

## Hunter 180

### Chapter 180: Fists of Fury

She dodged the attack as she vaulted backward, a few strands of her long hair still caught by the sharp claws of the beast. With her back bent like she was trying to win the world championship of limbo, her stance was a bit awkward as another claw descended towards her body.

In an impossible move, her entire body swayed to the side as if she didn't have any bones. Simultaneously, she pushed off the ground with her hand and landed a solid kick on the huge three-meter tall bear-like beast in front of her.

The beast barely reacted to the attack, but it allowed her to create some distance between them. She was breathing heavily, with several wounds already covering her entire body. All of them were healing at a near-visible rate, but she was still far from in optimal condition.

Her opponent was a bear-like creature that, in retrospect, actually looked more like a werebear. In actuality, though, it was a sloth.

[Slothful Warden – lvl ???]

It was the final boss of her tutorial, a being she had failed even to reach back then... but now, more than two months later, she would face it and win.

This wasn't the first time Carmen fought the beast... but it would be the last.

She charged again, not giving the beast time to relax. She knew it would recover as fast as herself, so hit-and-run tactics wouldn't work. The beast had two modes – slow-mode and fast-mode.

It moved incredibly slowly in slow-mode, but its defenses were ridiculous, and it healed its wounds incredibly fast. It was far more vulnerable in fast-mode and didn't recover at all, but it made the beast super fast, as the name suggested. This knowledge had taken her losing several limbs to learn.

The beast moved again, staying in fast-mode. She dodged back, not daring to try and fight it straight-up but instead looking for an opening. She leaned and weaved away from the claws until she finally saw her chance. She landed a right hook on the beast's face, making it stumble a bit back.

While her hit was far weaker than the D-grade's, she had managed to hit the chin and rattle the brain a little. With it disorientated, she moved in quickly and managed to land ten or so more blows before it used a skill to get her off.

Its long hair suddenly grew in length as the long strands, like tendrils, tried to catch her. She jumped back with all her strength, barely avoiding them. Her fists were both encompassed in an orange glow that was already spreading throughout her body, healing her wounds.

With every hit, she stole life-energy from the opponent, healing herself. At the same time, the lower her health, the stronger she got. She was a berserker, but without the berserking part. Her mind was calm as she swiftly moved forward again, seeing the Slothful Warden about to enter its slow-mode. Won't help you this time.

She wouldn't allow it to regenerate.

Her fists came down like hail, every one of them leaving a small imprint of energy behind. It tried to defend but was far slower than before. Carmen's attack didn't do any noticeable damage, but they did send energy into the beast's body with one purpose – stopping its healing.

Forced to move fast again, it exited its slow-mode and returned to fast-mode, and they returned to their slugfest. Carmen, calculatingly dodging every hit of the beast while it swung with increasing desperation.

After nearly half an hour, it was time to enter the second phase. Carmen had gotten here before and had almost lost her life... but now she would be ready.

The beast exploded with power as its hair grew, and it began glowing red. It grew another meter in size, power overflowing from its body.

Carmen took this time to make her own preparations as she prepared for the battle's final stage.

Pressing both her fists against the ground, she spoke, "Sacred Battleground."

An aura spread throughout the area, and for a split-second, an echo of battles prior swept across the land. Animals were fighting and hunting before the system, and even echoes of a war that had happened in bygone eras, perhaps all the way back in the stone age.

The visions disappeared as quickly as they came, but the ground remained hallowed. It was now a blessed battlefield where Carmen would bring down her foe.

She felt the power of the land flow into her as she activated her boosting skill.

“Ruination Drive.”

Carmen’s entire body felt like it was burning as orange energy swirled out from every pore on her skin. She didn’t hesitate as she moved, facing the D-grade in a final battle where only one of them would walk out alive.

Her fist landed on the beast, but at the same time, it also attacked. Her entire right arm was ripped off with a swipe, but the moment her fist connected, it pushed in a flood of the orange energy while at the same time dragging out the beast’s health points.

The severed arm regenerated in less than a second as she dodged a blow from the Slothful Warden and landed a kick. Spikes of hair flew out, and she blocked with her newly regenerated arm, barely avoiding getting her head impaled.

Gritting her teeth, she grabbed hold of the hair and dragged the beast in closer. Its arms were longer than hers, making it an advantage to get in closer. It did mean the hair would impale her now and then... but that is what her regeneration was for.

The giant sloth began using a few more skills here and there, but she had encountered them all before. The corrosive breath that leveled an area hundreds of meters in front of it in a cone was avoided as the attack was rather telegraphed, and the crescent beams it released from its claws were easy to dodge when you avoided or deflected its swings anyway.

Her body was ripped apart repeatedly, but she inflicted a heavy blow on the sloth for every limb she lost. Her regeneration was pushed to eleven, her power only growing as her massive health pool slowly depleted. If she fought outside her Sacred Battlefield or without her boosting skill, she would be dead already.

Carmen knew this entire fight was very tight. It was walking on a tightrope from start to finish, with no guarantee of victory even if she didn't fuck up. She could have fought with others or tried to level more... but she wanted to win alone and do so before capping her class.

When the beast looked to be on the verge of death, it made its final stand as energy poured out of it like never before. Carmen had kind of expected this... so she was ready.

She summoned six items while in mid-air, retreating from the beast - a sword, a spear, a set of claws, two skulls of beasts, and finally, a mirror. Her aura spiked as she spoke.

"Echoes of War."

Figures condensed around each item as golden ghostly apparitions were conjured. This was what she had prepared for the last two weeks by fighting powerful foes. Combining her class and profession with the Sacred Battlefield, she summoned echoes of those she had slain.

The Slothful Warden saw these figures and didn't hesitate to attack. The spearman fell nearly instantly, while the one with the sword managed to at least block a single attack before also dispersing. The two wolves summoned from the skulls managed to sink their teeth into one of the sloth's arms, while the panther summoned from the set of claws cut a nasty gash across its side.

Carmen also charged with no regard for her own safety. Both hands behind her as she ran, building up all the momentum she could. The summoned apparitions were also beginning to disperse as they couldn't remain active for more than a few seconds, the items that summoned them crumbling to dust along with the ghosts.

Her right fist was burning with all her energy as she swung a right hook straight for the head of the beast in a reckless attack. The Slothful Warden saw her reckless attack as it brought its claw forward, ready to rip off her head.

The claw came down as she swung her fist forward. The claw hit first due to the sloth's long arms, but the second it made contact with her hair, it didn't hit the human but instead sunk into a mirror that had suddenly appeared.

Instead of finishing the human, its blow was reflected back on itself as blood flew everywhere from its own claw, ripping its other arm off. The mirror also shattered to pieces, its power only enough to block a single blow. It was the regalia from slaying a peak E-grade boss monster, a ghost that was bound to the mirror itself.

With its attack reflected and the sloth heavily damaged, it couldn't react properly when Carmen swung her fist forward. It impacted the sloth's head, the facial bones and skull shattering to the fist that held everything the woman could muster. An explosion of power sounded out in the area as everything in a 10-meter radius was leveled from the blast.

All that remained was Carmen standing alone in the crater, her Ruinous Drive deactivated, her right arm gone, and her entire body covered in blood. Before her lay the headless corpse of the Slothful Warden, the final boss of what had once been her tutorial.

\*You have slain [Slothful Warden – lvl 108] – Bonus experience earned for killing an enemy above your level\*

\*'DING!' Class: [Savage Pugilist] has reached level 98 - Stat points allocated, +5 free points\*

\*'DING!' Race: [Human (E)] has reached level 79 - Stat points allocated, +5 free points\*

\*'DING!' Class: [Savage Pugilist] has reached level 99 - Stat points allocated, +5 free points\*

“Hehe...” she chuckled as she saw the messages before she began full-on laughing. “Fuck, I am awesome.”

She kicked the Slothful Warden as she gave it the finger. “Fuck you, and fuck everything you ever stood for!”

Carmen, for the first time in so long, felt truly free. It felt like she only now had truly broken free of the prison she was in before the system, as not a single remnant of it now remained. Her entire body was hurting, but she felt elation like never before.

She took out a recovery potion from her spatial storage, quickly chugging it down. It would help with the after-effects of the boosting skill while also helping her recover her resources faster. It was only inferiority, but it was damn impressive anyway.

Being able to at least move a little, she got on with the next area of business. She went up to the corpse of the beast as she knelt down and placed her hand on it.

"I tribute this victory to Valhal."

The corpse instantly began turning to golden dust, leaving only a single set of long claws behind. She instantly put them in her storage and noted she had gained another level.

\*'DING!' Profession: [Apprentice Valkyrie of Gudrun] has reached level 61 - Stat points allocated, +4 free points\*

\*'DING!' Race: [Human (E)] has reached level 80 - Stat points allocated, +5 free points\*

Honestly, that profession was a scam. All Carmen had to do was tribute kills she made to Valhal, and she would gain levels in it. Okay, she also had to prepare the items dropped to summon echoes and do some other rituals and stuff, but it was way easier to level than those professions that felt more like full-time jobs of just creating shit.

No way she would have the patience for that.

This is also why she had already found someone else to deal with the damn Pylon she had just gotten a quest about. No way she was going to waste her time on playing city-builder or whatever.



She had more stuff to punch and more levels to gain. She briefly looked at the other new quest she had gained about the Perfect Evolution title and shrugged. She could wait with evolving if it meant becoming more awesome.

It wasn't like she was going to stop fighting... she needed more tributes anyway.

Miranda entered the valley to give her weekly report to Jake. It had become routine that she would come by with some good food, and they would talk over any new happenings of the city. Nothing seemed unusual at first, but she did notice one thing... the two hawks were not at the nest.

One of them being gone was pretty normal, but not both of them. While the birds hadn't allowed Miranda to see it, Jake had mentioned they were caring for an egg. But no such egg was to be found.

She hesitated a bit as she went through the ever-active barrier and knocked on the door. It opened a second or so later, her mana sense skill telling her it was done with pure mana manipulation. He is getting a lot better every time I come by...

"I have brought this new dish; it reminds me a bit of kebab, bu-"

Miranda had barely entered and begun presenting today's meal when she saw Jake sitting in a chair with a book, and she was instantly dumbfounded. Not by the man himself as he looked the same as usual with a mask covering his face and everything.

No, what took her aback was the small fluffy white ball of down sitting on his head. It looked to be sleeping or at least half-asleep and didn't bother with her at all. She couldn't help but identify it out of pure curiosity.

[Sylphian Eyas – lvl 3]

"Kebab? That sounds great," Jake answered as he made his mask invisible and looked up with a smile.

"Is that...?"

"Yeah, this is Sylphie, Mystie's and Hawkie's kid. I am babysitting today as they both went out to hunt for a bit," Jake answered nonchalantly.

"I... well, at least that is a real name..." Miranda muttered as she walked over and placed the food on the dining table.

"Hatched a few days ago. She is usually an energetic little bugger, but I managed to tire her out," Jake chuckled as he brought a finger up and tickled the bird a bit. The small hawk happily nuzzled up to the finger without even opening its eyes.

So damn cute, Miranda thought as she took out the plates and cutlery and placed them on the table.

Jake got up from his small reading corner and went over to the table and helped her. He levitated the two plates and cutlery, placing them on each side of the table.

“We had the second restaurant open today; the food is from there. Well, it is more of a grill than anything,” Miranda said. “Two new caravans arrived this week, a few hundred people in each, so we are always behind in housing. Hank and Louise are raking in levels faster than ever, with all the new construction projects.”

The two of them sat down at the table as Miranda continued explaining as they ate.

“The four with merchant professions from the fort have done well with trying to facilitate normalizing using Credits. A few people who recently got their profession-upgrade have also become merchants or gained professions related to economics, helping with the cause.

“While most don’t care much about Credits or really have any to use, it is still the best we have. Producing our own currency would just be silly.”

“With the system as a guarantor of the Credits, it makes it a far superior currency. The multiverse as a whole also uses Credits, so us doing anything else would indeed be moronic,” Jake concurred.

“Exactly, so we have begun some initiatives to normalize using the credits. The restaurants accept it, and most crafters do, too, though it is hard to estimate how valuable something is or isn’t. We don’t really have any frames of reference besides what things cost in the Tutorial Store... and most of those things aren’t something we can make anyway.

“With that in mind, we began making some official quests to donate equipment and give wages to those working with the construction projects. It has helped a lot, but...”

“You lack funds,” Jake said as he ate the food, clearly enjoying it quite a lot.

“Yep, we are pretty much broke, but I talked with Phillip, and he had nearly 800.000 left over after the tutorial store, and we can borrow that for now, and it should get us through at least the first month, and by then we should have some taxation system set up or some other income-source,” Miranda explained.

The thought of asking the owner for any money didn’t occur to her. While he was the official leader of Haven, his job was only protection, not funding. This was her hurdle to overcome.

“I could let you borrow so-“ Jake began but was instantly cut off.

“Only if it becomes absolutely necessary,” she answered promptly. She had expected the offer, but she didn’t want it. “Instead... think about if there is anything the city may be able to do for you. Make a few requests and reward Credits for that.”

“That... is actually a good idea. I will consider doing that,” Jake answered, looking like he was questioning why the heck he hadn’t thought of that before.

The rest of the night was spent just talking over a few other key points. She ended up staying a few hours longer than usual, mainly due to the baby hawk waking up. It was just too damn cute to leave alone, and they played with it throughout the night, making her only leave at dawn.

She exited the valley as she cracked her neck a bit. She had a paper in hand with a request from Jake and a bright smile on her lips from interacting with the baby hawk. Despite having another full day of work ahead of her, she was content. Things were looking good for Haven.

Her mood was ruined a bit when she entered her office and saw a huge stack of papers with requests and inquiries... Oh well, another 72-hour shift ahead, it seems.