

Hunter 194

Chapter 194: Grades & Impatience

Jake sat on his porch, staring out over the pond as he pondered – pond-pun intended.

It felt like forever ago that he theorized that the nine stat-giving skills with “Of the Malefic Viper” in their names were actually part of a larger set, and so far, he felt like he had only been proven right time and time again. They just had way too much synergy not to be.

So when he got the ninth one to Ancient-rarity, he had expected something to happen. He knew skills could fuse from all the way back when Sense Herb and Sense Toxin merged into Sense of the Malefic Viper, so maybe the skills would finally merge upon them all upgrading?

Yet, no such thing had happened. Jake almost couldn’t hold himself back from asking the Viper if his skills were bugged or if he were just a moron for assuming they would merge.

Well... it wasn’t like he lost anything by them not merging, and while he didn’t ask the Viper about the skills, he did ask one question anyway. One that had been bothering him for a while.

“Hey Villy... should I evolve right when I can, or is there any reason to wait? Would it be better for me to work on upgrading some more skills first or maybe really diving into this whole arcane-affinity thing before doing so?” Jake asked.

All his evolutions before this he had just taken as soon as he could. He had often wondered if doing so had ultimately led to him being worse off throughout the months, especially when it came to his class. He knew that while the class wasn’t ‘bad,’ it wasn’t extraordinary either.

Jake had delved into the books to look for knowledge and hadn't found much. That is when he remembered another piece of literature he had quite frankly completely forgotten about... the small notebook Jacob had given him on the first day of returning to Earth.

He had only skimmed the first few pages and seen they were related to Pylon's and making a city and stuff, so he had Miranda read it over at one of their meetings. She had found it quite helpful but had also mentioned that the general info about classes and professions in it was enlightening. It was that little comment that made Jake flip through it... and he was pretty sure the Augur had given out some information he wasn't really supposed to.

First of all, he had written about his own class, without a care in the world. Well, it made a bit more sense when Jake read on, as he came to understand that knowledge about the Augur classes were pretty well-known, as it was a famous "archetype."

Jake's eyes bulged quite a bit when he read the stats given by the class... 32 total was just insane. His own Ambitious Hunter only gave 18 per level in comparison. Well, he did have a cheat of a profession making up for it a bit... but still.

However, as he read on, Jake began to feel quite a lot better about not being an Augur himself.

Professions and classes all came with tied-in ways of leveling them. Jake's class was all about being a hunter that liked killing stuff above his own level, so the class was made for that. He also came to realize that there likely were some hidden experience bonuses besides his Mark of the Ambitious Hunter tied to killing stronger enemies due to the class, as well as a penalty if he killed weaker foes.

In the same vein, the Augur of Hope had many rules tied into it also. For Jacob to level, he had to realize fates, stay true to his own beliefs, guide others towards paths to power, and do religious stuff... aka all things Jake would absolutely abhor doing.

And on the side of penalties, it was way fucking worse. Jacob couldn't fight at all. Not because of his class not offering any means of combat – it was a rule tied to his class. He was unable to fight back even if attacked, and if he took the lives of sapient creatures, he would be penalized, possibly even lose his class outright.

That was the reason it gave so many stats. It was to make up for the massive downsides it had. To Jake's knowledge, he didn't have any downsides to his class besides maybe that experience-penalty when killing lower-leveled foes, but that one didn't matter to him anyway.

Jake came to learn that the maximum amount of stats a class could give at E-grade was 34, while the maximum for a profession was 27. But both of those were for the ones that came with severe restrictions in place.

The Hermit Alchemist profession that Jake had seen was an example of a restrictive profession. It gave more stats than usual, but with other massive downsides.

If one wanted one without severe downsides, the limit for E-grade classes was 28, while for professions, it was 22. So, Jake had won out big time in the profession-department, getting one that nearly couldn't be better for one that isn't restricted, while his class still had a bit to go.

Of course, if you factor in the "of the Malefic Viper" skills... Jake was more than good when it came to stats.

At D-grade, all of those numbers were pretty much tripled. Max for a class would be 100, and max for a profession would be 80. Of course, they were realistically slightly lower due to the ones rewarding that much would be restricted. Jacob had even written that his Augur of Hope would give him 96 stats per level in D-grade. If Jake could get a class with more than 70 or maybe even 75 stats per level, he would be more than happy. He didn't know if he could, because quite frankly, he had no idea how good he was for an E-grade. He figured he was decent... but he didn't really have any proper comparisons.

As for the deferred stats, if one evolved a class or profession before reaching D-grade... well, you would just only get a third of the stats gained, with the rest coming in bulk after evolving. Pretty simple, actually.

Jake was thrown out of his thoughts when he felt the Malefic Viper's presence touch upon his mind as a voice echoed out in his head, answering his question about if he should evolve right away or not.

"Waiting with undergoing an evolution is a hard decision for some, but in your case, I wouldn't say it is. There is no reason to delay it even a day. While getting a lot of upgraded skills or improving yourself in other ways matters, so does momentum. Think about it like this; can you achieve as much overall growth in the next three months as you have in the last three? If not, go right ahead and evolve.

"Many spend decades if not over a century in E-grade to try and get better evolutions or simply because they were slow. If it took you seventy years to level from 24-99, it doesn't really hurt much to wait another thirty years to upgrade a handful of skills and further improve your craft. Possibly finishing off with creating your greatest creation yet before evolving. In your case, however, prolonging your evolution will only lead to you diluting your own achievements or losing momentum," the Viper said through his divine message-thing, before adding in the end in a smug faux-mocking voice.

"You have done adequately for a mere E-grade mortal, nothing compared to my magnificent achievements back then, but I guess it is acceptable for my Chosen. So get off your ass, make some poisons and get that final level."

Jake chuckled a bit as he answered. "Well, I would never dare to presume I could ever reach the levels of thee, oh my revered Patron. Thanks as always, Villy. Take care and say hi to those three witches for me... and if you could tell them to go a bit easier on Miranda, it would be nice. She seems to have a hard time dealing with all this divinity stuff."

"Jake, feeling at least a basic level of reverence towards gods is kind of the norm... just because you are weird as fuck doesn't mean everyone around you is too. But sure, I'll tell them to be more chill, but don't expect much to change, at least not in the short term. You can just hope that mortal girl learns to adapt a bit."

"But I am super reverent; what are you talking about!?" Jake joked, shaking his head. "I guess dealing with gods can be hard for some. Anyway, what are you up to these days besides answering my inane questions?"

"Oh, you know, trying to conquer the world and all that fun stuff. Went and got back a few people I had sent off to training a few months ago, and more than half survived, so that was nice. Mortals and their fragility, ya know? Actually, I think you know one of them, remember that Viridia girl? Yeah, she was one of the survivors of the little training-tour. Back on topic: I have been lazing about for far too long, so I am basically just reclaiming some stuff that used to belong to me and expanding the Order. You can come by and check stuff out once your universe begins opening up a bit, so look forward to it! But I can feel that my divine-message juice is running out, so cya around, and nice talking to ya."

"Yeah, nice talking to you, have fun with your world domination," Jake said with a smile as he felt the connection between him and the Malefic Viper fade away.

He was beginning to think that these divine-message-sessions actually helped strengthen the connection slightly every time, making it easier for the Viper to send longer and more complicated messages. Jake didn't know what the implications were if that was true... but did it really matter? He didn't see the

Viper having any untoward intentions towards him because if he did, the Viper literally had all the power.

Jake shook his head as he dispelled all distracting thoughts. It wasn't like knowing about stats, and the rules of classes and such would actually help him; it was just nice to know. No, the only thing that truly mattered right now was doing some alchemy and getting that level!

So, Jake sat down, took out his cauldron, and began producing some potions. He didn't make poisons as he had a feeling he would need to craft again shortly after evolving anyway, as chances are he could make more potent poisons and potions then. Better to just make some potions now that he could either sell or give away for others to use.

His impatience made him make a few more mistakes than usual, resulting in it taking nearly three days before he finally got it.

'DING!' Profession: [Prodigious Alchemist of the Malefic Viper] has reached level 99 - Stat points allocated, +5 free points

'DING!' Race: [Human (E)] has reached level 99 - Stat points allocated, +5 free points

Jake did an internal mini-cheer as he got the two notifications. A feeling of happiness that was only amplified further by the next message.

Quest: The Perfect Evolution completed

Reward given upon evolving to D-grade

He sat there waiting for the next system message for a few minutes before realizing it wasn't coming. Some-fucking-how, Jake had forgotten that he would actually still need another level in his race even after reaching level 99 in both his class and profession.

Jake could do this by doing alchemy for a few more days... or he could do as he actually did, as he opened his wings and soared upwards towards the cloud island. Mystie, Sylphie, and Hawkie all threw him a glance as he flew off, but only the small baby-bird made a small screech, wondering where he was going, as she tried to fly up and follow him. It didn't go that well, as she fell down, much to the amusement of her parents.

On the island, Jake went on a damn rampage, slaughtering Cloud Elementals and birds in droves. This is when he, to his delight, spotted a giant bird hanging around the massive lightning tree in the middle of the island.

[Thunder Roc – lvl ???]

The result of their epic fight was obvious from the beginning.

Jake summoned an Arrow of the Ambitious Hunter, as he focused his mind on ending the battle as fast as possible. Once summoned, he soaked it in his poison before nocking it as he charged his newly upgraded Arcane Powershot.

He looked at the poor Roc as he channeled his attack. Power swirled around him in a vortex of energy that began slowly tearing away at the small cloud island he stood on. Arcane Powershot was a lot more powerful than his old Infused Powershot and even had extra scaling with intelligence – a stat he had just gotten a big bump in from upgrading Touch of the Malefic Viper.

The power built up both inside his body and the weapon, and his skin began sizzling a little as he took a bit of damage. Purple-pink veins appeared on both his arms and his shoulders as he poured more energy into the skill than ever before.

He planned on ending it in one shot... to see if that was even possible. It wasn't something he had planned on doing, but what harm could there be in adding one-shotting a D-grade to his list of achievements?

Jake released the string as the arrow exploded out with power. The Arrow of the Ambitious Hunter flew straight for the unaware Thunder Roc that only noticed the incoming attack when it was too late. It tried to avoid getting hit in a vital area at the final moment but found itself frozen as it felt the gaze of an Apex Hunter land upon it.

The arrow hit it right in its head as it tore into the Roc's skull before exploding – leaving nothing above its neck. It kept struggling for a while as its natural vitality kept it alive, but the poison on the arrow made healing its wound impossible even if it somehow had the vitality to facilitate that.

A minute later and the Roc that was now lying on the cloud island below stopped struggling as it expired.

You have slain [Thunder Roc – lvl 101] – Bonus experience earned for killing an enemy above your level

Followed by the far more important message:

Race Evolution Requirements Met

With great ambition and drive, you have ventured through E-grade, never swaying on your path or questioning your own resolve. You have been diverse and delved into many different areas as your endless hunger to improve and explore led you both wide and deep – from embracing legacies to forging your own magics. An important decision lies before you.

Begin Evolution now?

Y/N

WARNING: Postponing evolution may have adverse effects, and no further race-experience can be earned before the evolution is completed.

Fucking finally, he thought as he made a huge smile. He rushed over to get the Beastorb but couldn't find it for some reason. He ended up getting impatient as he just rushed back to his lodge faster than he had ever flown before, and upon landing, he only threw a single glance at Mystie and Hawkie, who both gave him an approving and knowing glance. They understood he was about to evolve... even Sylphie seemed able to detect it.

Jake entered his lodge and sat down on the bed – the same one he had evolved to both F and E-grade on before – and accepted the notification as his vision turned black.