

## Hunter 228

### Chapter 228: A Question of Morality

Jake sat on the steps leading up to his lodge, looking at the weird banana time tree as he spoke with Villy.

His theory that gods truly had no idea what happened inside the World Congress turned out to be entirely accurate. The system just simply didn't allow them to peek or communicate with their blessed ones in any way during the Congress, and the only way for them to find out afterward was to be told. That, or use some serious mental magic on the person, but gods couldn't do that currently due to the other set of system-limitation on the entire 93rd universe.

"A Treasure Hunt... a bit unoriginal but not bad. It's honestly hard to say what would be best due to the lack of information. There is no way of knowing what kinds of treasures will appear, so it could end up just being piles of junk. I doubt it, but it could happen. Personally, I would have gone for dungeons due to the two Challenge Dungeons and tend to be safe bets. On a side note, if you ever find one, do it. They are all done alone and often come with some sweet rewards, and you could likely have done both within the allotted time," Villy chimed in, genuinely interested in all of the system stuff going around related to the integration.

"True," Jake spoke, seeing no reason not to speak out loud. It was just easier than sending it mentally. "But a Treasure Hunt can also be great, and it also feels more... new. Exciting. It will also allow me to finally butt heads with some of the other humans of Earth."

"As I said, it isn't a bad choice, and honestly, it would be impossible to determine what the best one would be. I am actually prone to trust your gut over anything else right now, including my own empty guesses," the Viper answered back.

"Huh? Why?" Jake asked, a bit confused.

"The system restricted everything about these events. That includes all skills or other types of divination, intuition skills, soothsaying, all of that stuff didn't do jack shit to give hints. But your bloodline isn't bound by any such rules."

"I reckon if the system blocks even gods, it would also block me. Sure, it's strong as fuck, but--"

"No buts. It isn't a question of strength either, but one of rules and absolutes. A bloodline operates on a different spectrum than skills or regular magic. It ignores all rules and acts as it is meant to act in all circumstances. You have a spherical perception ability of sorts, right?" Villy asked. Jake quickly confirmed with a nod.

"Well, that's an absolute. Aka, it doesn't give a flying fuck about anything. A god could use their strongest stealth skill, and you would be able to see them like nothing was obscuring you. Of course, it isn't perfect, and there are always ways to still mess you up. In the end, the bloodline still relies on you, so don't get complacent, but do realize exactly how powerful a tool it is."

Jake sat a bit in contemplation. It was true he could see through those barriers during the World Congress, though he had tried to avoid doing so not to be a peeking tom. He also did remember how he could see "outside" the dungeons he was in, basically just seeing large black voids beyond the walls. Villy had also mentioned something similar before. He was pretty sure it was something about how only two things operated outside the system.

"I get it... so my gut feeling originating from my bloodline is better than nothing... this is related to when you talked about bloodlines operating outside the system, right? You mentioned two things do that... what is the second thing?" Jake asked.

“Something you’ll learn about in the future. It isn’t anything relevant to you yet, and you’ll know the moment you encounter it. Just know that the difference between these two things is that while a bloodline is something bound to your being and comes from your Origin... the other thing is claimed. Surrendered to you by the system. What they do have in common is that neither is inherently about strength or power.”

“Alright,” Jake answered. He was fine with figuring stuff out himself. Now, as for what Jake himself wanted to talk about...

“So... Villy... I need some advice. I told you about the news related to that metal caster William who fucked up my tutorial, and I am just wondering... what would you suggest?”

“Hm, depends on what you want to do. If you want to kill the guy, go ahead, but if you want to leave him be, I doubt he will cause you much trouble. As I told you before, Eversmile likely doesn’t give a fuck either way,” Villy answered. But... that wasn’t really what Jake wanted to know.

“No... I mean... should I kill him the next time we meet? Would that be the right thing to do? Morally, that is. The dude has done some seriously fucked up stuff, but... honestly... it isn’t that bad in the grand scheme of things, is it? Sure, he is bad, but compared to that Donald fellow or some of the other fucked up people I have heard about, he doesn’t seem as evil. Also, it feels a bit weird for me to act like some arbiter of justice,” Jake said, shaking his head.

“I am not the best to ask about moral advice from, as most would classify me as evil. And I wouldn’t disagree either. Honestly, if you look at how many humans he has killed, you have done far worse than him since returning to Earth. He hasn’t even killed in the double digits while you have. You have also slain even more intelligent beasts than him. In the eyes of humanity, he might be evil, but in the eyes of the multiverse, no one cares,” Villy answered.

“Not to get into a too in-depth moral discussion, but doesn’t it also have something to do with intent and cause?” Jake asked.

“Sure, one can say it does. So let me ask you, why did you go and hunt down all those shit-flinging monkeys right after you evolved to D-grade?”

“Well, to test myself, get some levels, explore the forest, etc. I wanted a bit more progress before the World Congress, and I was curious what was out there,” Jake answered.

“And the reason why William did as he did during the tutorial was that he thought that was the best thing to do for himself. He thought it would give him a higher final reward if he were the only survivor, so he tried to make that happen,” Villy said. Jake had heard it all before from both Villy and his two buddies during the World Congress, so it wasn’t anything new, and he knew where the Viper was going with it, but he disagreed.

“But the difference is that he took pleasure and enjoyment in doing what he did. He enjoyed killing people and causing all that mayhem,” Jake shot back.

“Because you hated every second of hunting down monkeys, didn’t you? You both enjoy it, albeit for different reasons. William had, and likely still has, a fragile ego and psyche; he was stunted developmentally in every way and acted like a stupid teenager with too much power, so he began believing himself the chosen one, not knowing he was actually facing a Chosen. To him, there was no greater feeling than having power over others when he himself had felt so powerless his entire life. Eversmile was continually cultivating this mindset till the day you punted him into the ground. My actions back then should make it clear I hold no love for the little fuck, but that had nothing to do with me believing he is the bad guy or something, just that I thought you would enjoy putting him down.”

“So, you’re doing the whole ‘you aren’t so different’-speech?” Jake shook his head. “Also, you make him sound like the victim here.”

“Oh no, not at all; the dude deserved getting his head smashed in. Also, I like you way better. I am just saying that trying to judge William by some grand moral doctrine is bullshit, as everyone is evil in the eyes of someone else. I personally don’t like him because he is weak-minded and so easily manipulated. I don’t like him because he messed with you, and I don’t like him because I like fucking with Eversmile. I don’t like him selfishly. So what I am saying is... if you want to kill him, do it because you want to, not because you feel obligated to. In the end, we’re all monsters leaving mountains of corpses in our wake, so trying to judge who has the least bad corpse-mountain is just moronic in my opinion.”

“I know you’re partly playing devil’s advocate and stuff, but you do have a point... I guess we all suck now. Mystie, Hawkie, and Sylphie are as much people to me as any human... you’re technically a snake. So I guess by monkey-law, I am now a wanted war criminal?” Jake asked, a bit jokingly.

In all honesty, Jake just felt a bit... off about his entire mindset regarding things like revenge and bearing grudges. When he looked deep inside himself, he didn’t have anyone he really hated. Even those who betrayed him in the past just all seemed so meaningless now. Unless they posed an active threat, he didn’t see any need to hunt them down or do anything.

Yet, he was still not sure if he wanted to kill William. A part of him did, just to “finish the job,” and another part of him thought: “is he even worth thinking about?”

That isn’t to say Jake wouldn’t kill people he judged deserved it. If people like Donald waltzed in, Jake would happily put him down again. But that was solely because Jake selfishly hated them, not because he was trying to be some hero. Meanwhile, William was just... sad.

I'll just leave the judgment entirely up to Casper. Jacob clearly doesn't care about it and even seems to think what he did was "fine" as it was just him following his path or whatever, but Casper has every right to finish the job. As for the question if Jake would help Casper track down and kill William? Of course he would; that's what friends are for.

"If the monkey empire had a court, you would surely be put on trial," Villy answered Jake's bad joke that he made primarily to lighten the mood, Villy instantly catching on with his godlike ability to read social cues.

"Anyway, thanks as always for the talk Villy. You can always ping me if there is something," Jake answered with a smile.

"Sure thing. Work hard, and win that Treasure Hunt. I don't care if it isn't winnable, win it anyway,

" Villy said with a chuckle as Jake felt the presence of the snake god fade away, and he was once more alone in the valley.

He took a deep breath and stood as he stretched a bit. He had 90 days or three months till the Treasure Hunt, and he would spend all that time preparing. During these three months, he had a number of goals.

Firstly, he wanted to make a supply of uncommon-rarity poison. He knew it wasn't easy and that it would take a while to craft it reliably, but he felt confident.

Secondly, he wanted also to make an uncommon-rarity beneficial consumable. He wasn't sure if it would be a potion, as quite frankly, it would be impossible for him to make mana, health, or stamina potions of uncommon-rarity any time soon.

Due to the way rarity worked for the resource potions, the only way to increase the rarity was to increase the potency. There was only depth and no width to expand upon. The fungicide was uncommon due to the sheer complexity of how it worked, not necessarily how effective it was. Which is to say, if Jake wanted to make an uncommon-rarity potion, it would have to do more than just restore a resource. An uncommon-rarity health potion would restore several times his health pool anyway, so it would be kind of useless.

One way to do this was to make a rejuvenation potion that restored all three resources, though even that would likely not be possible. He could also try his hand at making regeneration potions that boosted passive regeneration for a time, or something like that. However, another option was to just make something entirely else... like flasks.

Flasks were something Jake had kind of neglected, but that didn't mean they weren't great. Flasks could give temporary bonuses, such as stat bonuses, heightened concentration, or even some more exotic effects like making a good portion of your mana into a certain affinity for a time or something like that. They were temporary boosting items and functioned a lot like his Limit Break, and like Limit Break, they would lead to a period of weakness or other side effects when they expired.

As for Elixirs... he would put that off for now. Three months just wasn't enough time to do everything.

Third, Jake wanted to check out the dungeon, maybe even clear it. He did want to spend most of this period on his profession due to the system store, but that didn't mean he would entirely neglect his class. Jake also seriously doubted he could make himself sit still for that long. At the very least, he wanted his level 120 skill selection.

Fourth, and perhaps the most important of them all, he wanted to cuddle the cute bird currently making a beeline for him.

“REEE!” Sylphie screeched as she descended towards him excitedly. It hadn’t been that long, but she was always excited, and Jake had absolutely no complaints about that.

“Had a good hunt?” he asked, Sylphie happily landing on his shoulder as she rubbed her head against the side of his head. He raised his hand and scratched her, taking that as a yes.

Sylphie was really beginning to look a lot more like a real adult hawk, but she was still a bit small, and all her feathers weren’t out yet.

[Sylphian Eyas – lvl 41]

She was growing up fast, and her level was already beginning to get quite impressive. She was leveling a lot faster these days, and when Jake saw her parents also enter the valley, he saw she wasn’t the only one.

[Stormsong Hawk – lvl 109]

[Mystsong Hawk – lvl 116]

The two of them had grown many levels since he evolved too. He remembered them being 102 and 111 respectively when he evolved his class, and he was pretty sure he was at least partly responsible for their leveling frenzy. He had kind of owned them both in their little fight.



As for Sylphie, she seemed to be going through a growth spurt too. Maybe it was because she was now actively practicing more and even hunting, and based on Jake's assessment, she could easily beat beasts quite a few levels above herself. Her wind magic was both weird and powerful, easily shredding most anything it touched.

After rubbing the bird a bit more, he finally got to work as he summoned his cauldron. He had a lot of stuff to do, but his first task would be to get grooving – which meant to mass-produce potions and sell them for ridiculous prices.

Hence with great vigor, he began yet another alchemy grind.