Wanderer 52

Chapter 52: Time management

Percy woke up feeling… alright.

He stretched out on his bed, before glancing around the dimly lit room. Just enough sunlight seeped through the curtain to cast soft shadows on the walls. Percy wasn't exactly fully rested, and he'd gladly sleep for another hour if it were an option. As the shopkeeper had said, the effect of the rejuvenation potion was rather modest.

'Still impressive though…'

All things considered, Percy had barely slept four hours, yet he was less tired than the previous mornings. His soreness remained, but it was muted. Pulling some mana from his abdomen also revealed that his channels had somewhat recovered – at least they didn't burn as much. Percy was tempted to keep buying the brown potions if only to improve his quality of life. Not feeling like crap had to count for something.

'No, let's make sure it gets me some tangible results first.' he decided, getting up.

Tossing his robe on, he opened his house's preservation box, taking a bottle of milk out. Next, he hurriedly drank two mouthfuls before rushing out of his house with a loaf of bread held by his teeth, eager to begin hunting. If he managed 30 kills today, he'd absolutely use that as an excuse to justify buying the potions. Half an hour later, Micky tilted his head upon seeing him, clearly noticing he was in a good mood.

CAW?

Percy chuckled, feeling a rare lightness in his steps. Even the colourful motes slowly falling on the mushroom looked prettier than usual.

'It's a secret.' he smirked, acting all mysterious.

CAW! CAW!

The familiar pecked him a few times.

“Ah-Ouch! Fuck! Ok! It’s a thing that made me sleep better!” Percy broke rather easily, rubbing his arm. That only seemed to pour oil in the fire, however.

CAW!! CRAAAA!!! CAW!!!

Percy shielded his face with his elbows, curling on the ground to cover as much of his body as possible.

‘Why are you even complaining?! I’m the one who has Circulation active all day!’

CAW!

Micky sent him the memory of being woken up in the middle of the night.

‘Fine! If they prove useful, I’ll CONSIDER buying you some too.’

Only then did the bird stop torturing him, a satisfied glint in its eye.

‘You extortionist… Have you at least found any wasps on the way here?’ he exhaled in defeat.

Micky remained silent, only sending him a few images of Starry Workers on some nearby mushrooms. Nodding, Percy took a deep breath, and then another… Next, he sprinted towards their first target for the day as the cyan lines shone under his skin.

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‘CAW! CAW!’ Micky reminded him of his promise as he crossed the final bridge connecting the second level to the Spire’s base.

‘Alright, a deal’s a deal. I’ll bring you one tomorrow.’ the young man replied.

His steps were uneven, as were his breaths. However, a shit-eating grin was plastered all over his face, despite the exhaustion. Today, they had managed to harvest 31 glands, proving the efficacy of the rejuvenation potion!

Well, ok. Perhaps part of it was just luck, another part a placebo. Still, Percy was quite certain his recent purchase had contributed to some extent. After all, once the mana began burning his channels and Circulation started feeling heavier, he was able to push through, keeping the technique active until the end. He doubted he had achieved this through sheer willpower.

Overall, he was satisfied. Not only with the potion but also his improvements since joining the Guild. He and Micky had started with a laughable 14 kills on their first day, yet they had more than doubled that number since.

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His only regret was that there didn’t seem to be any room for further improvement. At least not on the second floor. And he wasn’t confident in risking their lives or their secrets on the third one. This meant he had to make do with 465 contribution points per hunt for the foreseeable future, assuming he could keep this up.

‘It’s enough for one core, even if I account for three days of downtime per month.’

Of course, it was possible one of his clones might need longer but, in that case, he’d just have to accept the loss and hope he got something worthwhile in return. More importantly, this would also leave him enough change for two potions per day. One of those had to be his daily dose of the rejuvenation potion – it was already indispensable in his mind.

The second slot placed him in a bit of a dilemma though. On one hand, he wanted to get brown potions for Micky, to compensate the crow for helping him recover soul mana. He needed his help both to use

the diluted elixirs with his first core, but also to begin clearing the corresponding set of channels. On the other, he had to start reading up on alchemy. Saving 1000 points for each lecture was out of the question, so his only option was to hit the library and hope the enlightenment potions helped.

And there was another problem.

'Why can't there be more than 24 hours in a day?' Percy felt like tearing his hair out.

His hunting trips already lasted 18 hours – of which one was spent just travelling to and from the mushrooms. He couldn't cut the time down, else his income would also drop. Of the remaining six hours, one was spent at home drinking elixirs. His other activities – such as socializing with Freddy or exchanging his points – only ate into his sleep. Suffice to say, he couldn't reduce that any further either.

'The only way is to learn how to use the elixirs while walking.'

It might take some practice, but it would save him an hour per day. He could spend that either in the library or at home unblocking his channels.

'Let's alternate between the two. I'll do the same with the potions.'

Having settled on a plan, Percy entered the settlement, stopping by Freddy's for a few minutes. Next, he went to the official shops, this time buying his elixir from the other one. He also got two doses of the rejuvenation potion, one for himself and one to hand to his familiar tomorrow. Only then did he head home, taking a shower and downing one of the new potions before going to bed. He didn't drink any elixirs today, as he had to adjust the time he took them.

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Percy got up, feeling even better than yesterday. Evidently, an extra hour of sleep got him even more value out of the potion. After dressing and eating a tomato – no time for a salad – he ran out of his house, taking two doses of elixir with him – a regular and a diluted one. However, he didn't drink them just yet.

His plan was to take the diluted dose in the afternoon, on the way back. At that point, his body and core would be full of soul mana, right after the hunt ended. This meant he had to cleanse his pure core in the morning, but he couldn't do that in plain sight. People might notice the mana circulating in his abdomen. Consequently, he waited until he reached the second level to finally swallow the expensive elixir.

'It's tougher than I thought.' he groaned.

Cleansing one's core required a lot of focus and it was his first time trying it on the move. Making a mistake wasn't necessarily dangerous, but it could easily waste some of the elixir's efficacy.

'At least the Starry Workers don't attack unprovoked.'

He didn't know if it was different on the upper floors, but he didn't have to worry about them bothering him right now. By the time he met up with Micky, the elixir in his stomach had been used up. Percy estimated he'd wasted about 20%, which wasn't ideal. He sure hoped he'd get better at this soon.

'It can't be helped. It's a useful skill to have anyway.'

Most experienced mages learned this at some point. People like baldy couldn't afford to waste half an hour sitting still every day.

'Come to think of it… Can't I also unblock my channels on the move?'

It would be impossible to do that during a fight, but most of his time was spent travelling atop the giant fungi. In fact, whenever they finished a batch of wasps, Micky provided him with a ton of mana, so his current difficulty in regenerating it by himself wouldn't be an issue. Of course, he needed the soul mana to recover, but it wouldn't be lost when he unblocked a channel. It would still be in his body, available to be used later.

'Doing that while having Circulation active is going to be such a chore though.' he grimaced.

Like this, Percy would essentially be using every second productively.

Waking up. Travelling to the Fungal Spire while cleansing his second core. Killing a batch of wasps. Clearing his channels while moving to the next batch. Repeating the last two steps for the whole day. Returning to the Guild while cleansing his first core. Exchanging his points and buying potions and elixirs. Spending an hour in the library. Sleeping.

His routine would only change slightly once a month when he sent out a new clone. At that point, he'd have to take a break from hunting, but it would also be his best chance to put more time into studying, so he wasn't going to waste it.

He frowned.

Strictly speaking, this was arguably torture. However, if he stuck to it, he'd be making rapid progress towards multiple goals. Whenever he reached one of them, he'd be able to relax somewhat.

Eventually, using the elixirs while walking would become effortless. Also, after mastering Circulation with his second core, he wouldn't have to worry about it either. Plus, he could reconsider hunting on the third level at that point.

And these were just the short-term milestones. One of his clones was bound to stumble upon something interesting sooner or later. Not to mention that once he became an alchemist, he might be able to stop hunting entirely. And even if everything else failed, his second core should advance to Orange in a little over three years too. Although he sure hoped another of his projects would bear fruit before then.

Percy grinned.

'Pain is temporary. Gains are forever.'