Wanderer 101

Chapter 101: Whirlpool of Four Streams

Percy dropped the marble in the jar with the others, before pausing for a second to catch his breath.

Then, he pushed the soul mana he'd just recovered through the ethereal cord, sending it to his wasp clone to do whatever he wanted with it. As for the pure mana, he gathered some between his palms, forming another sphere in preparation for the next crystal.

'Just one more before cleansing time.'

This was his routine now. Percy started his days by drinking two doses of Aurora Dew – one for each core, before spending all morning condensing crystals. He could even keep Synchronization active for about half the time already!

Twenty minutes later, Percy added another marble to the pile, before deactivating Circulation, relieving his body of the excess mana. Sealing the jar, he carefully placed it inside a leather pouch along with the rest of his alchemy tools. Only then did he dare open the curtain.

'Finally! Sunlight!'

Opening the window too, he stood in front of it for a minute, inhaling as much fresh air as he could, basking in the warmth. If it was up to him, he'd stay there longer. Unfortunately, he had other things to do. For one, it was already a couple hours past noon, and he was positively famished. Walking to the kitchen, he scanned the interior of his preservation box, ultimately settling on an apple. He was about to close it, though he hesitated. In the end, he grabbed a banana too.

After devouring his snacks quickly – every second mattered – he begrudgingly closed the window and curtain again, picking two more vials of Aurora Dew from a cupboard. It was time for the second set of elixirs already.

'Man, why does everything I do have to involve some big secret?!'

Perhaps it was ungrateful of him to complain. Most people would kill for the opportunities afforded to him by his bloodline. All things considered, shutting himself inside a room for part of the day sounded like a small price to pay…

In the end, he shrugged, before biting both corks at once. Spitting them out, he drank the elixirs one after the other!

‘Now for the tricky part...’

Pulling mana from both cores, he split each stream into two, before sending them to his stomach. The ones made of pure mana passed horizontally by the front and back regions. They flowed in opposite directions, causing the contents of his stomach to churn, forming a miniature whirlpool inside his belly!

As for the other two streams – the ones made of soul mana – they flowed along the left and right sides of his stomach. They merely phased through without causing any physical changes. However, the brief contact was enough to blend with the augmented beast mana released by the Aurora Dew.

Finally, all four streams ended back at their respective cores, purifying both organs simultaneously!

‘Let’s aim for 90% this time.’

Naturally, Percy wasn’t the one who’d invented this technique. The Moirai books had mentioned more than just the affinity fusion. After all, they contained the distilled knowledge of an entire culture of people who’d spent eons learning to live with two cores. Suffice to say, they’d had plenty of time to come up with a couple nifty tricks!

This one was called the Whirlpool of Two Streams.

‘A little on the nose, but I suppose it did suffer two rounds of translation…’

As its name implied, it allowed one to purify both cores simultaneously, saving time. It worked by using two opposing flows of mana – one from each core – which then induced a rotation inside the stomach, spreading the beast mana uniformly. It sounded simple, but that couldn’t be further from the truth.

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Core purification was a delicate process, and there was a reason mages carefully measured how much elixir they consumed per day. Going over that, they risked damaging their cores more than they should, while using less meant slowing down their advancement speed.

What made this technique so profound was that it allowed the user to play around with the intensity of the flows, controlling how much beast mana reached each core. From there, it was all about manually balancing the two, so they got cleansed at the same rate.

'If only I could use the technique in its original form, I would have mastered it already…'

Sadly, Percy's affinity had forced him to modify it. The soul mana was incorporeal, rendering it unable to physically affect the contents of his stomach. That meant he needed two streams of pure mana to properly form the whirlpool. Consequently, he had to split the soul mana too, otherwise his pure core would end up drawing more beast mana.

'Oh well… I guess Whirlpool of Four Streams sounds catchier anyway. I'll patent it if I ever end up on the Moirais' world.'

Then again, they must've had plenty of people with the soul affinity in the past. Percy was probably just reinventing the wheel. In any case, the elixir was soon exhausted. Examining his cores, Percy realized he was off by a little again. His soul core burned slightly more than it was supposed to, which meant he'd have to skip the next purification session. As for the one in his abdomen, it had only benefited from around 85% of the substance.

Percy clicked his tongue. Ever since he began practicing the technique, he'd experienced quite a few losses. Every wasted drop of Aurora Dew was like a dagger in his heart – especially since he knew exactly how valuable it was. And judging by the rate at which he improved, it would be a few more weeks until he perfected the art.

'But it can't be helped. It'll pay dividends in the long-term.'

Though he'd mastered cleansing his cores while doing other things, it was no longer enough. After all, he now had to drink six doses per day, which added up to about three hours if taken separately. Granted, he could do it while brewing, but the distraction affected his yield. Consequently, learning to cut the time in half was a no brainer.

'Besides, my next promotion should be like fifteen years away. Losing a few weeks isn't the end of the world…'

Shaking his head, he opened a different cupboard, grabbing a few dozen vials filled with the regular elixir. Stuffing them in his satchel, he slung it over his shoulder before hurrying out.

Percy still had some more crystals to condense in the evening, but he'd arranged for his brewing sessions to go in-between. That way, he'd be able to recover his stamina, allowing him to use Synchronization again later.

In any case, his walk to Orin's place was the perfect opportunity to take in some more fresh air, and to catch up with his clone.

'What's the situation there? Any closer to the nest?'

The clone had spent some time exploring the Spire, though he'd never managed to delve too deep before getting kicked out by the queen. While Percy had thought it was worth mapping out the interior of the structure at first, he was beginning to reevaluate the usefulness of the clone.

'Nope. Just more of the same. I think there's no point keeping me around.'

Percy nodded. They'd already discussed this. Next time he was on a break, he'd work with the clone on drawing a map of the outer layers of the colony. Not that it would be particularly helpful, but it felt like a waste to not even document his progress. After that, they'd destroy the wasp and resume sending regular clones for a while.

'I'll try again with a stronger bug at some point.'

Naturally, he hadn't given up on the project entirely, but it was proving even more challenging than expected. A Starry Soldier might move faster and withstand more mental pressure from the queen. He didn't know if it would be enough to reach the nest, but there should be an improvement.

Reaching Orin's lab, Percy set his plans aside, clearing his mind of anything unrelated to alchemy. Over the rest of the afternoon, he processed the most recent batch of crystals into Aurora Dew, before bidding his mentor farewell.

'I need to be back home in about twenty minutes…'

He only met up with Nesha once a week to hand her the merchandise, but today happened to be the day. In any case, he had enough time to stop by Freddy's. Only after he was done getting his daily fix of socialization did he return to his place. There, he found Nesha standing outside, a grimace marring her face.

"You realize every minute I spend here, people might figure we're up to something, right?"

Percy rolled his eyes before letting her inside.

"It's not my fault. You're early." he replied in a nonchalant tone, keeping up the appearance of the aloof badass that he was.

At least until Nesha's next words caused him to deflate.

"You've got honey on your cheeks."

The girl left as soon as he handed her the elixirs, letting him return to his routine. He started by drinking another dose of Aurora Dew for his second core, before activating Synchronization. Only then did he resume condensing crystals, keeping at it until around midnight. At that point, he decided to call it a day, taking a quick shower before going to bed.

He'd be lying if he said he wasn't tired. Working for eighteen hours a day was brutal, but he always focused on the next milestone to keep himself going. Right now, that was Micky's second core.

‘And it’s getting close… I wonder what affinity he’ll get…’