

Hunter 137

Chapter 137: I Believe I Can Fly

By far, the King of the Forest was the strongest enemy Jake had ever faced, yet he had won in the end. It was a hard fight, sure, but he always kept his head cool to look for a way to victory. A mindset he had kept from then to now.

He thought the King would be his most significant challenge for a good while... until he met it.

It was more insidious than any enemy he could ever imagine. Its cruelty and evil instincts were overflowing with every one of its actions.

Jake had been practicing his flying once more after his round of meditation. Practicing gliding around and not falling down. Until suddenly, he sensed it in his sphere. A figure had invaded it and was fast making its way towards him.

Faster than anything he had encountered since the King. Even quicker than the mantis. He was prepared for an attack, but it never came. Instead, the figure appeared right beside him, where he saw its form clearly.

It looked like an ordinary hawk. But Identify made it clear it wasn't.

[Galesong Hawk – lvl 90]

It was the smallest beast he had ever seen at such a high level. It didn't appear to have grown a single centimeter from when it was just an average everyday hawk. But what it lacked in size, it clearly made up for in speed.

As he observed it, so did it observe him back. Perhaps he had entered its area, him now being well and truly outside of the boundary of the 'city.' It looked at him... and scoffed. How he knew it scoffed, he didn't know. He just did.

It sped up as it passed him, only to make a large circle and fly right up to him again on his other side. Repeating the same damn scoff as it began circling above and beneath him. Jake just silently gliding along in a straight line.

Clearly, it didn't get the reaction it wanted, as Jake just tried to ignore it. He wasn't in any shape to fight it in the air, and so far, he hadn't actually felt any aggression. It also wasn't the first bird or flying creature he came across, so it wasn't that interesting.

And then it did it. It flew up once more, flying right above Jake. He ignored it. But then suddenly, it sped up and headed straight for the top of his head. His danger sense didn't even give him a small warning before he felt it.

It fucking pecked him. Right on his noggin. An absolutely unprovoked attack.

It didn't do any damage, but it still hurt like hell. Not physically. Mentally.

“What the fuck?” he cursed out loud as he began wobbling back and forth in the air. He had to use all his focus on stabilizing himself once more - a challenging endeavor with the damn bird still flying in circles around him.

After he barely managed to avoid spiraling out of control and falling to the ground, the next ‘attack’ came. This time, it just flew up in front of him and flapped one of its wings into his face. He tried to grab it with his hands, but the bird was far faster than him.

What the... he thought, as he was forced to flap his wings uncontrollably, trying to remain in the air.

The bird kept looking at him as he flapped desperately. It attacked once more by firing a blast of wind in his direction, hitting one of the wings.

Surprisingly this blow didn’t destabilize him at all but did the exact opposite. He was wholly balanced for a brief moment before he flapped the wing on the other side, putting him off balance once again.

The hawk gave him a glance that he could only interpret as a mix between annoyance and disappointment. Releasing another gust of wind, Jake, this time, didn’t try to avoid it but simply let it hit. For a second, he felt like his flying went far smoother than before.

What is up with this bird? He questioned. It clearly wasn’t actually attacking him, but rather it felt like it was reprimanding him for something. Did it not like his way of flying, or what?

For a while, this went on. The hawk was flying around Jake, occasionally striking with blasts of wind, as he just tried to adapt to the situation.

His resentment slowly began to turn to gratefulness as the bird took hours out of its day to teach him. However, the entirely needless pecks and slaps with its wings weren't very welcome or productive.

While attempting to land, he spectacularly failed once more as he crashed into a tree. He got up just in time to see the bird sitting on a branch looking down on him judgmentally.

"Give me a break, I have had wings for less than two days," he complained out loud.

The bird just kept looking at him with the same admonishing gaze.

He took a stamina potion to replenish his fast-emptying pool of internal energy while sitting on a fallen log. This action got a hint of interest from the bird as it looked inquisitively at the bottle in his hand.

Jake noticed this as he took out another. "Want one?"

Even if it didn't understand his words, it clearly got the gist of his meaning. Moving one of its wings, a gust of wind picked up the bottle as Jake allowed it to be blown out of his hand.

The hawk caught it with one of its talons without even moving from the tree, surprising Jake with its high skill in manipulating wind. It was pure manipulation, not unlike his own manipulation of pure mana or what the metal caster had done with metals.

It looked at the bottle for a few seconds before it ripped the small cork out with its beak. After smelling the liquid for a second and throwing Jake yet another glance, seeing him also drinking one, it lifted up the bottle and emptied its contents down its throat.

Jake considered for a moment if potions even worked for birds, but its next action confirmed that it indeed did. It flapped its wings in a happy motion as it threw the now empty bottle towards him.

“Potions are awesome, right?” he laughed as the bird screeched in approval.

He sat for a while just looking at the bird, thinking of what exactly it wanted. Its action today just seemed so random. By now, he was used to beasts either running away or attacking him. One just deciding to chill with him was a new experience for sure.

While thinking, he tried flapping his wings a bit behind him to familiarize himself with the feeling, unbeknownst to him, insulting the bird once more.

It flew down and gave him a nice peck on top of his head. “Ow, what the hell?”

This only got him an angry chirp in response as it landed on another branch.

Jake just looked at it, considering how novel the experience of chilling with this sadistic bird truly was. Did it just like pecking him or what?

Trying to ignore it, he began practicing with his wings once more, and a few seconds later, got hit by a gust of wind, making him fall backward off the log he was resting on.

“Okay, what?” he looked up at it, questionably. Was him flapping his damn wings so insulting?

This time it answered by flapping its wings in a silly way, making it look like a newborn chick. Jake thought it was funny until it fired a blast of wind at him. That is when he got it. Is it calling me a stupid chick?

“Am I doing it wrong?” he questioned. Hey, if the bird was willing to teach, he was ready to learn.

It answered by slowly lifting its wings and making a few flapping movements in slow motion. Jake got the hint as he began imitating its movements. Only for a few seconds, though, before his left wing was hit by yet another blast of wind.

This time he didn’t get angry as he noted that he had indeed messed up. He nodded as he began adjusting his motions according to the directions of the hawk.

From an outsider’s perspective, the entire situation was bizarre, to say the least - a human with wings sitting on a log imitating a screeching hawk. Apologizing every time he was hit with a blast of wind without any complaint.

Jake felt happy with the arrangement, but sadly all things had to end. Only a few hours of practice in, the bird suddenly stopped giving directions as it looked up to the sky. Jake followed its gaze and saw nothing but soon noticed that it was preparing to take flight.

Without thinking, he did the same as the two of them took off at the same time. Once more imitating the bird, Jake made a mighty flap, shooting him up in the air.

Instantly he felt the difference in his movements. He felt in control of his wings. And in conjunction also how he moved through the air. It wasn't even close to the hawk's level, but far, far better than before.

He followed the hawk through the air as it threw a few glances his way. On the other hand, Jake's eyes were focused on the wings of the hawk as it flew elegantly through the air.

Of course, there was a big difference between a human's physique with wings and a hawk's, but many concepts were nevertheless the same.

One of the first things he had noticed upon taking flight the first time was the internal energy movements in the wings. It allowed him to fly despite the questionable aerodynamics and other inconsequential things, such as fundamental physics.

Then again, he did remember reading how dragons wouldn't actually be able to fly at all. They were simply too heavy and their wings too small, which didn't appear to faze any of the dragons he had seen in visions so far, meaning that naturally, magic was involved.

Jake also noticed that the hawk was using its wind manipulation actively while flying. It was small, subtle things, such as giving itself a slight updraft or blowing a small gust of wind into itself to turn faster.

He had also seen, and felt, it using wind to speed itself up to ludicrous levels. But right now, it was being rather nice and allowed him to keep up. He said 'allowed' as it could clearly outpace him if it so wished, despite his speed increasing after their training session.

They ended up flying together for twenty or so minutes, Jake learning a lot once more on the brief journey. But suddenly, the hawk fired a gust of wind at him, forcing him to slow down.

Momentarily confused, he looked at it but was just met with another blast of wind. Its intentions now clear. It was telling him not to follow it any further than this.

"Don't want me to follow?" he asked, not exactly expecting an answer.

And, of course, he didn't get an answer. Instead, he just hovered in the air, the hawk hovering ahead of him too. It looked behind it a few times, making Jake suspect it didn't want him to see something in that direction. A wish he decided to respect.

"Alright, I am taking a break down here," he said, pointing down to the forest below. "See ya later."

With that, he began flying downward and saw the hawk also turn around to fly in the direction it was flying before. He sincerely hoped it would come back to him later. Despite his initial hatred, he had actually come to like his feathered teacher over the last few hours.

Landing on the ground once more, he didn't waste any time taking out his cauldron. He wanted to concoct some more stamina potions as his consumption of those had increased tremendously with his flying practice. And if the hawk wanted a potion too here and there, his expenditure would only increase further.

Though getting a grade A flying teacher like the hawk for only a few stamina potions was more than worth it. He still wasn't sure why it decided to help him in the first place, and at this point, he didn't care to question it anymore. Rather just write it up to curiosity or pure goodwill.

He still had the poison for the Indigo Mushroom on his mind, but for now, it would have to be pushed back. Learning to use his wings and flying, in general, took precedence for now. He hadn't even explored the poison fumes aspect of the wings yet.

That would have to wait for him not being in the middle of a forest. He had a solid feeling poison gas wouldn't do anything good to his immediate surroundings, and as a regular rule, he preferred living plants over dead ones. Except for mushrooms. Fuck mushrooms. Mushrooms aren't even plants, to begin with.

Taking out his ingredients, he began crafting the potions as he was humming to himself. Despite the terrible start with the hawk pecking his head over and over, the day turned out quite good anyway. He was having fun.

Cauldron after cauldron of stamina potions was made, giving him a good 40 potions in total throughout his crafting session. By now, the sun had set, and it was night once more. Not that it had any particular effect on his vision, as the little light the moon and stars provided made everything clear as day to him.

Just as he wasn't expecting the hawk to turn up again, he felt a presence approach him. Moments later, the familiar figure entered his sphere once more. He didn't hesitate to pack away his cauldron as he got up and summoned his wings once more.

Landing on a branch, the hawk looked down at him for but a moment before it took flight once more. He understood instantly. It was practice time again. Jake following along with a big flap of his own wings.

Soaring into the night sky, he followed the hawk as they flew higher and higher. Small clouds hung far above, and from their direction, that was their target.

Jake couldn't help but smile as he felt the rush of wind on his face. The forest below and stars above. A human and a hawk, soaring through the air, unlikely companions as they were.