

CHAPTER 178 – MATTHEW’S MYSTIC MEDICINES II

“I’m never going to get that smell out of my nose,” Matt said to the darkness. A few candles burned fitfully near his rough-hewn desk, but he didn’t really need them. They helped, but necrams had natural Dark Vision.

“Okay,” he muttered to himself. “Every *fourth* turn needs to go in the opposite direction.”

While hardly *ideal*, it was progress of a sort. And the best part? Alchemy still provided Experience even for failures. Some failures even gave bonus Experience if he was able to learn something from it like he just had.

Chompers scurried in, oblivious to the smell. Just like a clumsy puppy, the treasure chest went a little too fast and skidded past Matt. Hurrying back, the mimic gave his leg an affectionate lick, then munched on some of the glue-shrapnel scattered on the ground.

Matt reached down and patted his lid affectionately. “You’re like the friendly dog that just wanders from apartment to apartment, aren’t you?”

The mimic made a quiet little howl.

“Good boy,” Matt said. Then, getting an idea, he leaned down and held out one of his last sprigs of [Eritis] in front of the mimic’s brass lock. “Think you could find me some more of these, Chompers?”

The mimic made a noise that was *just barely* audible, it sounded like a sniff but Matt couldn't be entirely sure. The mimic, however, did a complicated little dance with its dozens of corgi paws for feet, turning 180 degrees, and scurried out of the workshop.

Matt hoped he was able to find more. At the rate he was failing, he'd run out in the next few hours.

Mumbling to himself, Matt started up again. Every fourth turn of stirring the mix, he'd go clockwise, then return to counterclockwise. Slowly but surely, the thin and watery mixture turned thick and gummy.

He didn't like the Artisan Orb attempts that Raiko and Sam used.

They seemed finicky and far too easy to mess up without understanding why. Raiko claimed that crafting crystals could help manipulate Artisan Orbs, but with how little he messed with them, he couldn't figure that out.

Doing things by hand was Matt's way, even if it did take longer. That was fine by him. Everyone did things differently, and this new world definitely felt like it encouraged that.

By then, it was getting more difficult to stir the mixture. This wasn't exactly normal, so Matt didn't have much in the way of preparations for it. He tried to put more force into it, but realized he wasn't putting enough mana into it.

That smoothed things out.

Mana was often the oil of the process, keeping things going while also suspending the magical elements long enough for them to mix properly.

The three main stages of Alchemy—at least the kind Matt did—were Preparation, Balance, and Mixture. All three were equally important and equally finicky.

Prep work was simple, if a bit annoying. A lot of plants and materials needed to be prepped in *just the right way* or else they wouldn't have the properties you would want.

[Eritis], for example, needed its stems ground up first, then its leaves added. Doing it the other way produced zero stickiness in the final product. Why? *Fuck you, that's why.*

At least, that was how it felt to Matt.

Once you had the items prepared properly, you had to store or use them. Storing them properly required certain bottles and containers that were made out of mana to seal the materials from any outside influences.

He tried using stoppered bamboo to hold a poison once, and it melted straight through. Even if it hadn't destroyed the makeshift container, the poison wouldn't have stayed preserved for long.

Maybe in his Inventory, but Matt didn't want to take that gamble anymore. He knew Raiko and Lenal had done something like that with [Mana Tinctures], but that didn't seem like an ideal scenario kind of thing.

The creation of [Mana Containers] was slow and mind-numbing, but it was a useful part of the process. If he had glass, he could have imbued it much faster for the same effect.

Many of the products that an Alchemist produced were sealed in such containers, which explained why a great many of the potion bottles simply *ceased to exist* the moment the recipient drank the contents.

It was an easy way of dealing with trash and recycling all in one go, Matt had to admit.

But it made the whole process far more cumbersome. Being able to use those [Mana Containers] again would be incredibly useful and time saving. Instead of making them, he could spend more time

crafting poisons. Provided he didn't run out of materials or have to go out gathering for more.

Maybe we'll get somebody who knows how to blow glass, Matt thought to himself. I'm pretty sure I saw Sam had a [Dune] Tile up above. We could harvest that. Glass is just sand, right?

Then again, he realized he didn't know the first thing of what glass was actually made from and decided not to speculate further.

The reason there were [Mana Containers] in the first place was because any properly prepared ingredient had a very short shelf-life if exposed to air, light, and mana.

Putting them into proper containers stopped whatever internal countdown they had before the ingredients went utterly inert and were no more useful than a pile of grass clippings.

How [Mana Containers] that he could *clearly* see through stopped light from damaging the contents, he would never know and in fact didn't give two fucks about. It worked, and so he left it alone. That was becoming his new motto in his new life.

Doing anything else, like constantly trying to figure out why or how things worked, would have him a twitchy mess worse than Lenal was when she didn't fully understand something.

Unlike her, however, Matt didn't have a suite of skills that allowed him to delve deeper into the mysteries of this new world.

So, he used what was available to him.

Mixing, as he was currently doing, was not only a complex art unto itself, but it was also surprisingly taxing.

He had to thread a constant stream of mana into the mixture to keep it from seizing up. Every fourth turn had to go clockwise instead of counterclockwise, and as he learned when the mixture

began to smoke, he needed to lower the infusion of mana when going clockwise.

There were a million different tiny corrections you had to do as an Alchemist. It was a lot like driving a car, Matt thought.

To begin with, you're conscious of every tiny alteration, every correction of the steering wheel and change of pressure on the pedals.

Then, at some point, it just becomes automatic, and you can't even remember anything beyond getting into your car to go to work and parking.

Matt was desperately hoping that Alchemy would soon turn rote enough that he could turn his mind off like that. He didn't think it would. Not for a long while yet, but he had hope.

A new sound and a smell of old burnt tires filled Matt's well-ventilated room. The sizzling turned into a hiss, then into a faint whine as little pockets of the mixture began to pop and boil as he stirred.

That was usually a good sign, but Matt's Alchemist instincts were beginning to tingle all the same and he slowed down the trickle of mana.

The whistling whine slowed, then stopped altogether. Matt winced and shut his eyes as he surged a balloon of mana around the mixture to finish it off. He turned his head away and shut his eyes, fully expecting the thing to blow up in his face.

After a few moments, he opened one eye, then another. The mixture wasn't blowing up.

Craft Success!

You create a [Basic Adhesive +1].

You gain substantial Alchemy Experience for creating a new crafting recipe for the first time.

You gain greater Alchemy Experience for creating a high-quality result.

Level Up!

Your Alchemy Profession reaches Level 8.

+5 Arcane | +4 Resonance | +3 Control

+3 Mind

“That’s more like it!” Matt smiled, holding up the bowl to nobody in particular because everybody was already sleeping. “Oh. Right. Well... only half a dozen more to go!”

His Professor floated in through the door like any regular person, sans the floating, as if she still had to bother with pesky things like solid objects.

She gave a little clap at his success. Chompers hurried in after her and began jumping at the table. He couldn’t quite make the height. For a second, Matt could almost see a tail wagging back there.

Matt knelt down to the mimic. “Whatcha got for me boy?”

The mimic reared back, then lifted its lid and leaned forward, making a slight coughing noise as he spewed out heaps of freshly cut [Eritis]. More than enough for Matt to finish his portion of the ingredients needed.

He looked fondly at the mimic and gave it an affectionate pat on the lid. “You’re awesome, you know that, Chompers? Simply awesome.” He looked at the pile, then back at the mimic. “Think you could do me another small favor?”

Matt felt a little bad using the mimic to go gather things, but the longer he could spend on Alchemy, the better it would help everybody in the long run.

Not only could he make poisons that would make everybody's damage higher—not to mention healing himself—he could also make a wide assortment of required materials.

This adhesive that Bal'daz wanted was just one of them.

The mimic whined, seeming to want something. Maybe food? That was fair enough.

“What do mimics eat?” Matt asked aloud.

“People, usually,” Aldoverre said stoically as she looked over his stained and pitted table with disdain. She was the type of woman that would run her finger along your fireplace mantle and then check her finger afterward for any dust, as if that was a measure of your worth.

Matt would have been glad to dismiss her criticisms if she wasn't so infuriatingly *right* all the damn time. He had learned to guard his tongue around her and just take the biting remarks and shakes of her head along with the advice that was undoubtedly helpful.

Surely her ghost held on by sheer spite.

“Aside from people,” Matt said as pleasantly as he could.

“Items then,” Aldoverre said, turning toward the mimic. “It is rather affectionate for one of its kind. Most peculiar.” She looked at Matt. “You can make items, can you not?”

Chompers tried to lick the ghost, but she floated away.

Matt looked back at her. “Poisons, sure, but I don't want to hurt the little guy.”

“Poisons are not *items*, they are concoctions.” She sighed.

“Sometimes I swear you do it on purpose to rile me up. You make *things* to put concoctions *into*, do you not?”

Matt looked confused for a moment before remembering. He looked over at the [Basic Adhesive]. The balloon of mana he had placed around the finalized product had turned into a small glass tub about as wide around as his palm and few inches tall with a plain frosted glass-like lid.

It was all mana, however, and would stay in a solid and inert state until its contents were used up entirely.

“But the [Mana Containers] break apart shortly after I make them if they don’t have anything filling them.”

Aldoverre tried to pinch her nose, shoved her ghostly fingers through her nasal cavities three times before giving up, then grumbled and merely tried to adopt a pose of crossing her arms.

A difficult feat when they kept phasing through her torso. “Yes, but all things are made out of mana. It is the mana that he eats. Make a few pretty treats for him and I’m sure he’ll be happy.”

Matt patted Chompers’ lid and got to work. “Hope you like phials, little buddy. They should just about be snack-size for you.”