

CHAPTER 49 – SYNTHESIS

The addition of a Dunamis rank below Luke's race was new, signifying that it was clearly important enough to track on its own.

So that's my rank, but what's it do? Luke found himself asking again as he returned to the storeroom. He knelt by the [Flux Satchel (Fire)] he had made prior to his Ascension.

Even without him there to power the rune, it had siphoned up some of the fire flux on the floorboards.

Luke wasn't skilled enough yet to make recursive runes which worked on their own power, so he was impressed that it had done anything at all. His runes needed a constant supply of mana from a source, usually a person, in order to function.

As Luke combed over his status, he touched a fingertip to the sinuous rune and instilled it with mana.

Status

Name: Luke Solus

Race: Human (F-Grade - Level 10)

Dunamis Rank: Mundane (0)

Class: Thief (Level 19)

Profession: Apprentice Runegraver (Level 2)

Vital Resources

Health Points (HP): 750/770

Mana Points (MP): 300/470

Stamina Points (SP): 330/340

Stats

Strength: 88

Dexterity: 140 (+2)

Endurance: 34

Fortitude: 31 (+2)

Vitality: 77

Perception: 62
Willpower: 39
Wisdom: 47
Arcane: 44
Fate: 88
Free Points: 0

It was amazing how much he had grown in so short a time. Of course, having 6 Wisdom per level of Apprentice Runegraver meant that he would get a massive 60MP every level up.

With the early levels handing out experience like candy, he would get a nice quick jump in mana.

Luke was incredibly pleased with the result, and he had just started. He had so much more room to grow.

Considering how MP intensive runegraving was, not to mention his mana needs for his bloodline skills, Luke was considering sinking future points into Wisdom just for a buffer.

Increasing his MP would let him craft for longer and longer lengths of time without breaks to rest. *That could possibly result in gaining experience at a faster rate*, Luke thought.

Once the fire flux was placed in its satchel, Luke pulled the drawstrings tight and set it aside. He made 2 more satchels, a rather trivial process with 2 Apprentice Runegraver levels under his belt.

Despite the lack of any specific skill improving, Luke could feel how much easier it was for him to perform the duties of an Apprentice Runegraver.

Levels had a greater impact than simple stats would suggest.

You have successfully crafted [Flux Satchel (Earth)]. Extra experience gained for crafting a recipe above your level. Bonus experience gained for first time crafting completion.

Level Up! Your [Apprentice Runegraver] Profession has reached Level 3.

Stat points earned: +6 Arcane, +6 Wisdom, +2 Dexterity, +2 Perception, +2 Free Points.

Level Up! Your [Human (F-Grade)] Race has reached Level 11.

Stat points earned: +3 All Stats, +1 Fate, +2 Free Points.

You have successfully crafted [Flux Satchel (Wind)]. Extra experience gained for crafting a recipe above your level. Bonus experience gained for first time crafting completion.

Luke couldn't help but be a little disappointed when he didn't get yet another level up. The single digit levels were by far the fastest levels he ever gained, and it seemed that crafting a new item for the first time garnered a lot more experience than normal.

The notification didn't mention anything other than a bonus, so the only reasoning that Luke could imagine was that leveling professions was harder than classes.

Perhaps the early levels weren't going to be as easy as he once thought.

Despite that, he noticed that so long as the flux satchel was for a different type of element, it granted bonus experience as it was the first time he created one.

There were 8 elements for flux. Fire, water, ice, wind, lightning, earth as well as dark and light. Since there were so many elements, he could squeeze out a little extra experience before he returned to the workshop.

His free points went into Wisdom and Willpower. Once he set the flux satchels to collecting their respective flux elements, Luke glanced at his status once more.

Status

Name: Luke Solus

Race: Human (F-Grade - Level 11)

Dunamis Rank: Mundane (0)

Class: Thief (Level 19)

Profession: Apprentice Runegraver (Level 3)

Vital Resources

Health Points (HP): 764/800

Mana Points (MP): 312/600

Stamina Points (SP): 356/370

Stats

Strength: 91

Dexterity: 146 (+2)

Endurance: 37

Fortitude: 34 (+2)

Vitality: 80

Perception: 68

Willpower: 44

Wisdom: 60

Arcane: 53

Fate: 89

Free Points: 0

Luke nodded to himself. In just a few short hours he had come quite far, and his mana was growing at an impressive rate. If he could get his profession level to match his class level, things would be going incredibly well.

The sheer amount of stats he was able to gain per level now was absolutely insane. Even if professions leveled up slower than classes, the tradeoff was more than worth it.

A profession didn't need to expose itself to death and injury like a class did. He could gain stats from the safety and comfort of this place without worry or fear.

Aside from the Gordian meltdown just down the hall, Luke reminded himself.

Aside from *that*, he had everything he could want for the short-term. Food, water, shelter, and something to occupy his mind.

As Luke worked on the satchels, his clear and precise hand marked out runes with the [Stele]. He used up a trickle of earth flux. As earth flux was the most common flux he had access to, he figured he might as well use that up first.

Three more flux satchels were created, but in order to make dark or light, he required sixfold flux. Dark and light flux designs were created from the combined aspected essence of the basic elements. And, if Luke was being honest with himself, far beyond his current skill.

You have successfully crafted [Flux Satchel (Water)]. Extra experience gained for crafting a recipe above your level. Bonus experience gained for first time crafting completion.

You have successfully crafted [Flux Satchel (Ice)]. Extra experience gained for crafting a recipe above your level. Bonus experience gained for first time crafting completion.

You have successfully crafted [Flux Satchel (Lightning)]. Extra experience gained for crafting a recipe above your level. Bonus experience gained for first time crafting completion.

Level Up! Your [Apprentice Runegraver] Profession has reached Level 4.

Stat points earned: +6 Arcane, +6 Wisdom, +2 Dexterity, +2 Perception, +2 Free Points.

Just one more level, Luke thought, wondering what new skills his profession would have for him. It had taken a lot of work to get to level 4, but in the grand scheme of things, it had only taken him a day and change if he counted practicing the runes he was using.

The 2 free points went to Wisdom, putting him at a total of 690 MP. It was quickly catching up to his 800 HP, and had long since eclipsed his 370 SP.

“I guess I’m a quasi-mage now.”

With several small satchels of flux at his disposal, Luke returned to the workshop. He had a new rune to create now that he had the ingredients for threefold flux, a steppingstone ingredient for higher order runes.

It was without a doubt beyond his skill level to accomplish, but it wasn’t an astronomical gap like sixfold flux would be.

He was eager to see how much experience a proper rune would award. The satchels had been relatively basic. If he was successful at this, it would bring him one step closer to mending the Gordian.

From there, he could explore the outside world and... Luke paused, realizing he had barely thought about his friends for some time. Though, he had to admit calling his coworkers friends was a bit of a stretch.

He wondered how they were doing. He didn’t even know if most of them were alive anymore. Did Johnathan Case’s optimism put him in harm’s way because of Marcy’s schemes? How was Janet’s study of magic coming along? Did Ed’s ambition end up pulling him ahead of everyone else?

Luke couldn’t help but be curious if any of them had evolved their classes or picked up a profession like him. He somehow doubted one of them had the Precursor Marks necessary to get into a Dungeon like this.

There was no real way of finding out short of seeing them again, and Luke didn’t know under what circumstances that would be. He wasn’t sure if they would regard him as an enemy or an ally.

For all he knew, they could have broken off from Henry and Marcy’s group and found a sanctuary elsewhere.

Shaking his head, Luke got to work on the preparation for his new rune, using his recently gathered elemental flux.

Runes were functional magical symbols that allowed a practitioner to manipulate matter and magic around them. Luke was only on his first steps, but he had absorbed the material like a sponge and practiced obsessively until he knew the first foundational runes back and front.

Using his [Ambidextrous] skill, he had been able to practice drawing runes with both hands simultaneously. It had sped things along considerably.

He could have drawn them in his sleep.

It was a trivial matter to use a joining rune to bind the fire, earth, and wind flux into [Threefold Flux (Crude)].

Drawing the rune on a piece of linen paper, then carefully depositing the three types of flux at each cardinal point, Luke could then use [Instill Mana] to power up the joining rune.

It looked ridiculously easy, but the struggle going on inside of Luke was monumental. He had expected some difficulty, but nothing like this.

The amount of mana he instilled into the rune was constantly changing, . He wasn't very skilled at it and had precious little practice.

Tiny colored silvery granules of flux jittered as if the paper was vibrating. Bouncing like glitter, the flux tried to draw together. Luke had overcompensated with the amount of mana he was instilling and instead of a slow and steady pull toward the rune, the grains were jerked forward suddenly.

While the rune was drawn perfectly thanks to Luke's high Dexterity and his practice, what he had failed to understand was how strenuous the instilling process was.

With uneven pulses of mana being instilled into the rune, the flux positioned at each cardinal direction joined haphazardly.

Sometimes only the fire and earth flux fused, sometimes it was just the earth and the wind. Less than a tenth of the time it was all three, resulting in a very poor showing and a near failure in Luke's eyes.

By the time he had a thimbleful of threefold flux, he was sweating buckets, gasping for air, and had the mother of all migraines. His mana had dropped to nearly nothing, and as he scraped the bottom of the barrel, his control over the rune dropped to nearly nothing.

You have successfully crafted [Threefold Flux (Crude)]. Extra experience gained for crafting a recipe above your level. Bonus experience gained for first time crafting completion.

Panting, Luke waited for the level up notification, then realized it wasn't coming and sank into the chair nearby.

A glance at his mana told him he needed to give himself some time to regenerate. He wasn't going to be doing much of anything with those few droplets of mana flowing in his veins.

"I didn't think that'd be so hard."

Creating the rune with the [Stele] had been the easy part. His lack of control and poor understanding of his own mana and its limitations meant that he had much further to go than he could have imagined.

"No wonder even the System tried to warn me that this profession was difficult."

If it had just been memorizing and perfecting the drawing of runes, their placement, and the quasi-code of their use, Luke would have been a master in under a year.

But now he was seeing just how far he had to go until he was simply embarrassingly bad rather than catastrophically bad.

Looking over his flux reserves, Luke realized with a rush of private shame that he had used up over half of his supplies.

Leaning back in the wooden chair, Luke looked up at the boards of the ceiling. “It’s a good thing the storeroom has so much junk in it.”

It looked like he would be spending a lot of time there.