

## Hunter 15

### Chapter 15: Diverging paths

As Jake was relaxing, he reflected on how weird stamina was. He was not tired per-se, as he did not feel like taking a nap, and his muscles did not ache or anything like that. He had not felt even a second of exhaustion during the fight itself, and yet the second the battle was done, he felt drained.

It was likely just mental exhaustion over physical exhaustion now that he was thinking about it. There was no stat for that. Or does willpower help with that? Naturally, he didn't know, so he could only guess, but since he hadn't really felt less mentally taxed even with the stat increases, he felt like it didn't.

It did kind of make sense that it was tiring to focus on interpreting the feelings from his Sphere of Perception all the time while also being under constant pressure. At the moment, it was still active, vaguely making him aware of everything within 8 meters or so, but he was not really directly using it. He couldn't really put it into words, but he guessed one would say it had an 'active' and a 'passive' mode.

Not that he had any clue how it worked. He just knew what was within it. He did not expressly 'see' anything; he just knew the shapes and sizes of everything. It would take a lot of experimentation to truly figure it out if it was even possible ever to do so, and for some reason, Jake doubted he would get any answers from just sitting there. Instead, he decided to go through his system notifications and level-ups. And boy, were there notifications.

\*You have slain [Human (G) - lvl 3 / Warrior (Light) - lvl 6] – Bonus experience earned for killing an enemy above your level. 365 TP earned\*

\*You have slain [Human (G) - lvl 2 / Archer - lvl 5] – Experience earned. 243 TP earned\*

\*You have slain [Human (G) - lvl 3 / Warrior (Light) - lvl 7] – Bonus experience earned for killing an enemy above your level. 471 TP earned\*

\*'DING!' Class: [Archer] has reached level 6 - Stat points allocated, +1 free point\*

\*'DING!' Race: [Human (G)] has reached level 3 - Stat points allocated, +1 free point\*

\*You have slain [Human (G) -lvl 3 / Warrior (Light) - lvl 6] – Experience earned. 394 TP earned\*

\*You have slain [Human (G) -lvl 3 / Archer - lvl 7] – A small amount of bonus experience earned for killing an enemy with a class above your class level. 654 TP earned\*

\*You have slain [Human (G) -lvl 4 / Archer - lvl 9] – Bonus experience earned for killing an enemy above your level. 1167 TP earned\*

\*'DING!' Class: [Archer] has reached level 7 - Stat points allocated, +1 free point\*

The gains were good, and he was especially surprised to see that Nicholas had been level 9 with quite a lot of tutorial points too, indicating that he had indeed killed a lot of beasts. He was strong, after all. It made Jake wonder if Richard lied when he said that he was level 9, but it was honestly inconsequential for now.

He only had a single free point left from the last level-up, as he mid-way through the fight threw all his points into perception. Perception was, without a doubt, the stat that he liked the most, and he felt like it had great synergy with his bloodline ability. Based on that, he decided just to drop his one free point into perception, as he opened his newly upgraded status menu.

## Status

Name: Jake Thayne

Race: [Human (G) – lvl 3]

Class: [Archer – lvl 7]

Profession: N/A

Health Points (HP): 257/340

Mana Points (MP): 88/140

Stamina: 151/210

## Stats

Strength: 21

Agility: 22

Endurance: 21

Vitality: 34

Toughness: 13

Wisdom: 14

Intelligence: 14

Perception: 37

Willpower: 12

Free points: 0

Once more, he confirmed the weirdness of the endurance stat. Due to the level-ups, his maximum stamina had increased by 40, making his current also increase by 40. Which ultimately led to him having more stamina than when he began the fight. He also decided to check the tutorial panel now that he was fiddling with menus.

Tutorial Panel

Duration: 63 days & 2:27:39

Total Survivors Remaining: 987/1200

TP Collected: 4629

So many people have died, and not even the first day has passed, he thought. 213 people dead. More than one-sixth of the total amount of those who had entered the tutorial. Not that Jake helped that statistic in any way, being personally responsible for nine of those deaths.

He had no clue if his TP was a lot or little, but according to the rules, he got half the TP of people he killed, so he assumed it had to be a lot. If Nicholas gave him 1167, he would have had double that at 2334 which was still only a bit over half of what he currently had. Not that he had any idea what those damn points could be used for quite yet.

His amount of points was rather respectable, though, as Nicholas had been level 9, while Jake was only level 7. But it did kind of make sense, as he took the accumulated points of people who had killed plenty of enemies to get to their levels. He also had no clue exactly how much TP different enemies gave. He had gotten over 300 from the level 10 boar, and that had been a shared kill.

For the badgers, he got 4 points from the level 3 ones, and 8 from the level 4 one. The sample size was way too small, but maybe the points just doubled for every level? Though that seemed insane. It did kind of fit with a level 10 boar giving a total of 512, and him getting 300 plus of that on a shared kill.

But that would mean a level 11 beast would give 1024, a level 12 2048, then 4096, and so on. It just seemed way too extreme to work like that. A level 20 beast would give a whopping 524,288 points, which was just absolutely insane if true. Granted, he had no idea how strong a level 20 beast would be, but he doubted they would warrant such a huge point increase.

Once more, he shook his head at his useless internal thoughts. It was a waste of time to think about, and he would just have to go hunt beasts to find out how many points each level gave easily.

He closed all his menus and got up feeling refreshed in both mind and body despite only relaxing for ten minutes. He walked over to where he had fought Nicholas walking up to the dead man's body. Jake could still see the unwillingness on his face, but nothing could be done about that. They had fought, and Jake had come out on top.

He had already resolved himself to give a respectable send-off for the man, but quickly met the obstacle of not having anything to dig with. He refused to leave the man's body for a bunch of overgrown badgers or deer to eat, so just leaving the body out in the open was not an option. Logically, it was a waste of time, but one could not always remain logical.

He instead decided to make a small fire. Fire was rather easy to make by creating sparks with two daggers, one of which he had taken from one of the dead archers. It was in no way a glorious pyre, but it got the job done. He watched solemnly as the corpse burned, nodding towards what had once been a powerful enemy as the flames consumed it.

Despite being in the same place for a couple of hours while preparing and burning the body, no one showed up. Jakes guessed that Richard had decided not to send any more would-be assassins after him for now.

With him being done there, he went to a nearby river and washed himself and his cloak. He bathed in full clothes, his dress-shirt and pants still on. The only thing he took off was his shoes and socks, as getting them wet somehow seemed too much.

After cleaning himself and having his cloak return to being more brown than red, he decided to set out once more and finally get his solo-hunting underway. Excited to finally get started, he smiled and ran into the depths of the forest once more, like a child entering an amusement park.

Richard had sent Nicholas and the other fighters with the stealth skill off nearly an hour ago. They knew to return to their original camp once the job was done, and he had nearly expected to meet them there. It took a good 40 minutes to walk with the newbies to their camp, arriving with little hassle along the way.

The situation was kind of awkward as they walked, but Richard had talked to the young man named Jacob and found him to be rather competent. He was good at reading people, and his group of survivors clearly listened to him and respected him. He was protective of them, but Richard only saw that as a bonus. Despite only interacting with the young man for a bit over half an hour, he had already come to have a modicum of respect for him.

The only thing he was annoyed at was the lack of information he got on the archer he had sent Nicholas after.

Jacob claimed that he had been their co-worker before the initiation, and that was about it. He seemed to barely know the guy. The only thing he knew was that he was good with a bow and that he tended to like being alone. It was annoying, but ultimately it mattered little as the archer was likely already dead by the time the point was discussed.

Or at least he assumed he was. But the lack of the kill-squad who went after him returning made him worried. The young man had been self-confident to the level of being ridiculous, and Richard was starting to fear that it had not all been bravado. Most of it had been without a doubt as he was pretty sure he remembered one of his lines being from a movie, but the paranoia still crept up on him.

Losing a member or two would be more than annoying. They had poured quite a few resources into them after all, raising them all to at least level 5. He had not for a second considered them being wiped out.

Nicholas was too good for that, in his opinion. He was at the same level as himself, and Richard had no confidence in fighting the man head-on. He was strong before the tutorial, and in here, he was only stronger. He did have a small fear that Nicholas would one day turn on him, but it did not seem too probable so far. Either way, he saw no scenario of that arrogant bastard of an archer surviving.

Arriving at their small camp with the newbies, the new arrivals looked about, with Richard nodding at the progress in his absence. The camp was basic, to say the least, but they had started constructing some make-shift huts using sticks and leaves, with some grander buildings already being planned. If they had to spend over two months here, they would have to make safe shelter eventually, and no time was better than the present.



After waiting another quarter of an hour, he saw someone running towards the camp, and he didn't immediately recognize him. A haggard teenager with cuts and bruises all over stumbled out the trees, making him get a better look. At first, Richard was happy as he recognized him as one of Nicholas' men but soon frowned as he noticed him being alone.

Getting a closer look, he saw the pure terror still present on the face of the youth. Richard instantly turned serious as several questions quickly popped up in his head. Could they have met a dangerous beast out there? Another group? Where was Nicholas?

He took a brisk walk towards the kid, as he practically collided with him. Before the kid could open his mouth, Richard cut him off:

"What happened? Where is Nicholas? Where the hell is the rest of your squad?"

"D... dead," the kid barely managed to stammer out.

Richard momentarily froze.

"Did Nicholas kill them?" he asked. If Nicholas had betrayed him...

"He... died..."

“WHAT!?” Richard yelled out, clearly scaring the already terrified kid. The kid barely managed to explain in bits and pieces how they had gotten into a fight and killed off, but Richard interrupted him.

“If he killed everyone,” Richard yelled, taking a deep breath as he looked down on the kid, “then why the fuck are you alive?”

At this point, the other people in the camp had noticed the commotion, including Jacob, who decided to get a bit closer and listen in. He knew that Richard had sent people after Jake and had hoped that his friend could somehow get away. It was an open secret that no one talked about.

But it sounded like it had gone quite different than he had hoped. He was honestly unsure whether he should be happy or not that his friend had killed a bunch of people.

The young archer was nearly pissing himself at this point. He gritted his teeth and explained what had happened in more detail. How they had been ambushed, and two people died as all they could do was try and get to cover. He told everything he knew, leaving out only the fact that he had hidden cowardly for the entire thing.

“He left me alive because he wanted me to deliver a message,” the archer said. “He told me that Nicholas fought well... and that he was serious about what he said earlier.”

The teenager left out the last part of sending more people. He was scared that it would only make Richard madder and that he would actually do it. If that happened, the teenager was sure that he would also be forced to go.

Despite leaving out the last part, Richard was still fuming. He was red in his face but, at the same time, very hesitant about what exactly to do. He looked at the kid, who, in turn, looked like he was contemplating if he should say something.

“What else? Spit it out!” He said, staring angrily.

“Boss... he was not normal. He... he enjoyed it... smiled while covered in blood... a monster.”

Richard was taken aback. He would normally yell more at the kid, but what he saw before him was not just a scared kid, but someone utterly terrified. Reprimanding him would do no good. He instead turned to Jacob, who stood not far away.

Jacob was also shocked at what he heard, especially the last part. He knew that Jake was strong, and he knew that he was rather particular when it comes to fighting... but to describe him as a monster.

But as he thought back to during the night, the blood-soaked Jake stood smiling amidst three brutally slain corpses... he got it. If he had been on the other side of that, it would have been utterly terrifying.

“What the hell is up with that guy?” Richard finally asked as he looked over at Jacob.

Jacob decided to stand his ground. He had heard what the kid said. Jake was out there, and he was a genuine threat from the sound of it. He was his group's strongest bargaining chip along with Caroline. And Jacob was nothing if not a good businessman.

“He is my friend and coworker like I told you, and he is particularly good with a bow. And when it comes to fighting, or ‘hunting’ as he calls it, he gets a bit in the zone per-se. He is weird, he is a loner. I quite honestly don’t understand much about him, but the one thing I do know is that he’s my friend.”

Richard looked at Jacob and saw no indication of the man lying about anything.

Whatever he is, Richard thought, he isn’t worth it.

He had lost enough good men for one day.