

## Hunter 129

### Chapter 129: Points of view

For hours he had tried to ignore her while working. Hours he had endured that piercing stare. It was far more unsettling than some dungeon boss staring him down. Jake felt like his every action was judged and evaluated. He had endured it... but it was just too much.

He hated whenever people did that. It was why open-concept offices were the spawn of the devil himself. Who the hell could concentrate with someone staring at them covertly, or worse, sitting in plain fucking view staring...

What the hell, woman, was all he could think. He had managed to do alchemy as most of it was routine by now, but even then, he had failed far more than before. His mana practice was just damn impossible; it even took him a few seconds to coat his feet in mana to walk on water.

So he prepared himself to confront the woman. To make her quit whatever she was doing. To give her a piece of his mind about how the hell she had been raised not to know staring at people was rude. So with full gusto, he appeared before her, ready to lay into her.

"Could you stop staring?"

Mission successfully failed. Jake felt that he had just made the situation 100 times worse. Worse yet, the woman just kept staring up at him, like a deer caught in the headlights - like a child caught doing something wrong.

"I... I didn't mean to..." Miranda stammered, trying to explain herself.

Jake, at this point, was too embarrassed to think clearly either. The entire thing was just too damn awkward. But who the hell told her to stare at him for literal hours?

Miranda was the first to collect herself as she managed to string together a sentence: "I just wanted to see your crafting... it was very inspiring."

Having a point of conversation to jump into, Jake also calmed himself. Be professional, he told himself as he answered.

"If you have any questions, just ask instead of silently staring. It is counterproductive for both of us."

What Jake didn't know at this moment was the floodgate he had just opened. Miranda's eyes brightened as she began her barrage of questions.

"Can you tell me the profession used to make potions? It's a profession, right? And what is that telekinetic skill? Is that part of your class or profession? Water walking? Also, the pot-like thing, is that specific to making potions? What does it do? And where did you get the ingredients? Oh and..."

Miranda had spent the last few hours wondering all these things and so much more. She couldn't understand how she, out of a crowd of thousands, hadn't seen a single profession that could create potions like the masked man's. All his skills were just too out of the ordinary.

Jake took a deep breath as he motioned for her just to follow him. Might as well just sate her curiosity. Going to the edge of the pond, she nervously yet enthusiastically followed. Taking out two chairs from his spatial storage, he couldn't help but think about how this was the first time he had needed to summon two pieces of furniture. How he had never had anyone to sit with outside of gods. Maybe it would be nice to have a conversation with someone that wasn't himself...

Of course, him not just summoning ingredients but freaking chairs only made Miranda all the more interested. Sitting down in the chair, she couldn't help herself feeling it out, just to make sure it was actually a real physical object.

Looking out over the pond, Jake felt himself relax a bit. It was weird how nerve-wracking he found it to engage with another human compared to fighting monsters.

"One question at a time," he said, still staring out on the water.

"How do you make potions?" Miranda asked, just rehashing the questions she rapid-fired earlier.

"Alchemist profession. Allows me to make potions along with a bunch of other things."

"How did you get such a profession?" she asked, frowning. She knew what an alchemist was before the system, but only surface-level - something about pursuing immortality and turning lead to gold.

"Do you know what challenge dungeons are? Or just dungeons in general?"

“No to both. What are they?”

“Separate spaces that you enter through portals. In my tutorial, most of the powerful enemies were found within those. Also, while I can’t speak for every type of dungeon, you receive rewards upon completing the dungeon,” Jake explained.

The thought of not sharing information didn’t occur to him. While there were many things he wouldn’t share, this kind of knowledge would only help others strive. Besides, everyone would learn it in time as it was considered common knowledge that even young children knew in the rest of the multiverse.

“Fascinating... I take it you have completed some of these dungeons?”

“Yeah, a few. To answer your earlier question, my profession was gained through a challenge dungeon, with it being both a requirement and a part of the reward for doing it.”

“If it was given through such unique circumstances, I can understand why I haven’t encountered one before,” she nodded. “But how did you come across these dungeons? Were they part of the trials or in the city zone?”

“Huh?” Jake exclaimed, confused as he turned to her. “What do you mean?”

“The weekly trials... wait, were there different kinds of tutorials?”

After that, they compared notes a bit. Jake had heard from his colleagues earlier about the different tutorials and even recognized a few things she said. It appears that Mike had been in the same tutorial as these four. Granted, it was only guesswork based on his eavesdropping while he spoke to Jacob.

Miranda heard for the first time that different types of tutorials existed. When she heard Jake talk about how Jake's had been a forest filled with beasts, she was more than a little surprised. Hers had been known as a 'creation' type tutorial, while Jake's had been a survival type.

Both of them discovered a lot of exciting things. Jake learned a lot about different classes and professions, and he hadn't even heard of the so-called 'social' professions before. There were of course, also many more creation-types.

He learned that Hank was an evolved builder profession. Mark was a builder, and Louise had some kind of artist profession. Out of everyone, she was clearly the one least focused on hers, and she had apparently gotten it through drawing a lot.

Miranda learned a lot of common knowledge. She learned about standard terms such as the different grades and, of course of dungeons and skills. He didn't share anything to do with gods or bloodlines, however.

"The world has really changed. I can't believe I worked in a manufacturing plant just a few months ago. Now I am sitting in the middle of a forest with a masked stranger," she laughed after a bit.

Jake nodded along until the last part. The damn mask. Once more, he had forgotten that he even had it on. It was just too damn sneaky. Who the hell designed a mask you couldn't see or even feel wearing? He hadn't taken it off for two weeks, not even when in the water.

“Ah, sorry, I totally forgot about the mask,” he said as he made it invisible. Oh, it was still there, just unable to be seen by anyone. Even the Viper had confirmed that while he knew it was still there, he couldn’t actually ‘see’ it. System-stuff right there.

Miranda had been looking at him all this time and was startled as the mask suddenly was just gone. Equally surprising was the face beneath it.

Jake, seeing her weird look, couldn’t help but ask a bit self-consciously, “...What is it?”

“You just look way more... normal – more normal than I expected, at least. The eyes made me expect something quite a bit different,” Miranda answered, chuckling. Jake really did look far too normal for a masked savior that could teleport and summon things from thin air.

“Oh... I see.” Of course, Jake had noticed that his eyes had changed quite a bit after he got Gaze of the Apex Hunter. Not that he had anything against it. Even if it looked a bit weird at first sight, the power of the skill was more than worth it. Even a level 59 tiger had been entirely frozen for a few seconds just from a glance.

“Is it a skill?” she asked.

“Yep, and quite a good one. How about that mind-affecting aura of yours? A profession-related one?”

Taken aback, she quickly apologized. “I’m sorry, I don’t even notice when I’m using it! It says that it only makes me appear more trustworthy, and I am so sorry if-“

"It's fine, doesn't work anyway," he interrupted, laughing it off. "Takes a lot more than that to affect me. It's actually good practice when it comes to sensing and adapting to it. By all means, keep it active."

Relieved, Miranda let out a breath. She was afraid that all the goodwill she had built-up had disappeared. But, for some reason, she was also relieved to hear that her skills didn't work.

"By the way, I don't have any subtle mind-affecting skills, if you wondered," Jake clarified. He couldn't help but wonder if people would have to explain stuff like that in the future... or how such skills would affect human interactions.

"Good to know; I was afraid I was unable to detect it if there was. I bought a skill to defend myself against mental attacks for my tutorial points," Miranda explained, slightly relieved once more. "Did your tutorial have those points too?"

"It did. That appears to be one shared commonality. Besides the high death rates."

"Yes... I am unsure of the six other factions, but out of a hundred thousand on our side, I think we lost nearly ten thousand. You mentioned that your tutorial had twelve hundred; how many people made it out?"

"Only one," Jake said, Miranda instantly exclaiming:

"WHAT? Only a hundred? How can tha-"

"No. One. As in me."

Miranda sat there staring at him for a few seconds, while Jake tried to save the situation by further clarifying:

"Ah, but four others also made it in the end. They did all die, though..."

"What the heck happened? How is that even possible? Were those beasts that powerful?" she asked dumbfounded.

"No... while the beasts did kill quite a few in the first days, humans killed humans. I am not entirely sure about everything that happened. However, some psychopath ended up killing everyone but himself and me towards the end," Jake sighed, still remembering the terrible - yet slightly satisfying - memory of pummeling William into a paste.

"Who would do that... what happened to that person?"

"I killed him," Jake explained casually.

"I... I am sorry, that must have been terrible. Having to kill another person..." Miranda said, looking horrified and sorrowful at the same time.



Jake, trying to ease her feelings, explained: "It was fine; it's not like he was the first."

An attempt that sure as hell didn't work. Jake had forgotten that it was still only three months since the system arrived. While humans adapted quickly, it wasn't that quick. The act of killing other humans was still a concept many found hard to grasp.

On the other hand, Jake had begun to accept it as just another reality of the multiverse. While he wouldn't go out of his way to kill humans, he, surprisingly even to himself, wasn't very averse to it. An enemy was an enemy, after all. He knew he had been affected a bit by talking with the Viper, whose main advice to solving problems tended to be: "Just kill everyone?"

Seeing Jake practically admit to multiple murders like it was no big deal made Miranda shirk back a little. Something he naturally noticed.

"What's wrong?" he asked with genuine confusion.

"I... I am sorry if..." Miranda apologized yet again for reasons Jake still didn't understand.

"I don't get it," he said, scratching his head.

"Why would you...?" she muttered under her breath until she collected herself and raised her head to look Jake in the eyes.

“What are you planning on doing with us?” she asked, having reached a conclusion wildly different from reality.

She had deduced that the only reason why Jake would just confess to it was that he wasn’t planning on letting them go. She couldn’t comprehend any other reason why someone would admit to such an incriminating act. Something that, in her eyes, was absolutely immoral.

If he had responded with deep emotions from taking another human life, she would have reacted differently. But he talked of it like it was just a minor matter. She even had suspicions that he was the psycho that he claimed murdered his entire tutorial.

What she didn’t understand was why he would lure her in like that? To have such a long pleasant conversation just to show his fangs. Was it some kind of demented entertainment for him?

“Okay, what’s happening here? I don’t plan on doing anything with you? What?” Jake exclaimed, now wholly dumbfounded. She looked at him like she had prepared herself to die or something.

Miranda found this response not what she expected either. He seemed genuinely confused. Either he was the most talented actor she had ever seen, or he was honest...

Either way, she steeled herself and just asked.

“Why did you kill others?”

“What? Because they were enemies and attacked me. Is that what you were so caught up in? Seriously?” Jake said with exasperation.

“So it was all in self-defense?” Miranda asked, with a bit of hope that the man in front of her wasn’t a mass-murdering monster. Though the casualness still bothered her.

“Well, yeah. Though I guess, the last one was more out of rage. But really, what’s up with you?”

“Can’t you see what is wrong with killing others?” Miranda practically yelled, her fear slowly being replaced with anger.

“If they are my enemies, no. It’s not like I get any kicks out of it. I merely realize that this new world isn’t one where killing can be as black and white as before. Things have changed. Doesn’t mean I like it, just that I acknowledge it,” Jake tried to explain.

He had this conversation with the Viper during one of their very first meetings. He recognized where Miranda was coming from. But he now also realized that it was too naïve.

“So you’re just going to kill anyone you deem an enemy?” she asked, getting more than a little upset at the notion.

“If I deem it necessary, then yeah, I will,” Jake answered calmly.

“And when is it necessary?”

“When I decide it is.”

Jake felt like he was sitting on the other side of the discussion he had not even that long ago. He knew the next arguments. He had the same debate after all. In the end, it all boiled down to a differing fundamental view on the value of life.

He had realized that putting life on a pedestal and walking the path he was currently on was both impossible and hypocritical. He was a hunter. A hunter’s purpose is to hunt down and kill their prey. He had already killed thousands of creatures during the tutorial.

Some of them were approaching, if not already at, the intelligence-level of humans. Some likely even above, such as the Great White Stag.

“Will yo-“

“I will do what I think is best. The world is different now. Tell me, how many enemies did you kill during the tutorial?” Jake interrupted.

“That is different. They attacked us, and we had to defend ourselves. Besides, while it doesn’t make it okay, they weren’t intelligent beings who-“ Miranda tried to say before Jake interrupted her again with an argument he shamelessly stole from the Viper himself.

“So it is okay to kill children as they aren’t as smart as adults?” he asked, of course knowing full well how preposterous the statement was.

“Of course not, it isn’t-” she answered, getting cut off once more before she could continue.

“Oh, but it is the same. The system has changed every living being on a base level. A simple animal can evolve to a level of intelligence above that of a human. They can even learn to take humanoid forms, speak, love, and live a life no different from you and me. To kill any living being is to take away that potential,” Jake explained, continuing.

“A young child is no more intelligent than an animal, but we know they will grow up to become like you and me. What we kill is their potential... and now killing any living being in the world is taking away that potential. Heck, we can even expand it to plants as even they can evolve,” Jake said. He knew there were flaws in the arguments, but it got the point across.

“Tell me, do you find it justified that I killed that tiger chasing you?”

“If you hadn’t, we would be dead,” she answered, still taking in what he said before his question.

“What if it had been a human? Would you still find it acceptable that I killed them?”

“I don’t know...” she said, thinking.

“To me, that question is easy. It was someone I decided to kill when I saw the situation and made a split-second decision. That decision saved you and the three others. I would have done the same if it was a human. I have my own thoughts, but more importantly, I have my own guts and intuition. And I trust those more than any law or interpretation of morality,” he said, before getting up.

Miranda looked after him as he got up, as he turned and said.

“I am going out for a bit. This place is safe so just rest up. Take care. I’ll be back.”

With those words, he walked off with each step crossing tens of meters, with Miranda staring after him, still lost in thought.