

Hunter 126

Chapter 126: The Times They Are A-Changin'

Time marched onward unforgivingly. Soon two weeks had passed since the conclusion of the tutorial.

Earth was in chaos as the newly returned humans scrambled to find a foothold. Factions quickly formed, though they were more just collections of people who happened to be in the same area when they returned.

Many had thought the nightmare over upon exiting the tutorial, naively believing that humanity could return to some semblance of normalcy. Sadly for them, reality proved the exact opposite. Earth was far more dangerous than nearly all the tutorials.

In Jake's tutorial, the beasts hadn't ever really attacked people in the outer zone. They were incredibly passive and could easily be avoided most of the time. It was only in the beginning that people really died to the environment and not their fellow humans.

Upon their return, they found Earth to be far less friendly. Beasts and monsters roamed about without any restrictions. An area filled with weak single-digit monsters could easily be invaded by one several times everything else's level.

The only solace was that higher-leveled beasts and monsters tended to not bother with lower-leveled things. Like the lizard that had attacked Jake and his coworkers, it had only cared about the ones with a level at least a bit close to its own.

It wasn't as if the human threat was gone either. With the collapse of social order nearly everywhere, some unsavory individuals chose to take advantage. The powerful became tyrants and were as monstrous as the actual monsters stalking about.

Yet, one place was tranquil. Not a single beast was nearby, not a single drop of blood anywhere. There was only a beautiful waterfall landing in a serene pond. On the shore sat a young man with a cauldron, a transparent fire beneath it, and a strong smell in the air.

For the vast majority of humanity, the last two weeks had, without a doubt, been a constant stream of hectic moments of people trying to survive. For Jake, however, it had been the most relaxing time since before the tutorial.

Without any real external pressure, he had managed to achieve a lot. Many of the things he had put off during the tutorial due to time constraints he now had time to do. The first of which was to practice potion-making.

He had only been able to make inferior-rarity potions of all three types for a long time now but had held off on improving and making common-rarity ones.

Now, however, he had time. In only two weeks, he had broken through and made common-rarity potions of the health and mana type while getting very close with the stamina ones. Looking at the two new brews he had made, they indeed were a lot more potent than before.

[Mana Potion (Common)] – Restores 4347 mana when consumed.

[Health Potion (Common)] – Restores 2824 health when consumed.

First of all, the amount of resources they restored was, of course, higher. In fact, the separator between inferior and common-rarity was twofold. First of all, there was a qualitative improvement in the crafting process.

Common-rarity was harder and required far more skill to make. Of course, better ingredients were also required, something Jake had more than plenty of. He had never used the common versions of the Lavender Flowers that were used in his recipes. Aka, he had a lot of them still sitting around in his spatial storage.

Besides the change in the crafting process, the second requirement was the required amount of resources restored. Common-rarity potions restored a minimum of 2500 in either health, stamina, or mana. Even if Jake made a potion with the improved crafting method that restored less, it would just turn out to be inferior.

Interestingly enough, this didn't mean that inferior potions couldn't restore more than 2500 resources. In fact, Jake's best inferior-rarity mana potion to date had restored 2600 mana. Of course, it remained inferior due to the 'lesser' crafting method, and he was beginning to feel the cap approaching with that one.

As for the requirement for potions to be uncommon-rarity, he didn't even know yet. He remembered that inferior potions needed to restore a minimum of 25 resources. From 25 to 2500 was a 100-fold increase, so if that pattern continued, uncommon-rarity would have to restore 250.000 points. Yeah, he wasn't sure about that one.

What mattered was that he was improving. His very first common-rarity mana potion was made on the first day and restored 2600 mana. The health potion came on the sixth day, it restoring 2541 for the first craft. Both of those numbers had now clearly increased even more, especially for the mana potions.

Not that he actually needed it. He had plenty of potions to spare as he didn't even have to use one that often.

His Mask of the Fallen King carried the insane properties of giving him 25% more maximum mana, and at the same time, increasing his mana regeneration. The Pylon of Civilization only increased that regeneration even more within his own domain.

Lastly, his Palate of the Malefic Viper now made all potions restore even more resources after it had been upgraded to ancient-rarity. The increase was only around 10-20%, but everything added up in the long run.

Of course, he also meditated once in a while to ponder on different things, which only helped him keep his mana usage at an easily manageable level. All in all, everything was going swimmingly.

Now, on the day that marked two weeks since humanity's return, he was working on making his first common-rarity stamina potion for the first time. The hardest type to make for him by quite a bit.

But it did go a lot easier than he had first feared - his experience with internal energy through his Limit Break ability as well as just general practice doing wonders.

Finally, he also couldn't discredit the massive benefits from his cauldron. It just made everything far, far easier than with the mixing bowl he used before. Overall, he used less mana as there wasn't much resistance, and he could way better 'feel' the mana during the crafting process.

Coupled with his increased mana control from Sagacity of the Malefic Viper helping further. Which ultimately resulted in his success that day.

You have successfully crafted [Stamina Potion (Common)] – A new kind of creation has been made. Bonus experience earned

'DING!' Profession: [Prodigious Alchemist of the Malefic Viper] has reached level 69 - Stat points allocated, +5 free points

'DING!' Race: [Human (E)] has reached level 76 - Stat points allocated, +5 free points

Seeing his profession level up, he only had one response to the level he had reached. Nice.

The stamina potions looked just like its inferior version. But Identify made the difference between the two very clear.

[Stamina Potion (Common)] – Restores 2511 stamina when consumed

With all his stats from his many titles and levels, he still only had 8200 stamina. That meant that with Palate of the Malefic Viper's bonus counted in, a single stamina potion could restore a bit more than a third of his total stamina pool.

Smiling to himself, he bottled the potions, packed everything up, and threw it in his spatial storage. It was time for the next item on his agenda.

Walking to the edge of the pond, he didn't stop as his foot touched the water. An invisible shimmer of mana covered his feet as he walked on water. Walking to the middle of the pond, he sat down in meditation, still on the surface of the water.

Next, he conjured tens of tendrils of mana. Each of them reaching six or so meters to the bottom of the lake, where many large stones lay. Ones he had either found or placed there previously.

His improvements showed once more as he didn't even need to wrap the tendrils around the rocks. Merely touching them was enough for his mana to exert its influence. It even drained less mana than forcefully lifting it by wrapping his strings of mana around the stone.

Out of the water rose four stones, each one easily weighing more than his own bodyweight. Small beads of sweat appeared on his face after a few minutes as he shuffled the stones around. After nearly 10 minutes, he dropped one of the stones, and in the chaos, lost control of his mana.

All of the stones fell into the pond once more, scaring the small eels that observed the weird human above. Simultaneously, he failed to control the mana keeping him on top of the water, resulting in him following the rocks.

It wasn't the first time that happened either. Jake's routine was pretty much set every single day. Speaking of days, they were still a thing.

One would think that with Earth growing to a substantially larger size, the day-night cycle would be affected. Those who thought that would be wrong, as the system clearly didn't care about making sense in that department.

There was also still only one sun and one moon. Neither appeared larger or smaller, which probably meant that both had actually gotten bigger. Not that he could confirm it, as he wasn't actually sure exactly how big either were before the system.

He had found a lot of enjoyment in the new sky, though. Without light pollution and with his incredibly high perception, his eyes may as well have been telescopes. He could see way further and even spot details on the moon... though he was pretty sure he saw movements one time. That had to be nothing... right?

Anyway, the cosmos was truly a beautiful thing. Jake did kind of expect to see some wondrous supernatural sights. A space octopus, maybe. So far, he had only found disappointment. Space octopuses had to be a thing. Maybe there was one on the moon?

This was how Jake spent his days since the tutorial ended. Alchemy, mana practice, and stargazing. So far, he had only slept a single time. A dreamless night thankfully.

He had successfully managed to distract himself with work. He got a level in alchemy nearly every second day, which was pretty good according to his own standards. His class hadn't experienced any progress, though, as he hadn't even taken out his bow since leaving the city.

He did find time to walk around with One Step Mile and practice that a bit. His current dream was to somehow manage to use it while on the water. Currently, he hadn't been able to as his feet couldn't quite find purchase on the surface, but he firmly believed it possible.

It was surprising that not a single beast had stumbled upon him yet. He hadn't even seen any check him out. The birds were still around, and he saw a few other animals, such as the eels. But none of them were above level 10, most of them still being lvl 0. He had no clue how that was even possible.

Two weeks may feel like a long time without any human contact, but one had to remember that Jake was pretty skilled at being antisocial. He was a bit lonely, and he knew that his solitude couldn't continue in perpetuity.

One day humans would stumble upon his little valley. A day that came sooner than he expected.

Jacob walked on the pavement that had once been a highway. Bertram on his right and a tall woman, carrying a bow, on his left.

The past two weeks had been far more eventful for him than Jake. This first period was his greatest opportunity to establish himself in this new world. One he happily jumped at.

Behind him was not just his former colleagues but thousands of people. Jacob had gone from building to building to recruit, and in the end, rounded up a massive following.

At first, he was met with skepticism. But his skills that bordered on mental manipulation, as well as his high level, allowed things to proceed way more smoothly than he had first feared. As his group of followers grew, it only became easier to convince others.

Bertram was also a huge asset in recruiting people. While Jacob wasn't a fighter, the same couldn't be said about his old bodyguard. He became E-grade in the tutorial, and his class and levels had only grown further since then.

His skills were awe-inspiring. Training from the Grand Master, his powerful special class, and his own talent all coming together. This meant that when the group was attacked by a large rodent-like creature at level 54, he had managed to slay it quite easily alone.

When he fought, his blade and entire body was enveloped in light. He moved swiftly, every swing of his sword shearing his foe with beams of light. His defensive abilities were even more impressive as the rodent failed to pierce the shining armor that enveloped his body - its claws were even breaking upon hitting his shield.

A powerful man was enough to inspire many in this turbulent age.

Of the groups they encountered, the strongest was led by the woman now walking on his left. Standing at a height only slightly lower than Bertram with bursting muscles on her forearms, she looked more than a little intimidating.

The bow she carried was, without a doubt, not just for show. They had seen her use it several times, firing off powerful arrows that exploded in flames whenever they hit a foe. Between her and Bertram, Jacob didn't know who would win, and ultimately it didn't matter. For she was one of his people.

Maria was her name. With a class at level 61 and profession at 24, she was the second-highest overall level in the group, just behind Jacob. Jacob, who himself had already gained several levels. His class had reached level 66, having grown nearly a whole level a day. With the levels from training with the Holy Church, he had gained 16 levels since he 'died.'

Once more, he had, of course, gained a powerful skill. One at ancient-rarity even.

[Augur's Wings of Liberation (Ancient)] – Blessed be those touched by the feathers of the Augur. Allows the Augur of Hope to summon wings of light that periodically drop feathers. Anyone who absorbs a feather restores a small amount of mana and stamina and receives a temporary increase to the maximum value of both. May your wings bring liberation to all. Adds a medium bonus to the Augur's Wings of Liberation's effect based on wisdom and willpower.

From the description, it didn't appear overly powerful, and one might even doubt its rating. But when put on display, it all became much clearer.

Giant wings of light would spread out behind him. Each of them more than ten meters long as they extend behind him. Tens of feathers falling every second. After a few minutes, the feathers would dissolve, but it was more than enough for people to pick them up and absorb them.

This skill did wonders in keeping the group healthy and moving. On top of that, there was also one other aspect to the skill, one not mentioned in the description.

The sheer intimidation factor of them - to see a human spring forth giant radiant wings was enough for many to fall in line or look at him with reverence. Maria wasn't one of those people, as she had chosen to follow him just because she didn't have any interest in leadership herself. Jacob was pretty sure that she had her own agenda by staying with him... likely related to the god that had blessed her.

With her choice to follow him, so did the ones who followed her prior. With so many in tow, their next objective was to find somewhere and establish themselves.

But not before recruiting more. As Jacob saw the city in the distance, they didn't feel happiness or anticipation as they had expected, but instead, all got a terrible feeling. For what they saw was only mere outskirts -the rest of the city, covered by a giant barrier that a select few recognized as the ones marking the Inner zones in their tutorials.

Jacob gazed at it but knew it wasn't time yet. They would train, and they would wait... because others were also coming.

The Augur wasn't the only follower the Holy Church had recruited during the tutorials... far from it.