Wanderer 95

Chapter 95: Teal fog

As much as he would have liked to stay and practice some more, Percy knew he'd have to resume brewing tomorrow. He couldn't afford to pull an all-nighter on the Spire.

'Have I signed my freedom away?' he groaned.

Granted, adhering to a tight schedule wasn't exactly new to him. He'd done that for years already. That said, it was one thing working nonstop for himself – out of discipline – and another thing entirely to be held accountable to a third-party like Nesha or their customers.

'I guess I'm still doing it for myself.' he sighed. 'I really need that money…'

In any case, he could at least take his sweet time on the way back to the Guild, playing around with the minuscule quantity of teal fog he'd managed to create. It wasn't enough to form a proper spell, but perhaps he could discern some of its properties.

Splitting the exotic substance in half – to avoid wasting all of it by accident – he pinched a portion with his other hand. Next, he willed it to solidify, forming a marble smaller than his fingernail.

It worked, allowing Percy to curiously fiddle with the tiny sphere for a few minutes, before ultimately crushing it between his fingers. Many of the fragments dissipated on the spot, though he did manage to salvage a few. He melted them again before merging them back to the rest of the material in his other hand.

'Hmmm… It behaves much like my pure mana. Except when it breaks.'

Percy drew a trickle from his second core, manifesting a cyan orb about the same size as before. Then he handled it in a similar manner for a while, comparing the two objects in his mind.

Once he was satisfied with his observations, he shattered it too, noting the teal sphere hadn't been any more durable than the cyan one. Percy had exerted about the same amount of force to crush both.

Other than the colour, the only difference was the pure mana dissipated completely into motes, making it a little harder to retrieve.

‘Is that the only benefit? Recycling it more easily?’

If that was the case Percy would be disappointed. Gabe’s light spell had been both hotter and quicker than either of its components. Though that had come at the cost of its mass, it would still be the superior option in many circumstances.

Meanwhile, the only advantage to the teal fog so far was that Percy might be able to chain his magic, reshaping one spell into another smoothly. It wasn’t nothing, but he’d certainly expected more.

‘That can’t be everything.’ he shook his head. ‘It has yet to display any properties of soul mana.’

Glancing back at the substance in his palm, he focused on its ethereal nature this time. He flushed out all thoughts related to his pure mana from his mind, visualizing only his original affinity. Hopefully, that might draw out any latent effects the teal fog had yet to reveal.

Taking it a step further, he shaped it into a miniature Parting Gift. There wasn’t that much of the fused mana, but he still managed to form a tiny sickle in the end – though it looked more like a strange earring. Still, his self-induced illusion seemed to have yielded some results.

‘It feels different…’ he raised an eyebrow.

The small weapon looked the same, but its tiny handle had partially sunk into his skin. Percy could tell from experience he was pinching it with his soul now – not his flesh. His eyes widened.

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‘Holy shit! I can choose whether to make it tangible or not!’

Percy walked onto another suspension bridge absentmindedly, retracing the way home by instinct. Next, he played around with the teal construct some more, trying to change it between the two states at will. Getting himself into the correct frame of mind took some effort, but he did get the sickle to transition between corporeal and incorporeal a few more times. Yet, there was more.

'Did it turn invisible just now?!'

Percy raised an eyebrow. He'd only stumbled upon this by accident, having not even tried to rob the construct of its colour. In fact, he'd almost forgotten his soul mana was invisible by default. After all, he rarely used it without activating Circulation first, which came with passive Soul Vision. Not just that, but his constructs were much denser than they used to be, making them faintly visible to the naked eye. Still…

'Can I pick out what properties to give it? That could really enrich my kit!'

Currently, his options were essentially set in stone. Half his mana was invisible and intangible, while the rest was both opaque and corporeal – albeit flimsy. But what if he could control his entire mana pool, freely assigning his constructs whatever effect was convenient at any given time?!

Eager to confirm if that was possible, Percy resumed his experimentation, playing around with the teal fog some more. And sure enough...

'It has four possible states. Even the ones I can't access normally.'

Percy could definitely think of a situation where he might need a construct that was corporeal yet invisible. For example, if he wanted to trick an enemy immune to soul damage. Or to shield his face from a physical attack without inhibiting his own vision in the process. Likewise, the opposite could be handy – a spell that was opaque yet able to phase through objects. Perhaps he could conjure illusions with it, or pass a message through a wall.

The possibilities were endless!

'Though it's going to have a high skill ceiling…'

It had taken him all day to fuse the tiniest amount of teal fog. Changing its properties wasn't exactly easy either. And Percy also doubted recycling the mana from one spell to the next would be trivial. Each of these steps would take a lot of practice to learn.

'Still, I'll be able to pull off all sorts of tricks once I master it.'

Percy nodded in appreciation once he fully understood the path which lay before him. His fused mana might not be 'stronger' than its two components in the traditional sense – but it did open some interesting doors for him. If he had to use one word to summarize it, it would be…

Versatile.

'Oh, I guess I'm back.'

Without realizing, Percy had reached the settlement. Today had definitely been productive, as he'd not only familiarized himself with the rest of his magic post-advancement, but also taken another step along the prestigious path the Moirai had paved. By all means, he should be happy. Yet…

GRUMBLE

Percy grimaced.

'How am I going to sleep without my fix?!'

Since his first day in the Alchemists' Guild, he'd never gone once without a Honey Roll. Sadly, he'd returned way too late tonight. Freddy should have long closed already.

'Ugh… I hope I have something edible at home.'

Walking along the empty streets of the settlement, Percy tried his best to keep his mind on the colourful particles dancing in the wind, ignoring his protesting stomach.

Eventually, he arrived at his house, pressing his badge against the door to open it. As a newcomer, he used to appreciate the mysterious runes making conveniences like this possible. That said, his recent trip to the Vault of Magic had truly put Remior's relatively primitive technology into perspective.

Entering, he paused, noticing a sealed envelope by his feet. Percy wasn't very surprised, having expected Elaine's reply. The two had kept in touch since her first mail a few months back. Picking the letter up in a hurry, he dropped it on his nightstand for later, before rushing to the preservation box. Desperately digging through the container for scraps, he soon realized there wasn't much there – just some stale bread and a few vegetables of questionable quality.

'At least I won't starve…'

Making a mental note to restock at some point, he then begrudgingly stuffed his face with as much food as he could tolerate. Next, he took off his robes. He tossed the immaculate fabric a passing glance, appreciating how his clothes had remained spotless after another hunting trip. Then, he dove into the shower, eager to finish his chores as quickly as possible.

Soon, he found himself resting on his bed. There was only one last item left for today. Extending his arm, he grabbed the envelope from the table. Technically, he didn't have to read the message right now – he could leave it for tomorrow. But Percy would rather get it over with, having grown a little worried over the recent developments back at home.

Ripping the envelope, he took the letter out, before unfolding the light indigo paper, his attention falling on his cousin's words.

'Dear Percy…'