

Hunter 203

Chapter 203: A Heretical Chosen

When Jake got his class upgrade, not much happened, honestly. He just got some cool-ass skills, and that was about it. Yet this time, he felt something else other than skills right away... something a lot like when he communicated with Villy.

A warm flow entered his body as he felt his intelligence stat increase, and at the same moment, a system message appeared.

Your bond with the Malefic Viper is further strengthened as you reforge your karmic connection, claiming partial dominion over it. The Malefic Viper can no longer reclaim his blessing, and you have lost your ability to denounce it through all usual means.

Jake read it through and wasn't sure if he should be worried or not. His theory of one of the limiting rules of the profession requiring him to maintain his blessing had been a bit off... it was the exact opposite. It meant he couldn't give it up. Jake also instantly knew what this meant... the only way for the Viper to sever their connection when he wanted to was to kill Jake – an easy feat for a Primordial. And if Jake was honest, he felt like if the Viper wanted to, he could kill Jake solely through that karmic connection.

At the same time, he had to retain his defiant attitude towards the Malefic Viper. It truly was paradoxical... he had to both oppose and stay in the good graces of the vastly more powerful god at the same time.

A bit of a nasty restriction, eh? Jake thought, but he honestly wasn't scared. He had a feeling Villy was the kind of snake that would kill Jake if he wanted to anyway, so it really wasn't that bad. Also... not like he could do anything about it, so why worry? What should he do anyway, begin acting like an asslicker to try and not piss off Villy? Nah, fuck that.

Instead, Jake would stick to his motto: “Keep things simple, and take the complications as they come.”

Anyway, his blessing had once more been improved and was honestly starting to get damn good.

[True Blessing of the Malefic Viper (Blessing - True)] – An Alchemist recognized by the Malefic Viper himself that has now seized parts of the blessing in an act of defiance. Few throughout the ages have found themselves blessed by the Primordial, despite their desire to be so. You are his Chosen. Now even the true blood of the Malefic Viper himself is found within your very being, only strengthening your bond further. Through your powerful direct karmic and bodily connection, the wisdom, willpower, vitality, and intelligence of the Malefic Viper empower you. +10% Willpower, +10% Wisdom, +10% Vitality, +10% Intelligence. Grants access to many new paths. Only one blessing can be held at a time. Cannot be denounced or retracted.

Jake was never going to say no to extra stats, and it even gave intelligence, a stat that had just gained newfound value. With his class and profession together, he would also begin to get quite a lot of it, with 10 from every level as an alchemist and 12 from every level as a hunter. Wisdom was even more crazy, giving a combined 25.

After looking over the whole blessing thing, he finally saw the class level gained and the accompanying skill gains and changes.

‘DING!’ Profession: [Heretic-Chosen Alchemist of the Malefic Viper] has reached level 100 - Stat points allocated, +10 free points

Gained skill: [Craft Elixir (Common)] – Potions for emergencies, flasks in preparation for the toughest of foes, and elixirs to build the foundation of power. Allows the alchemist to craft elixirs of common-rarity and below. Elixirs are able to grant those who consume it a permanent increase to stats. Must have suitable materials and equipment in order to create elixirs. Adds a minor increase to the effectiveness of created elixirs based on Wisdom.

Getting used to only seeing Ancient-rarity skills from his profession, Jake was actually a bit taken aback when he saw the common-rarity tag, but on the other hand, wasn't this skill just something most alchemists got upon reaching D-grade?

Jake happily accepted it as it was the kind of skill he felt like he would want to pick up anyway down the line. Or maybe Sagacity of the Malefic Viper made it superfluous?

Well, not entirely...

Because when he thought about making elixirs, knowledge instantly appeared, just like with Brew Potion and Concoct Poison. The small stat bonus to his creations based on wisdom should also still be useable.

Either way, the ability to make elixirs wasn't exactly anything new to him but a welcome addition to his repertoire of skills nevertheless.

Moving on down the list, the next item was an upgrade to an existing skill, a bit like how his Big Game Hunter had been upgraded.

[Malefic Viper's Poison (Rare)] – The Malefic Viper stalks its prey and needs only to strike once as venom devours its prey. Increases the potency of all crafted poisons. Grants the ability to craft a poison with a rarity above that of your Concoct Poison skill if certain conditions are met. The poison may at most be upgraded to the rarity of the Malefic Viper's Poison skill (Uncommon --> Rare). Allows poison not to lose efficiency for a short amount of time after being applied to a weapon.

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[Malefic Viper's Poison (Epic)] – The Malefic Viper stalks its prey and needs only to strike once as venom devours its prey. Increases the potency of all crafted poisons. Grants the ability to craft a poison with a rarity above that of your Concoct Poison skill if certain conditions are met. The poison may at most be upgraded to the rarity of the Malefic Viper's Poison skill (Uncommon --> Epic). Allows poison not to lose efficiency for a prolonged period of time after being applied to a weapon.

If Jake had to rate a skill upgrade between 1-10 in how boring it was, this would be a solid 9. This isn't to say the effects of the upgrade weren't great. Once more, comparing it to Big Game Hunter, this was the kind of skill that just did things behind the hood. It made all his poisons better and even helped when he coated his weapons in it to make it last longer.

The only real noticeable part of it was the ability to sometimes "buff" an item. It had only triggered twice so far – once in the challenge dungeon and once when Jake made the Malefic Beastorb for Sylphie – but besides that, he didn't really notice the skill much.

In summary, it was a great skill but a bit subtle. Either way, it was nice to have it upgraded.

He was already feeling pretty good about all his gains from the various evolutions, yet he moved on to the last skill with quite a few expectations anyway. The profession was clearly special, and a part of him

had even hoped for a Legendary skill or something like that... but what he got instead was just a bit confusing.

Gained skill: [Path of the Heretic-Chosen (Unique)] – A unique path between the Primordial known as the Malefic Viper and his Chosen, the Progenitor Jake Thayne. Allows you to experience the Legacy of the Malefic Viper on a far more direct level by relying on your direct connection as a Chosen and mentality of a heretic. Focusing on the Malefic Viper's Legacy's core skills, a skill that you adequately comprehend, will allow you to peer into its true Records as you journey through time, space, reality, and experience history firsthand. Be warned that gains are not guaranteed, and while the journey cannot harm you directly, the journey may cause harm or have lasting effects – a risk you must take as a Heretic. May you walk with confidence as you tread a path never walked before. Gains 1 use every 10 levels in Heretic-Chosen Alchemist of the Malefic Viper. Any skill can only be chosen once. Current uses remaining: 1

Jake had a lot of questions about this one. The most obvious was the rarity. Unique-rarity skills were a bit weird in that their actual power couldn't necessarily be determined. Heck, his Legacy of Man was unique-rarity, and he wasn't sure how good that one actually was.

This one at least gave him the impression it was impressive if a bit weird.

If Jake were reading it correctly, this skill would allow him to upgrade his other skills related to the Malefic Viper more easily, more accurately the "of the Malefic Viper" ones. He had already checked the descriptions of all the skills and seen that they hadn't changed. They still "only" gave 1 stat per level in his profession. Jake assumed he would have to upgrade them to legendary-rarity to gain more, and needless to say, that wasn't an easy task.

Jake sat contemplating for a bit before he did something he probably should have done before choosing to pick a profession with the word heretic in it.

“So, Villy. Thoughts?”

A few seconds passed before Jake felt a presence descend on his soul. He felt its intent to utterly suppress him and bring him to his knees, but Jake barely reacted.

“You dare become a heretic and stand against the Malefic Viper himself!? A mere mortal has the audacity to display such arrogance!?” Jake heard the voice of the Primordial echo loudly in his mind.

“So you think it’s kinda funny?” Jake answered back, nodding in understanding.

“Oh yeah, equally funny and interesting,” he heard Villy’s voice answer back, and he could easily picture the god snickering as he spoke. “But you are fully aware that if I find someone else I want to make my Chosen, I will have to kill you first, right?”

Jake just shrugged in response. “It is what it is. Any other way to get rid of that black mark on my status menu?”

“Wow, rude, just because I can’t take it away anymore...” the Viper answered with faux outrage. “As for getting rid of it... just become a god, pretty easy actually. Trust me; I’ve done it at least once.”

“... Is that to say it’s possible to become a god more than once?”

“No, of course not, that would be silly.”

Jake shook his head, glad that nothing seemed to have changed despite the system clearly seeing it as a perilous and heretical path.

“But back to my original question, any thoughts on the new skill?” Jake asked, still having the system menu open and staring at the Path of the Heretic-Chosen in front of him.

“You are aware I can’t actually see your skills, right?” Villy answered back.

“... Gonna be honest, I kind of assumed you could. Sure, maybe you are unable to see the detailed description or something, but I had just guessed you had a feeling for the skills or something like that,” Jake said, a bit embarrassed, scratching his chin.

“I just know most skills in general and what kind of skill one is when you use it. I have no idea what skill you are even talking about right now, however. Being directly able to see someone else’s skill would be the same as peering into their Truesoul and isn’t something people just do. I never met someone who can anyway. There are ways to share descriptions, but it is honestly just easier to tell someone. They aren’t that long, after all.”

“Oh... well, it’s a skill that allows me to go on journeys and see your Legacy or something to upgrade skills. It honestly does sound a bit weird...” Jake said, once more scratching his chin. It wasn’t even itchy.

“Heard of similar skills like that, but you know there a few small important details off,” the Malefic Viper said. “Normally, the individual you get the Legacy from is aware of it, or they are already dead... they also normally need to give permission, but I guess you aren’t good at asking for that, now are you?”

“Why ask for permission when you can also just ignore asking for forgiveness because honestly, who’s got time for that?” Jake joked back. “Oh yeah, now that I have you on the divine phone, any input for that whole World Congress thing happening in a week?”

“Nope, no idea whatsoever,” the Viper answered back promptly.

“Wait, isn’t it related to why you said claiming one of those Pylons fast would be worth it?” Jake asked with a frown.

“Maybe?”

“Aight, why did you emphasize claiming a Pylon that much then?”

“Well, it isn’t like anything bad could happen by doing it, and the passive bonuses it gives when in the area are still good. As for that World Congress and pretty much all of those introductory things by the system, I am as clueless as you,” the Malefic Viper confessed.

“Really? That’s surprising. Is it because you weren’t around at the last few integrations, or are all of them just different?” Jake asked, already suspecting it was the second. Beforehand, he had been told that each new universe being integrated would bring change and new things to the entire multiverse, so it made sense that even all these post-tutorial things would be different. According to Villy, the tutorial hadn’t even been a thing back in his day but was a staple now. Maybe the World Congress was similar?

"All are different, and as the system does everything, no one can predict what will truly happen, especially not those outside your universe. All of those people divining shit in your universe will know is that it is important and maybe a very general sense of what it is about but nothing more," Villy explained.

"Interesting," Jake said, nodding, but he had a faint suspicion there was a bit more to it. "So you told me to get a Pylon just on the assumption that things would turn out well? It has nothing to do with anything else, now has it?"

"I can neither confirm nor deny that in all prior integrations, the performance of those blessed by the gods in these kinds of system-made events will also reward the god that has blessed them, and I am most certainly not saying that the reward for me is higher because you are my Chosen. Definitely not," the Viper said, in the most faux-innocent tone Jake could imagine.

"Well then, as your totally-not-heretical Chosen, I'll be sure to perform to my utmost level, oh my honored Patron," Jake said, smiling. "Though I have no idea what I am supposed to do."

"Find out when the time comes; I'm sure it'll be entertaining if nothing else."

"I guess," Jake said, shrugging. "Also, when are you going to stop doing that weird aura-thing?"

For the entire conversation, the Malefic Viper had let his full presence press down on Jake. It felt like he was actually sitting in front of the god himself without the Viper bothering to suppress his natural aura. Not that Jake particularly minded; he was just curious... it wasn't like that whole presence thing had any real effect on Jake anyway.

“Yeah... you do know that you are a bit abnormal, right? Anyway, nice talking to you, you filthy blasphemous heretic. Good luck with stuff, and remember to have fun!” the Viper said, as his aura slowly contracted and began fading away from Jake’s soul.

“Yeah, cya around,” Jake said, as he mentally waved the Viper goodbye, a wave he apparently picked up somehow. Weird stuff that whole karmic connection or whatever.

With Villy gone, Jake was back with just Sylphie, who hadn’t bothered with him talking to himself at all as she was just sleeping on a pillow.

Jake closed all his menus but one: Path of the Heretic-Chosen.

1 use remaining?

He kept staring at that part as he shrugged. He had seven days, and his intuition told him the journey-thing wouldn’t be that long. What exactly the whole journey was, he didn’t know exactly, and it even had some warnings and stuff, so all logic dictated that he should try and research the skill a bit more or plan ahead before using his one limit use, especially considering how he would only get another chance in ten levels.

But... to counter that... Jake was kinda curious.

Nothing ventured, nothing gained.