

## Hunter 177

### Chapter 177: To Pursue Perfection

Phillip stood with his soldiers on the wall, all just staring out onto the absolute massacre unfolding before their eyes. The giant blue Mystbeasts ripping apart the few surviving bovines after that insane magic spell unleashed by the Mystsong Bird killed most of the weaker beasts.

At first, they had all been impressed by Neil and his party as they engaged the Herd Leader... but it was just hard to compare it to what the D-rank had done. It was an unfair comparison. To begin with... the chances are the party could only handle two or a maximum of three of the Mystbeasts if they all worked together. And it was very doubtful they could kill them. Meanwhile, the Mystsong Hawk could summon ten times that number while also still posing a threat itself.

Just as they were all thinking nothing more would happen, something tore through the battlefield, blowing a massive hole into one of the Herd Leaders. The wound left behind soon started rotting, and it didn't even have time to move before its head also exploded.

More attacks came, and a few sharp-eyed observers noticed that it was arrows. Yet nobody could see where they came from, at least none who were on the wall.

"A single figure spotted approximately 7-7,5 kilometers to the east," Phillip heard through his walkie-talkie from one of the snipers on the tower. They, too, were also just watching... knowing they couldn't really contribute much.

Phillip had a good idea who the shooter was, and he could only sigh in resignation but also felt a bit of confidence... at least we would be protected.

"Ms. Wells... when do you think we can begin the migration?" he asked. They weren't totally done with their negotiations yet... but at this rate, everyone was going to follow them back anyway...

Jake entered the fort after he and all the Mystbeasts got done cleaning up the battlefield. Neil and his party also took down the big Herd Leader they had been battling with. Jake saw it was level 99, and while it wasn't as strong as the Horde Leader had been – not by a long shot – it was still a decent opponent for the party. He also saw that three of them had gained a level, so that was nice.

When Mystie saw Jake enter, it dispelled that blue giant myst-form it had been using and flew down and began floating beside him. It had already dispelled the giant portal, which subsequently also made the Mystbeasts disappear.

With this battle, if you could even call it that, Jake had gotten a good understanding of Mystie's power... and it indeed wasn't that well-fit for straight-up fights with an opponent of equal level. While she had diverse means, her primary power lay in the complexity and diversity of spells, not raw strength.

Against a horde of enemies, she was likely the best beast he had seen. Taking down an army of bovines wasn't easily done, even by Jake. He would begin to get tired, and wounds would accumulate, as while the Herd Leaders weren't that strong individually, there were still a lot of them.

Yet her powers made her quite ill-fitting against something like the Thunder Roc or even Jake himself. Sure, it would have some effective attack methods, but he doubted most would be that effective if he used his scales and bombarded the hawk from afar.

As for how Mystie would fare against the Minotaur Mindchief... honestly, it was hard to say. It depended on if Mystie could resist its mental magic and rely on ranged attacks. Another factor was also if the summons were immune. Even then... it likely would not win.

If the Minotaur got close and landed any blows, Mystie would be in for a bad time. Anyway, Mystie is kinda awesome in her own right; I should have her teach me some magic.

"Sir," Miranda said, walking up to Jake and his hawk friend. "Phillip has agreed to migrate to the forest, but we won't take everyone right away. As we slowly expand, we will bring them there while still maintaining a small outpost at this fort."

She explained a bit more about their plans, Jake just listening and nodding along. It all sounded good, and he didn't really have any objections or interjections. The first group that would go included Phillip himself, mainly to check out the forest. He would return again to the fort within the same day, so chances are the fort would be safe.

The only thing Jake had to say was to of course inform Miranda about the people left back in the barn, and it was decided that Neil and his party would go with a few of Phillip's men to escort them back.

With the Minotaur dead and the threat of the daily attacks gone, life in the fort should be a lot easier. It didn't mean it was entirely safe, though. Beasts and monsters would still attack to claim the bountiful experience from the many humans residing within, but it likely wouldn't be in large coordinated attacks like before.

Jake could feel Mystie happy that they were finally going back. They hadn't been gone for that long, but he understood the mother-birds anxiety. He was looking forward to seeing Hawkie and the egg too.

The first group left for the forest less than an hour later, Jake and Mystie at the lead, acting as escorts. Miquel had stayed back at the fort, as he had apparently become very interested in crafting more modern weaponry. It was fine, as Jake had kind of forgotten about the guy, so he only noticed the dude hadn't come along halfway back.

Needless to say, getting back to the 'city' took a lot longer than when they left. Mystie and Jake couldn't fly everyone, and many of them wouldn't like to be airlifted either. They also brought many things, and Jake didn't have the faintest interest in putting it into his inventory to help them. That would require so much damn planning for him to remember what belonged to who and sorting stuff, and a lot of annoying stuff solved by people just carrying their own shit.

Jake only spoke a bit with Miranda on the way, and they agreed to a meeting once they were back and had gotten everyone settled. Well, an after-meeting to be more accurate. Miranda would have a meeting with Hank, Phillip, Lillian, and many others to figure out how to get everyone housing and all of that other administrative stuff that was her job. Afterward, she would give Jake a quick breakdown. Damn, it was nice being the boss.

When they had traveled a good while, Mystie couldn't wait anymore and took off. Jake could only chuckle a bit to himself as he stayed with the group. While they had traveled damn fast for a caravan, it was still incredibly slow for Jake and the D-grade hawk's standards.

Not long after, they made it back. Only a few hundred people had come along for the first trip, and it was mainly to try and help build stuff for the next batch. Not that Jake was that invested, as he left right after returning after a quick 'see ya later' to Miranda.

He used One Step Mile to get to his house faster and walked past the 'no entry' sign into the valley. With a deep breath, he took in the atmosphere as he saw the waterfall and pond, as well as the small idyllic lodge. The big nest with two hawks sitting in was also a bit hard to miss.

"Hey Hawkie, anything interesting happened while we were gone?" he asked as he casually strolled towards the nest.

Jake got a small screech of annoyance. Likely because they took so long to return. "Yeah yeah, happy to see you too."

He jumped up to the nest and squatted down, looking at the egg. It hadn't changed much since last, but Jake could feel the faint presence it gave off had increased. "It will hatch soon..." he said, both birds agreeing.

I guess that's part of the reason why Mystie wanted to hurry back... she was afraid the egg would hatch without her being there, he thought, feeling a bit bad about making the bird leave with him. Luckily, it hadn't happened, so no harm was done.

And there wasn't any danger of Jake asking them to leave again anytime soon. Mainly because of the notifications he had gone through on his way back.

He had unexpectantly gained yet another level from the cleanup of the Herd Leaders, making him reach level 99, the cap of E-grade.

\*'DING!' Class: [Ambitious Hunter] has reached level 99 - Stat points allocated, +4 free points\*

\*'DING!' Race: [Human (E)] has reached level 86 - Stat points allocated, +5 free points\*

Jake had initially been considering pushing straight to 100 and getting his class evolution as he had done at E-grade. The class and profession evolution back then had just been a straightforward power boost, and it didn't take much considering if he wanted to rush it or not.

But... it appeared that D-grade was a bit different, as the second he reached level 99 in his class, he got a quest.

Quest: The Perfect Evolution

As you approach the pinnacle of your grade, evolution is imminent. As you prepare to step out of the lower tiers, you must choose: pursue perfection or immediate power. A human may choose to evolve their class or profession immediately once fulfilling the basic requirements or wait to make a perfect evolution. Evolving a class or profession to level 100 before evolving to D-grade will result in a portion of the stat gains being deferred.

The choice is yours.

Objective: Reach level 99 in both your profession and class before evolving to D-grade.

Reward: [The Perfect Evolution (D)]

Upon failure, you will still obtain the [Evolution (D)] title.

Jake wondered if the quest was something everyone got or if it was something unique to new initiates. From the looks of it, the titles were something everyone would get, and the quest was just a PSA of sorts. But he did have some questions still... and luckily, he had a one-way-line to a walking encyclopedia.

After saying his goodbyes to Mystie and Hawkie, he walked through the barrier and into his lodge. He walked through the building and out the back door to the porch, where he placed a wooden chair. It was new, and not one he had stolen from any dungeons, but one of the many pieces of furniture from the fort that was now superfluous.

Sitting down and leaning back, he closed his eyes as he spoke. "Oh mighty Villy, big-boss snake, I have inquiries for thee. What's up with the D-grade evolution, and will I be fucked if I don't get the Perfect Evolution title? Also, how would I even level my race? Hope you are doing well. Love, best-buddy Jake."

He could vaguely feel his message go out and be delivered to the Viper. He even saw a bit of his mana disappear, much to his surprise. Wait, had he just sent a legit prayer? Like, recognized by the system as a prayer?

Meh, who cares. All Jake knew was that the Viper heard him.

A few seconds later, he felt something touch upon his mind - a familiar presence. It felt just like during the tutorial-store-rewards-thing, but even more substantial than then. With the presence came the amused voice of the Malefic Viper, echoing in his head.

"Alright, divine message coming through. That title honestly isn't that big of a deal, and you won't really lose anything worth mentioning by just evolving your class right away. Many people do it, even elites, but it would be foolish of you not to get it when you aren't in a rush. You won't lose much if you don't, but ya know, everything counts. Any experience you gain that would get you class levels before now get

you race levels. Seriously, this is basic shit; why not just look it up in a book? Oh, and when you reach D-grade and evolve your professions, I have a surprise for you. Have fun grinding till then! Love, bestest-buddy Vilastromoz.”

Jake chuckled a bit as he felt the presence disappear. “Thanks, mate.”

Well, I guess that settles it - next goal: max out Prodigious Alchemist of the Malefic Viper.

He would have done it even without the Viper telling him it was smart... he kind of liked completing quests.

The next hour or so was spent actually organizing his lodge. He took out all the bookshelves and placed them in the large central room, practically turning the living room into a library. He would need some more furniture soon, as what he had swiped from the dungeon wasn't enough. The bed was also quite bad, and everything was what he would classify as 'mundane.' Aka, it didn't have any magical properties.

The same couldn't be said about the lodge itself. It was only at a low level, but it did have some basic enchants that made it more robust and some basic helpful things, such as regulating humidity and temperature inside.

After sorting stuff, he went outside to talk to the birds. Well, just him talking and them saying bird-sounds, with Jake mostly just there to observe the magic circle laid down by Mystie and the egg in the nest. It wasn't a circle to nurture the egg anymore, but just one to defend the nest.

Jake was pretty sure the egg didn't need any more nurturing. Just protection and time to hatch.



He considered starting a crafting session but decided against it. Miranda would come by in not that long to go over what the other people of the city agreed on and for him to give input, so he wasn't sure he would have time to really get in the zone. Every brew or concoction also took a bit, and it would be rude to make her wait. She was already working hard, no need for him to waste her time more than necessary.

Instead, he sat down on the steps of the lodge, a book in hand - one of the many books about fungi and - more accurately - how to kill the damn things. By now, Jake was plenty aware that the Indigo Fungus wasn't an easy opponent, even for one in D-grade.

If he planned on grinding alchemy anyway... finding a way to kill that was an obvious goal. It would allow him to explore a new area of alchemy he hadn't tried before, and at the same time, level up the profession so he could get that Perfect Evolution.

Making more potions was also an option, and he would still do so, but he would need more ingredients for that soon. He was beginning to run out and at the moment only felt comfortable crafting for himself. He could perhaps have some of his new citizens scavenge for him... but the issue is that he didn't really want inferior-rarity ingredients anymore.

It would help the city if he supplied potions, but it would also make him stagnate. There was no challenge in making inferior-rarity potions anymore, and he wanted to avoid it as much as possible. Could I teach someone? he suddenly considered.

Possibly... but all of that would have to wait. That would be far too time-consuming currently. Besides, Jake had just felt a presence approaching.

Jake looked up from his book and saw Miranda enter the valley. She had a big smile on her lips and was carrying a large platter as well as a wine bottle and two glasses.