

# CHAPTER 142: THE HEALING SPRING II

The hours went by as Sam went over his skill ups, of which there were plenty. Nearly everything he had used in holding the line between the Dungeon Core and the ghostly crew working on the Mana Engine saw significant growth.

However, the first things that caught his attention were not his skills, but his affinities. They were harder to acquire, and as a result, harder to improve.

It didn't hurt that they made a rather substantial improvement to any mana, whether it was an Art, a spell, or otherwise, utilizing that type of mana.

**Your Void Mana Affinity has reached (★☆☆ Uncommon II)**

**Your Metal Mana Affinity has reached (★☆☆ Uncommon)**

No surprise that his Metal mana increased, [Heavy Blade] utilized a lot of it and he had employed that ability whenever he could.

What *was* surprising, however, was that his Metal mana affinity had jumped straight to Uncommon.

Sam had thought the tiers were something like levels, increasing up to Tier V or thereabouts before finally hitting the next rarity, but that didn't seem to be the case for Metal affinity.

He looked back over his notifications and found that he was correct. There was nothing else he missed. His Metal affinity simply shot up from Common II to Uncommon in one go.

*Maybe I should rethink what those tiers mean then,* he thought to himself.

Now that he had [Heavy Blade], and [Essence of Escha], both Void and Metal affinity were going to be far more useful to him than ever before.

He was glad that Escha was a type of Void mana rather than requiring an entirely new type of affinity.

Skipping the multitude of skill ups, Sam found a new ability. While it wasn't useful in *battle*, it was nevertheless something that Sam enjoyed quite a lot once he realized he could do it.

All it took was a little thought to condense the skill ups and level ups into a single set.

He could view the first and the last, or simply the last, which was his preference. That way whenever he gained a truckload of Experience, he didn't have to feel like he was reading one of those EULA that every game, app, and social media platform required you to look at before you clicked accept anyway because... really, what was the alternative?

**Your [Armor Foundation] Skill has reached (★☆☆ Uncommon I).**

**Your [Rally] Ability has reached (★☆☆ Uncommon).**

**Your [Endure] Trait has reached (★☆☆ Uncommon II).**

**Your [Power Stance] Ability has reached (★☆☆ Uncommon III).**

**Your [Battle Tactics] Skill has reached (★☆☆ Uncommon).**

**Your [Armored Aura] Trait has reached (★☆☆ Uncommon).**

**Your [Swordsmanship Foundation] Skill has reached (★☆☆ Uncommon III).**

Your [Traversal] Skill has reached (★★ Uncommon).

Your [Max HP Up] Trait has reached (★ Common).

Your [Heavy Blade] Ability has reached (★★ Uncommon III).

Your [Void: Scour] Art has reached (★★ Uncommon).

Your [Void: Smother] Art has reached (★★ Uncommon).

Your [Heavy Weapon Handling] Skill has reached (★★ Unusual I).

As if recognizing the skill increases, a whirlpool of knowledge funneled into Sam's head. More than anything, he gained a greater intrinsic understanding as to how to balance his massively higher stats with fighting with his sword, armor, and Void mana.

Taking a peek at his HP, Sam saw that the increase of his [Max HP Up] trait did actually increase his HP. It wasn't much, not anymore at least, but the roughly 50 HP more was welcome all the same.

Sam didn't bother trying to figure out how it had changed. In the end, all that mattered was that his HP was higher and, therefore, he was even harder to kill.

The most impressive skill up of all, however, was his [Heavy Weapon Handling]. He could practically feel a bond between himself and the [Dullahan Greatsword] now.

Sam could see all the ways in which he could improve, and surprisingly, a lot of it had to do with wielding the weapon one-handed. Something that he was surprised he had been able to do. That realization left an indelible mark upon his soul.

The skill distilled information into his brain as if it had always been there, and it took a while to sort out where that line of previous ignorance met current knowledge.

Sam was so eager to try out the new things he'd unlocked that he almost tried to get up from the pool, surprising himself by rising halfway before he stopped.

Raiko rested outside the Sacred Tree's spring, eyes shut, legs folded in a meditative posture. She cracked open one eye at his movement, then shut it again when he didn't persist in trying to leave the healing pool.

The Ninja didn't appear to be completely recovered, so he wasn't sure why she also wasn't in the pool.

He wouldn't necessarily mind the company. Was he really that much of a drain on the runestones?

Komachi didn't look to be in good shape either, but the cat was staying out of the pool too. She watched him anxiously, and his concern deepened.

It didn't seem like his best friend had been handling Sam's near-death experience well.

Sam leaned his head toward her and the British shorthair pressed against him, affectionately butting her head on his and nuzzling lovingly. She purred loudly and Sam took some comfort in the familiar noise.

He wished he could pick her up, but his arms still ached from trying to get out of the pool.

Looking over his skill ups once more, Sam noticed one more major change. At least, as far as the skill itself was concerned. His [Power Stance] now could hold 4 stacks of [Fury] instead of 3.

**[Power Stance]**

**(Sword Stance) (F-Class)**

**(★★ Uncommon III)**

*A simple but aggressive stance that builds stacks of [Fury], providing you with the opportunity to enhance your attacks at the cost of [Fury] stacks. Through your force of will, you have altered this Stance to fit your fighting style. You may now generate [Fury] for any normal attack, unleashing your built-up [Fury] on one of the Power Arts listed below, augmenting them depending on the amount of [Fury] expended.*

Maximum [Fury] Stacks: 4

Power Arts:

[Shockwave], [Whirling Slash], [Reaping the Willows]

*Do things only improve when they hit the next rarity?* Sam wondered. It would make sense, but then why the fuss over the tiers?

Sam frowned and eventually gave up. There was something else he was missing; he was sure of it. He *had* felt stronger and more knowledgeable with each and every ability or skill that increased in tier.

It couldn't be that it meant nothing, but he arrived at the same conclusion from earlier. In the grand scheme of things, the only thing that truly mattered was the steady march of progress.

The details were, ultimately, immaterial. Gaining power was the goal, and he was doing that in spades.

Better, even, was that through his efforts—reckless and suicidal though they often were—he was able to bring his friends and allies along as well.

Not for the first time, he missed his best friend. He wondered how Kale was doing. If he and the twins, Chris and Kylie, were okay.

It didn't make him comfortable knowing that the last Raiko had seen of them, they were with Darren. The scheming coward who had cut down that bridge back on the starting island in an attempt to kill Sam and save his own craven hide.

With Kale, Chris, and Kylie staying near Darren, things didn't bode well for their safety. But he had faith in his friends. Sam could only hope that they had gotten free of Darren's control.

And now that Lenal was reunited with her people—as much as the living and dead can be united that is—it was time to reunite Raiko with *her* best friend.

Sam could hardly remember the little otter she called Haman, but she always kept a small doll of him on her person. He doubted she realized how often she touched it or stroked it.

The quest he'd received would be the next thing he focused on... right after he could walk.

With all of his skills and levels accounted for, Sam still had three important tasks before him: assign bonus points, pick new Swordsman abilities, and saving the best for last, decide whether he wanted to take Blacksmith as his Profession.

No matter what, it didn't seem likely Sam was going to find a Profession with as many perks as Blacksmith down the road.

The bonus points were easy enough.

His Legend, Voidknight, no longer gave him any. His Path never had, and so that meant he only got 8 bonus points from the 4 Swordsman levels.

Still, bonus points were bonus points, and he wasn't about to let them rot a moment longer.

Looking at his [Status], Sam struggled not to make a sound at the sharp rise in his stats. His Strength and Vigor were insane now. Both of them cresting over 300 before any equipment bonuses.

Considering his Talents for each were at 42, he was gaining nearly 100 extra points just from Talents alone.

*I knew they'd start to shine eventually!*

Naturally, 8 points in either Strength or Vigor would go much farther than any other stat, with the exception of Arcane and Insight. Owing to the bump of 2 Talents per Void level, those both had 53 Talents apiece.

Which meant any Arcane or Insight he gained would be increased by 53%. A shocking amount, considering Sam didn't have to do anything to receive the extra stats.

And yet... now that his HP was a staggering 6,402, his MP of 1,660 had once again dipped below a third of his HP.

*I don't think I'll ever be able to increase it enough,* he thought to himself.

It was almost annoying enough to stop trying altogether. But to do that would not only be tantamount to admitting defeat, it would mean his MP would only rise whenever his Legend did. His Legend gave 2 points to every stat, and that simply wasn't enough.

With his new [Essence of Escha] effectively doubling his Void Arts, Sam had even more reason to use mana than ever before. And their curious interaction with enemies was one he was very keen on testing out once he was able.

For now, however, Sam had to put the points wholesale into Mind to increase his MP. It had the added benefit of increasing his magical defenses and debuff resistances, which was always a nice bonus.

Sam paused for a moment. Where had he learned that?

It was almost as if, similar to skills, he gained more information on the stats the higher they climbed. Yet, even with 100 Mind, he felt like he was just scratching the surface of what he knew about the stat.

As much as those 8 points of Mind could have turned into an equivalent of 12 for either Insight or Arcane, those two stats would rise anyway with every few Void levels as their Talents climbed higher and higher.

Ultimately, that meant that Sam didn't have to do much to get higher Insight and Arcane.

As it was, his Mind was at 100 before he put the 8 points into it while his Insight was 82. Impressive considering he had hardly put any points into Insight whatsoever while he had veritably dumped points into Mind.

Sam looked at his [Status] again, happy to see his current HP was still ticking upward, and the 8 points in Mind had served their purpose.

[Status]

**Name:** Samuel Hunter

**Race:** Human

**Legend:** [Voidknight (Lv.20 - Unranked)]

**Job:** [Swordsman (Lv.30 - Copper)]

**Profession:** [N/A (Lv.0 - Unranked)]

**Path:** [Void (Lv.30 - Copper)]



Health(HP): [773/6,402]

Mana(MP): [800/1,806]

### Attunements

[Void Mana] (F-Class Apocalypse Gate) (★★★★ Legendary V)

### Affinities

[Fire Mana] (F-Class) (★ Common I)

[Metal Mana] (F-Class) (★☆ Uncommon)

[Void Mana] (F-Class) (★☆ Uncommon II)

### Physical Stats

Strength(STR): 319 (+22)

Dexterity(DEX): 117 (+8)

Agility(AGI): 119 (+3)

Vigor(VIG): 317 (+18)

Awareness(AWR): 52 (+18)

### Magical Stats

Arcane(ARC): 64

Control(CTL): 43

Resonance(RSN): 45

Mind(MND): 109

**Insight(INS): 82 (+17)**

Still, he'd need over 2,000 MP just to get back to a third of his HP and that clearly wasn't happening without a very large amount of help in the form of more bonus points or equipment that could augment his MP.

So far, it seemed largely down to accessories that increased HP or MP. That made him all the more interested in opening up his rewards for clearing the Dungeon.

Once his HP was finally full, that was. And given its current state, that was going to be a while.

Sam sighed, leaned his head back, and decided to rest before he took a stab at his new Swordsman abilities. Just a quick moment to shut his eyes and then he'd be back at it.