

Hunter 205

Chapter 205: An Improved Palate

Sylphie opened her eyes as she saw the human appear again back at the lodge. He had only been gone for a few minutes, but he looked like something big had happened as he instantly closed his eyes and entered meditation. She was a bit annoyed at not knowing what was going on, but she would be a good bird and not disturb him.

She was kind like that.

Jake replayed the feeling of being the Wyvern and tried replicating the same experiences in his body repeatedly. He ignored the notification for now as he just properly processed all he had gone through - not just the parts with Palate of the Malefic Viper, but also the fight with the Protector and when the Viper had used what would one day be called Touch of the Malefic Viper.

Several hours passed as he just sat there while everything was still fresh on his mind. The true gains had been related to Palate of the Malefic Viper, and it had clearly been the focus of the skill as it was only when Palate was about to be used that Jake was fully merged with the Viper, but everything else was still valuable.

No matter what, the Wyvern Jake had seen would one day become the Malefic Viper.

He didn't really think much about anything unrelated to the fight and how to improve his skills. Everything that happened then was history and couldn't be changed, even if the entire thing was a bit cruel. The Protector willingly abandoned the city, and the Viper did not even give a single thought to it as he fought.

Billions had died, sure, but they had just been at the wrong place at the wrong time. It was the unfortunate reality of the weak that didn't live under the umbrella of the truly strong. The Protector had given some thought to the citizens by establishing the barrier, but he refused to risk his own life for the billions of lives living within his domain. The King had even abandoned the city the moment things went south.

Jake shook his head as he finally awoke from his meditation. He had gained some inspirations related to other aspects of the Legacy of the Malefic Viper, but the true gain was without a doubt with his Palate of the Malefic Viper.

Opening the notification, he saw what he expected, but he was still more than satisfied.

[Palate of the Malefic Viper (Ancient)] – The Malefic Viper has honed its venom by devouring myriad toxins found throughout the multiverse. In the same vein, the Alchemist of the Malefic Viper can consume toxins to learn their effects and properties. Further evolved, you can now also learn the properties of herbs while at the same time enjoying a greater benefit from all potions consumed. Grants immunity or resistance to most poisons. Passively provides 1 Endurance per level in Alchemist of the Malefic Viper. Through consumption, may your power grow; through gluttony, may your Records expand.

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[Palate of the Malefic Viper (Legendary)] – The Malefic Viper has honed its venom by devouring myriad toxins and treasures found throughout the multiverse. In the same vein, the Alchemist of the Malefic Viper can consume toxins to learn their effects and properties. Further evolved, you can now also learn the properties of herbs while at the same time enjoying a greater benefit from all potions consumed. Natural treasures can be swallowed and refined at an accelerated pace, using your current level of Cultivate Toxin (Uncommon). If the item is not a toxin, the item will still be refined but at a slower pace. Allows you to learn the properties of any treasure in your stomach as you slowly refine it. Grants immunity or resistance to most poisons. Passively provides 3 Endurance per level in Heretic-Chosen

Alchemist of the Malefic Viper. Through endless consumption, may your power grow; through gluttony, may your Records expand as you devour the world.

Jake read the changes, and everything was as expected... he felt that every part of the skill had gotten slightly stronger, but the true gain was with the new “stomach” created by the skill. He could feel it within him right at that moment, even if he knew it didn’t actually physically exist.

It was like his soul in some ways, but in a way that was a bit more... tangible. Jake knew that whatever was within that stomach would appear out in the real world if he died, just like if one broke his spatial necklace after killing him. In fact, it was like that stomach was a part of him like equipment like rings or necklaces was.

Inspecting it more closely, he felt that the stomach was quite limited in many ways. Due to the way it constantly refined and absorbed Records from the item in an endless feedback loop, he couldn’t consume more than one thing at a time.

There was also the question of what counted as a natural treasure. Jake was confident that normal items such as equipment didn’t count, while he assumed herbs would. Either way, it was something he would have to look into in a bit; he first wanted to get done with his notifications.

The next few actually surprised him a bit as he hadn’t seen that happening...

’DING!’ Profession: [Heretic-Chosen Alchemist of the Malefic Viper] has reached level 101 - Stat points allocated, +10 free points

'DING!' Profession: [Heretic-Chosen Alchemist of the Malefic Viper] has reached level 102 - Stat points allocated, +10 free points

'DING!' Race: [Human (D)] has reached level 101 - Stat points allocated, +15 free points

So, Jake had just gained two levels in his profession less than an hour after getting it. Gaining levels from upgrading the "of the Malefic Viper" skills wasn't anything new to him, but he had assumed he wouldn't get them when he used the Path of the Heretic-Chosen to do it.

Seems like a bit of a scam, he thought, not at all complaining. Heck, it helped the alchemist profession, which was typically slow as heck to level, to progress far faster. Who would complain about that?

The final thing he had left was to see how much endurance he had gained from the upgrade, though he kind of already knew the answer based on not feeling a massive rush of energy from suddenly gaining a lot of stats.

Checking his status screen, he saw that, sadly, the skill did not work retroactively to any levels below the triple digits but only gave him 3 endurance per level in Heretic-Chosen Alchemist of the Malefic Viper. He still had the 99 stats from level 1-99, so it wasn't like he had lost anything, and quite honestly, he couldn't really claim to be surprised. If it suddenly gave him almost 200 more endurance before bonuses, it would just be insane.

All in all, Jake felt pretty damn good after it all. That Path of the Heretic-Chosen skill was great, and Jake was already looking forward to the next use.

With all of his evolutions done, he finally opened up his status menu in full to get a view of things.

Status

Name: Jake Thayne

Race: [Human (D) – lvl 101]

Class: [Avaricious Arcane Hunter – lvl 100]

Profession: [Heretic-Chosen Alchemist of the Malefic Viper – lvl 102]

Health Points (HP): 18430/18430

Mana Points (MP): 20578/22087

Stamina: 13512/13790

Stats

Strength: 1226

Agility: 1552

Endurance: 1379

Vitality: 1843

Toughness: 1266

Wisdom: 1767

Intelligence: 1295

Perception: 3140

Willpower: 1425

Free points: 70

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], [Perfect Evolution (D-grade)]

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)], [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)], [Big Game Arcane Hunter (Epic)], [Arcane Hunter's Arrows (Epic)], [One Step Mile (Ancient)], [Moment of the Primal Hunter (Legendary)], [Gaze of the Apex Hunter (Legendary)]

Profession Skills: [Path of the Heretic-Chosen (Unique)], [Herbology (Common)], [Brew Potion (Common)], [Alchemist's Purification (Common)], [Alchemical Flame (Common)], [Craft Elixir (Common)] [Toxicology (Uncommon)], [Cultivate Toxin (Uncommon)], [Concoct Poison (Uncommon)], [Malefic Viper's Poison (Epic)], [Scales 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)], [Palate of the Malefic Viper (Legendary)]

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

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

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

Once more, Jake took note of how damn long the thing was getting. He had gained new skills, upgrades to existing ones, and of course, a few more stats. It also felt good to finally have a legendary skill under his profession skills.

The upgraded Palate of the Malefic Viper hadn't undergone a tremendous change, but it was still one Jake felt made it worthy of being legendary-rarity. It used both the concept of space and time, and Jake had a feeling he wouldn't have gained the upgrade without having experience with those two from One Step Mile and Moment of the Primal Hunter. Maybe he wouldn't have been able to use Path of the Heretic-Chosen at all.

Jake was aware, however, that his version was not the same as the Malefic Viper's was back then. First of all, the Malefic Viper was a monster while Jake was a human. As a monster, the Wyvern could gain not just knowledge of the item but even experience and levels from consuming the gemstone, much like how Mystie had used the Mystbone to level and evolve to D-grade.

He had felt the intent of the Viper back then was to just slowly nurture and absorb the gemstone over a longer period of time. This new part of Palate of the Malefic Viper was to the Wyvern primarily a way of getting more gains out of absorbing natural treasures. Jake's was a bit different.

Jake's was solely focused on learning about the item while also refining it and improving it. He wouldn't absorb it as the Viper did. He had a feeling the Viper could also do as Jake's version did, likely even back then. It just didn't make sense for him to do so.

What truly made the skill worthy of the legendary-rarity was how insanely valuable the ability to learn about the natural treasure was.

One of the biggest challenges one was faced with when using rare ingredients was exactly that – their rarity. When Jake wanted to craft a regular health potion or a poison, he had plenty of time to practice. He could fail a hundred brews or concoctions before finally succeeding, and it wouldn't be a significant loss.

The same couldn't be said when one used incredibly rare or expensive ingredients. An example recently was Jake trying to make his first uncommon-rarity poison using the rare Lifevine of the Indigo Fungus. He was limited in his attempts due to only having a single Lifevine, and he even had to cut it up so he could have more tries.

And that had only been a rare-rarity item. What if it was one even rarer?

Jake knew that often the creations wouldn't result in a failure, just an inferior product. To completely fail was far harder than just creating a mediocre product that truly didn't do the incredible ingredient justice.

With Palate of the Malefic Viper, that all changed.

Without even harming – no, actually improving – the natural treasure, he would be able to learn about it and make it feel far more intimate to him when he would finally use it in alchemy. One of the reasons why Jake learned to craft potions and poisons so quickly was his ability to learn about the ingredients by eating them. It was an ability that made the entire profession as an Alchemist of the Malefic Viper coveted across the multiverse.

Jake was certain there was some kind of threshold to how much you could learn about a natural treasure while having it consumed, but either way, it would be a huge advantage in the future. There were still some doubts in his mind, so he did what he always did when in doubt:

He just dove right in and tried using the skill a bit, and Jake happened to have just the item for it. While it would feel a bit disgusting to swallow something that had once been a part of such an abhorrent creature... sigh, what one doesn't do for science.

He was naturally thinking about the rarest natural treasure he had: the Lifecore of the Indigo Fungus Mycorrhiza.

[Indigo Fungus Mycorrhiza Lifecore (Epic)] – The Lifecore of an Indigo Fungus Mycorrhiza. Contains a massive amount of life-affinity mana and vital energy. Can be used in a myriad of alchemical creations. Will grant a permanent increase to the Vitality stat if consumed.

Jake took it out of his spatial storage and looked at it a bit. He had no idea what to make with it currently, and while he could consume it directly and gain some stat points, he knew it would be a waste. Very rarely was it worth it to directly consume natural treasures, but it was far better to use them for crafting.

The Lifecore could be used for many things outside of alchemy. It would be great to socket on a staff or a wand to create a powerful life-affinity weapon, or maybe even as a catalyst in a piece of armor or jewelry to make it give vitality.

It was a mystery what he would one day end up using it for... but it would be used to test his skill for now.

Jake looked at the Lifecore about the size of his palm and took note that it was far too large to just shove in his mouth. Luckily, swallowing with the skill didn't actually require him to eat it.

He opened his mouth and activated the skill. A suction force took hold of the Lifecore as it shrunk and flew into Jake's mouth, disappearing from sight just as it entered. Jake instantly felt the Lifecore enter the stomach of the skill, and he felt all parts of his improved Palate of the Malefic Viper truly flare to life.

Energy began slowly refining the Lifecore, but it was slow as it wasn't a toxin and couldn't use his Cultivate Toxin skill. Luckily, it was helped along by the time inside the stomach accelerating to over a dozen times normal speed, far faster than Jake had predicted.

It only took a few moments before Jake felt a faint wisp of knowledge enter his mind... it was incredibly minor, just a bit about how the shell of the Lifecore was formed, but it was something. In a day, a week, or a month, he would know far more. He did seriously doubt he could learn everything... but he could most certainly learn a lot.

He was also pleasantly surprised that it barely drained any mana. It was utterly negligible, and if he didn't focus on the skill draining a bit, he wouldn't know it happened. His natural regeneration – not even including his mask and the effects of the Pylon – far outpacing the drain.

Jake spent the next few hours just focusing on the feeling and familiarizing himself with the skill. He was only thrown out of his Thoughtful Meditation when Sylphie got too bored and began poking him with her talon to get his attention.

Awakening, he scratched her as he considered his next move. His quest panel made him aware that the World Congress would begin in around five and a half days.

A part of him wanted to go to the dungeon, but he knew it wouldn't be wise. He tended to get too invested in a singular goal, and he would hate having to leave it halfway. Rather just wait till after that congress. Besides... it wasn't like there were no other D-grades in the world.

Haven was located in the outskirts of a grand forest, one larger than all continents of the old planet. Jake had only gone a bit of the way in when he went to Mystie and Hawkie's old nest, and even then, he had felt the presence of a few D-grades further in, and that area had still been considered the outskirts.

Having already decided, he got up and stretched, cracked his neck, and had Hawkie take responsibility for Sylphie as he prepared to go on a bit of an adventure.