

The Beginning After The End, Chapter 2: The Encyclopedia of Mana Manipulation

I was a king. I could have my country's army assemble at my feet, kneeling down with the snap of a finger. I've outdueled my competitors from different countries as well as my own people to settle disputes and maintain my position. In terms of swordsmanship and controlling ki, I was second to none, for having personal strength was essential to becoming a ruler in my past world on Earth. Kings weren't born, but raised. Yet, I couldn't think of a prouder moment in my two lives than now.

I can crawl baby!

'Till now, I had to make do with the stories mother would tell me while trying to make me fall asleep. I grumbled out noises of complaint when she stopped too early. My father would sometimes sit me on his lap while idly talking to me about his old days, which gave me some hints as to what kind of world this was and what it was filled with.

Reynolds Leywin, former adventurer, (apparently that's a viable occupation in this world) had quite a lot of experience in this field. He was a part of several parties that went on expeditions to search for treasure and fulfill missions they acquired from the Adventurer Guild. He eventually settled down when he met my mother at the Kingdom's border in a city called Valden. He proudly told me how my mother fell head over heels for him at first sight when he visited the town's Adventurer Guild hall that she had been working at at that time, but I suspected it was the exact opposite from how my mother slapped him across the back of the head and told him to stop telling me lies.

My name was Arthur Leywin now, by the way. Art for short, which, as a former King, sounded a little too cute, but hey, after getting a glimpse of myself in the metal sheet they used as a mirror in the washroom, I looked absolutely adorable. I got my mother's glowing auburn hair while my eyes were a bright azure color, inherited from my father. I don't know how my facial features are going to turn out as I mature, but as long as I don't turn out fat, it'll be okay.

Watch out future ladies! Prepare to be heartbroken!

After weeks of attempting to crawl, yet only achieving an uncoordinated scuffle in place, I had finally succeeded; even managing to sneak into the family's library/study room while my mother was hanging the laundry out to dry. Mother rued the day I started to become mobile, sighing, "I swear, you're going to become as hard to manage as your father."

I closed the encyclopedia and situated myself more comfortably on the ground... basically I just laid on my belly because crawling and sitting upright was so d**n tiring.

Pondering over what I had just read, this world seemed pretty underdeveloped. From what I could infer, there didn't seem to be much technological advancement. The only source of transportation appeared to be horse-driven carriages, that varied in size for overland use, and ships with sails for rivers.

Weapons were freely allowed and not really regulated unless you were visiting the royal family or people that held authority. For God's sake, it continues to baffle me every time I see people carrying weapons while shopping for groceries.

Sure, in my previous world, Earth, there were soldiers and guards who carried concealed weapons, despite that, they weren't for the purpose of killing, but to deter crimes from happening.

Here, though, I witnessed a thief who stole a couple of items from the armory store the other day get slashed in the back by a large, bald mercenary carrying a polearm. Moreover, the bystanders even went as far as to applaud that oversized monk as the thief laid there dying.

A similarity that both this world and my previous world shared was the system of monarchy. The continent of Dicathen had Kingdoms, each ruled by a king and his royal family. Unlike Earth though, the king was chosen based on lineage; the title passed down from the son of the King, to his son and so on.

After scanning through the encyclopedia, there didn't seem to be much information on other continents besides the one we were currently in. I found this a bit odd since there were ships that carried goods and passengers across the continent by river. I just assumed that maybe the technology on ships haven't been developed enough to sail across oceans.

One thing that was going to be hard to get used to was the whole premise of magic in this world. If we were talking about superhuman powers, sure, the countries on Earth relied on such people.

On Earth, practitioners learned how to condense and utilize the innate ki that they had in their body. Think of it as a muscle if you will. Repeatedly breaking the ki center down through exhaustion followed by rest would cause the ki center to grow stronger, allowing access to a bigger pool of ki. The ki would then be channeled throughout the body via special veins or meridians and utilized for the strengthening of the body and weapon.

In this world, instead of ki, it seemed to be called mana and the more surprising thing was that it existed in the atmosphere. Thus, Practitioners, or Mages, would use the surrounding mana and draw it into their bodies, ultimately condensing it in their mana core. In my old world, ki only existed and formed inside the body. Whether ki had never existed in Earth's atmosphere in the first place or ceased to exist because of the pollution caused by humans, we'd never know.

On Earth, while practice was incredibly important, the size of a user's innate ki center was even more important because the limited amount of ki one had in his body was all one could work with. Did that mean that one's innate mana core size wouldn't matter as much because of the available mana in the atmosphere?

The bigger the cup, the more you can hold, right?

In my old world, even though my ki center wasn't that large, I was considered a prodigy at channeling and utilizing my ki effectively to make up for my not so sufficiently large ki center. With the way I utilized every bit of my ki, I was able to become the strongest of the elite division of Duelists, earning the right to become King.

Now, if I could still practice the way ki practitioners used their ki, but with mana that was both present inside the mana core and in the surrounding atmosphere, couldn't I essentially double... no... triple the strength that I had before?

The next book that I managed to pull from the bottom shelf, explained a couple of questions for me.

“Beginner's Guide for the Privileged Mage”

“While the power to control mana is largely genetic, there are many cases where children of Magi come out unable to sense the mana around them. A recent census showed that roughly 1 in a 100 children are able to sense mana, but the extent of which could only be tested when their mana core first completely developed—anywhere from their early adolescence to late teen years. It will be apparent when a mage first awakens by the initial repulsion of the surrounding mana when their mana core manifests. This results in a translucent barrier forming around the awakened that lasts a couple of minutes.”

Flipping through the pages, I found something that caught my attention.

“...Mana can be used in a couple of ways. The two most common methods of utilizing mana are: enhancement of the body with mana (augmenter), and emission of mana to the outside world (conjurer)...”

“... augmenters are most commonly seen amongst warriors who utilize mana, channeling it through their body to strengthen themselves and their attacks.”

“... The practice of conjuring is seen in Mages, who, after utilizing their mana, can cast spells to give off a certain effect on the surrounding area or directly at a target.”

Weaknesses and Limitations

“While augmenters can possess incredible strength, defense and agility, their weakness lies in their limited range...”

“conjurers possess unfathomable powers, being able to bend their surroundings to their will. However, such powers come with limits. Unlike augmenters, who utilize most of the mana in their own mana cores, conjurers need to borrow mana from the outside world, in addition to their own mana core, to exert mana into their surroundings in the form of a spell.”

“While both types of Mages, or Mana Manipulators, for the more scientifically accurate term, depend on and are categorized by their mana core, augmenters and conjurers also have different ways of measuring their aptitude.”

“flip”

“An augments’s prowess or talent is measured by the strength of the mana channels in their body, which measures the speed and efficiency in relocating their mana from their mana core into various parts of their bodies...”

“...A conjurer’s power and talent, comparatively, is measured by the power of their mana veins, which indicates the speed and effectiveness of absorbing mana from the outside world to cast a spell.”

“flip”

“...Mages (Mana Manipulators) are typically categorized into one of these two divisions since attempting to be proficient in both from an early stage is incredibly time consuming and inefficient. Most are born with a skewed difference in their mana channels and mana veins...”

“...augmenters do not need very strong mana veins because they mostly utilize the mana from their cores, while conjurers do not need very powerful mana channels because they do not release their mana into their own bodies.”

“As proficiency level rises, the distinction between augmenters and conjurers lessens naturally, but that is only so at an advanced level...”

Hmm... So my idiot father seems to be a decently competent augments and a less than average conjurer.

That healing light though... What was my mother?

“flip, flip, flip”

AHA!

“There are a few, rare deviants. The two most well-known types of deviants are elemental deviants and Emitters. While there are still some undiscovered, ones that are highly sought after are the Emitters, more commonly known as healers. Healers

possess the rare ability to cast their unique restorative mana unto others, directly, recovering injuries and impairments.”

Wow... mother is the best.

Fundamentals of Conjuring

“The proper steps of utilizing mana for conjurers is to gather the surrounding mana in the area, drawing it into your body, then, after circulating it into your mana core to stabilize and purify the atmosphere’s diluted mana, you channel it into an appropriate conductor (a staff, wand, ring, of some sort) with the incantations as a mental controller for your will into shaping the mana into whatever spell you want...”

“flip”

“...The more powerful the spell, the longer it will take to draw in surrounding mana, store it in your mana core, where it is condensed and purified, and finally channel and release...”

“flip”

“Because conjuring involves exerting focused mana into a particular spell, conjurers will notice that they have a special aptitude of certain elements (Air, Water, Fire, Earth), but with proper training, can become adequate in the basics of all elements.

“flip, flip”

Fundamentals of Augmenting

“Unlike conjuring, much less time can be spent gathering the surrounding mana. Efficient use of augmenting requires speed and precision in the use of the mana from your core and less from the mana in the atmosphere..”

This was where it clicked.... augmenting was very close to using ki, except you could also draw mana in from your surroundings. The reason why there weren’t any kinds of conjurers in my old world of Earth was because there was no mana in the atmosphere to draw from and create a phenomenon.

My gaze tensed as I read on.

“...augmenting requires proper distribution of mana into different parts of the body, depending on how the user sees fit. While it seems simple at a glance, augmenting requires much insight into the individual’s own body. Being able to utilize the mana channels efficiently requires years of both mental and physical practice.”

“flip”

“Because augmenting involves extracting mana in its purest form from the user’s mana core, there are no highly notable distinctions in an elemental sense at an early stage. However, augmenters are able to control their mana more freely, resulting in vastly different forms of fighting through augmentation.”

“flip”

“The phenomenon called ‘Backlash’ occurs in both types of practitioners. For augmenters, it occurs from depletion of the mana core, causing extreme bodily pain, depending on how strenuous the damage to the mana core is. For conjurers, backlash occurs from overfilling of the mana core. This is caused by overuse of spells beyond the practitioner’s capacity, or using a spell too powerful for his or her mana core to handle.”

Closing the book, I propped myself up on my b**t, digesting the overload of information that I had just read.

Because of the uncanny similarities between the ki center from my old world and the mana core in this world, I found it hard to believe that you needed to be a young adolescent to manipulate mana. In my old world, children could already meditate and sense the ki scattered inside their bodies. Once the ki migrated into a single place, the ki center would form.

Testing my hypothesis, I began meditating, trying to sense the mana in my 7 month old body when...

“There you are! Art, honey, are you having trouble taking a poopy?”

Mother! I’m about to begin my journey to become the greatest mage in the world! Do not make me out to be a constipated infant!

Picking me up and gently placing me in her arms, I was forcibly taken away to have my diaper changed, which, surprisingly, was full by the time I noticed.

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