

Hunter 156

Chapter 156: Skills & Pylons

Landing on the cloud island with Hawkie at his side, Jake sat down in meditation instantly. He felt like it was far too long since he had gotten a skill in his class and hoped for something useful to add to his repertoire. He especially desired to see his magic progress reflected and maybe even get some sweet new skill related to it.

First on his notifications were the kill messages, and that, of course, was as expected.

You have slain [Lightning Roc – lvl 98] – Bonus experience earned for killing an enemy above your level

You have slain [Cloud Elemental – lvl 97] – Bonus experience earned for killing an enemy above your level

What he cared more about was the ones right below it.

'DING!' Class: [Ambitious Hunter] has reached level 90 - Stat points allocated, +4 free points

Ambitious Hunter class skills available

With great anticipation, he accepted the prompt. He nearly didn't dare look, but of course, he had to. He still vividly remembered his disappointment at 80. His first reaction was a sigh of relief as he saw five new options available he could choose from. The maximum. So far, so good.

Without further ado, he dove straight into it. Doing as you do, he started from the first option. Instantly getting a bit miffed at the common rarity.

[Weak Telekinesis (Common)] – Move the world only with your mind. Grants the hunter basic telekinetic powers, able to move objects within a certain range using only mana. The cost of the skill is dependent on the weight and resistance of the entity you attempt to move. The weight limit and power of Weak Telekinesis is based on Intelligence and Wisdom.

Okay, at least telekinesis is cool, he thought to himself. The common-rarity tag being a bit sore on his eyes. The name alone pretty much described the skill entirely. It was just telekinesis and apparently a weak version of it.

It was one of the many things he could already do without a skill. Albeit not as elegantly as a skill would likely make it, but he could do it, nonetheless. Which was without a doubt the reason why he had unlocked it. No way it was a skill related to his class after all. Telekinesis and a hunter aiming for strong prey didn't exactly go hand in hand.

So while it was a skill he liked and even wanted due to pure vanity, every reasonable part of him made him skip over it. Better to just train himself to be able to do telekinesis without a skill. If one day he was offered a legendary super-telekinesis skill, he may pick it, but weak telekinesis was just too... well, weak. Hence he moved on.

[Superior Mana Bolt (Uncommon)] – Sometimes, the simplest applications of mana can be the most effective. A philosophy you have followed as you refined the most basic of spells. Allows the hunter to

summon bolts of mana to defeat your foes. Adds a small bonus to the effect of Intelligence when using Superior Mana Bolt.

The mana bolt. But far from as simple as the ones he had seen during his first days of the tutorial. The basic mana bolt skill was only inferior-rarity, making it truly the lowest of offensive magic skills. And now he had upgraded it twice over at least, it appeared.

While he wouldn't pick it, it did show that Jake's mana practice hadn't been a waste of time. If he had actually chosen to be a caster back during the tutorial, he would have likely improved it even further. It always felt good to get some positive affirmation that his work had gotten results.

The next skill was very much the same story.

[Infuse Arrow (Uncommon)] – Magic and archery combined to form a new way to damage your foes. Infuse a spell construct (of Uncommon-rarity and below) into an arrow. The spell will activate upon impact. Note that not all spells can be bound, and the effect varies based on the spell used and the arrow infused. Adds a minor bonus to the effect of the infused spell based on Intelligence.

It was the result of the magic practice where he attempted to create proper magic arrows. While it had turned out to be less effective than just throwing mana bolts repeatably, he had learned something from it.

Though, of course, the skill was, in good old English, absolutely worthless. That limit of only spell constructs of uncommon-rarity and below sitting there ruining everything. But it also inadvertently explained a lot.

The system recognized the level of his mana bolts as being of uncommon-rarity, which was why he would so easily infuse those into arrows as it was his limit. Or maybe it was his limit because it was based on his practice of using the mana bolt as the base. When he tried it with Touch of the Malefic Viper, however, it failed every time. Touch being a skill of epic-rarity, of course, so he hoped that with practice, he could make arrows infused with Touch... damn, that would be good.

Death on the outside with coated poison and death on the inside from Touch. The double-whammy.

That was something for the future, though. Moving on, Jake went to the second-to-last skill. Yet another result of his application of mana, it seems. One he hadn't actually seen coming.

[Disruptive Mana Eruption (Uncommon)] – Dispel that which impedes you. Erupt in a torrent of destructive mana, dispelling any spell constructs in your immediate vicinity by overloading them with mana. Higher consumption of mana based on power and stability of the spell constructs. Adds a minor bonus to the effect of Wisdom and Intelligence when using Disruptive Mana Eruption.

Jake still vividly remembered the first time he exploded in an eruption of mana to dispel others' magic. He was locked down by the lackeys of Hayden and Richard and was looking death in the eye. At that moment, he had followed his instincts and flooded his entire body with mana and managed to dispel it somehow.

When he began practicing mana, he thought back on that feeling and managed to replicate it. He did wonder why he hadn't unlocked it earlier, but perhaps it had to do with him not actually understanding at all what he had done back then. Now he knew that it was a bit more than just a flood of pure mana.

It was 'destructive' mana. The same type Jake used to make his mana bolts. He still wasn't quite sure what the difference between the destructive mana and normal mana was, besides the moniker of destructive mana being able to destroy stuff.

Now he had finally been offered it as a skill. But it fell into the exact same category as many of the prior skills. He knew it was still a simple technique, and he knew it was something he could do even without a skill.

Before moving on to the last skill, he quite honestly wasn't sure if he felt disappointed or happy with his skill choices. Clearly, his efforts had been recognized, but on the other hand, he had seen nothing above uncommon-rarity.

He had to remind himself that he had only been part of the multiverse for a few months in realtime. Some of the time had been spent in a time-chamber with Villy and Duskleaf, and while that time had been productive, it was far worse than live combat. It was also alchemy-focused, of course.

Dispelling quite a lot of his discouragement, he moved on to the final skill, immediately noticing the epic-rarity, making his lips curl up.

[Arrow of the Ambitious Hunter (Epic)] - The signature skill of the Ambitious Hunter: An arrow to strike down a fated foe in a single shot. Grants the skill to summon a powerful arrow designed to strike down a specific foe. The Hunter must envision his foe and, with great focus, channel all of his desire to slay it to summon the arrow. The arrow summoned deals significantly greater damage to the envisioned target while ineffective on anything else. Damage increased further based on level disparity. Adds a small bonus to the effects of Agility, Strength, and Perception when using Arrow of the Ambitious Hunter.

His class had offered quite a few skills during the last many levels, and while he couldn't say he was disappointed in them, he wasn't exactly over the moon either. Granted, his profession had skewed his view quite a lot, being offered Ancient skills left and right.

Big Game Hunter and Mark of the Ambitious Hunter were the only ones really worth mentioning. Infused Powershot was from Powershot he got as a regular archer, and his other powerful skills weren't really from the class itself either.

Moment of the Primal Hunter came from his bloodline more than the class. It had been a rare skill that was likely quite okay, but it was his bloodline that had made it the legendary trump card it was today.

One Step Mile and Gaze of the Apex Hunter were both classified as class skills but were both gained as tutorial rewards, so he couldn't really credit his class with those either. He felt like getting the Gaze had more to do with his bloodline and high perception than anything else.

It wasn't like the stats from the Ambitious Hunter class had been incredible either. Rather low, actually. Jake knew that classes on average gave more stats than professions, but his case was entirely lopsided. His profession gave him insane stats while his class was rather lacking.

But perhaps this skill would prove a gamechanger. The description at least made it appear like it had the potential to. It was also something Jake felt like he needed right now. He saw no reason why he shouldn't be able to shoot this arrow with his Infused Powershot, making it a genuinely deadly attack.

Of course, he picked it.

Feeling the knowledge enter his head, he became aware of how to use it intuitively. It didn't come with any explicit understanding of how strong it was or potential limitations, but that is what testing is for. Something he was sure the dear elementals and birds on the cloud island below would gladly volunteer for.

As Jake was making rapid progress on his own, so did the world around him move forward. Humanity had taken a hit for sure, but many heroes would rise in a time of crisis. In several places, the bubbles that were leftovers from the tutorials were surrounded, studied, and a few brave souls even entered to try and claim whatever rewards lay within.

Some made progress while others failed miserably. But it wasn't an impossible challenge - far from it.

A being like the King of the Forest was indeed an outlier. While the final bosses of these tutorial zones were indeed all D-grade, they were only just D-grade. The King had been level 136.

All grades are naturally split into several stages. Early, mid, late, and peak was the most often used terms. For an E-grade like Jake, being between level 25-50 was the early stage, 50-75 mid, 75-95 late, and 95-99 peak. In the same way, then in D-grade 100-130 was the early stage, 130-160 mid, 160-190 late, and 190-199 peak. Level 200 being C-grade.

The King was a mid-stage D-tier Unique Lifeform. Already incredibly powerful for its level. For such a being to have even been in the tutorial, to begin with, was evidence of how abnormal Jake's tutorial had been.

But even if the average final boss was only a level 100 average D-tier end boss, it didn't mean that humans would stand a chance - the difference between tiers simply too high. Even Jake, being a late-stage E-tier with all his bonuses, couldn't necessarily face one head-on yet.

Yet, humans did have some advantages still. First of all, their ability to rapidly progress. With the barriers trapping the tutorial zones, none of the ones within could exit and progress, but humans could level. Secondly, they had numbers and coordination.

This is why the Lord-tier bosses all around the world were falling. Many of them comparable to the dungeon bosses Jake had faced. Some even stronger than the strongest boar. No final bosses had fallen except the King before that day. Very few had even managed to kill any of the lords during the tutorials, so to defeat a D-grade was a tall order. Most didn't even know these lords and final bosses existed.

But some factions were very special, some places the frontline of humanity's progress.

In one such place - even special among the many factions battling the tutorial zones - stood an old man in a blue robe. Surrounded by several other humans who all followed him without question. During the tutorial, he had killed the strongest lord in single combat. His name was Noboru Miyamoto, and today was the day.

Now, he had come for the General - the final boss. But surprisingly, this wasn't even their first bout. Two days prior, he had been there too, to fight. He and his fellow warriors had been forced to retreat, but today he held no such intentions.

Behind him stood his family. All of them powerhouses in their own right. The most influential members of their large family. The weakest among them wielding power only slightly below that of Abby. Someone who, in comparison to Jake, had been far weaker, but in the context of the entire planet was at the peak.

In front of them stood the Terracotta General upon his horse of stone. He was a bulky statue far too nimble for solid rock. Around him, only a few Terracotta Footsoldiers remained. None of them a threat. All of the powerful members of the General's army were crushed during and after the tutorial.

The Noboru clan had made a focused assault on this tutorial zone from the very beginning. Sent soldiers into the zone to whittle away at the Terracotta army little by little. Miyamoto and the rest of the elites entering to take care of any powerful enemy the normal clan members couldn't handle.

All for this day. The day where they would claim the head of the enemy General.

Miyamoto stared at the General atop his horse. His sunken eyes were shining with a sharp light. Raising his hand, he gave the order as they moved - a dozen or so elites against the D-grade general.

The Terracotta general fought valiantly. His halberd cut down five fighters before his head fell to the blade of Miyamoto. A massive loss to their family. But the gains from claiming the Pylon would outweigh it.

He hoped they were still the first to claim a Pylon of Civilization and receive the associated rewards. There were bound to be some bonuses. His patron god had urged him to quickly claim it despite the losses they would no doubt suffer.

Today he had done it. But he wasn't first. This was the second Pylon claimed on Earth. It didn't tell him he was second, but the profession offered made it clear he was only among the first ten. But all he truly cared about was that he wasn't first.

Closing his eyes in disappointment, he sighed at his own weakness. If only I could return to springtime.