

Hunter 164

Chapter 164: Rituals

It took another day to once more reconfigure the magic circle for Jake's new addition. Both hawks were more than happy with doing the extra work required to use the Beastorb.

Their egg had been slowly fed mana for the last one and a half months as it slowly grew, but here towards the end, they had slowed it down to do a final push. A final infusion of energy and Records to kickstart the growth and boost their chick's future potential.

Jake had inadvertently become a part of it all as he spent most of his time observing the birds redraw the formation while trying to understand how it worked. Quite honestly, he wasn't doing well, but he did get a few ideas.

He also helped speed the entire thing up a bit by liberally giving out mana potions, allowing Mystie to work even faster.

After the entire thing was done, they all went to their positions. Three focal points were created inside the formation, each corresponding to an item. Of course, Jake was aware of the Beastorb and the Storm Elemental Orb, but he wasn't aware of the final item before now.

[Mystbone (Unique)] – A Mystbone granted by the system to the newly integrated 93rd Universe. Contains a vast amount of energy and Records that will allow any beast that consumes it to grow far faster and gain magical skills and abilities related to the path of mysticism.

That... actually answers a lot.

Jake had wondered how there even were so many D-grade beasts on Earth, especially in an area like the Cloud Continent with only two of them. They clearly didn't have anything to hunt, so they must have evolved by consuming special items like this or through some kind of natural talent.

He knew that beasts could grow in level without fighting in several ways. Consuming special items, simply through time, or being in select areas and absorbing the energy in their surroundings. But it appears that the system – quite literally – threw them a bone.

From the looks of it, the bone had clearly already been partly consumed. It was doubtlessly what had allowed the Mystsong Hawk to evolve, and now it wanted to use the remaining energy within for its chick.

In his position in the magic circle, Jake was at the Beastorb, Hawkie was at the Storm Elemental Orb, and Mystie was at the bone. While the hawks couldn't talk to him, he understood what he had to do. He just had to feed mana into the circle and help power it. Mystie would be in charge of everything else.

At this point, he was just taking this all as a learning experience. He got insights into the birth and evolution of beasts, magic circles of a mystical nature, and all while helping out a friend.

Slowly, the formation hummed to life as Mystie began the ritual. All of the Cloud Elemental Orbs began shining as the mana within them were drained. In moments the interior was entirely covered with extremely dense wind-affinity mana.

Jake felt as if small blades were continually trying to cut his skin. It didn't cause him any harm, but he could imagine an average human would be cut into little pieces in seconds. All of this incredibly dense energy was slowly being poured into the small egg in the center.

He saw it being filtered before entering the egg, allowing only the densest and most profound energy to affect it.

Around ten minutes later, the second part began. Hawkie lifted its wings as it began channeling mana into the circle, instantly awakening the Storm Elemental Orb.

It erupted with energy as the dense wind-affinity mana was soaked in the potent storm-affinity mana. Small bolts of lightning began jumping back and forth but were quickly eliminated by the formation. Hawkie fell tired to the ground after fifteen minutes or so as the last bit of lightning disappeared, and now only pure mana and wind-affinity mana remained.

Hawkie quickly downed a mana potion – naturally provided by their resident alchemist – as it prepared to help support the circle.

Next up was the Mystsong Hawk, Mystie. It activated the formation with the Mystbone in it. This part was, without a doubt, the simplest for a variety of reasons.

First of all, Mystie was far more accustomed to manipulating the energy found within the bone than any other. The energy within it was also less than the Beastorb and Elemental Orb, as it was mostly drained already.

Clearly, the purpose of this formation had been to infuse the egg with the Mystbone and mana from as many Cloud Elementals as possible, meaning the formation was primarily designed to accommodate the use of those two. While it had been significantly altered to allow for Jake's contributions, it wasn't a complete overhaul.

Deep blue energy exited the bone as it flew through the air, lightly coloring all the wind-affinity mana a teal color. It slowly began being filtered into the egg as Mystie also consumed its own mana potion. This part hadn't taken as long, but the bird had still spent a significant amount of mana keeping the magic circle going from the start.

Finally, it was Jake's turn. He placed both his hands on two small magic circles on the ground as he began channeling in mana. It didn't feel that much different from doing alchemy; the main difference was that he didn't have to actually control it much.

It was just like opening the faucet; the only thing he had to control was the output.

The small Beastorb in his part of the circle cracked and spread its energy just like the Storm Elemental had before. Dense lightning ascended, looking very similar to what the Storm Elemental gave off too. It was pretty clear that their source of power was the same, likely the giant lightning tree on the cloud continent.

Slowly these bolts of lightning were eliminated, too, as the mana density only grew. But the mana from the Beastorb was not mainly that of wind or lightning, but pure mana. He had managed to transform all the vital energies within it to his own pure mana, allowing it to mix with the Thunder Roc mana.

Pure mana mixed extremely well into any environment and easily integrated itself with the dense wind-affinity mana. Pure mana was colorless, and the only thing that could make one notice it was the mana density increasing. Yet despite it all being pure mana... a small part of it had a distinct green sheen. It

was incredibly faint, but they all noticed it nevertheless. The mana from that green energy just felt... ancient.

After all the lightning mana was eliminated, and only wind-affinity and pure mana - albeit some of it with a green sheen - should remain... a third element persisted. Tiny purple sparks that refused to be culled. None of them noticed this, not even Jake with his immense perception or Mystie controlling the formation. They were like pure mana, but... somehow rawer.

They continued to go unnoticed as they were slowly channeled into the egg together with the wind-affinity and pure mana. They were flawlessly integrated with the pure mana and only seemed to help strengthen it.

The ritual continued for hours as the three channeled mana into it and consumed a mana potion whenever possible. The small egg in the middle of it all looking no different than before as it got infused with extremely pure energy and Records.

Jake didn't exactly know what he was doing but just followed along. He just went with the flow as he fed his mana into it and mentally gave his well-wishes to the small chick.

May you grow big and strong and one day peck a dragon to death, Jake thought, going all-in with the positive vibes. Or his version of positive vibes anyway.

The better part of a day later, the ritual completed as the barrier surrounding the magic circle dispersed, revealing Jake, two hawks, and a single egg.

Casper stood and channeled his skills into the steel-like surface as he slowly carved the intricate Magiscript. Each rune was smaller than a fingernail, but it went smoothly with the small pen in this hand. It was quiet work that he enjoyed a lot.

In the corner sat the ghost of a woman in meditation as she focused on absorbing the nearby death-affinity mana. The entire area was already slowly getting soaked in it as the first pillar was erected not long ago. With the support of the Pylon of Civilization, the spread of death-affinity-mana only went faster.

They had been the 4th to claim a Pylon, which quite honestly was a lot slower than anticipated. To slay a D-grade this shortly after the integration was nearly unheard of, especially for a relatively small planet like theirs. Sure, there were still billions of survivors, but the vast majority didn't amount to much, to put it kindly.

A lot of discussions had been had around the camp. The general consensus was that the Holy Church had managed to claim the first and associated rewards. They mainly reached that conclusion because Casper hadn't bothered to speak up.

He knew it was Jake. It had to be.

Heck, anything else would be ridiculous. Jake was a Progenitor, and hence he had managed to slay the D-grade during the tutorial and thus had first dibs on the associated Pylon. Unless Earth had a second Progenitor, he was bound to be first. Something Casper very much doubted.

One was already far too many for their measly planet. Heck, Casper even knew they weren't the only humans in the 93rd Universe and that their population of less than 10 billion was considered low.

Yet planet Earth had turned into an epicenter of action. Influenced by many outside sources with far more resources poured in than usual for a world their size. All of it started by the Primordial Eversmile and further amplified by the Progenitor, Jake. In other words, Casper's tutorial had brought with it immense benefits and challenges to their entire planet.

He was one such perfect example himself as a human turned undead through a ritual and challenge dungeon - Lyra, his ghostly girlfriend, even more so.

Looking over, he Identified her and noticed she had once more grown in level.

[Blightwraith – lvl 73]

The level was high, but the main reason was that... a monster like her tended to level up quickly. In this case, the word monster was not used in any derogatory way but simply as a means of classification. Because Lyra truly wasn't like the others anymore.

She had truly died during their tutorial. Casper had made a deal to preserve her soul, and that promise had been fulfilled. Her soul had been sealed in a necklace, and Casper would have to find a way to help her himself.

Yet one day, he had been whisked away from his training chamber with an S-rank Archlich. That he was training with such an entity was in itself weird and had made him respected by the other undead, but what happened next was even more surprising to him.

The Blightfather, creator of the enlightened undead race and one of the twelve Primordials, offered him a blessing and even, with a casual gesture, created a legendary item for him in the form of the locket around his neck.

He later found out it was due to Jake being so outstanding that the Primordial even bothered with him. Casper was thankful for that, even if it had placed a lot of undue stress on him.

And if he was treated differently for having an S-class teacher before, it sure as hell got worse when the Blightfather blessed him. Amplified further when they saw the name of the race of his ghostly girlfriend: Blightwraith.

Called Noble Ghosts by many, these spirits were of the highest echelon. Blessed with human intelligence from their inception, they would often lead hordes of specters. They could also only be found within the Ghostlands, the homeland of the undead.

This was because they required the power of Blight. It was conceptual energy that only a select few could use as it was a concept created by the Blightfather himself, hence his name. And as he had transformed Lyra's soul directly... he had made a monster of the highest echelon.

One would think this would give Lyra respect... but it all went to him. Because she was bound to Casper through his locket, she was by most just considered an extension of his powers. A... servant of sorts, as much as Casper hated that sentiment.

Speaking of the other humans... or well, Risen Humans... undead... they truly had quite a bunch gathered by now. Nearly ten thousand undead had already reached this settlement, which was quite a lot considering only around 135.000 Risen exited the tutorial.

As undead naturally didn't exist before the integration, the system's way of fixing this was to give everyone who died in the last 24 hours before integrating a second chance. That had meant around 150.000 undead in total. Some had died during the tutorial, though, so 135.000 exited.

But for ten thousand individuals to reach their base within a month would be impossible... if they were all undead. Which, in fact, the majority weren't. They were just people seeking safety or had family there.

If they weren't undead, they would surely have way more, but ten thousand was still really good. Many people had worked on crafting small tokens to sense other undead while within the tutorial and handed them out to their fellow Risen.

This is how they managed to team up so fast. And the second function of the token was to locate the closest Pylon infused with death-affinity mana.

The purpose of the undead faction wasn't some large world-scale domination. It was just to carve out their own little corner of Earth and create a foothold.

"I am done," Casper said as he finished up the small metal plate.

Lyra opened her eyes as she looked at him. "Great, let's get going then! The diggers and earth casters should have the cave prepared by now."

“Yep,” he said, getting up and stretching a bit. Lyra didn’t hesitate as she flew over to him, gave him a small peck on the chin, and jumped into the locket.

Walking out of the house, he saw the sun was out as he shielded his eyes, more out of habit than necessity. A few people instantly turned towards him, but he ignored them all as he walked through the bustling village that was quickly turning into a full-on city.

Large houses were under construction everywhere, and walls were being built to keep beasts and other attackers out while at the same time making a great medium to place protective enchants on later.

Casper avoided people as best he could as he made his way to the epicenter of the city. There, he saw Priscilla, as she had clearly been waiting for him.

“Is everything prepared?” she asked, clearly excited.

“Yep.”

“Great work as always, Casper!” she said with a big smile as she playfully went over to him and patted him on the shoulder. More just brushed her hand on him, really.

He felt his locket glow a bit as he felt the ghost’s dissatisfaction. Priscilla noticed it, too, but ignored it as she kept smiling.

“You should really focus more on controlling the Blightwraith. It would be wrong to waste a gift from the Blightfather,” she said nonchalantly.

Casper didn’t even bother arguing with her as he just ignored her comments and stayed on point. “Her name is Lyra... and she will do fine. I reckon you guys are also done with your part, so let’s go.”

The two of them – three counting Lyra – entered the central building constructed like a castle. They then sought downwards into deep tunnels beneath the castle until they reached a giant underground cavern.

In the middle was a large pillar with many steel-plates on it, all of them made by Casper earlier. The wall around the cavern had also been reinforced with metal, and they were even covered in intricate scripts. The entire cavern a giant ritual chamber. They had moved the pillar there earlier that day, and this entire cavern was made with one purpose in mind.

Allowing for the living to join the dead.