

## Hunter 181

### Chapter 181: Methods of Improvement

Jake saw Miranda leave and reentered the lodge to continue his work. It was a nice break to get once in a while when she came by, and he often got something quite valuable out of it too. Today, he had gotten the idea of actually using the city to his advantage.

The issues of upgrading his Touch of the Malefic Viper and Sense of the Malefic Viper had been bothering him more than before these last few days. Especially so after he had reached level 80 in his profession only a few hours prior and gained the next incredibly powerful stat-granting skill.

It hadn't taken him long to decide between Fang and Pride. His encounter with the Minotaur Mindlord had made him aware of how weak he was against any kind of mental attack, even if the fight had been on the easy side for him.

He feared he would encounter something stronger, as the memory of briefly considering the Mindlord a 'friend' still haunted him. What if it had been permanent? Or lasted far longer? What if he had been with actual friends, and it fooled him for long enough to kill one of them?

What if Mystie had come along and he had made Jake fight it... all of those things had been bothering him, so he wanted to shore up the weakness at least a little bit. So yeah, he picked Pride of the Malefic Viper.

[Pride of the Malefic Viper (Ancient)] – The arrogance and strong will of the Malefic Viper is known throughout the multiverse. Now, you have learned to take after him, your own pride now a tangible weapon. Allows the Alchemist to force their will upon the world far more easily. Significantly increases the effect of all Words of Power spoken. Your pride increases all resistance to any kind of mind-affecting effects but be warned that it wanes in despair. Passively provides 1 Willpower per level in Prodigious Alchemist of the Malefic Viper. May your will be truth, your pride eternal.

Jake still had no idea what Words of Power were, but he figured he would find out eventually. He wanted it for the mental resistance thing anyway. To explore an entirely new 'thing' when he already had two skills to upgrade and his profession to level up also seemed like a bit too much.

The skill hadn't come with any instinctive knowledge or anything like that. Then again, it just made him do things better. Things he didn't know how to do, but.. he was better at them now, so yay?

He had experimented a bit with the whole "force your will upon the world" part, and... he had just made himself look silly. How the hell was he supposed to do that anyway? It wasn't like it just made all his skills stronger because he wanted them to be, and it didn't make mana manipulation any easier either. Jake was sure there was some trick to it, and he was looking forward to figuring it out.

But back on the topic of what he had made Miranda get... he had just asked for one thing. Equipment, but preferably weapons. Not anything for him to use but to experiment on. He had spent quite a lot of time thinking about improving the Touch skill and had come to some realizations.

Jake had to remember that at its core, Touch of the Malefic Viper was an alchemy-skill, not a combat-skill. The one time he had upgraded it prior was when he infused the Essence in the Valley of Tusks dungeon. Before that, he had also used his Touch on the massive concoction in the Lucenti Plains, and most recently, he used it on the Malefic Beastorb he created to help the little birdie sleeping on his head.

In every one of those cases, he had changed an item, or more accurately, corrupted an item. He hadn't just poisoned them but made their properties different, even making them be seen as other objects entirely.

Jake had a theory that Touch of the Malefic Viper's original purpose was to be used during concoction-processes to fuse different poisons or add the property of another poison to the concoction. That... or just corrupt the shit out of it all and make something far deadlier than before.

He had injected Touch into the Beastcore through the cauldron, showing the runes on the cauldron recognized the Touch as an alchemy-skill. He knew the base-runes for alchemy were entirely system-created and actually weren't that hard to make. Given a few weeks, Jake could likely learn to create a basic mixing bowl. They would be shit but useable by anyone with any crafting-skill related to potions or poisons or just knowledge of how to use the runes.

He had already done a few experiments using Touch during the crafting process, and quite honestly... it went swimmingly. No issues at all, and he even felt like it improved some of his concoctions a bit. He made his best Necrotic Poison yet by mixing in some of the effects from his blood towards the end, amplifying some aspect of the concoction instead of just using his blood purely as a catalyst.

It was still a Necrotic Poison, but it appeared like it could spread slightly faster than before. It wasn't enough for it to change the name or description at all; it was just the feeling he got from his Sense of the Malefic Viper.

But the fact that it was so easy to do was the issue. Clearly, the skill was already meant to do that, and Jake was just a bit of a dummy for not having done it a lot earlier. Well, he hadn't lost much as it didn't necessarily make the concoctions stronger, often just slightly altering the effects. Sometimes making it weaker, too, if the effects didn't mix well.

No, he needed to go in another direction... he had already managed to alter the skill slightly by expanding its scope by allowing the effects of affinities to be mixed in, so now he wanted to increase its depth. He wanted to double down on the corruption effect and learn to use it on other things outside of just mimicking a poison.

He felt like it was a bit like cheating... but he had asked the Viper and gained a semi-useful answer:

“The true Touch of the Malefic Viper - or any of my skills really - are way outside the scope of your understanding. Your epic-rarity version may not be the same as another’s, and neither will your ancient-rarity one be. Mixing in affinities is just a mere fraction of what the real Touch of Me can do.”

Okay, it was actually quite useful and gave him some good insight into how all those Legacy skill-things worked. It was pretty much just saying: “go right ahead and try to improve it in any way possible!”

So that’s what he did. He wanted to see if he could further corrupt and change items, so he had Miranda put out a quest to deliver him some. He had some items in his inventory... but quite frankly, they were just too good to experiment on.

He still had the Staff of Lucenti Realms and the epic-rarity Scimitar of Debauchery, for example. Both of those interesting due to how different they were. One held mana of moonlight, a very pure type of mana, while the other was only good because of some fucked up curse.

While he wouldn’t feel bad about just breaking the scimitar, he would prefer to at least get something useful out of doing so. So he would start out by breaking a bunch of inferior-rarity items made by smiths training their craft. It also had the nice side-benefit of injecting some of his Credits into the economy.

However, for now, it was back to trying to make something tasty for Sylphie.

Days passed by as his commission was out, and while Miranda collected weapons he had intended to create something to help Sylphie grow but he quickly ran into some problems.

First of all, he had never made anything like it before, so it was an entirely new area. While that was a bit exciting, he found out it really was way outside his area of expertise. He found a book that described a few recipes, and it noted that creating any kind of nurturing product for a beast was far closer to the cooking profession than alchemy. There were also entire professions dedicated to raising beasts besides that, so maybe it would be better to find someone else to help?

He also found out that different beasts required different things. You needed to know the beast's mana affinities, its general species, and last but not least, the grade of its Origin. The Origin was related to the core of its Records and was something Jake had encountered in the description of his bloodline as an example.

Using himself as an example once more, while he himself was the Origin of the bloodline, the Malefic Viper was the Origin of all his skills carrying the name. Origins then had grades, the grade of the Malefic Viper, of course being pretty damn high. This again tied back to upgrading the skill... if he managed to go beyond the Origin, he would be able to change the skill entirely, perhaps making it into Touch of Jake Thayne... actually, let's just stick with Malefic Viper for that one

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The Origin of his profession was naturally also the Malefic Viper.

For beasts, their Origin was often tied to the name of their race. Sylphian Eyas meant its species was that of a hawk, not hard that one, but the name Sylphian was a bit more challenging to figure out. Jake assumed it was related to Sylphs. The issue was... what exactly was a Sylph?

In conclusion... Jake had no idea where the hell even to start. He would at most make some shitty inferior-rarity soup for the bird, and at that point, it would just be better to feed it meat from a high-level beast anyway.

So... Jake returned to his original goal, which was actually going quite well.

\*You have successfully crafted [Fungicide (Common)] – A new kind of creation has been made. Bonus experience earned\*

\*'DING!' Profession: [Prodigious Alchemist of the Malefic Viper] has reached level 82 - Stat points allocated, +5 free points\*

Jake breathed in the fragrance of the liquid in the cauldron and nearly gagged. God was it horrid. He also felt some of the poison enter his system before quickly being eliminated by Palate of the Malefic Viper.

As a responsible bird-babysitter, he had only been crafting today because the little one was with her parents. They were outside running around as the small hawk was still too young to fly. She hadn't even begun growing feathers yet.

Jake wasn't the most knowledgeable about birds, but he was pretty sure most birds tended to grow pretty quickly. Sylphie was definitely growing up slower than pre-system hawks, not that he minded. She had gotten slightly bigger and was a lot faster and stronger now, but just as cute.

Well... he was pretty sure the little eyes could kill an average pre-system adult no problem, seeing as he had already seen the small bird peck small holes into the incredible resilient bark of some of the trees.

She was getting stronger every day, but he still didn't want her in the house when concocting poisons. It didn't matter when he worked on potions, but the fumes from poison alone would hurt the little one. With the common-rarity toxins, perhaps even a chance she could die. Either way, it was a risk he was absolutely unwilling to take.

The barrier around the house also served to keep any fumes inside, an unexpected but welcome benefit.

Taking a look at his new creation, he noted that the description was pretty much the exact same as before.

[Fungicide (Common)] – A poison created to kill fungi and similar lifeforms. This type of poison is made to spread through any physical connection of the fungi, quickly infecting large parts of it. Deals relatively low damage but is hard to cleanse.

It was like when he went from Weak Hemotoxin to just Hemotoxin... it added a word here or removed a word there, just indicating it was now slightly stronger, which made sense, as the concoction was pretty much the exact same as the weak version.

The primary ingredient of the fungicide was actually his own blood. He remembered how it utterly annihilated the needle-like tendrils of the Indigo Mushroom when it tried to suck out his blood and wanted an effect like that, but slower.

Besides that, he just used some moss and some of the mushrooms he hadn't paid much attention to prior. Most of them common-rarity. He was beginning to run low on most ingredients, but he did have a plan to alleviate that a bit by once more using the city. He would take that up with Miranda the next time she came by.

Yet even with a common-rarity fungicide, he wasn't satisfied. He knew it would deal damage to the mushroom, but he doubted it would be enough. So he was going to go beyond common-rarity and make an even stronger poison.

And to do that... he already had some ingredients in mind. All of them were things he had gained during the tutorial and then just kept hidden away in his spatial storage. The first of which was taken from the Forgotten Sewers dungeon.

[Lesser Ethwood Ashes (Uncommon)] – The ashes left behind by burnt Lesser Ethwood. Used in a myriad of recipes related to the soul and mind. Has no effect upon direct consumption.

With that item alone, it was clear that Jake was going for a poison that wouldn't just infect the body but the mushroom's soul. He didn't need to actually damage the soul – that was something at a level far beyond what he could do – he just needed to muddle the mushroom a little. Make it more challenging for it to detect the poison.

He had been inspired quite a bit by the Minotaur Mindlord. While it had been a real asshole, it was competent in what it did. He still vividly remembered the phantom pains he endured and his inability to detect the Minotaur with anything besides his bloodline-related abilities. He wanted something in that vein.

A second ingredient he would use for that came from a bush growing beside his porch.

[Soothing Bellberry Bush (Uncommon)] – A bush of Soothing Bellberries. The berries growing on this bush are known to have a soothing effect on the mind.



Jake had 'borrowed' the bush from the tutorial a long time ago and had quite frankly totally forgotten about it until he began forming his plan to kill the mushroom. The bush grew berries quite quickly, and he already picked a few dozen of them.

[Soothing Bellberry (Uncommon)] – A berry that provides a soothing effect to whoever consumes it.

He wanted them to work in concert with the ash to help soothe the mushroom. He had found some recipes that he believed could help him do that, but all of them mentioned one final crucial ingredient to make such a fungicide.

A part of the fungus itself.