

Hunter 121

Chapter 121: You know, I'm something of a sage myself

After a long and very fruitful conversation, he was finally reminded by the old alchemist that he still had notifications pending. One notification to be more accurate. This one due to unlocking another available skill upon reaching level 60 in his profession.

Prodigious Alchemist of the Malefic Viper profession skills available

Jake was honestly quite excited. The last few skills gained from his profession had all been excellent, the most recent being Scales of the Malefic Viper. It was surprisingly long ago he got it, all the way back before he even fought the Great White Stag.

Now he had finally managed to unlock another. With great vigor, he jumped in, and with fervor, saw the first skill.

[Offering (Common)] – Offer an item to your chosen god, allowing them to better hear your pleas for a short period.

And it was shit. Seriously? For all his trials and tribulation, he got a shitty prayer skill? He was pretty sure the Viper could already hear whenever he did something akin to a prayer, so why the hell would he need a skill for it? The rarity alone was enough to put him off - the description was the bare minimum, telling nothing of value.

He knew that only five new skills were added at a maximum every time he unlocked the possibility of getting a new skill. Perhaps he had spent a bit too much time around gods recently. He could only imagine that it had pushed out better and more useable skills.

Moving on with great speed, he got to the next one, which was at least a rare skill.

[Ritualism of the Malefic Viper (Rare)] – To do a ritual is to pay tribute. To give your life for the Malefic One, an honor. Grants the Alchemist knowledge of different rituals pertaining to the Malefic Viper. The ritual's effect is based on the nature of the ritual performed and the materials used during the ritual. Stat bonuses are applied according to the nature of the ritual performed.

... Had the system finally gotten a sense of humor and begun joking with him? The talk of ritual sacrifices was a joke. A joke. Yet Jake was a bit suspicious at the mere existence of the skill. Maybe it was just something all gods had?

Yeah, he assumed all gods would have fanatical followers that went overboard. It was the damn Viper's fault for speaking about sacrifices and such, to begin with. A horrible joke turned into a horrible skill that Jake, of course, had no intention of taking at all.

Everything about it was just ominous. No way he was actually going to return to earth and begin some insane cult with human sacrifices to a god named Villy, with whom he drinks beers with on weekends. As he said during the talk of sacrificial rituals earlier: fuck that.

Moving on down the list, the next one was epic-rarity, and... well, this one was good. Real good.

[Methodology of Duskleaf (Epic)] – Taught by a god who stands at the pinnacle of alchemy, you have begun to understand his methodology. Grants the alchemist a fragment of the knowledge of the god Duskleaf, increases your understanding of alchemy and mana, as well as overall control-techniques during all concoctions or brewings. Allows the Alchemist to make creations he does not have the associated crafting skill for. (does not receive stat effectiveness bonuses without associated skill).

“Hey Duskleaf, guess what?” he said to the god who looked to be daydreaming. Probably about alchemy.

“Hm?”

“I got a skill from you. Methodology of Duskleaf. It’s even Epic and has quite the descri-“

“I forbid you from taking it!” Duskleaf exclaimed loudly, the air slightly trembling at his voice. “No way! Choose something else! Anything but that!”

“I don’t know; it looks pretty good...” Jake teased. However, there was quite a bit of truth in what he said. The skill was good. Really good. It seemed like a skill that would just improve nearly everything during a concoction and brewing, and it would even allow him to make things he didn’t have the crafting skill for, such as flasks.

He had been told that he could anyway; it was just harder. In fact, anyone could still do anything. Jake, if he so wished, could pick up a hammer and make a sword. Of course, the sword would suck, but the system would recognize his creation if it met the bare minimum requirements. He would also not receive any of the bonuses associated with having a profession linked to crafting swords, nor any experience of any kind.

This skill would allow him to make flasks far easier without the associated crafting skill as it would allow him to get the system-assistance and instinctive knowledge. He would very likely still want the actual crafting skill at some point, but it was a good temporary solution. Besides, Jake knew he wouldn't have enough skill and time soon to get all the crafting skills.

Transmutation, pill-making, flasks, powder, elixirs, and so on were just a few of the things he could learn to craft as an alchemist. And those were just the ones he already knew about. He knew there was far more out there. He wasn't sure when he would ever get the skill selections for the skills at the current pace.

Currently, he only got a skill every 10 levels. It was every 5 levels before the first class evolution, so he had a strong suspicion it would be even less than every 10 levels after his next evolution. And on top of that, his biggest issue was that he often just had better skills - this very skill-picking-session being one such situation.

"... therefore you should refrain from picking it as it would have implications that-"

"Fine, I won't. Sheesh," Jake said as he exited his inner thoughts, noticing that Duskleaf had kept talking throughout his entire inner monologue.

"Too bad, you just missed the perfect chance to get your first faithful," the Malefic Viper laughed in the background.

Jake just shook his head as he moved on to the fourth skill available. Another one of epic-rarity and this one also related to the Malefic Viper. Though perhaps not precisely what he was looking for.

[Dark Beacon of the Malefic Viper (Epic)] – As the holder of a True Blessing of the Malefic Viper, you're his champion among the mortals. Allows the Alchemist to channel the aura of the Malefic Viper to more easily subdue others. Allows the Alchemist to guide others towards the path of the Malefic Viper. Forcefully or otherwise. Skill effect is based on wisdom and willpower. The larger disparity between your power and your targets, the larger the effect.

Is the system set on my becoming a cult leader or what? Jake thought to himself after reading the description. Also, what the hell did the skill even have to do with alchemy, to begin with? Maybe related to teaching others alchemy? It would take some serious mental gymnastics for it to make sense. Then again, it wasn't like the prior skills were necessarily alchemy-related.

The only slightly positive thing that he could see was its possible combat applications, like an AOE aura to suppress weaker enemies or crowds. But thinking on it further, didn't his new Gaze of the Apex Hunter do something similar to that? Just by sight instead of a constant aura.

Also, the wording on it was just too creepy. Talking about subduing others, forcing them into following the Malefic Viper and such. It was giving off clear 'nope'-vibes all around. Jake did not, in any way, shape, or form, have the desire to become any kind of leader. Despite him having a 'Lord' title now.

He considered asking the Viper about the skill but ultimately decided not to. He hadn't asked or shown any interest in the skills Jake had been offered. It was Jake's choice to make, be they suboptimal or not. Though in many cases, the outright best skill was just clear from the beginning. It turns out this time was no different, with the final skill being a clear standout.

[Sagacity of the Malefic Viper (Ancient)] – To hold just a fragment of the wisdom of a Primordial is more than most ever achieve. Much less to be personally taught that knowledge directly by the god himself. Allows the Alchemist to peek into a fragment of the Malefic Viper's Records to seek his knowledge. Grants the Alchemist of the Malefic Viper far better understanding of mana and of most affinities. Allows the Alchemist to make creations he does not have the associated crafting skill for (does not

receive stat effectiveness bonuses without associated skill). Passively provides 1 Wisdom per level in Alchemist of the Malefic Viper. May your search for knowledge be as inexhaustible as the Malefic One.

Once again, a long-ass description. A tendency Jake was beginning to see with the ancient-rarity skills granted by the Malefic Viper. Like with the Scales, Palate, and Blood, this one provided wisdom. The pattern was clear, and Jake was also beginning to suspect that some of his other skills would be similar when upgraded to ancient.

But to focus on the actual skill in question... there was a lot to say, and yet not that much. It was awesome. Wisdom was an excellent stat when it came to alchemy, and the skill overall appeared to in many ways to just be a better version of the Methodology of Duskleaf skill. There were some minor differences, but the crafting without associated skills-part was there. It actually made him feel a bit sad for Duskleaf, but on the other hand, he had been forbidden from taking his skill.

Duskleaf's skill provided a bonus while doing alchemy to mana control, while this one just granted a better understanding of mana and affinities without directly having to do with the alchemy. He was also interested in the 'peer into a fragment to see Records of the Malefic Viper' part. If he had to guess, then that fragment would be the drop of blood he now carried within him.

In the end, there was no contest as to which skill he would choose. The 63 bonus wisdom alone made the Sagacity of the Malefic Viper just too tempting to pass up. He found it interesting that he would now effectively get 4 more stats per level in his profession than otherwise stated with the skill. He had quite honestly lucked out hardcore when it came to stumbling across that challenge dungeon.

Or maybe it was the subtle guiding hand of the system, fate, destiny, or whatever else mumbo-jumbo people believed in post-system. He didn't care about things he couldn't influence or control, so he just decided to be grateful for what he had gotten.

He didn't even consult the two gods before he picked the skill. Something he should maybe have done as they were both surprised when he knelt down to the floor holding his head. He had gotten many skills over the brief period he had been in the system, but this one was by far the worst when it came to knowledge imprinted in his mind.

It felt like hours as he was assaulted by a constant stream of information downloaded directly into him. There was so much he quite frankly couldn't contain it all. The entire process took nearly an hour before the influx and pain subsided.

My fucking head, he cursed as he tried to go through whatever knowledge was just forced upon him. To his absolute bewilderment, he found barely anything. It was just a few wisps of knowledge about mana control and the nature of different affinities, most of which he already knew through prior testing or educated guesses.

Instead, it appeared that the knowledge was somehow locked away. Locked away within him. More accurately, inside that drop of blood he had absorbed. It seems that absorbing that drop of blood is the only reason I could get that overpowered skill to begin with.

It also made the description make more sense - the thing about peeking into a fragment of his knowledge. Just picking it up didn't give him the full view but was more akin to downloading Wikipedia. Just because it was downloaded didn't mean he wouldn't actually have to study and understand it.

"That was a doozy," Jake muttered, inadvisably opening up himself to question from the two gods.

"Got a nice skill, I reckon?" the Viper asked.

“Sagacity of the Malefic Viper. I would explain what it does, but I guess you already know,” Jake answered.

“Well, as the skill says, I am something of a sage myself. Surprised you unlocked that skill so early, though. The first one to get it for many eras, and I think the first one ever to get it at E-grade. I think you’ll come to learn it is quite the skill.”

“Glad to see that I can even surprise a sage with my humble actions,” he said, before turning to Duskleaf, a faux look of grief on his face. “I am so sorry I didn’t pick your skill. I promise to get one with your name in it next time if possible.”

“Just... don’t,” Duskleaf said, heaving a sigh of relief when he realized it was just a joke.

After talking a bit with the two, Jake decided to finally look at his status menu. However, before doing so, he dumped all his points into perception to truly see how far he had come.

Status

Name: Jake Thayne

Race: [Human (E) – lvl 73]

Class: [Ambitious Hunter – lvl 83]

Profession: [Prodigious Alchemist of the Malefic Viper – lvl 63]

Health Points (HP): 10030/10030

Mana Points (MP): 11350/11350

Stamina: 8024/8030

Stats

Strength: 629

Agility: 877

Endurance: 803

Vitality: 1003

Toughness: 650

Wisdom: 908

Intelligence: 442

Perception: 1689

Willpower: 550

Free points: 0

Titles:[Forerunner of the New World], [Bloodline Patriarch],[Holder of a Primordial's True Blessing], [Dungeoneer V], [Dungeon Pioneer V], [Legendary Prodigy],[Prodigious Slayer of the Mighty], [Kingslayer], [Nobility: Lord], [Progenitor of the 93rd Universe]

Class Skills:[Basic One-Handed Weapons (Inferior)], [Advanced Stealth (Common)], [Advanced Archery (Common)], [Basic Twin Fang Style (Uncommon)], [Basic Shadow Vault of Umbra (Uncommon)], [Splitting Arrow (Uncommon)], [Hunter's Tracking (Uncommon)], [Big Game Hunter (Rare)], [Infused Powershot (Rare)], [Mark of the Ambitious Hunter (Rare)], [Descending Dark Fang (Rare)], [Limit Break (Rare)], [One Step Mile (Ancient)], [Moment of the Primal Hunter (Legendary)], [Gaze of the Apex Hunter (Legendary)]

Profession Skills: [Herbology (Common)], [Brew Potion (Common)], [Concoct Poison (Common)], [Alchemist's Purification (Common)], [Alchemical Flame (Common)], [Toxicology (Uncommon)], [Cultivate Toxin (Uncommon)], [Malefic Viper's Poison (Rare)], [Sense of the Malefic Viper (Rare)], [Touch of the Malefic Viper (Epic)], [Scales of the Malefic Viper (Ancient)], [Palate of the Malefic Viper (Ancient)], [Blood of the Malefic Viper (Ancient)], [Sagacity of the Malefic Viper (Ancient)]

Blessing: [True Blessing of the Malefic Viper (Blessing - True)]

Race Skills:[Endless Tongues of the Myriad Races (Unique)], [Identify (Common)], [Thoughtful Meditation (Uncommon)], [Shroud of the Primordial (Divine)]

Bloodline:[Bloodline of the Primal Hunter (Bloodline Ability - Unique)]

Looking over his entire status menu, his progress was impressive. He had gotten so many titles and levels since last. Thinking back, he hadn't actually gone through his status since back before he fought the Horde Leader. After that, he had killed that boss, killed the King of the Forest, and now even gotten way stronger from his, to quote: 'cool-ass time-warped training session in alchemy.'

He was stronger than ever before by quite a lot. He hadn't had the chance to fight anything and test himself, but perhaps he could win against the King if it was the current him.

"Hey, if I fought the King of the Forest now, do you think I cou-"

"Fuck no."

"Absolutely not."

The two gods answered simultaneously.

"Are yo--"

"Yeah, you would get your head ripped off in a moment. Seriously Jake, I still don't think you understand the disparity. That was a true-blue D-grade unique lifeform. If he hadn't been so far up his own ass, he would have killed you instantly. Perhaps if you had your current strength, all it would change is that he wouldn't have bothered to play around but just killed you outright."

"In other words, I just got extremely lucky?" Jake asked, a bit disappointed.

"Partly. You were offered a situation to exploit and the tools to possibly exploit it. If you had been any weaker, you would have failed; if you had been less deceitful and smart about it, you would have died. Don't take anything away from your own victory. Besides, the King wasn't a normal D-grade being. Far from it. So don't belittle yourself.

"The tutorials are made to be theoretically beatable. They are balanced based on who attends them. The system naturally knew how much divine interference there would be, so it upped the overall difficulty. In fact, I reckon your tutorial was among the hardest of your universe and certainly the hardest for Earth. You beating it is fucking monstrous, so keep it up, you goddamn freak."

“Thanks, I guess. Anyway, what’s the plan now? More alchemy?” he asked, ready to try and practice his new skills.

“We got only a few hours before it is time for you to get whisked back to Earth, and that is counting the time-warping,” the Viper said. “I think it’s time we sit down and have a talk about what’s to come.”