

Hunter 209

Chapter 209: Worthy Opponents

Jake opened his hand as he let the body fall, the dark green glow of Touch of the Malefic Viper fading. The body that fell was that of a monkey with a black handprint on its neck and its body already half rotten. When it hit the ground, it squashed together as its insides were already decayed and turned to mush.

You have slain [Tri-Lighttail Dervish – lvl 128] – Bonus experience earned for killing an enemy above your level

Its killer took out a healing potion and drank it as the dozens of deep cuts on his body rapidly began closing, leaving only a few of the worse ones, such as where a tail had penetrated his chest. Those would take a bit longer.

The entire section of the forest he was in was utterly wrecked. The trees had deep cuts in them, the ground littered with craters, and everything had a horrible smell of death and decay as he hadn't held back on using his poisons at all. The bark of many of the trees was black from the poison mist or arrows coated in poison hitting them

'DING!' Class: [Avaricious Arcane Hunter] has reached level 103 - Stat points allocated, +10 free points

He flew over to a branch as he sat down and entered meditation. This was the third fight since he met the first Dervish and by far the hardest. The first fight had only been a small group of normal D-grades with a single Suppressor, so those were pretty easily put down.

The second fight was a bit tougher and was a lot like the first group with a Dervish he encountered, but with his increased experience fighting the monkeys, it ended quite a bit faster.

As for the third and final fight, he had just finished; there had been two dozen enemies with three Dervishes. It had been quite the battle as the Dervishes honestly weren't easy opponents at all. They were incredibly fast, no doubt agility-focused, and combined with their weight-increasing magic, their whip-blade-tails felt like heavy as fuck razors barraging you constantly.

Jake was fully aware that if he screwed up, he could lose his life to them – which is why he found them entertaining to battle.

He also made a decision. One that may be viewed as controversial by many... but Jake felt like it was necessary. As he made the command through the system, it hurt him down to the core of his soul... but he had to. He needed the speed to keep up with his foes, and he could feel his body unable to move as fast as he wanted, so he had done it.

Jake had used free points on something that wasn't perception.

The 105 free points he had saved up since entering D-grade were all put into agility as he felt the stat increase, taking him from 1595 to 1748 after all the bonuses were applied. It was around a 10% increase, and he instantly felt the difference as he could now move even faster than before, and perhaps now he could begin reacting to even the Dervishes above level 130. The one at 128 had been a bit too fast for him, and he had to freeze it and grab hold of it to use Touch of the Malefic Viper to win the fight instead of just beating it with his blade. Fighting with his sword tended to be more fun, so he would prefer to do that, after all.

Checking the time, he still had plenty to get to the inner area, and he had a feeling he was close.

Still, he had to spend a few hours getting himself back in top condition. Between his meditation and liberal potion use, Jake's recovery was far faster than most other D-grades, allowing him to battle far more than normal.

Once he was done sitting around meditating and chugging down potions, he moved on with his day of slaughtering monkeys.

He tried to avoid unnecessary fights and encounters with small squads as those battles weren't exactly entertaining.

Just as he made his way around a tree, he spotted a small group of D-grades heading his way around 300 meters ahead of him. Not feeling like battling four regular D-grade Lighttail Monkeys, he focused a bit on staying hidden as he even used his cloak to camouflage himself a bit better.

It wasn't something he aimed for or even expected... but that small action gave him a notification.

[Advanced Stealth (Common)] – The deadliest blow is the one not seen coming. A proven artisan in the arts of stealth, you have learned to stay undetected far better than a mere novice. You now find it even easier to blend into the environment, waiting for just the right moment to strike. Adds a minor bonus to the effect of Agility and Perception while successfully remaining undetected.

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[Expert Stealth (Uncommon)] – The deadliest blow is the one not seen coming. You have proven yourself an expert in the arts of stealth, as you have learned to become a shadow that is only seen when you wish to be so. You find it easier than ever to blend into the environment, making your presence, mana, and nearly all traces of your existence hidden as you wait for your prey to be vulnerable. Adds a small bonus to the effect of Agility and Perception while successfully remaining undetected.

Jake read it over and couldn't help but just shrug. Staying hidden was never anything he really thought much about; it is just one of those things you do. The skill itself was just one of those that kind of just existed and didn't require any more thoughts than that. Not that he complained about getting it upgraded, as he knew it would make the hiding he already did just a little bit more effective.

Anyway, with a random skill upgrade out of the way, he continued his quest into the heart of the monkey-lands.

He estimated the entire domain controlled by the monkeys to be several hundred kilometers in diameter, making it a small country based on old-world standards. Still, Jake knew that compared to some other beasts, it really wasn't that impressive.

The scale of everything in the multiverse was just bigger. It made sense, though, as an area did feel a lot smaller when you can fly faster than a fighter jet or practically teleport with every footstep. Populations growing to ridiculous levels and cities becoming absolutely massive was also just kind of natural.

Heck, trees could now naturally grow to be kilometers tall, and buildings could easily be constructed to be even taller. The logistical issues with large cities were primarily eliminated by magic and the population's lower requirements for sustenance and their natural ability to survive better independently due to stats and evolutions. E-grade required way less food than a normal pre-system human, after all, and so far in D-grade, Jake had yet to feel any hunger.

Well, except a hunger for good challenges, but that is a bit of a different thing.

Back in the real world, outside of Jake's neverending random thoughts about things getting bigger, he had just made his way around a massive tree. It was one of the true behemoths in the area, and while he did consider flying to the top for fun, what he saw as he got to the other side of it dissuaded him.

Before Jake lay what could only be described as a small ancient temple with a few stone buildings placed around it. The temple itself looked like one of those old boxy pyramids like the Aztecs made them, except without that entrance on the top. There was a small entrance at the bottom, though.

If that were the only thing worth noting, he would only be mildly interested, but what was living among those ancient-looking buildings made him quite excited. Hundreds of monkeys jumped around, a lot of them D-grade, but there were even more E-grades running about.

He saw dozens of Dervishes, Crushers, and Suppressors... but what was even more noteworthy were four huge monkeys, each sitting on top of their own small ancient building.

[Tri-Lighttail Monkey Matriarch – lvl 142]

[Tri-Lighttail Monkey Matriarch – lvl 147]

[Tri-Lighttail Monkey Matriarch – lvl 146]

[Tri-Lighttail Monkey Matriarch – lvl 146]

The Matriarchs looked a bit like their brethren but were twice the size of an average monkey, with quite a bit of bulk and fat on their bodies. They looked like they could put up quite a fight, but it wasn't their primary role. Many small monkeys crawled all over their bodies with levels as low as 25, making Jake believe this was their primary breeding ground.

Just as Jake was trying to get a good count of how many baby monkeys there were, he felt something look his way. He barely managed to see a figure exit the ancient temple in the middle before he instinctively hid behind the tree he was on and focused on his newly upgraded stealth.

A few moments passed before he felt it was safe as he peeked out and saw what had just nearly spotted him from so far away.

It was another monkey, but it was quite a bit different from the others.

Like the Dervishes, it was tall and slender, but it was a bit bulkier than those. What truly set it apart was its pristine golden fur, the glowing silvery symbol on its forehead, and the five tails extending out behind it. Jake didn't doubt for a second that this beast was the most powerful in the entire settlement and could in no way be considered weak. He used Identify on it as he hid, and the level didn't actually surprise him.

[Penta-Lighttail Monkey Prima – lvl 131]

It was lower than all the Matriarchs and even many the Dervishes, but Jake knew level wasn't everything. Shit, he just had to look at himself and the pile of dead monkeys in his wake making it to this temple, all of them higher level than himself.

A smile crept onto his lips as he, for the first time, spotted a prey he found worth hunting after reaching D-grade.

Miyamoto was in his courtyard with his eyes closed as he slowly swung the blade through the air. As if dancing, he moved fluidly through the motions in a slow fashion - his blade appearing to almost shimmer with every stroke, like it was made of water.

Every movement calculated, every step pre-determined, and every fiber of his being and soul invested as he trained. To Miyamoto, there was no world outside of him and his sword at that moment.

But all things have to come to an end as he stopped. His eyes opened as he softly looked down at his sword. The old heirloom that had been proudly displayed by their family for generations no longer just a normal weapon. Oh no, far from it.

One of the tutorial rewards he had spent his points on was to make this old family blade awaken - to allow the spirits of his ancestors and their will to come to life and for the blade to become a true artifact. His request had been met, and the blade bound to his soul as it became his life companion.

Miyamoto was level 99 in his class and 95 in his profession. While it did hurt his pride a bit to not be the first D-grade as the patriarch of his clan, he would be the first to achieve the perfect evolution.

If he had chosen to become a City Lord, perhaps things would be different, but he knew he did not desire to be a leader of the people anymore. He was past that age, and he had passed the baton to the younger generation. No, he would focus on the blade and his passions as he helped protect his family as any good patriarch would do.

By following his own desires, he had spearheaded the expansion of the clan. He had fought and claimed the first Pylon, losing many family members in the process, but for the second Pylon, he had taken care of the foe by his lonesome. The third Pylon he hadn't even needed to be present as his grandson and his great-granddaughter had handled that just a week prior.

As an old soul, he had little to complain about as he spent most of his time focusing on improving himself to be a pillar of strength for the clan. He had just gone through a session of Sword Meditation, a skill he valued quite highly.

[Supreme Sword Meditation (Ancient)] – The sword is you, and you are your sword. While in meditation, regenerate stamina and mana significantly faster and more easily find inspiration and experience enlightenment in relation to all sword-related skills. Allows you to earn far more experience points while using Supreme Sword Meditation. While in Supreme Sword Meditation, you must perform a compatible Sword Dance flawlessly. Any mistakes will lead to forcefully exiting meditation and be unable to reenter it again for a short period of time. May you find your truth through your blade.

It was a great skill, and he had gotten it to its current rarity shortly after returning to Earth, while it had only been epic-rarity upon his exit of the tutorial.

He had gotten it to rare-rarity the day he reached level 25 and earned the meditation skill.

Taking a deep breath, the old man extended his sword as he began drawing in the air, as he painted with his sword. It was an ephemeral painting of water that would disperse the moment he stopped the skill, a mere snapshot of reality that he would be the only one to ever lay his eyes on.

Finesse had many forms, be it swordsmanship or painting. Ultimately, both were about control, conviction, and the ability to execute techniques accurately. All these things only became more true as the system arrived.

Miyamoto had seen many others of the older generations – people still his juniors – fail to adapt to this everchanging world. They relied on the ways of old, or their mindsets were simply not adaptive enough. It was difficult for him to understand.

Life was but a series of shifting seasons. Every new season would bring about change as the world developed, not one day the same as the last. Throughout his life, he had seen so much change, so many shifts in society.

If he had been unable to adapt, how could he ever have hoped to achieve success? If he could not embrace new technology and even be willing to try and get ahead and prepare for the coming winter as fall arrived, how could he ever hope to excel?

To him, the arrival of the system was just yet another changing season. As he lay there in his bed, he believed that it was his winter and that season would be his last. Yet spring had arrived and brought about new life and new opportunities.

And as nature cheered and blossomed to welcome the sun and the end of winter, so would he blossom and grow to make his clan experience the most fruitful summer imaginable.

The World Congress would be the first step in achieving that, the first time where he would finally meet the other leaders and patriarchs of the planet - including he who had claimed the first Pylon.