

## Hunter 202

### Chapter 202: An Even More Professional Evolution

“Dum di dum di dum,” Jake sang in a humming tone as he swayed his head back and forth, both hands on the cauldron. He was naturally making even more mana potions but also doing something else equally important.

Sylphie sat opposite him, bopping her head to the tune, mimicking him. Jake couldn’t help but smile as she happily played along, even trying to make the same sounds as him. She wasn’t doing very well in that department, but damn was it cute.

He barely had to focus when making the potions, and it was effortless for him to split his focus... it was actually a bit weird. He felt like he was focusing on both things simultaneously, no matter how contradictory that sounds. Maybe another gain of his race evolution? He already knew that he thought faster while under stress or fighting, so it kind of made sense... his math skills had also improved tremendously.

See, now I am focusing on three things at once, he thought, still humming the tune and finishing off the latest batch of mana potions meanwhile.

Just as the mix was completed, Jake heard the sweet sound he had been waiting for as he gave Sylphie a big smile. “It’s evolution time!”

“Ree!” she cheered back in return, getting a few head pats as Jake opened up his notifications.

\*Profession Evolution Requirements Met\*

To call your journey so far as an Alchemist of the Malefic Viper abnormal would be an understatement and disservice to the unique path you are walking. On the one hand, you're a supremely talented alchemist faithfully following the Legacy of the Malefic Viper, and the other, a blasphemous heretic that does not show any reverence to the Primordial that has given you this power. Your entire existence only grows more paradoxical as your defiance and arrogance have only been rewarded by the Malefic One and not punished as his faithful followers believe it rightfully should have been. Where this unlikely friendship will take you is unknown to all, even the ones involved.

Either rebel, conform or carve your own path that has never been seen before – the choice is yours.

Begin Evolution now?

Y/N

**WARNING:** Postponing evolution for too long may have adverse effects, and no further profession-experience can be earned before the evolution is completed.

Jake read through it and was honestly a bit relieved. A small part of him had been afraid of it, not even mentioning alchemy but just focusing on his friendship with Villy. The Hunter-Champion class had been a bit of an eye-opener to the significance of their relationship in the eyes of the system, and he would honestly hate to get a good evolution solely because of that friendship.

So to see it calling him talented at alchemy was good and boded well for what evolutions he would have available. Without further ado, he jumped right into it.

**\*5 Possible Evolutions Available\***

Five as expected, he thought, and as always, started with the first and most boring option.

Renowned Expert Alchemist of the Malefic Viper – A direct upgrade to the Prodigious Alchemist of the Malefic Viper class. As a prodigy, you have already proven your talents during your early days, and coast-tailing on that talent, you are now recognized as a renowned expert, even if you no longer stand out like before. Allows one to combine the natural treasures of the world, and make potions, pills, transmute one material to another, with a slew of other mystical means to be discovered. This rare type of alchemist specializes in the production of poisons, contrary to the craft of potions. Leveraging your prestige, you have also gained the ability to sway others more efficiently and make them respect you far more. Even if your talent may wane with time, that time has yet to come as, while perhaps no longer a prodigy, you are still an expert. May you continue to be the harbinger of death and pursue the footsteps of the Malefic One. Stat bonuses per level: +14 Wis, +10 Will, +9 Vit, +5 Tough +5 Int, +10 Free Points

Yep, this one was just as boring as he had expected. Heck, it was even more boring than that... it wasn't even a real "upgrade" over his Prodigious Alchemist as it didn't even give three times the stats. It gave only 53, which made it good but not great. Either way, Jake didn't bother lingering on it anymore as the description of the profession said all there was to say – and Jake didn't believe for a moment that his talents were waning.

Heretical Alchemist of the Malefic Viper – Most look upon a Primordial with awe, respect, and fear, but you choose to blaspheme his name and stand in opposition to his message. Allows one to combine the natural treasures of the world, and make potions, pills, transmute one material to another, with a slew of other mystical means to be discovered. This rare type of alchemist specializes in the production of poisons, contrary to the craft of potions. As an alchemist following the Legacy of the Malefic Viper, you wield his strength and enjoy the benefits of his creed as much as any devout follower, showing a powerful mind and independent spirit. No longer willing to follow on in his steps, you only seek to reap benefits, hoping to escape the wrath of the Primordial or his followers unharmed. As a heretic, the Legacy of the Malefic Viper is no longer contingent on retaining any blessing from the Malefic Viper. May you succeed in your foolhardy ways or meet your end on your heretical path. Stat bonuses per level: +20 Will, +12 Wis, +12 Vit, +6 Tough +6 Int, +12 Free Points

Oh, come on, it ain't that bad, Jake thought, shaking his head as he went through it. Was he really a heretic? Jake didn't see it that way, unless it was considered heretical to not really hold any faith towards a god you were technically supposed to fol... yeah, okay, I think I get it.

Anyway, this one was quite a lot more interesting. First of all, it gave a buttload more stats per level, making it quite clear this was a high-tier profession. The name was quite a bit simpler, though, even if it was so much better. It also carried some interesting complications.

From what Jake had gathered, a Legacy required one to have some kind of connection to the source, be it through an item or by gaining the class or profession through special means. There were some other rules and exceptions if you accepted the Legacy of someone dead, but Jake focused on the Legacies of the living. This also meant that the one behind the Legacy had at least a bit of power to influence the path of those that follow it, gods being the easiest example with the most straightforward way of affecting their followers – retracting their blessing.

This class would change that dynamic and make the Viper unable to retract his Legacy. He could likely still take back the blessing, but it wouldn't affect his future evolutions or skill choices. It truly was a heretical path where Jake could use a god's skills that didn't even recognize him anymore.

The stats were also interesting, as 68 was just around the absolute cap of professions at D-grade that didn't carry significant penalties. Needless to say, the Heretic one did carry penalties – such as being a heretic – but even then, it was proof of how high-tiered the profession was. And to make it better... the last three options available to him gave even more stats than this one.

Anyway, while the profession carried some interesting implications, it wasn't something Jake wanted to go with. He felt like being a heretic wasn't the right word for him, even if it did seem a bit accurate on paper. With all that in mind, he moved on to the next option – one that was the entirely opposite of being a heretic.

True Confidant of the Malefic Viper – More than a mere servant of the Primordial, you are now his most trusted Confidant. Your word carries implications for the entire multiverse as you possess the ability to influence the will of the Malefic One. With this power, it is only natural that all his followers shall bow to your every command. This profession focuses on leadership and persuasion by influencing the mind and will of those around you with every word or action, yet you also retain all your talents in alchemy to better relate to your Patron, even if it is a path you will no longer pursue actively. Being a Confidant will allow you to understand the Malefic One's desires better and carry out his will and support his every command. As his trusted Confidant, you aim to one day stand beside him as his equal, even if you have a long way to go – but with his trust, the first and possibly hardest hurdle is already overcome. Stat bonuses per level: +15 Wis, +15 Will, +10 Vit, +8 Int, +7 Tough, +15 Free Points

No.

Saint-Alchemist of the Malefic Viper – There are many paths one can walk to honor the Malefic Viper and spread his word. To properly honor your Patron, you have proven that you excel not just in spreading his name but in walking his path as you have shown yourself an extraordinarily talented alchemist. As an alchemist, you can combine natural treasures of the world, make potions, pills, transmute one material to another, and many other means, but to honor the Malefic Viper, you will focus even further on toxins than ever before. As a saint, you can spread his word and recruit followers into following the Malefic Viper by granting baptisms or pray for the Malefic One to bestow his blessing on those deemed worthy. The profession will also allow you to better convince and influence others' will to accept the Malefic Viper's path. May you walk both path of faith and the path of alchemy to the pinnacle, all while basking in the power of the Malefic Viper. Stat bonuses per level: +16 Will, +14 Wis +12 Vit, +8 Int, +6 Tough, +14 Free Points

Alright, this one was a bit of a mix between the "super-Villy-fanboy-adviser" and "wow-he-is-actually-still-an-alchemist"-professions. One Jake, of course, seriously didn't want. For real, that "Confidant" one just rubbed him badly from head to toe. No fucking way he would pick a profession that was pretty much just saying: "be Villy's friend, I guess?"

This profession wasn't even about that anymore but instead about Jake actively becoming involved with spreading the Order of the Malefic Viper's faith and doing religious stuff. Just because he had given Miranda the okay for making a temple of sorts didn't mean he was suddenly into going full-on priest – or worse – begin acting like some god-sent saint.

Also... once again, it tried to hammer home how important it was that he was blessed by the Malefic Viper. He really didn't like it, and the only saving grace this one had was that at least it was still about being an alchemist. The stupid Confidant one even talked about giving up on doing alchemy to focus more on being a friend to Villy. How the hell does that work?

Yes, Jake was fully aware that the Confidant one was not really about being a friend but more of an adviser of sorts, but there was no way Villy would ever even want that. He was pretty sure a Primordial like the Malefic Viper had smart people just standing by to give advice at any time. If Jake was perfectly honest, then he really wasn't the person to ask about leading an Order with more members than people living on his planet.

As for stats, both this and the Confidant before it gave 70 per level. The absolute cap for professions being 80 made them both damn good from a numbers standpoint, especially considering they didn't have significantly restrictive or special requirements. They likely just required him to retain a blessing from the Viper and possibly some other stuff that didn't matter as he really didn't want either.

One mediocre option, one massive dud, and two semi-duds, please let the last one be good, he thought as he moved on to the last one on the list.

Heretic-Chosen Alchemist of the Malefic Viper – You walk a paradoxical path, understood by none but you and your Patron. His Chosen, but not his believer, his ally but not of his Order, and a bearer of his Legacy, yet a blasphemer in the eyes of most. You have the ears of a Primordial, yet you choose to remain dedicated to the alchemy that first made the Malefic One known to you. Allows one to combine the natural treasures of the world, and make potions, pills, transmute one material to another, with a slew of other mystical means to be discovered. This rare type of alchemist specializes in the production of poisons, contrary to the craft of potions. As a heretic, the Legacy of the Malefic Viper is no longer

contingent on retaining any blessing from the Malefic Viper, yet as his Chosen, you are closer to him than any other mortal. May you walk your own path – be it that of a Heretic or a Chosen, or one entirely unique to you and the Malefic One. Stat bonuses per level: +15 Will, +15 Wis +14 Vit, +10 Int, +10 Tough, +10 Free Points.

Ah, you silly system, you were just teasing me, I see! Jake thought after reading the last option. What a bamboozling the system tried to pull on him, trying to convince him he would be stuck either being some shitty priest or meddle in mediocrity!

This one just had all checkmarks.

Alchemy-focused? Check

Not religious? Kinda check, balanced out by being equally heretic and chosen. Those two added together had to equal “not religious”.

Great stats? 74 per level, so more than any prior.

Ultimately, it also just felt like it fit him better than any prior options offered. From an objective standpoint, it was a class sitting at the absolute top. The absolute cap was 80, and this one gave 74. Those with 80 would even have some serious restrictions, even worse than Jacob’s Augur of Hope, yet Heretic-Chosen Alchemist gave 74 without any discernable issues, at least not on the surface.

He said on the surface... but the restriction was quite evident. It required him to remain not only a Chosen of the Malefic Viper but also remain a heretic. If he had picked the Malefic Dragonkin evolution

and gone with having a profession, he was absolutely sure he would not have been offered this profession.

Anyway, all of that is to say Jake liked it, and without thinking about it more than necessary, he picked the evolution, giving birth to the first Heretic-Chosen of a Primordial in the history of the multiverse.

Vilastromoz felt the minor shift and tug on the connection formed by his True Blessing of the Malefic Viper. He couldn't help but smile as he felt what Jake had picked, and the old Primordial experienced a bit of excitement and anticipation for the first time in a while. Who doesn't like new things, especially when an entirely new path is formed?

Their connection was stronger than ever before, yet he also felt something else oddly contradictory to that sentiment... he was no longer the sole controller of his own blessing. He could no longer withdraw it. Usually, a god could always take back their blessings, and even if a True Blessing was harder to reclaim, it wasn't something that couldn't be done.

The Malefic Viper instantly knew that now the only way for the True Blessing ever to be dispelled was through three means: the death of the Malefic Viper, the death of Jake Thayne, or the ascension of the Heretic-Chosen to godhood.

Unless, of course, his pal managed to upset his predictions again.