

## Hunter 131

### Chapter 131: Two kinds of people

Jake stood on top of a large purple mushroom as he inhaled deeply, taking in the atmosphere. This cavern, which he had decided to now call a biodome, was truly interesting.

On the ground beneath him lay tens of dead insectoids. None had been a threat, but all of them insanely aggressive, nevertheless. The beasts above had either scurried off upon seeing him or at least been hesitant. These insects didn't give a damn.

Which naturally resulted in their untimely demise. One charging mantis quickly attracted others to come out of the woodwork - or shroomwork in this case - and joined the charge. One charging mantis had quickly resulted in many dead mantises.

The strongest had been level 48, with the weakest at 26 - quite the disparity. Far more so than a dungeon would have, but then again, this area wasn't as 'designed' as those were. Besides, Jake could feel that he hadn't met the big boss of this biodome yet.

For the first time, he felt a bit of excitement. Maybe he could even find something worth fighting down here.

With those thoughts, he moved onwards. Slaughtering everything in his path as he went towards the center of the biodome.

On the way, he didn't care for herbs as before. He only focused on the aura he felt. It was faint... but it was there.

A sword in one hand, a dagger in the other, he cleaved down mantis after mantis. Occasionally a centipede-like monster would appear, but they didn't seem to be on friendly terms with the mantises either. Most of them were either injured or in the middle of being devoured.

The same was true for every other species than the mantises. This was clearly their territory. Their domain. A domain that had now been invaded by an enemy predator in the form of a human.

Soon he couldn't strike the mantises down in a single blow anymore. Their levels were growing. From the early 50s to now being in the early 60s. Even the occasional one in the early 70s. Any of these mantises would be the apex predator only a few hundred meters above them.

But down here, they could only play second fiddle to the true lord of the biodome.

Jake jumped to one of the tallest mushrooms and stared down at the huge insect beneath him.

Its body was bright green, its eyes even shining slightly. Its two blades were more than three meters long, strong mandibles that looked like they could easily crush steel, and a level making it worthy of being the ruler here.

[Alpha Mantis Scyther – lvl 89]

Smiling, Jake looked down at it, making eye-contact. He had hoped to see a trace of intelligence as he had seen in all of the dungeon bosses. Yet, he found only disappointment. Not a single spark of intelligence was present; it was clearly nothing more than just a giant stupid insect.

A shame, he thought. Hopefully, it can make up for it in power.

Taking out his bow, a quiver appeared on his back simultaneously. At the same time, the mantis had now clearly noticed him also. And like all the others, it merely attacked.

Jake didn't use Infused Powershot but instead opened with a Splitting Arrow.

In-flight, one arrow split into two dozen, the most considerable amount Jake had created so far with a single shot. Jake could see the arrows about to hit the mantis when he got his first pleasant surprise. Its back opened up, and out came two transparent sets of wings.

With a swift motion, it dodged all of the arrows as it continued its attack. Even faster than Jake had anticipated. Less than a second after he had fired the arrow, the alpha mantis was before him, its scythe cleaving down.

Jake took a step forward as he saw the mushroom be split in two behind him through his sphere. His step had naturally been the skill One Step Mile and had taken him down to the ground, close to where the mantis had been initially.

Turning around quickly, he managed to fire off another arrow before the clearly confused insect managed to locate him. He hit it right in its midsection and saw the arrow sink in deeply as it shrieked in pain. He was pretty sure mantises couldn't shriek before.

His attack had done little more than alert it to his position. With its more than six-meter tall body, it flew towards him once more. Its speed still very impressive.

Firing off yet another arrow, he hit it another time before it reached him. And once more, he dodged it, this time without even using a skill.

Its attacks were predictable and straightforward. Its only advantage was in speed. Clearly, its agility and maybe even strength were far above his own. He didn't doubt that if he got hit by its blades, he would lose an arm or a leg. He just didn't feel like it would ever hit him.

Their dance kept going for a few minutes, with Jake dodging and the mantis frantically trying to cut him to pieces. Eventually, Jake began to get bored, as the insect hadn't done jack shit to adapt. The only change being its accumulating wounds.

He hoped for it to have more. Maybe some kind of new skill or hidden ability. But... nothing. It was just slowly fighting a battle it clearly couldn't win, with no thought of any kind. It was just... disappointing.

With a sigh, Jake decided to end it.

## One Step Mile

He appeared tens of meters behind the mantis as he turned around, an arrow already nocked. The mantis was once more confused, having clearly learned nothing from earlier.

Gaze of the Apex Hunter

Then it felt its body freeze for a moment, not moving when it wanted to. And finally...

Infused Powershot

It lost its head to an arrow that soared through the biodome with unstoppable power.

Miranda sat in the chair, staring out at the serene pond. She saw the small eels swimming without a care in the world as the thoughts jumped around in her head.

She felt like there was a vast difference between her and the young formerly-masked man. Not just in power, but mentality and understanding.

He had known so much of the system. Like he had lived in it far longer than Miranda or the others. Or actually been able to learn from someone who had.

His experiences of the tutorial were so much more than hers. The most significant difference, however, was the disparity in mindset between the two.

In her work before the system, she interacted and worked with many different types of employees. Over time she had begun to classify them mentally. Put them into boxes - one for those you need to watch out for and those you don't.

The first group was also split into many different types. Troublemakers, the lazy, the incompetent, etc. - yet she found the most volatile of them all of another category: the truly driven.

Many workers just go to work for their monthly paycheck. They work to live. Get the job done and go home. But the driven want more than that. They want to advance. They want to improve. They become restless if their ambitions aren't realized.

In her retrospection, she had come to see that she and even Hank and his kids were the first types of person. Not in her job before the tutorial, but in the tutorial itself. Like a worker merely working to live, she had done the tutorial simply to survive. Nearly everyone had.

Of course, she had worked hard in her own mind. She went above and beyond to organize and try and lead some of the other survivors. But... she couldn't honestly say that she hadn't done it for the sake of survival. To make herself useful and gain levels to not die in the next trial.

The trials themselves were also harrowing - a real struggle. And the moment they ended, Miranda returned to the rest area as quickly as possible. Yet... what if she had remained within the trial area? No one forced them to leave. What if she went beyond where they simply guarded themselves during the trial?

That was the first type of person. The type that was just walking forward to survive one day at a time. The other type was different.

You needed to look out for them, focusing on both the good and the bad. They would be the employee that could take the company to the next level. Have a new innovative idea or strategic insight that could lead to practical change. They could be the best type of employee imaginable.

At the same time, they could be the worst type. The one who would advance by any means necessary. Willing to stomp on anyone in their way on their path of advancement. Every other person merely a tool to help themselves.

Without a doubt, the masked man was the ambitious and driven type. If he had been in their tutorial, he wouldn't have stayed in the trial area. He would have gone beyond it. She heard how he spoke. As if it was natural to hunt down whatever monsters lurked in the most dangerous corners of his tutorial.

He had gone above and beyond and come out of the tutorial more powerful than she thought possible. And what did he do then? He kept working; he kept grinding. Somehow, he had managed to find the time and do his alchemy also.

She respected him. But at the same time, she was terrified of how foreign he felt.

As she concluded, he was the second type of person. Ambitious and driven. But was he the archetype that would bring himself up, and by doing so, uplift everyone around him? Or the one who left others in his wake, squashed beneath him.

She worried because this wasn't just a corporate job we were talking about. It wasn't just a lost bonus or a missed promotion. It wasn't a bastard taking credit for work he didn't do or cheat on an evaluation.

It was the difference between letting others live and outright killing them. The difference between the ones killing the people they entered the trials with and those who worked together.

Miranda had been incredibly sure that the masked man was the good kind for the majority of their conversation. She had been so sure... until the end. Now she wasn't so confident. Was he a monster or a savior? Perhaps neither...

She looked down at the pond, her face easily reflected by the calm water. Her slightly haggard look was making her a bit embarrassed. Her long orange hair all curled up from not having a proper wash since leaving the tutorial.

If she had to say so herself, she looked quite good usually, but now she could easily be confused for being homeless. At least her skin was still as healthy as before. She found it weird how the system affected appearance through the evolutions.

The consensus had been that the change was according to the one evolving and their own desires. If you had flaws or blemishes you considered faults, the system would better them. It couldn't do significant changes, at least not at E-grade, but it could do smaller things according to what she encountered.

The makeup industry would have gone under without a doubt, she thought as she sat down at the edge of the pond and began clearing her face and hair. The water was cold and pleasant, and it was refreshing to finally start feeling cleaner.

"Miranda?" she heard a voice she recognized, turning around to see Hank standing a few meters away. Not staring at her, but the two chairs right behind her.



“Where did the masked man go?” he asked, appearing slightly worried. “And where did these chairs come from?”

“Oh, hey Hank,” she said as she continued washing her hair. “I’m not sure where he went; he just said he was heading out for a bit. Oh, and the chairs are his.”

“He had these chairs just lying around?” Hank asked, still kind of hung up on where the hell they came from. They were in the middle of a forest, hundreds of kilometers from anything as far as he could tell. And the chairs were clearly old and made of wood he couldn’t recognize at all.

“No, he summoned them out of thin air as far as I could tell. Waved his hands, and then a chair appeared in each of them.”

“Are they real?” he asked, studying them more in-depth. He knew that some classes and professions had learned to summon things with skills. But they always consisted of mana and would disappear after a short while.

“They are,” she answered.

“Hm,” Hank said, finally deciding to move on from the subject. “What happened after I fell asleep?”

The man walked over and sat a few meters from her, as he also began cleaning himself. Perhaps seeing her do it and recognizing how long it had been.

He had a full beard that was full of leaves and small pieces of sticks. Not to mention the blackened blood that had made it all stiff. His arm was back to normal, but the blood that had splattered all over his face as it exploded hadn't disappeared.

"I sat watch as we agreed and kept an eye on him. After a while, he called me out on it, and we ended up sitting here and had a pleasant chat. It was very enlightening," Miranda said, not wanting to disclose the embarrassing circumstances in which it happened.

"Any useful information?" Hank asked, a bit bewildered that they had ended up having what she described as a 'pleasant chat.'

"Oh, so much. First of all..." Miranda began recounting all the useful information she had learned. The things the masked man had known of the system, of skills and whatnot. About dungeons and about what he mentioned his tutorial was like, surprising Hank as he also learned that different types of tutorials existed.

"It is indeed unbelievable... different universes, these magical spaces you call dungeons, different tutorials, alchemy..." Hank said as he leaned back, having now had time to clean his face properly. "A shame you told me alone. Now I will have to explain it to the kids later."

"Hmph, like you aren't going to enjoy looking all knowledgeable and cool," she chuckled as the man also smiled slightly. Something he hadn't done often after his wife, her best friend, had died.

"How powerful do you think he is?" Hank finally asked. A question she had expected and considered.

"I truly don't know. His profession is at a very high level, of that I am sure. And from his retellings, assuming they are true, he has also done plenty of fighting," Miranda said. "I think... I think his race-level may be over level 60."

"What? is that even possible?" Hank said, with wide eyes. "Clearly, he is strong, but to such an extent... are you sure he told the truth? Did you use that mental skill of yours?"

"I did... and he didn't just notice it; he found it enjoyable as he said it helped him to understand how such a skill works or something. With the comment that it was far too weak to have any effect," Miranda sighed.

"Is it safe to even stay here? He is gone now... but what if he decides just to get rid of us upon returning? From what you said, the talk didn't end on a positive note," Hank said, somewhat worried as he looked back towards his still sleeping children.

"I am not sure... but is anywhere really safe these days? The forest was hell. And Hank... we are weak. All of us. Can we truly make it on our own? Or just long enough to find help? With just us four... I think it's safer to stay here. Besides, he didn't look like a bad guy," Miranda said.

"You saw his face?" Hank asked. "Forget it... let's just stay here for now, at least till he returns. By the way, what did he say his name was?"

Miranda froze for a bit as she began fiddling with her hands. "I eh..."

"Yes?"

“I... forgot to ask?”