

Hunter 216

Chapter 216: The Calm Before the Politics

He wasn't sure if he should be disappointed or not as he entered the central temple. The inside sloped down a bit as he entered a small underground chamber – a perfect place for a secret treasure vault.

What he found instead was just a damn bush... tree... thing. As he looked at it, he actually found it a bit odd that his Sagacity of the Malefic Viper didn't toss out a snippet of knowledge. His Herbology skill was also not giving him any idea what the hell he was looking at.

Luckily, the system still came in tight and offered a nice explanation as he used Identify.

[Ancient Celerita Musa (Ancient)] – This plant has been grown from an ancient Musa seed and brought new life by the advent of the system. Also commonly called a banana tree, this plant produces different sorts of bananas, a type of fruit unique to the newly integrated planet Earth. This tree has become intimately connected to the concept of time through unknown means, making its growth pattern highly unpredictable. Destroying this tree will have unpredictable effects, and using it in any kind of alchemical creation will require one to first anchor it in time. Can only grow in certain areas with intense amounts of mana.

You learn something new every day. Jake actually thought bananas grew on trees, something the system acknowledged. Maybe it was just being extra-nice with these new things and giving all of that sweet info? Either way, it was much appreciated. As for the banana Musa itself...

Well, this was without a doubt the rarest and most powerful herb Jake had ever come across. He felt the pressure just standing before it as he observed the weird plant.

It looked like it was growing in real-time. At least it was until suddenly it wasn't. A minute or so later, a part of it suddenly began growing in the opposite direction – in other words, began retracting into itself as if time reversed. That was likely because time kind of did reverse... this was a time tree... time musa. Whatever. Anyway...kinda awesome, not gonna lie.

It wasn't very big, only about five meters tall, though it was pretty wide with its large leaves. There was nothing else in the entire underground chamber aside from a few other minor herbs that Jake decided he may as well just pick up.

As he stood there considering that, something happened on the plant. One of the flower-like growths suddenly appeared to bloom as four small bumps began growing out. Within less than a minute, the bumps took the shape of bananas before the growth stopped.

It was – to the surprise of no one – bananas. Yellow and ripe, looking just like what Jake was used to buying in the supermarket. Jake was pretty sure modern bananas were selectively bred or something like that, but who's gonna complain about delicious-looking bananas?

He went up to the tree – yes, Jake had decided to just call it a tree because it looked a bit like a tree - and felt like he passed a weird barrier as he got close. He felt like time being ever-so-slightly affected in the area a few meters around it.

Using Identify on the bananas, Jake was honestly a bit taken aback.

[Celerita Banana (Rare)] – As a banana from the Ancient Celerita Musa, this fruit contains intense amounts of Celerita-affinity mana with agility-enhancing effects. This fruit can be used in many different creations and is especially suited for flasks and elixirs. Due to this banana's origin, it will be returned to the rivers of time if it is removed too far from the tree. Consuming or transforming the fruit will anchor the energies in time, removing this effect. +3 Agility upon consumption.

This was the second natural treasure he had seen that just stated how many stats it gave, the first being the Argentum Vitae Mushrooms all the way back in the challenge dungeon. These bananas were clearly a step better, giving three stats each.

With four of them, that was just 12 free agility. Well, not entirely free, as with most things, there was a cap.

Jake had considered at one point if the rich and entitled kids of the multiverse couldn't just have their mama and papa give them a mountain of elixirs and whatnot and instantly make their children absolutely overpowered for their level, but that – luckily – wasn't a thing.

Villy had explained to him that the cap was actually quite low and based entirely on race level. For level 1-24, aka F-grade, you could get 3 stats per race-level; for E-grade, you could get 5 per level and D-grade 15 per level. This ultimately resulted in Jake having a maximum cap of stat-bonus from consuming stuff sitting at 585 currently. Of course, he had already used a bit of that.

Jake had eaten his way to a total of 86 stats gained. 51 of it in vitality, 25 in toughness, and 10 in willpower. The stats were coming from the elixir he had chugged down after clearing the Valley of Tusks dungeon, the fucked-up concoction he had made to clear the challenge dungeon, and the mural with the history of the Malefic Viper in that same dungeon. Yes, things like that “glimpse” counted towards this cap too. This cap was pretty much everything you could get from outside sources.

There was one big difference between this and something like equipment, though. First of all, it counted towards base values, and secondly, there was no limit to increasing any one stat. This meant Jake could go drink perception-increasing elixirs and get 499 perception at his current level if he so wanted. Which he kind of did want, but that wasn't the current issue.

The current issue was that he was under time pressure in front of a giant time tree-thingie that he really wanted, and based on all the descriptions going around, there was some magic going on he didn't really understand.

He did understand that he couldn't just take the bananas that were growing on the tree. Maybe he could put them in his storage, but he had a feeling they wouldn't come out the way he wanted them. The barrier around the tree was likely what kept them ripe as they currently were, and he would have to find a way to "anchor" them before using them in any alchemical creation.

Well, with the four bananas that had just grown, he anchored them the easiest way possible as he grabbed the first one and peeled it.

You have assimilated a powerful energy of Agility.

+3 Agility

"Damn, these are good," he spoke out loud as he munched on it. He had always liked bananas. They were like the candy of fruit and fit in any good smoothie. Banana cake was also good.

Jake didn't hesitate to eat all four of them, getting a sweet +12 agility total. If all things went well, this would only be the beginning as Jake took out an item he hadn't used for a long time. His Omnitool.

[Omnitool (Rare)] – A favorite for nearly all professions. This tool is made of a liquid metal that can take on any pre-programmed shape that the user desire. While unsuitable for combat, it has incredible application when it comes to performing nearly any recreational task. Enchantments: Self-Repair.

The item he forgot about 99% of the time and should have totally given to some of the crafters back at Haven, so it didn't just sit uselessly in his spatial storage like so many other things. Anyway, with that in hand, he transformed it into a giant shovel.

Now, did Jake have any idea if he could even steal the banana tree? No, not at all.

How to properly move it? Of course not.

Was it possible it could only grow within this temple, and he would just kill it? It sure was.

Did he 100% bank on his valley counting as an area with "intense amounts of mana" due to the Pylon? He sure did.

Was Jake just 100% taking a chance as he decided to dig up the entire tree and bring it with him to just plop it down outside his lodge just to get a cool-ass banana tree? Yes. Yes, he was.

Shit, what is the worst that can happen? I kill a tree and still get some weird-ass-time-tree-musa-thing I can play around with, Jake thought as he began digging it up, finding it a bit annoying as the soil randomly moved back from where he had just dug it up from. Time magic and all that.

Jake was just going to risk it all and try to steal it. He knew it was a high-risk, high reward move, but if he was candid, he wasn't sure he would ever come back here. This temple was in an area that would be swarmed with new D-grades within a day or two once they noticed the Prima was dead, and a new alpha would claim the tree. Could Jake just kill that new alpha? Sure, but he was pretty sure it wouldn't be nice to him and save the bananas.

So, Jake would have cut it down or tried something similar to that anyway. No way he would just leave it here. It was also damn far away from Haven, and it wasn't like he could position anyone here. Even Mystie and Hawkie wouldn't be safe at the temple with the kinds of beasts he saw around the place.

Eventually, Jake realized he had to dig around the barrier of the tree to not have the soil be put back all the time. Stupid tree. So, he dug around the tree just where the barrier was in a radius of three meters or so. It did take around two hours, which still left plenty of time to go back.

Him missing the World Congress had never been an option. He would rather say "fuck this tree" and fly back right away if getting it meant missing the meeting. Because while he didn't give much of a shit for all the political bullshit that would be going on – that was for Miranda to handle – there was something he had genuinely been looking forward to: Meeting his family.

He was only willing to spend this time to bring the tree back because he did have time. There was just one minor issue left.

"Now, how do I carry this..."

Miyamoto cleaned his blade as he waited, not because he expected to use it, but to clear his mind as he got more used to his reforged body. His blue robe was in impeccable condition, and he was ready. His

great-granddaughter was already waiting at the Pylon together with his grandson and one of the managers.

He had also gotten word that the two other Pylons had prepared, each bringing in four people. This meant the Noboru clan would have twelve representatives present at the World Congress. Their preparations had been excellent, and Miyamoto was especially looking forward to finally laying his eyes on Earth's elites.

Jacob drank a cup of coffee as he read over the latest reports and prepared for their final meeting before the World Congress. The Pylons had the ability to link up and connect to each other, which was undoubtedly one of the major reasons for the World Congress, as it required either the owner, lord, or someone with an assistant profession to meet another representative.

Naturally, the Holy Church had already linked up their three Pylons to better facilitate cooperation. The hope of this World Congress was not just to link with a few of the remaining factions – they aimed to at least reach some kind of agreement with 90% of other Pylon holders.

Caleb rocked back and forth with his son as he took the time to clear his mind and relax before the World Congress. Maja was with him as they talked about the upcoming meeting, not just between the many faction leaders around Earth but also the reunion with Jake.

There were many powerful people on Earth, and while Caleb did believe in Jake, he was still worried as any family member would be. They hadn't met in over half a year, and to say that a lot had happened during that time would be an understatement.

His only consolation was the words he had been given by Umbra in a divine message that his brother was fine. Besides that, he had only heard some vague rumors that may or may not pertain to Jake. He had to be honest; it would be good seeing his big bro again.

“Remember, we do not seek any hostile relationships with any factions. Play it safe, be courteous and recognize that some may be scared, at least to begin with. This will be the first time for many to see a Risen; it is our job to make the first impression a pleasant one,” Priscilla said with a big smile to the three people in the room with her.

One of those people being Casper, who looked like he was listening but was actually more busy thinking about how much he really didn’t want to attend the World Congress and at the same time how much he would hate to miss it. On the one hand, it would mean meeting many people who would hate him by default just because he was an undead – his general aura amplified by his powerful curse-skills not helping either.

On the other... it would be good to see Jake and even Jacob again. At least he hoped it would...

“I am not wearing a fucking dress,” Carmen said as she looked at the other woman enter the room.

“No one says you have to,” the older woman answered with a shrug. “Just remember we aren’t going to fight. Who even knows if we will be able to fight? It would be quite silly if the first World Congress ended in a bloodbath.”

“That does sound more fun than sitting around a table with dim lights discussing trade,” Carmen sighed, annoyed she even had to attend. The woman in front of her was the current City Lord while she had taken the title of city owner. She was called Pam, and the only reason Carmen had picked her was that she was the only one she had gotten along with of all the annoying survivors she came across so far. Oh, and she was her old boxing coach.

“Who knows? Maybe something fun will happen,” Pam said with a smile as she sniffed the air. “However, one thing you are doing before the meeting is taking a shower. No discussion.”

Many other factions around Earth prepared as the most important geopolitical event was approaching. A meeting between all the most prominent factions of the planet. It would be the time to forge alliances that could last for ages to come.

No faction dared take it lightly. All with just the slightest hint of competency knew this, and even if they didn't have the smarts, most at least still got intuition skills related to being a City Lord, making them aware of how important it was.

“Jake, what the hell are you doing!” Miranda yelled as she stood half-panicked at the Pylon as she saw a figure descend carrying what looked like a small fucking island with a plant on it.

His response was throwing Neil, who stood beside her, a glance as he smiled.

“Big hole, there now,” he said as he pointed at the ground beside the lodge.

“You want to-” Neil asked before Jake just threw him a glance. Neil sighed and used his space magic to create a hole in the ground by teleporting a cube of dirt away. A task he had done quite a lot these days as he had helped with the construction efforts at the Fort.

Jake happily plopped the tree down as he began filling it with dirt and trying to make sure it would survive.

The flight back sure as hell took a bit longer than expected. Who would have thought that flying with an Ancient-rarity natural treasure would attract attention? Well, he should have guessed it... either way, the banana tree was safely returned with... 9 minutes remaining.

"I need a shower," he said as he stood there, covered in dirt. At least he had managed to pump enough mana into the Self-Repair enchant during the flight back for his clothes to be back in top condition.

"Then hurry up!" Miranda yelled, her panic overpowering her usual restraint.

"Geez, I'm on it, I'm on it..." Jake said as he jumped over to the pond and entered it, swam around a little before jumping out, and, with his mana, pushed off all the water and dried himself off. A final Alchemist's Purification was used on himself for good measure.

"Alright, ready to go!" he said as he stood there staring at them - all of them looking at him a bit hesitantly before Lillian finally spoke up.

"We did kind of plan on going with more... formal attire."

To which Jake had the perfect response.

"Excuse me, this is premier dungeon boss fur and leather..."

Which was about as far as they got before a system message popped up in front of Jake and Miranda, warning them there was one minute left. Jake had also gotten one at 1 hour, which had been a bit stressful.

With everything ready, the four of them prepared as the first World Congress began.