

The first step in creating my demo loadout for this Endbringer slaying army was to work through the long list of options I had compiled over the last few weeks. Most of these ideas were barely thought-out scribbles, things I came up with to demonstrate my flexibility while also showcasing my mass production capabilities. While I wouldn't be mass-producing this batch, I needed to go into the design process with the intent of mass production, since working backwards from a ritual that only produced one piece of equipment would be much more difficult than ensuring it worked from the start.

Essentially, for the best and most efficient effect, I needed to design each ritual and enchantment as something that could be mass-produced. It meant more time now, but it also meant a more realistic and immediately useful design.

That actually brought up a good point, namely that I needed to unlock more flexible enchantments as soon as possible. I was familiar with several enchantments from my larger subject, such as druidcraft. I could even bend and flex many of them to achieve interesting effects, especially with the application of magical mass production, since that heavily modified and expanded all of my other subjects in line with its purpose. Despite that, I was still far behind my enchantment abilities when compared to rituals or spell crafting.

Most likely, enchantment design was going to be my next topic. In fact...

I closed and focused inward, immediately finding my connection to the Marvelous Mage system. Sure enough, sitting there, just waiting to be used, was a lone extra charge. I had earned it a while back for assisting in the Endbringer aftermath, since it was the only part I actually participated in. Previously, it had acted as insurance in case my first purchase for my last cycle wasn't what I needed, but now it was just sitting there. Having a spare point to throw around was... nice, but right now, having some more enchanting knowledge was more important.

I debated for a minute or two on how exactly I should define the charge, before settling on "Enchantment Design and Crafting." After that, it didn't take long to push the charge into the subject, and for knowledge to spread. It was far from the three levels of ritual crafting I had, but that was to be expected. Instead, I gained knowledge of basic enchanting, most of which was below what I had learned from my other subjects. Mass production connected to it, of course, pulling some ideas for enchanting multiple items at the same time, as well as putting multiple enchantments on one object at once.

"Well... It's a start," I said, leaning back in my chair, my notebook on my lap.

"Will it be enough?" Alya asked, sitting in a semi-corporeal form nearby.

"No, I'll need to at least put another level in," I responded. "Probably even bump it up to level three. Then I can focus on esoteric things for my next cycles, like barrier magic or siege magic, stuff like that."

On top of making equipment for people, Olivia also pointed out this morning that creating larger magic objects, things like heavy weapons, vehicles, deployable defenses, could all be extremely useful, especially if, or rather when, we "tested" the army on S-class threats, like Nilbong.

Not only would firing a magic cannon at Leviathan be *awesome*, but it would also make my dimensional partitioning levels useful. I could imagine a trio of soldiers climbing up to a rooftop, pulling a cannon and some defensive equipment out of a messenger bag, then blasting chunks off of their target. Of course, in order for that to happen, the previous pattern of getting multiple cycles of focus on the same "random" purchase would need to continue.

Either way, my options were particularly limited for now by my lack of enchantment knowledge, but even the low-level one I unlocked was giving me some ideas. I would do the best with what I had at the moment, and then push for time so that the next cycle could turn over before starting the official batch. Either that, or make sure to do as much as possible for the next quest my system pushed me towards.

Once I had explored my new limited branch of knowledge, I finally got to work. My first target was a pair of leather boots. There was nothing special about them, they were a simple pair of mass-produced combat boots with steel toes and everything. I could have gone with something more bespoke, like something hand-made or well-worn, but I wasn't likely to get that option for mass production later, so it was better to avoid that for now.

I debated on what I would put on the boots for a moment, but eventually I settled on the beginnings of a solid mover rating, since I had plans to re-create the dexterity cuffs I had made for Panacea. They were quite potent and would take an already trained individual and elevate them to the mover one or two category on their own.

Combined with boots of sure footing and another mover aspect, that would turn them into a mover three, maybe even four, depending on how powerful I could make them.

I spent about two hours puzzling out my options, before finally settling on the simplest choice. I would crank the shore-footed aspect of the boots until they could act like boots of spider climb, as well as increasing the user's speed. This would be a potent combination, but would ultimately have a hard drawback. While I was ultimately able to triple the user's speed, and let the boots climb even upside down, the draw of power ultimately meant they had a time limit. Both abilities drew from the same source of power, a circle of gold and rubies I fused onto the boot's collar.

The power source was my first custom enchantment, and was just a general, slowly recharging storage vessel for power. The ritual that I layered onto the boots would drain from it, twice as fast if they use both abilities at once.

The stable foot ability was passive, while the spider climb would drain the power from the ruby. And if you were activating any level of the increased speed, it would drain even faster. The duration of the charge would vary depending on the intensity of use, but the system would not break down due to overuse, it was too stable for that.

When I was finally done with the design, I quickly set up the ritual, which would have technically allowed me to run twenty-four boots at once. Combined with my iron chalk, I could have made seventy-two of them in just over an hour and a half, since each ritual took forty-five minutes to charge. I just used my blood-enhanced chalk, which worked fine.

Setting the now-completed boots aside, I got to work on the companion piece to the boots, the second part of the loadout's mover rating, the dexterity-enhancing cuffs. For those, I got a little creative. I didn't want there to be any loose jewelry in this loadout, so I bought a pair of leather wrist wraps, which I fused with double bands of silver. With some finagling, I was able to add a slight spatial awareness to the leather cuffs. It wasn't quite a danger sense, more like a subtle peripheral sense, like when you see something past the corner of your eye, but now all around you. After testing it, I almost scrapped it, as it was a very bizarre sensation. However, after wearing it for about an hour, my brain started to make sense of the sensation, and it became less distracting.

I imagine that with training, the extra perception would eventually become normal. I also assumed that tying it to myself with blood would make it even less obtrusive, but unfortunately, that wasn't an option with these creations. Considering I would be making several thousand pieces of equipment at the very least, tying each one to an individual person was not something I was capable of.

The new leather cuffs took about an hour to redesign, and another thirty minutes to ritualize. By then, I was getting a bit bored, so I took a break for lunch. As I was eating, Kali stopped by and invited me out to see the dogs, where she used me as a guinea pig to help them get used to people. The progress she had already made was incredible, especially considering that, in normal circumstances, most of them, if not all of them, would have had to be put down.

Of course, I did get bitten several times, but they were the ones I ended up needing to heal, since my skin was about as tough as tungsten. They had learned their lesson, and it was clear that Kali was a significant influence on them, as they all seemed happy and healthy.

When I was done with my break, I decided to put off working on another project for the Endbringer army and take a crack at making something to fly. Taylor's request for a flight had reignited my own previously tamped-down drive, so I pulled out a new, fresh page in my notebook and got to work.

I had already previously experimented with several ideas, but none of them ever balanced out for a ritual. The problem was that, while it was easy to say, creating a method of flight was extremely complicated. I could easily develop a ritualized piece of equipment to fling myself into the air. I could also come up with something to fling myself in various other directions. I could slow myself, speed myself up, glide, dive, and pretty much anything else you could imagine. I even had a few spells that could do those things.

I just couldn't do them all at once in a cohesive object. And any spell I made to do all of those things would be so mana-intensive, it would drain me in seconds. Considering it would

take considerably longer to cast such a complicated and power-intensive spell than I could keep it active for, even *with* quick cast, it wasn't exactly worth it.

I had spells like slow fall to save me from things like falling, anyway.

Still, there *had* to be a way to work everything together. Flying was such a huge tactical advantage, just giving up on it because it was hard to come up with one ritual...

"Oh, goddammit," I muttered to myself, Alya looking over at me with a raised eyebrow.

"What is it?"

"I had the solution all along," I said, shaking my head, rubbing my eyes. "I couldn't crack flying because it was too complicated to put into one object, and if I put it into multiple, it was too difficult to control. If only I had a scalably complicated control mechanism capable of complicated magical manipulations."

"... A golem core?" Alya asked, and I needed.

"Exactly," I responded. "It means the final product won't be small, so no rings of flight, but a small backpack of flight? Very possible."

Still annoyed at my oversight, I went through my notes and pulled out my older attempts. These were a treasure trove of mechanics that would work perfectly, at least now that I could separate them out from one ritual into several.

Unfortunately, even with my solution, the process remained complex. While I had figured out how to actually make the system work, I was now working with a lot of moving parts, a difficulty I didn't often encounter with rituals. Additionally, my notes didn't contain all the answers, and as I worked on the design, I realized that I still hadn't uncovered every problem that needed solving. Still, now that I had cracked the overall issue, each new problem just meant adding a new module to the list.

The sun was starting to sink by the time I was finally ready to give the process a shot, making sure I had enough materials to complete each stage twice, once for myself and another time for Weaver.

I started with the most straightforward and most robust part of the system, the thrust. I was hard-pressed to find one cohesive group of natural things that created thrust, so I was forced to use a variety. Bug wings, flight feathers, and wing bones, as well as the internal parts of a squid, specifically the siphon, which was where they squirted water from to propel themselves forward. It was a somewhat dense ritual, stretching the concepts a bit further than I was usually willing to, but with some layering and the inclusion of precious stones, I was able to draw enough power from the ritual to make it work.

After that, the process continued far into the night, first working on a ritual for shifting in pitch, and then one for moving in yaw. Initially, I was going to keep those together, but I quickly realized that I would have considerably better control and potency if I kept them separate. I then

needed to create a function that would secure the equipment to the user in a way that spread out the load, so that when I activated it, I wasn't yanked around by whatever I fused all of these things to.

Finally, after several unforeseen additions, including how the golem would read my intentions, I designed the golem brain required to control it all. It was very complicated, requiring nearly two dozen layers that used a good chunk of my gemstones and a fair bit of silver to refine the control, something most of my golems didn't have, since I couldn't really spare that much precious metal.

When the brain was finished, I finally attached all the ritualized parts to a thick leather belt. I then used my skills in leather craft, gained from arcane focus crafting, to secure and cover them. The result was a sort of leather travel or utility belt, with bags and sleeves around the front and back, but none of the small bags opened. The final step was to ritualize and connect it all together with a final enchantment, as well as Weaver's blood. That was thankfully pretty simple, so my single charge in enchanting was happy to show me how.

I then proceed to assemble a belt for myself, this time using my leather spell crystal holster. I was forced to cut some of the crystal slots out to make room, but that was a sacrifice I was happy to make. With the ability to fly, I was likely to teleport around a bit less anyway.

When I was finally done duplicating the finishing process on my own version, I quickly wrapped the belt around my waist, feeling the connection lock in almost instantly and securely fasten it to me. While I couldn't feel it constantly, I knew that the forces set into the pieces of the belt were now firmly anchored to my body.

With a grin, I looked over at Alya, who was watching with a raised eyebrow and crossed arms.

"Wish me luck?"

"Good luck," She responded with a nod. "Break a leg?"

I chuckled, before focusing on the new item, letting out a slow breath before jumping into the air. I could feel the sudden thrust coming from the belt, pushing me up through the branches, toward the faint light of the sky above. I could see it getting closer, the thrust pushing me upward...

Until I slammed into a deceptively thick branch, hidden by the leaves. I, of course, smashed through it, but the force was enough to spin me out of control. I spun through the branches until I hit something else, something solid enough to stop me completely, falling through the canopy until I smashed into the ground with a bone-rattling shaking thud.

I lay there for a moment, feeling stupid and a bit dizzy from all the spinning. When I opened my eyes, both Kali and Alya were looking down at me.

"Well... you didn't break a leg?" Alya pointed out, prompting me to collapse back with a groan.