

Hunter 204

Chapter 204: The Wyvern of the Desolates

Jake closed his eyes and focused on his Path of the Heretic-Chosen as he tried to get it to activate – just long enough to make him wonder if he hadn't reached an adequate understanding of any of his skills. Which, to be fair, he could perfectly understand. Jake himself was full of doubt about what exactly he needed to understand.

Yet just as this thought appeared, the skill reacted:

Do you wish to experience the Legacy of the Malefic Viper? Uses remaining: 1

Jake didn't hesitate but instantly accepted.

Sylphie, who had been sleeping on the chair, woke up with a startle as she felt the mana in the air moving weirdly. She felt like the entire space shifted for a moment, and she barely managed to register the human disappearing into thin air.

She looked around a bit confused but soon after just lay her head back down to keep sleeping. Nothing to do about humans acting weird.

Jet-black wings blanketed the skies as a massive frame covered the land beneath it in an almost unnatural darkness. Humans, elves, demons, and many other kinds of species hid away within their houses in the city below as the beast headed towards the central tower.

It was a city of impossible proportions based on the standards of old Earth. It spanned thousands of kilometers with buildings, housing billions of the myriad races – their only solace being the trustworthy barrier protecting their home.

Yet the Wyvern of the Desolates had come anyway - a monstrous beast that had wiped out all life on one of the massive continents on their planet. In its wake always followed death and destruction, and many families of the city already began mourning those who failed to enter the safety of the barrier in time.

The entire city went into complete lockdown, and as the poison mist that swirled around the mighty wyrm encountered the barrier, it sizzled and burned but remained stable. It was put down by the city's and country's protector, a mighty warrior who sat at a higher position than even the King.

It was a being none could look down upon with his level placing him firmly as a mid-tier C-grade.

"ROAR!"

The Wyvern opened its maw as it spewed out a beam of green energy that impacted the barrier and made the entire city shake.

Yet the barrier held up.

But it wouldn't be able to do so forever.

It was made by an early C-grade companion of the Protector, and while it would hold up for a while, the Wyvern's attack was especially effective at these kinds of prolonged standoffs. With no other choice, the Protector would have to move personally.

No matter what, it wouldn't be an easy fight, for the Wyvern was mid-tier C-grade just like him.

Far above the city and barrier appeared a single figure. It was a muscular red-skinned demon wearing heavy armor and carrying a massive mallet and large tower shield. His entire body hummed with power as his glowing white eyes stared at the Wyvern that had come to attack his home.

"What do you hope to accomplish by coming here?" he asked in the common tongue of their planet.

Getting nothing but a breath of toxic green energy in return as the wyvern attacked.

As it flew, its form became smaller, shrinking from being a several hundreds of meters long monstrosity to only about a dozen meters from head to tail. While the reduced size made the beast appear less threatening, the Protector knew it was just the opposite – because while it became smaller, its speed increased manyfold.

The Wyvern soon reached the Protector, who blocked the blow easily with his shield. He felt a pulse of poison release as the claw hit, but he shrugged it off as his armor nullified most of it. What he wore today was a set of armor he had personally made specifically for this day – for he knew the gluttonous and greedy Wyvern would one day come to claim what was rightfully the Protector's.

He countered as he swung his mallet, forcing the beast to retreat. The poison mist released from its wings blanketed the entire area already, and the Protector knew the beast relied on it to win... but it would not go as the Wyvern hoped.

Pressing further, he kept attacking, and several of his blows struck true, shattering the scales of the beast. He knew it was relatively weaker to physical attacks than magic – a trait of most winged lizards – hence his simple yet effective approach.

The beast was, in the end, but a beast. It relied on its instincts and not intelligence, making it inherently inferior. Its decision to come to his city that day would mark its end.

Their battle continued as the entire area surrounding the city was transformed. A new valley was created when his kinetic blow missed and sent a shockwave down into the ground and a poisoned swamp when the Wyvern failed to hit with its deadly breath.

The Protector had to admit that the beast was powerful beyond his expectations, but he knew he had the upper hand. It relied on its poison building up in his body, but he was prepared. Just a few months earlier, a renowned alchemist had visited his city. He was a mid-tier C-grade just like himself, and from him, he had procured a powerful antitoxin for today.

When the beast believed it had won, he would consume it and finish it off, not leaving the greedy Wyvern a chance to escape. He would be hailed a hero, and his renown would grow even further.

A single exchange later, and the beast managed to barely scrape him with one of its long fangs, drawing blood. He felt the extra-potent toxin enter his body and knew it was time. He had managed to land a mighty hit in return for the attack and broke one of the Wyvern's wings, making it far harder for it to escape.

Smiling, he took out the antitoxin and consumed the contents of the bottle. He felt the liquid enter his body as it-

What?

Blood splurged out his orifices as all the pent-up poison in his body suddenly got renewed life and exploded with power. The Protector felt his insides begin to rot as he stumbled back, nearly failing to stay airborne. Had the alchemist lied to him? He knew some could alter the descriptions, but all the potions, flasks, and elixirs he had also bought worked flawlessly... so why?

"Not a fan of my concoction?" the Protector heard a familiar voice say as he looked up at the Wyvern staring down at him with condescending eyes.

"What?" the Protector answered but soon realized... the Wyvern before him was the renowned alchemist known as Vilastromoz. From the beginning, this fight had been a setup... the antitoxin a trap he had fallen into with both legs.

But how could he possibly have suspected a mindless beast like the Wyvern of the Desolates to be an alchemist? How was it even possible when it as a beast did not possess a profession? He knew it was possible to craft anyway, but he hadn't heard of a beast doing so before...

"Cough, cough." More blood spurted out as he wavered in the air, but he activated a skill to temporarily at least stabilize himself a bit, seeing that the Wyvern was not continuing its assault even in his moment of weakness.

"It's here, right?" the Wyvern asked, its large eyes staring down at the man.

"I... cough... the city... just take it," the Protector said, before shaking his head and standing up a bit more straight. "There is no reason for either of us to risk death. I do not care what happens to the city... let us just leave it as it is and go our separate ways."

"Fine," the voice of the Wyvern echoed out. "Remove the barrier and leave."

The Protector didn't hesitate to do so. He didn't believe that the Wyvern genuinely wanted a fight to the death. In the battle they had been somewhat evenly matched, and like most powerhouses, he had methods to make a last stand if things got too dangerous. The only reason why he had any confidence in slaying the Wyvern was due to his many preparations.

Inside the city, the citizens saw the barrier that ensured their safety slowly began to disperse as they despaired. The King of the land inside the grand palace, a peak D-tier man, cursed at the Protector for abandoning them as the poison released by the Wyvern descended upon the capital. The King didn't hesitate as he began making his escape, not even bothering with his family or anyone else.

Up in the air, the Protector was about to take his leave as he saw a potion appear before the Wyvern as the beast swiftly chomped down on it. Seconds later, the broken wing had regenerated, and the beast looked to be in near-perfect condition once more.

Turning to quickly fly away, he barely managed to dodge as the claw came for him.

"You! We had an agreement!" he yelled as the Wyvern attacked him again.

"Oh, that? I lied."

Less than fifteen minutes later, the Protector fell as he succumbed to the ever-increasing poison in his body.

The city below quickly turned into pandemonium as everyone tried to flee, yet escape was impossible for most. The dark green cloud had well and truly descended on the city, and soon there were more rotting corpses than living citizens in the once grand capital of one of the largest countries on the planet.

The Wyvern turned its gaze to one side as it released a breath, with a fleeing King and a few of his guards in its crosshairs. The King took out a protective item to try and save himself, but the shield generated by the marble barely held up for a second before shattering as he was reduced to a rotting pile of goo.

Finally, with nothing else to distract it, the Wyvern dove down towards the central palace and the grand tower that adorned its middle – a mighty mage tower housing an artifact the Wyvern had come for.

With a swipe of its tail, the upper parts of the tower were ripped away as the large blue gem within was revealed. The gem had been what powered the entire barrier and was a true natural treasure.

And as the Wyvern that would one day be known as the Malefic Viper laid its eyes upon the gemstone, so did another soul. It was a silent and unnoticed passenger that was simply on for the ride - one who was just there to observe and experience the annals of history and the Records of what once happened during the first Era of the multiverse.

Throughout it all, Jake had been present. He had felt the thoughts of the Viper, the Protector, and even all the living souls in the city below. He had experienced every collision of power between the two fighters as if he was in the fight itself.

Yet it was only at this final moment Jake felt himself be truly immersed into the body of the Malefic Viper. He felt like he truly became the Viper and that the body of the Wyvern was his own. Every single small piece of energy moving within the large body was clear as day to him.

Instinctually – perhaps due to the skill or his bloodline – he knew that this was when the important moment would come: his chance.

The Viper extended its claw as it channeled a version of Touch of the Malefic Viper Jake very much recognized. The gemstone was slowly transmuted as it began turning dark green and giving off powerful toxic energy. None of this was very enlightening to Jake, but he did notice a few areas where he could improve his own ways of using Touch of the Malefic Viper. If Jake had to guess, then the skill was only still at ancient-rarity at this time for Viper, or maybe the would-be-god just focused on entirely different areas than Jake.

Opening his maw, Jake felt something inside the Wyvern's body come to life that felt both familiar and foreign. Instantly, he knew it was what would one day be named Palate of the Malefic Viper. But it was different from Jake's version in many ways. It was far more potent for one thing, but it also felt... larger?

Jake felt the skill activate as something inside the Viper's body began attracting the gemstone. The gemstone appeared to slightly shrink as it was drawn into the mouth of the Wyvern, and Jake noticed something that reminded him of his One Step Mile – the concept of space.

Once the gemstone entered the mouth, it just... disappeared. Yet moments later, Jake noticed where it had gone.

Like his spatial storage, a small dimension was found within the stomach of the Wyvern. Within that storage, Jake felt the gemstone and what was happening to it. He felt it be continually refined and cultivated, but it happened too fast somehow. Like time moved differently within that new space created by the skill.

A time-accelerated space? Stomach? Just as Jake was considering all these things...

Time rewind.

Jake felt the Wyvern open its mouth like it was his own, and the skill activated. The gem shrunk and entered the maw before being thrown into the spatial storage inside its stomach and refined in an accelerated fashion.

Time rewind.

The gemstone was slowly made smaller as the concept of space worked to make it able to be deposited in the storage inside the Wyvern. The storage itself was not actually inside the stomach but more in another realm created by the skill.

Time rewind.

This time Jake focused not on the swallowing but the storage itself. It was truly more metaphysical, likely part of the soul. This is also why the Viper could more easily accelerate its time in a passive sense as it happened inside its own body.

Time rewind.

Not only was the gemstone absorbed, the usual effect of Palate even kept working on it. However, it couldn't help regenerate resource pools because all of the energy was passively consumed to keep the time acceleration and space alive, but something was absorbed – the knowledge of the item.

Time rewind.

While in the space, it was being refined by a skill reminding Jake a bit of his own Cultivate Toxin... could he use that as a substitute? He should be able to.

Time Rewound.

He felt that the journey created by Path of the Heretic-Chosen was about to end, but Jake didn't lose focus. He studied every single movement of energy and everything the Viper did as it used its Palate of the Malefic Viper to absorb the gemstone. He borrowed from his own instinctive understanding of One Step Mile and Moment of the Primal Hunter to better understand how time was affected. Both only worked to influence his own body, while the Viper's Palate only worked to affect his body too, except for the whole swallowing part. But Jake was quickly figuring that out...

Time rewind.

Everything was slowly coming together, and Jake felt that the next time would be the last. Mentally he went over everything as he prepared himself and immersed his entire body and soul into the Viper.

Time rewound.

Jake opened his maw as the gemstone slowly shrank in size as the concept of space worked to reduce its size and deposit it into the metaphysical spatial storage created with Palate of the Malefic Viper. Within, it was constantly refined by a skill very similar to his Cultivate Toxin – he would have to use that for his own version - while at the same time experiencing time acceleration through the concept of time. Throughout it all, the gemstone's Records were also slowly being absorbed by the Viper through Palate as his understanding and familiarity grew to a highly intimate level.

He heard the notification sound just as his journey came to an end.