

## Hunter 195

### Chapter 195: D-grade

Jake opened his eyes within a vast void of nothingness, the only thing visible being distant star-like objects. It was his third time there, and it was as beautiful and wonderous as ever. He was entirely naked, except for his mask that was still on his face for some reason.

The first time he went there had been the most wonderous as it marked the day he became able to passively sense mana, while his E-grade evolution had been a bit less exciting.

Like all the other times, the intensity of the mana around him was extreme, but after progressing through E-grade, he could now feel it much better. He felt the affinities in the mana around him, and he was taken aback... because he felt so... so many.

He noticed the space-affinity that reminded him of the mana Neil used and even the concept of his own One Step Mile. Dark-affinity, water-affinity, earth-affinity, and a slew of energies he didn't understand at all... he felt all of them. But out of them all, the affinity he felt next was by far the most surprising.

The arcane-affinity. Or more, accurately, Jake's own arcane-affinity. How is there arcane-mana here? Does that mean...

Jake closed his eyes as he focused on his sphere to take it all in. Even energy reminding me of what the Malefic Viper released is here... Jake thought as he awoke from his stupor.

Was this place... an amalgamation of all the energy he had ever used, absorbed, or encountered? Was he inside his soul, and were these all the concepts he had ever used and affinities he had explored?

As his head was filled with these thoughts... the system finally made its presence known. It was time for the evolution to begin... but instead of just being shown what he would evolve to like all the other times, this one was different.

Congratulations! You have unlocked the possibility to diverge your race and evolve into a different species. As a rarity among humans and monsters both, you must now make an important choice. Be warned not to lose yourself.

Jake was surprised for the umpteenth time today, as he quickly saw that two options were available for evolution and the first one was exactly what he had expected.

Human (D) – A human that has stepped into the mid-grades of the system. The human race is known as the most balanced and numerous race of the multiverse, being able to walk many different roads on their path to power. Stat bonuses per level: +6 to all stats, +15 Free Points per level

He looked it over and nodded internally. It wasn't like the human evolutions were a secret, and he knew the stat-gain for every level would just triple when one evolved to D-grade, going from 23 stats per level to 69. A very nice number.

But that wasn't the option worth noting.

Malefic Dragonkin (D) – Once a human, you embraced the Malefic Viper's Legacy to become a race closer to your Patron. Still maintaining a primarily human form, you have replaced your soft skin with scales and have gained several other draconic properties, including wings and claws. This race is incredibly rare and only earned by those who have truly begun walking the Path of the Malefic Viper. By

maintaining many of your humanoid traits, you can retain either a class or a profession. Stat bonuses per level: +20 Wis, +20 Will, + 20 Vit, + 15 Tough, +15 Int, + 10 Agi, +10 Str, +10 Per, +10 End, +20 Free Points per level

Warning: Some skills related to the lost profession or class may be lost or changed. Stat-bonuses from classes will be reduced by 10% if chosen over a profession, while a profession will provide +10% more stats per level. All current race skills will be lost.

As the initial message said, evolving into a new species was incredibly rare and difficult. It was a fundamental, qualitative change that would severely alter your path in the future. And the Malefic Dragonkin evolution was sure as hell a drastic change.

Jake had to read it over a few times before something clicked in his mind... this has to be the result of maxing out the nine stat-giving skills. Many of them added physiological traits such as scales or wings or making his canines toxic.

But... he also knew it had a lot to do with the drop of blood he had seized from the Malefic Viper himself because the description sure as hell reminded him of that bootleg half-dragon version of himself he had seen within that weird soul-realm during the Trial of Myriad Poisons.

While he already knew what 'choice' he would make, he evaluated the options anyway. The Malefic Dragonkin race gave 150 stats per level, with the human one giving 69 – a difference of 81 stats per level. However... becoming a dragonkin would also mean giving up one of the significant advantages of being human: having both a class and profession.

If one just looked at stats, then Jake would need to get a class providing 81 stats per level after the penalty, which was... a lot. If he got a class within the same realm as his Ambitious Hunter, it would only give 54 stats per level.

All of that is to say the Malefic Dragonkin was clearly a top-tier race. One Jake had absolutely no interest in ever picking.

He was human, and he saw no reason at all to throw that away. Jake also felt an almost palpable disgust from his bloodline at the mere thought of becoming a dragonkin. No, to Jake, the human race was the optimal choice. His entire bloodline and being was grounded in being a human, and changing his path by suddenly trying to become something entirely different wasn't on his to-do list.

Also... he really didn't want to pick between alchemy and archery. He liked both.

Jake didn't need to think anymore as he began his evolution.

All around him, the countless energies began swirling as they poured into him. He felt his body fill with strength, but he also felt himself... change. His entire body was being broken down and rebuilt from the inside, yet he didn't experience any pain or discomfort. The only annoyance was his inability to move during the process.

Instinctively, he knew that he was undergoing a qualitative change. He felt some of his organs begin to disappear, perhaps no longer deemed necessary by the system, but he also felt that those that remained mattered less than before.

Even in E-grade, losing a vital organ didn't result in instant death; it just meant that you needed a shitload of vitality to regenerate it. From now on, even these vital organs would take fewer health points to restore and be overall less critical.

Even while choosing to stay human, I feel like I move further and further away from being so... Jake thought as he felt both his liver and spleen were now gone. He knew from an objective standpoint that all these changes would only lead to him becoming stronger and more capable at fighting, but it still rubbed a small part of him the wrong way.

Outwardly, his changes were minimal. He grew only a few centimeters while the features on his face were ironed out a bit, moving him from the slightly-above-average-but-still-very-normal-looking he was after his E-grade evolution to now being firmly in the deemed-handsome-by-most-category.

Jake himself didn't really desire any significant changes to be made to his body. However, subconsciously he still had an idea like every other human about how they could look slightly better. It was natural non-magical evolution to desire to be viewed as more outwardly appealing, especially as a primarily social species, even if he was a rather anti-social member of that species.

He decided to take one final look at his status page as he waited for his body to stop changing.

Status

Name: Jake Thayne

Race: [Human (E) – lvl 99]

Class: [Ambitious Hunter – lvl 99]

Profession: [Prodigious Alchemist of the Malefic Viper – lvl 99]

Health Points (HP): 13860/13860

Mana Points (MP): 16475/16475

Stamina: 10150/10150

Stats

Strength: 876

Agility: 1194

Endurance: 1015

Vitality: 1386

Toughness: 882

Wisdom: 1318

Intelligence: 815

Perception: 2637

Willpower: 982

Free points: 0

Titles: [Forerunner of the New World], [Bloodline Patriarch], [Holder of a Primordial's True Blessing], [Dungeoneer V], [Dungeon Pioneer V], [Legendary Prodigy], [Prodigious Slayer of the Mighty], [Kingslayer], [Nobility: Earl], [Progenitor of the 93rd Universe], [Prodigious Arcanist]

Class Skills: [Basic One-Handed Weapons (Inferior)], [Advanced Stealth (Common)], [Basic Twin Fang Style (Uncommon)], [Basic Shadow Vault of Umbra (Uncommon)], [Splitting Arrow (Uncommon)], [Hunter's Tracking (Uncommon)], [Big Game Hunter (Rare)], [Mark of the Ambitious Hunter (Rare)], [Archery of Vast Horizons (Rare)] [Descending Dark Fang (Rare)], [Limit Break (Rare)], [Arrow of the Ambitious Hunter (Epic)], [Arcane Powershot (Epic)], [One Step Mile (Ancient)], [Moment of the Primal Hunter (Legendary)], [Gaze of the Apex Hunter (Legendary)]

Profession Skills: [Herbology (Common)], [Brew Potion (Common)], [Alchemist's Purification (Common)], [Alchemical Flame (Common)], [Toxicology (Uncommon)], [Cultivate Toxin (Uncommon)], [Concoct

Poison (Uncommon)), [Malefic Viper's Poison (Rare)], [Scales of the Malefic Viper (Ancient)], [Palate of the Malefic Viper (Ancient)], [Blood of the Malefic Viper (Ancient)], [Sagacity of the Malefic Viper (Ancient)], [Wings of the Malefic Viper (Ancient)], [Pride of the Malefic Viper (Ancient)], [Fangs of the Malefic Viper (Ancient)], [Sense of the Malefic Viper (Ancient)], [Touch of the Malefic Viper (Ancient)]

Blessing: [True Blessing of the Malefic Viper (Blessing - True)]

Race Skills: [Endless Tongues of the Myriad Races (Unique)], [Identify (Common)], [Thoughtful Meditation (Uncommon)], [Shroud of the Primordial (Divine)]

Bloodline: [Bloodline of the Primal Hunter (Bloodline Ability - Unique)]

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Jake felt a weird sense of pride as he read it all over. The progress he had made since he last found himself inside this void all the way back in the challenge dungeon, shortly after meeting Villy for the first time. He had come a long way... and now his third evolution was approaching its completion, and he would step into D-grade, formally entering what was referred to as the "mid-tier" grades.

The infusion and changes to his body soon came to an end, and that was the exact moment a part of him stirred. He felt a heartbeat as the surrounding energy appeared to have a second wind as it began pouring into him again, right towards that weird metaphysical area around his heart where he knew his bloodline and the drop of blood from the Malefic Viper resided. To his surprise, a slight sliver of energy also entered his mask, but he didn't really think further on it as he got a notification.

**\*Bloodline Ability Evolved\***



The evolution has stirred your bloodline, allowing it to evolve along with you.

**\*Bloodline Ability Upgraded\*:** [Bloodline of the Primal Hunter (Bloodline Ability - Unique)] – Dormant power lies in the very essence of your being. A unique, innate ability awakened in the bloodline of Jake Thayne. Grants the Sphere of Perception. Grants an improved sense of danger. Enhances all instincts and intuition. +20% to Perception.

This was the third time it had upgraded, and like all the other times, he didn't really take notice of any changes besides the increase to his perception, going from +15% to +20%. He did feel like his sphere expanded a bit, but he couldn't really tell, floating in a mana-filled void and all. Space was a bit distorted, throwing him off.

With his bloodline upgraded, he also saw the level-up had finally come.

**\*'DING!' Race:** [Human (D)] has reached level 100 - Stat points allocated, +15 free points\*

Along with that came a title... a title Jake felt before he read. He felt warmth overflow as he experienced what could only be described as a massive influx of power. What he had felt after killing the King of the Forest was nothing compared to this... and this was the moment it truly became clear to him how large the gap between E and D-grade was. Because, unlike other evolutions, this one came with what he had theorized monsters and beasts had a long time ago – a one-time large stat-increase – the stats shown and hence earned in the form of a title.

Title earned: [The Perfect Evolution (D)]

[The Perfect Evolution (D)] – You have undergone a perfect evolution to become a D-grade human. +220 all stats.

A title so simple yet so damn powerful it was ridiculous. Jake felt – and was – stronger than ever before. He couldn't help re-check the quest to see what he would have ended up with if he hadn't completed the Perfect Evolution quest.

[Evolution (D)] – You have undergone evolution to become a D-grade human. +200 all stats.

Jake read it and nodded internally. It wasn't that big a loss if one didn't get the extra 20 to all stats, but it wasn't something he had wanted to miss out on either, especially when he saw that these stats were indeed affected by his percentage amplifiers.

He couldn't help but look at his stats page and compare it to before his evolution.

Status

Name: Jake Thayne

Race: [Human (D) – lvl 100]

Class: [Ambitious Hunter – lvl 99]

Profession: [Prodigious Alchemist of the Malefic Viper – lvl 99]

Health Points (HP): 13860/17590

Mana Points (MP): 20850/20850

Stamina: 13430/13430

Stats

Strength: 1204

Agility: 1521

Endurance: 1343

Vitality: 1759

Toughness: 1210

Wisdom: 1668

Intelligence: 1143

Perception: 3092

Willpower: 1332

Free points: 15

Needless to say, all the stats had experienced a massive increase. Significantly, Jake's perception and vitality had grown a lot as he had 65% amplification on those, followed by willpower and wisdom, which both had a 55% increase. The rest of his stats were still gaining 45% extra, meaning that ultimately he earned more than 50% more total stats from the evolution than someone without any stat amplifiers. It felt unfair on many levels... but Jake knew other powerhouses also had many titles and stat-amplifiers. They had to.

After Jake was done admiring his awesome stats, he went on to the last notification – a new skill. Humans really didn't get any race skills, but the few they got tended to be very useful... but he was a bit unsure about this one.

\*Race Skill gained\*: [Legacy of Man (Unique)] – The human race has been around since the very first Era, and has stood on the pinnacle from the beginning. This is not simply due to extraordinary individuals in your midst, but your ability to stand on the shoulders of your ancestors and pass down Records. While each human's lifespan may be short, your race's collective knowledge is perennial, and through generations, humanity will prevail. Allows you to far more effectively pass down Records and makes anyone you teach far more likely to unlock new paths.

Jake didn't have much interest in teaching others. Not at all. But from an objective standpoint, he could see how useful the skill was. It also made sense only to gain it at D-grade as chances are the person wouldn't have anything worth passing on before then.

He had considered maybe teaching someone a bit of alchemy to make potion-production a thing, but also to have others know about herbs to help him gather materials. So perhaps the skill could be helpful for that. Besides that, the only exciting thing about it was the unique rarity. Well, it was a bit weird to call it unique when every single D-grade human had it, especially considering that humans were the most numerous race of the multiverse... but he guessed it was because the skill was unique to the human race.

The next few minutes were spent with Jake just considering things to do in the future and contemplating if he should level and evolve his class or profession first. He saw that after he evolved, he had lost the option to instantly begin evolving his class at any moment, meaning he most likely had to go kill a few things to get a bit more experience. Or maybe he would get the option back once he was out of this weird space? So many things to think about while impatiently floating in the void, waiting just to be transported back to the real world.

Finally, he felt that he was about to return as his intuition made him aware of the subtle shift of the energy around him. His vision turned black for a fraction of a second before he found himself back in the lodge and-

“ARGH!” Jake knelt down on the floor as soon as he appeared, grasping his head as information flooded into him. Not from the system or any skill, but from the overwhelming stimuli from something he thought he had gotten used to – his Sphere of Perception.