

Hunter 134

Chapter 134: Construction plans

Jake felt like a weight had been lifted from his shoulders as he saw Miranda leave. Keeping up his professional persona did take some effort, but he was happy that it wasn't that bad to interact with Miranda.

For the last two weeks, the lost potential of the Pylon had been bothering him more than it probably should. Jake knew the offered profession was powerful, and he was curious to see what it could give. But as he didn't have any desire to pick it up himself, it was just lying there.

Which is when he got the idea to offer the job to Miranda. As he talked, he had stretched a small strand of mana down to touch the Pylon, allowing him to offer the profession. When he asked if she wanted it, the system read his intentions. It was a bit of a gamble, but his guts told him it would work.

He was a bit afraid of the prospects of a city where he was essentially the highest authority. Heck, just a small settlement was scary. On that subject, Miranda had offered that he could just keep up his mysterious masked protector persona. She seemed more than happy enough to just do everything while he would be the enigmatic figure standing behind her.

She was clearly reaching for a type of power far more structural than Jake. To make herself indispensable to the city and tie her own fate with the success of this settlement. It wasn't the same as he would do, but he could acknowledge her path having some potential. Besides, if she did things well, she would likely get many levels and thus stats, making her powerful even in direct combat.

He also predicted that the profession would include several ways for the City Lord to protect him or herself. At least the description hinted heavily at that. But all that was for another time. They had agreed on a meeting at next sundown, where they would go over the profession and some more plans for what to do if or when more people arrived.

For now, his focus would return to alchemy. He had encountered an enemy below that he had to admit his bow could do little to nothing against.

Its entire body covered a few square kilometers, and while it certainly had weak points, he doubted it would die without at least the majority of its body being destroyed. He was even beginning to suspect that the mana crystal he found at the start was its way of luring its prey.

The Indigo Mushroom was clearly an immobile monster, bound to the area where it was born. But if the crystal could attract powerful beasts or even humans like himself, it would surely get plenty of prey to feast upon.

Its attack pattern had been relatively simple for the majority of the fight, but at the end had shown a modicum of tactical prowess when it distracted and limited his movements with roots, only to blast him with the beam of mana. The quick follow-up with the needles was also clearly a part of the 3-step attack.

He did discover the effectiveness of his toxins too. Both his blood and Touch of the Malefic Viper killed the roots and plants nearly instantly. They decayed in seconds, and while that was good for getting the needles off him at the last moment, it wasn't handy if he aimed to kill the damn thing.

If it rotted too quickly, the poison wouldn't have as much time to spread. It also made it far more comfortable for the thing to cut off any infected part of it.

In the last few weeks, he had been mainly focused on making potions, more accurately on brewing common-rarity versions of all three resource potions. Now, it was time to shift his focus back on what his profession was really about: Poisons.

He wanted to design a poison directly aimed at the damn mushroom. He needed it to be powerful but slow. No matter what, the fight would be a marathon and not a sprint.

Necrotic poisons were out instantly. That type worked best against flesh and blood targets, and the same was true for any kind of hemotoxin as mushrooms tend not to have blood. Aka, his two most used types of poison were ineffective.

With that being the case, he would need something new - something designed for killing plants. A super-weed killer, if you may. Unluckily for him, he had never been much into gardening, so he didn't really know what kind of toxin was good against mushrooms.

On the other hand, did it even matter? This thing was clearly not an ordinary mushroom. So he did what he always did when in doubt. He dove his mind into his spatial necklace and summoned the bookshelves he had hidden within.

A small library appeared around him as he began going through them one by one. While he had read a bit about plant-focused toxins in the more general books on poison, he hadn't ever really delved into it. He had mainly been fighting beasts, after all.

It didn't take him long to discover a few books that may be interesting. Gardening for Novices: Weeds & How to Kill Them, followed by Basic Mycology I, II, III, IV, V, and so on and so forth. It was an entire series. While none of them directly related to concocting a poison, they would make him better understand what he was facing. Of course, these were far from the only ones he had picked to go through, but these were the ones that appeared most obviously helpful.

From the conversation with the Viper, he learned that none of them were considered high level despite the plethora of books available. But they did cover a lot of useful knowledge from F-D grade and would help push him further for an additional hundred levels easily.

He summoned the bed that he hadn't used in quite a while, as he sat on it with his legs crossed. It reminded him of being back in the challenge dungeon once more, only this time he didn't aim to cure himself of deadly poison. This time he would be the one making it.

Reading the books should go fast with his increased stats, but the books' writing was clearly designed for those with stats. He didn't know if it was because of his utterly overpowered translation skill, but the text didn't really fit on the pages.

It was likely written in a script that took up far less space than English or any other human language. Which, in essence, meant that each page held several times more content than the last. The paper itself was also so impossibly thin that each book had far more pages than reasonable for one its size. By human standards, that is.

Before he knew it, he was interrupted as a person entered his sphere of perception. She didn't approach any closer as he finished up the page he was currently on and closed the book.

"Time sure flies by," he said with a smile as he looked up at her. It was amazing how he wasn't tired despite immersing himself in books for nearly 24 hours. Was this the dividends from investing so much in his perception?

"You look like you've been busy. And these books... exactly how big is this spatial storage of yours?" Miranda said, staring at the dozens of large bookcases standing on the ground.

It honestly looked quite silly - two chairs, a bed, and a bunch of bookcases standing out in the wild like that. It was the saddest library for homeless people she had ever seen.

"Big enough," he answered, also recognizing how silly it looked. "So, how is it to be the new Principal City Lord?"

"There is quite a lot to go over, actually. I have gotten a few skills that grant me access to certain systems. For example, I can see how many people are within the domain of the Pylon. This is actually one of the things I wanted to ask about... I can't see you with the skill," she explained.

"I have a good guess why you can't. It is likely the same thing that also makes using Identify on me harder," he explained, eyeing his Shroud of the Primordial skill. With its rating being Divine, he didn't doubt its effectiveness of hiding him.

"Alright then. The rest of the skills are mainly ones helping me to plan out the construction of a city, and even one that increases the amount of experience earned for citizens when they do things that aren't related to combat," she continued her explanation.

"Oh, I know about that last one; it was actually already there. Interesting to see it is now a skill. Which is quite good as it means it can now be upgraded," Jake nodded along.

"I also talked with Hank about beginning to actually make things. The three of them naturally decided to stay, and as this looks to be our long-term home, we discussed constructing some houses. Hank got an

upgraded Builder profession and actually worked in construction before the system, so I think he would do well in that department.”

“Sounds good to me,” he agreed.

“So the first thing is... we want to defend the Pylon, correct? Not just from potential enemies, but we need to keep its existence, or at least location, hidden for as long as possible correct?” she asked.

He nodded once more, as they already agreed on this yesterday.

“Where it is currently is fine, and you clearly like this place. For a good reason,” she added, looking out at the pond and the waterfall. “I thought that maybe we could build a house right here on top of where you hid it?”

“Wouldn’t that be obvious? And is finding it not quite easy, considering the aura it gives off and the fact that it is so clearly located at the center of the city?” he asked, a bit skeptical. He had considered maybe building some kind of vault or something to hide the thing in.

“Well, as I will be the official leader to the public eye, I think most would expect me to be in charge of the Pylon. On top of that, who would dare to snoop around the strongest person’s personal abode in the city on a mere suspicion that a Pylon may be here? Of course, this is dependent on you remaining the strongest, but for some reason, I don’t think that will prove an issue for you,” she said with a cheeky wink.

“Still doesn’t solve the issue of it being pretty damn clear where it is if you have a skill or any practice sensing mana,” he replied, still skeptical.

“About that... one of my skills allows me to influence the zone the Pylon affects. In other words, it doesn’t have to be a perfect circle, and I can even restrict it to be smaller. Simply by getting the profession, the area affected has already grown quite a bit compared to just a few days ago, and I think it will keep growing based on my level in the profession,” Miranda added, continuing.

“Additionally, you don’t have to be afraid of anyone sensing the Pylon. I have a mana sensing skill, and I couldn’t sense its location before becoming the City Lord. And the knowledge I got when I became City Lord also made it clear that it is impossible to detect with any ordinary means.”

“Hm, that is good to know,” he nodded, one fear expelled from his mind. “What are your thoughts on expanding the area? And if a city or just small town is to be built, where will it be?”

“I talked over this with Hank, and I think we will keep the valley clear of any buildings. Make it a restricted area. That way, you can get your desired peace, and we can protect the Pylon more easily. Your role, as we talked about earlier, is to be the mysterious protector living here. If luck has it, many will likely even think you are the source of beasts staying away, and not the Pylon,” she said.

“Painting me out to be some kind of monster, aren’t you?” he joked.

“A little,” she chuckled, returning the smile. “But isn’t that good? Who wants to mess with a monster?”

“I guess that is fine. So, what is your first plan of action?” Jake asked, changing the subject away from his own supposed monstrosity.

“To build you a house,” she answered promptly.

“Huh?”

“Look around you, for god’s sake. You just have furniture standing on the bare ground right next to a pond. If anyone needs a house, it’s you. Of course, that will also have the practical implication of hiding the Pylon as discussed,” she explained.

Jake tried to argue back a few times but was shot down promptly at every turn. Miranda had come determined to make the first structure his house, whether he liked it or not. And Jake had to admit that maybe it was a bit too silly having even bookcases standing out in the open like this.

In the end, they agreed, and with a huge smile, Miranda went to fetch Hank. It wouldn’t be built in a day, but they still needed to plan out what exactly to make. And as Hank would be the one actually making it, he kind of needed to be present for that stage.

Who came back wasn’t only Hank, however, but the two kids also following behind him. Jake had at least covered himself with a simple shirt at this time, and the instant he sensed them coming, he also hid his face once more by making the mask reappear.

They had decided that he would keep up his mysterious persona even towards Hank and the two kids. Because while Miranda trusted Hank, she didn’t trust Hank not to tell his kids, and from what he heard, Louise was a real tattler. While they had seen his face once... it shouldn’t lead to any issues in the future. Heck, Miranda could likely convince them that it was just an illusion or something if it came down to it.

Sadly, he only had two chairs, so they ended up all just standing as they met in front of the pond in solidarity. Hank was the first to speak.

“This is where we want to build?” he asked, looking at the bookcases, chairs, and bed. “It is a bit close to the water, but it is more than doable.”

A man of action. Jake liked that as he didn’t even have to say anything, with Hank already surveying the area.

“Any preferred material?” he asked, quickly adding. “I would advise wood as I have a profession specialized in making wooden structures. And wood is abundant being in a forest and all. But if you want, we can dig up some clay and make bricks, but it will take far longer.”

“Wood is fine, as long as it can stand high heat,” he answered, thinking of his alchemy. It would suck to burn down his new home first thing.

“Shouldn’t be a problem, I got an enchantment to help with that,” he nodded. “I plan on doing a simple one-plane wooden lodge. Two entrances, one at the front, one at the back leading directly out to the pond, while adding a small terrace of sorts. Louise?”

The girl, who Jake had noticed still staring at him weirdly, quickly took out a stack of papers from who-knows-where as well as summoned a small pen. Both likely conjured through some skill.

“Louise got an artist profession, one related to drawing and painting,” Miranda explained, as the young girl began drawing something on the paper. Hank was standing behind her, pointing and giving pointers here and there.

The young man Mark just stood awkwardly at the back. Having clearly followed along, he didn't want to be left alone when everyone else went to the valley.

After ten minutes or so, the father and daughter pair had a sketch ready; one Jake just approved without looking at it much. He had never really been picky about where he lived, and his current stance was that anything was better than nothing.

"Putting on a second floor if needed in the future is also possible. How about a cellar?" Hank asked.

"No need," Jake quickly dismissed. That would just reveal the damn Pylon right away. Though on second thought... "Actually, yeah, make a cellar. Could be useful:"

Hank was a bit confused at his quick dismissal into a full 180 but just shrugged.

After a bit longer, Hank and his kids left to collect some wood and further refine the plan. Jake and Miranda being the only ones left in the valley.

"A cellar?" she asked, confused.

"Yeah. But not directly below the house. I got a plan."

He couldn't help smiling as he explained his genius plan.