slowly sway on the movements of the fire. Wherever the blaze would peak, Arthur's hands would follow in a graceful, slow dance.

"Is he following the rhythm of the fires?" Andrea muttered, proving that being stuck at the enlightened level didn't stop her from being aware of the intricacies of the stages above that.

Even if she could not sense the things she needed to do it herself, she still knew of such technique.

"But isn't elemental sway reserved for Ascenders?" Andrea whispered, turning her face to Ackhart's profile. Then, her face whitened. "Don't tell me he reached..."

"No," Ackhart decisively shook his head, moving his eyes to keep them locked on Arthur's every move. A long wrinkle appeared on his forehead. "There is no way he reached that stage so soon," he claimed.

Then, the wrinkle on his forehead deepened as he stared deeper into Arthur's dance.

His eyes widened.

"He isn't following the sway of fire," Ackhart whispered, refusing to look away even for the shortest of moments. "He is leading it instead!"

"This is definitely weird," I muttered to myself. I only allowed myself to voice my thoughts because I was fairly certain the rage of the fire would block others from hearing my words.

My body danced all on its own.

Prompted by the movements of the fire, it somehow managed to follow its sway. And because of this connection between the moves of the fire and my very flesh, absorbing its energy turned out insanely easy.

My moves, albeit slow, were wide. My legs led me deeper into the flame. Instead of escaping from this scalding inferno, I plunged deeper into it, eager to absorb it all.

A sudden bout of pain refreshed my mind a little, throwing me off my daze.

The skin on my face cracked apart, creating a long, open wound running all the way from the left side of my forehead, through the middle of my face, and towards the right corner of my mouth.

No blood oozed out of this fresh wound. It was a wound that I couldn't see myself, but one that I could perfectly feel.

'Huh?' I shrugged, surprised by the sudden injury. 'Did something fly by and cut my face open?' I thought, unable to figure out what had just happened.

And then I realized what was wrong.

It wasn't that people below the ascender's rank couldn't handle elements at all.

The burden of doing so was simply so great, only those of that specific cultivation stage or above could handle it!

'Should I deploy my wardens?' An idea skimmed through my brain.

Right now, my greatest problem lay in my body, corroding under the pressure of all the magic that I was consuming. And the easiest way I could think of to ease that burden was by sharing it with my extensive network of supports.

'No, I can't,' I thought moments later, gritting my teeth as another wound opened up, this time along the side of my left arm.

I didn't need to encourage myself.

What started as my attempt at quelling the fires was now something far more important.

I was absorbing the energy at a rate that had never happened to me before. A simple fire gave my body more energy than an entire pile of monster cores squeezed into an advanced formation.

'That makes me want to create a fire-absorbing formation,' I thought, trying to alleviate my pain by thinking about something entirely else.

Instead of suffering through the torture of my body corroding, I immersed myself in the psychological reward of growing at an insane pace.

'Now that ascenders and royals are on the scene, I'm way too weak,' I thought, holding on to my determination despite new and new wounds opening all over my body.

For every bit of energy that I infused into fires to control them, a powerful surge of energy would enter my system in return. And each of those surges carried a small amount of energy that I didn't manage to control.

And it were those wild strands of mana that corrupted my flesh from inside-out, putting a hefty cost for every second of this mad growth of mine.

'I wonder how much I have advanced already,' I thought, suddenly prompted by curiosity to open up my system.

And in a single instant, I forgot about all the pain and suffering that I was going through.

Mature Enlightenment (269 458 673 215/300 000 000 000)

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Enlightenment: 69 458 673 215/100 000 000 000

Potential: 100 000 000 000/100 000 000 000

Drive: 100 000 000 000/100 000 000 000

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The gap that I believed would take me months, if not years, to bridge turned out to only take a single leap. Yet, despite the flow of energy constantly filling my body, the progress of my enlightenment remained stuck in place, frozen by some condition.

'Huh?' I shrugged in surprise, my mind too shocked to even notice the pain anymore.

But that didn't mean the corrosion stopped. Rather than that, new wounds continued to open all over my body. I was quickly reaching the point where I would simply bleed out the second that whatever held my blood from flowing out would disappear.

'I don't really have the choice, huh?' I thought, ready to go for the breakthrough in order to save my very life.

And then it clicked.

My prolonged effort of reaching out and controlling the flame finally paid off.

Even though the entire wing of the auction hall continued to burn, all of those flames were now under my control.

And so I stopped my dance, freezing in place in a pretty weird position.

I had my hands raised above my head while my left knee was halfway to a kneel.

The fires froze, turning from the guide that led my moves to an obedient slave that followed them instead.

I leaned my body forward, allowing my hands to paint a wide arc as they angled towards the ground.

And then, I bent both of my knees, making my body plummet down.

The second my hands struck the ground, I took a deep, slow breath.

'Hold it,' I ordered myself, ready for what was about to happen.