

Chapter 140 - Profession Skills

High on the benefits of his new profession, Kai was in high spirits, almost floating. Mana Child was everything he had hoped and more.

From its *description*, he had worried the profession would be centered around developing his magic like a student or scholar, with little to no combat potential. The skills and boon did go in that direction, yet a higher mana pool granted him incredible flexibility.

It would help him train longer *and* to fling more spells when he hunted an awakened beast. Till now, he burned through his reserves with a few powerful casts and was forced to rely on his Swordsmanship to do the heavy lifting.

It'd be nice to stay back and blast a drake like a proper mage.

His tiny mana pool had been the bane of his existence. It had slowly improved as he had grown up and upgraded his race, but it was still limited. He had often wondered how mages didn't run out of mana.

Do all magic professions get a similar boon?

Probably not every profession and certainly not at Red, maybe at Orange. It was frustrating that any information about the Guide was so scarce on Elydes, especially in the Archipelago. The islanders considered it the gift of the spirits, studying the divine was very close to blasphemy and disrespectful to the ancestors.

Kai had heard of libraries in Higharbor, but he doubted the Republic would be much freer with important knowledge.

I should have asked them more before they left the estate...

Viryra had taught him little about professions beyond Red and boons. Not that he hadn't tried to pry more information. Dora caved in after a few weeks if she thought the knowledge did no harm. And even though Elijah never admitted to it, he often let slip valuable knowledge if Kai trained without complaint.

The more time passed the more he came to realize the unbelievable luck he had with his teachers.

They're gone, no point in wallowing in what could have been. I have to work with what I got.

Another matter worth looking into was whether the boosts from Mana Spring scaled with him. Once his natural mana pool increased would the boosts also increase or remain the same?

It's an amazing boon either way. Would it be too good to hope it's the first?

Kai pulled out one of his new profession skills, he'd figure it out eventually.

Gifted Novice (lv1) – When passion meets diligence, true talent is born. A Mana Child is naturally gifted at developing knowledge and skills of the arcane.

It was his first meta-skill that affected other skills directly, and he could hardly think of something better. Gifted Novice would help him learn and train faster anything that had to do with magic. More than half of his skills were related to mana and arcane disciplines.

Since it was a red skill, Kai didn't expect a mind-blowing improvement—at least not at level 1. No matter how big or small, even if it spared him ten minutes a day, that would add up over months and years.

Remembering the long days he had spent on his mana skills, or brewing potions through his childhood, Kai would wholeheartedly thank even for a 1% bonus.

Would it also work for skills that consumed mana like Empower and Blessed Swimmer? Will it help me study herbs or a recipe faster for Alchemy?

With its passive nature, it would be a challenge to test and measure how Gifted Novice worked. There were thousands of details he'd like to verify.

Why can't it just tell me exactly how it works? If people had any sense, three- or four-page descriptions would be the norm.

He pulled back the skill in the vain hope he had somehow missed a drop-down menu, no such luck.

I'll have to figure them out myself and track my daily progress. Such a damn chore, yay!

Dora had long taught him that studying magic often meant tedious and methodical work. While the years spent learning Alchemy had made him excellent at taking notes, they hadn't increased his enjoyment of the task.

Kai opened the next skill to lift his mood.

Mana Echo (lv1) – Create an echo of a mana construct or casting you've observed to reproduce it at will. The quality and quantity of the copies is determined by the level of the skill.

Now, this was something he could test with a lot of fun practical experiments.

I only need a test subject to copy. There must be a fellow mage somewhere in Sylspring...

About to take a walk outside looking for inspiration, his eyes fell on the sound-proofing runes he had painted on the walls. Two sets were hidden behind a bookcase and a painting of the Vastaire ruin, ivory constructions surrounded by a lush jungle. The one on the door was perfectly visible in its deep purple ink.

This should count as a mana construct, right?

He stepped closer to take in all the details. General skills were all straightforward in use and function. Nothing happened. How was Mana Echo supposed to work?

Was I wrong?

Kai activated Mana Sense to get a better look of the glowing lines, and then he *knew*. His gaze narrowed down and darted all over the script. His eyes and mind worked on their own, though he also *knew* he could stop it any time if he wanted.

He mulled freely while another part of his mind was busy on the task. It was a simple formation of twenty-two conjoined runes, to block sounds around a specified direction and distance. The most complicated section was the self-sustaining part to keep it running.

This is so weird.

A few seconds later, it was done. Befuddled, Kai sat at his desk. He could feel *something*, like a thought at the edge of his mind.

On a hunch, he took out a clean sheet of paper and a jar of inscribing ink. Dipping his quill, his hand sketched the rune formation as if guided by its own brain. All twenty-two runes and their links were done with rapid and precise movements in less than a minute.

Kai examined the fresh purple ink with wonder. He could spot some minor imperfections, and the paper wasn't an ideal medium to hold the enchantment. Still, the mana flowing through the runes proved it worked.

Repeating the test, Kai measured the process with an hourglass. It only took about a tenth of the time he needed to inscribe them manually.

That's something.

He scoured his room and spatial ring for any enchanted scrap he could find. His mind could store up to nine minor enhancements before he was forced to dismiss one of them, but the number dropped to five when he copied the one on the bathroom shower.

The more complicated the formation the more space it required. The time to create an echo also varied with the complexity and his familiarity with the enchantment. The shower took about ten minutes, and the copy he drew had several minor mistakes that caused it to fizzle out before his eyes.

He could tell the runes that had been drawn wrong, but if he interrupted the skill halfway, he was forced to start from the beginning. The only solution Kai found was to study the enchantment for longer, which seemed to improve the copy and bring the echo closer to the original.

After half an hour of intently studying the glowing lines in the bathroom, he ran back to his room, ignoring an annoyed Kea who yelled after him.

When he drew the runes this time, each one worked properly.

Damn, I'm almost out of ink.

Mana Echo needed actual enchanting ink to activate. Luckily, it didn't care about quality, and he could get away with diluting it with water.

I guess that's fair, it can't be considered a mana construct without any mana.

Kai massaged his eyes, his mind was throbbing painfully. He recognized the signs of skill overuse. The more he pushed the longer he'd take to recover.

That slightly dampened his enthusiasm, *slightly*, meaning he barely managed to sit without jumping up and down in excitement. He had just begun to scratch the surface of Mana Echo.

Using the skill to efficiently copy his own runes was a single use, likely the most boring one. A more interesting idea was to create an echo of someone else's enchantments. Even if the copy wasn't perfect, he could fix the flaws later.

Does that count as stealing? I don't think enchanted items are patentable, but it wouldn't be surprising if they are, and I'll get sued by some huge corporation.

Moral quandaries aside, Kai noted down other ideas for the skill. Runes were just one type of mana construct. There were others, without counting all the types of magic casting.

I already got two levels, though that's probably normal for a red skill...

"Did you receive some good news?" Alana asked after dinner. Uncle Moui silently observed him, washing the dishes.

"Maybe..." Kai beamed innocently.

Ele looked at their sister. "Why don't we go for a walk? I want to see if the old fishing shop has opened again."

"I need to check if my bowstring isn't crooked," Kea tried to slip towards the stairs.

"It'll be fun, and I'd feel safer if you came with me. But I can go alone if you're too busy..."

"I'll come," Kea grumbled, stopping in her tracks. "I need to check on the bowyer."

"We can visit all the places you like."

Ele threw him a meaningful look over Kea's shoulder, quickly bringing her out the door.

Great...

If his mother didn't suspect something earlier, now she definitely did.

"Do you need to tell me something, *Kai Tylenn*?" Alana looked at him expectantly with a sweet tone and warm smile.

Fuck, she knows.

His enthusiasm had been hard to hide. He could have managed with Improvisation, but he hadn't.

Maybe I wanted her to notice. No point dragging it out any longer.

“Have you gotten into trouble?” Moui added a stern look for good measure.

His Uncle’s Mana Sense shouldn’t be good enough to distinguish his profession yet, but Kai was starting to doubt his assumptions.

“Define *trouble*,” he sat at the empty table, looking innocent as a baby. Not like him as a baby, but like some other, more naive child.

Alana took a seat across from him with a heavy sigh. “How much should I worry?”

“It’s nothing bad...” Kai dithered to gather his courage. “I just took a profession.”

His mother paled despite her tanned skin, thankfully she was already sitting. Her hands stretched over the table toward him, and Kai didn’t think she wanted to caress his hair. She opted to grab onto the dinner table till her knuckles whitened.

The conversation went about as expected. After the initial shock wore off, they pulled the whole story out of him interrupting every second sentence. Kai endured a storm of reprimands for being reckless and not asking them for advice.

Somehow the fact the Guide offered him the possibility on its own made it a bit better for his mom. Professions were a personal matter between you and the spirits. Families could offer advice, but the choice was his. Though normally people were fourteen—officially adults—when they picked theirs. Children had all the right to be told what to do by their parents. It was an interesting conundrum.

Ultimately, there wasn’t anything to be done since he had already taken up a profession. Kai waited for the scolding to be over before revealing the details of Mana Child, causing another bout of shock.

Moui sat beside his mother. “You really got a boon and two skills? I’ve heard of one guy who was offered a boon, but he only had one skill and the attributes were terrible.”

“Mine are pretty good, higher than two.” Kai used his best humble tone.

He expected they would accuse him of lying or look skeptical. There was not a shade of doubt on their faces.

A nice fuzzy feeling warmed his heart. Whether it was because they thought highly of him or believed he wouldn't lie, it didn't matter.

“I'm going to go to bed.” Kai used this time of respite to make a strategic retreat. “Good night, Mom. Uncle.”

It was hard to be angry at him for taking a profession early when Mana Child was better than anything they had ever heard of.

With the dawn of a new day, Kai discovered his mana regeneration hadn't increased with his reserves. He hadn't even consumed more than half, but he wasn't full. With the low density of the archipelago, it likely meant he'd have to refill manually every day.

Just a minor inconvenience. Positive thoughts.

“Kai,” Alana greeted him downstairs. She didn't add anything else, but he could feel her eyes staring a hole through his skull.

Kai went back to his room without knowing what he had eaten. Moui waited for him on the stairs, an unreadable expression on his face.

“Good morning,” Kai forced a smile.

“Good morning.”

Is this a new kind of punishment? Guess I deserve it...

Kai waited for his Uncle to move down the stairs, but the man remained where he was.

Fine.

“Can I go with you hunting today?”

“Why do you want to—” Moui broke his impassive stare with a frown. “No, I’m not going to bring you to fight more beasts.”

“I didn’t mean that. I just want to watch you hunt in the jungle. Can I? Unless you didn’t plan to go today.”

No better place to keep an eye on me.

Kai could hear the grinding of the gears in Moui’s brain as he tried to find the pitfall. “I’ll hold you to your word. We leave in twenty.”

Hiding a smirk, Kai was ready in half that time. The hunter threw him suspicious looks all the way to the Veeryd jungle while Kea seemed amused.

What did they tell her?

“I’ll go ahead. I agreed to meet my friends. We’ll stay near the outskirts,” his sister waved at a group of teens waiting at the edge of the treeline, already walking.

“Be careful,” Moui yelled after her.

Kea raised a hand to show she heard. The hunter watched her disappear into the vegetation before moving his attention to him. “So, what’s up with you? And don’t tell me it’s nothing, I know you’re up to something.”

“Can’t I just want to spend some time with my favorite uncle?”

“I’m your only uncle, and we both know that’s not the reason.” Moui crossed his arms, without any intention of taking a step further till he confessed.

“I just want to watch you hunt.”

“Kai.” A warning note rose in his tone.

This is so unfair. I’ve not done anything yet.

“And I was hoping to see you use some skills that use mana. Do you by any chance have some?”