Wanderer 89

Chapter 89: Condensing crystals

“Neat!”

Strictly speaking, Synchronization was only classified as ‘Refined’, like Circulation. However, this was still impressive in many ways. Generally, the Status avoided registering an upgrade within the same class, unless the spell in question was a qualitative improvement over its predecessor.

‘Though I hope it’s compatible with the Dance.’

Of course, Percy didn’t know how to get his hands on the final step of the technique. The only clue Micky had left him was it had something to do with ambient mana, but that wasn’t much to go with. That said, he hoped he wouldn’t have to choose between that and Synchronization.

CAW!

The crow landed next to him, diving into the mess of wasp parts. It tossed the bigger chunks away with its beak, occasionally swallowing one of the smaller pieces, while searching for the core.

‘Wow, you could at least pretend to be excited over my new spell.’ Percy complained in a faux-offended tone.

Though Micky just ignored him. Only after the familiar was done eating did the two head back to the settlement. They took their sweet time catching up, as they weren’t in a rush, wanting to make the most of this rare vacation while it lasted.

‘At some point, I’ll need to teach him how to speak.’

Due to his unique circumstances, Micky was more than smart enough to learn the language. Communicating via feelings and images was certainly convenient, but it wouldn’t hurt to have the ability to talk to other people. Well, assuming his physiology even allowed it.

‘It’ll be easier after his next advancement… Plus, I’m a little swamped right now.’ Percy sighed.

His original goal for today had been to test his entire kit, though his overindulgence in his new toy had left his body battered and sore, forcing him to leave earlier. It was a bit of a bummer, especially since he also looked forward to fusing his affinities.

‘I suppose I’ll have to try that some other time.’

Once they approached the bridges leading to the ground level, they finally parted ways. Entering the Guild, Percy headed straight to Freddy’s stand, waving at the plump vendor as soon as he came into view. The latter waved back absentmindedly at first, though his eyes widened upon noticing Percy’s condition.

“Holy shit! What happened to you?!”

“I got in a messy situation out there…” Percy replied vaguely. However, upon seeing the colour fade from his friend’s face, he hurriedly added, “Ah! But don’t worry about it! I’m not injured! Just tired… and filthy… and… very, very hungry!”

The response seemed to calm Freddy down, though the man still raised an eyebrow.

“Since when did you return to hunting anyway? I thought you switched to alchemy a while ago.”

Percy shrugged.

“I did. I was on a break today.”

Freddy chuckled, thinking it was a joke. It wasn’t until a moment later he seemed to realize Percy wasn’t kidding.

“Seriously?! Who goes hunting on their break?!” he asked in exasperation. “Man, you should really get yourself a hobby!”

Percy didn’t take any offense, knowing the guy was just looking out for him.

“You know what they say… Happy is the man who turns his hobby into a profession.”

This tale has been unlawfully lifted without the author's consent. Report any appearances on Amazon.

“Oh? Is that what you did? Turned your hobby into a profession?” Freddy scoffed.

“Well, not exactly.” Percy admitted, before grinning. “But I think I’m close to turning my former profession into a hobby!”

Freddy rolled his eyes, though Percy didn’t miss the subtle smile tugging at his pal’s lips.

“Anyway… You’re here for the usual I assume?” Freddy asked, changing the topic.

Percy nodded before passing him a brown chip. Freddy handed him the Honey Roll, grimacing as he tried and failed to wipe the grime off the change. Percy didn’t pay him much attention, his focus soon shifting to his snack. Pouncing on it like a famished wolf, he’d already devoured half of it by the time his friend finished cleaning the coin.

“Wow. It’s almost like you didn’t have one last night.” Freddy said, getting another shrug back.

A few minutes later, Percy arrived at his house. Though he’d been too tired to keep fighting the bugs, it was still bright outside, so he wasn’t going to bed just yet. There was something else he wanted to figure out before returning to work tomorrow.

After taking a quick shower, he sat on the floor, pulling some pure mana out of his abdomen. He’d shaven a lot of time off Crystallization over the last year, but each marble still took him over an hour to make, which wasn’t ideal.

‘Let’s see how much faster I can do it now. First, without Circulation.’

Forming the cyan blob between his hands, he exerted all his strength, pressing down on it with physical and magical might alike.

Normally, Percy hated producing the crystals more than anything else he’d done over the years. It was no less exhausting than his most difficult fights, and even more monotonous than alchemy. At least when brewing elixirs, every batch was unique, making the process interactive and somewhat engaging.

This, instead, was sitting still for hours on end, doing the exact same thing over and over. In fact, he couldn’t even think about something else to distract himself. The tedious task required nothing short of his full attention and willpower. Of course, he didn’t really have a choice. It wasn’t the first sacrifice he’d had to make during his magical journey, nor would it be the last.

‘Maybe I shouldn’t be doing this on my day off though…’

Then again, this was a special occasion. The mere idea of evaluating his gains post-advancement filled him with anticipation, breathing some fresh air into the stale process.

The sphere continued to shrink as Percy kept pushing. He felt no different than when he usually did it – he was just as tired, his body drenched in sweat. Yet, the results spoke for themselves.

POP

‘Wow, that was much faster indeed.’

He wiped his forehead with his arm, his chest heaving up and down. Perhaps he shouldn’t have been in a rush to take a shower before starting. Though having to wash up twice was definitely preferrable to getting wasp goo all over his room.

‘Around forty minutes, give or take.’ he estimated, pinching the cyan marble between his thumb and index finger.

Then, he grinned.

‘I’ve finally beaten her!’

Having a one-sided competition against a sick old lady struggling to provide for her village admittedly wasn’t Percy’s classiest moment. Especially since the poor woman hadn’t the slightest idea some random kid across the cosmos had set her as a personal goal to surpass. But hey, Percy thought being a little competitive was one of his better traits! It motivated him to keep improving! Plus, he wasn’t hurting anybody!

In any case, the experiment wasn’t over yet. In fact, the main event had yet to begin.

Taking a few deep breaths, he activated Circulation with both cores, though he didn’t push it beyond the usual limit. For now, this was the state he’d be using most of the time while compressing the crystals – at least until he grew more accustomed to Synchronization. Repeating the process once more, he soon ended up with a second marble in his palm.

’20 minutes…’

It was good. Over three times faster than before the promotion, which was definitely going to help once the new recipe was complete.

However, Percy wasn’t done.

While he still had to iron the kinks out of his latest spell, he just couldn’t wait to put it to the test. Retracing his actions from earlier that morning, he incrementally raised the intensity of the two instances of Circulation, until his channels couldn’t fit any more mana.

Realizing the process had taken him a while, he frowned.

‘I’ll have to work on the activation time too, not just the endurance. I can’t afford to spend this long in a fight.’

But that was a problem for the future. Manifesting another blob between his hands, he quickly began the compression process again, soon beating his record for the third time that day.

’15 minutes!’

The difference wasn’t huge, but Percy knew an opportunity when he saw it. If he spent as long as possible making the marbles with Synchronization active, he’d not only increase his output a little, but it would also help him get used to the new spell, killing two birds with one stone.

‘Great! Efficiency is king.’ he smiled, though his expression soon soured.

Now that his end of the manufacturing process was settled, he had a few more obstacles to deal with, standing between him and untold riches.

‘On the bright side, Metatron still hasn’t kidnapped me.’