

Hunter 229

Chapter 229: A Healthy Diet

Lavender, Evergreen Grass, a lot of mana and a bit of love, and you have a perfectly healthy potion. It seemed simple on paper, but there was a bit of work going into it. The mana-control aspect of the crafting process was something that could always be improved, and the more you trained, the better your potions would inadvertently get. While there was a cap caused by the ingredients and your own stats, it wasn't one Jake could ever feasibly reach.

He did improve a whole lot, though. His potions got better and better, and he honestly took quite a while to get proper pricing down but ended up just settling on 20.000 for each potion. While he certainly could charge more, he didn't feel the need to. He didn't craft them to make money, to begin with, but to level his profession and get as comfortable with his new D-grade mana control prowess as he could before he would begin crafting some more interesting things.

Like some uncommon-rarity poison.

Well, his pricing scheme was like that for the first week until he talked about it with Miranda.

"Why don't you have someone else sell it for you? Merchants or others with compatible professions apparently get great experience selling items through the store to other cities and have even better methods to price goods with their skills. That way, they can gain levels, and you can gain Credits without thinking about putting them up for sale yourself," she said, sounding quite reasonable.

"Do you have anyone in mind?" he had asked.

This was when he learned that apparently, being a City Lord's assistant also included selling stuff as a part of the job, at least the system agreed it did. Lillian came by later that day, and from the first week and moving forward, she handled all the commercial stuff for him. She just came by once a day or so and took all the potions he had already made while giving him any stuff he asked her to buy or look out for.

Jake still bought most of the items he wanted himself, as quite frankly, he only knew he wanted it when he saw it. Every item above common-rarity was more or less an impulse buy because he thought: "hey, I guess I can use this for something."

It had now been two weeks total since the World Congress ended, and Jake was spending most of his time every day experimenting on making an uncommon-rarity poison, but he did still spend a few hours pumping out potions.

The experience was great when he mass-produced things, and he had gained two levels during this period. While that doesn't seem like a lot, one had to remember that leveling only got harder and harder as time went on. Villy had told him that sometimes going years between levels at higher grades was just to be expected.

' DING!' Profession: [Heretic-Chosen Alchemist of the Malefic Viper] has reached level 103 - Stat points allocated, +10 free points

' DING!' Race: [Human (D)] has reached level 109 - Stat points allocated, +15 free points

' DING!' Profession: [Heretic-Chosen Alchemist of the Malefic Viper] has reached level 104 - Stat points allocated, +10 free points

As for what kind of poison he was trying to make an uncommon variant of? He had decided to start with the old trusty one: Necrotic Poison.

Necrotic Poison did have some drawbacks, but against any living being, it was just great. Against elementals, it was quite bad, but it even functioned okay-ish versus plant-based foes. It also happened to be the poison Jake had the most experience with.

Finally, he decided to go for this poison because of a certain herb. Or, more accurately, mushroom. An old friend of his, but in a new and improved form.

[Aged Bluebright Mushroom (Uncommon)] - A poisonous blue mushroom that emits blue light. The Aged Blue Mushroom has grown to a point where simply being touched by its light can bring you harm, and the juices found within are more toxic than ever.

Jake had discovered that the System Store was indeed a bit dynamic and adaptable. He had bought all the normal common-rarity Bluebright Mushrooms that he could and found that the store stocked a few more every time, with it even giving out a few uncommon-rarity ones every time now.

For the first many mushrooms, he did as any reasonable person would do and ate them. All competent doctors would agree that death-shrooms would be a part of a healthy diet.

They tasted a lot like the regular Bluebright Mushrooms but had a bit stronger flavor, and the juices within them sizzled in his mouth when he ate. He was perfectly aware that without *Palate of the Malefic Viper*, half his mouth would have rotted away, but with it, nothing really happened. Yay for a legendary skill granting poison resistance.

The first few mushrooms always gave the best insights, and it was far more valuable than just trying to experiment with them blindly. Jake did run into the issue of needing to get more, and he knew he would need these mushrooms in the long run, even after the System Store disappeared. Problem is... Jake had never actually done any proper gardening in his life, and he also really didn't feel like starting now. It would require a lot of time to make a proper mushroom garden. This was an issue he brought up with Lillian during one of her visits to get his potions, and she just shrugged and said.

"Why not just find someone to do it for you? Maybe train someone to do it properly. That should also get them a great profession or a great upgrade."

Jake had considered it, but that would also take time... there was also the issue that he couldn't just take anyone random. They had to know the basics and be strong enough not to be killed by the mushrooms. He considered it for a while and decided to just postpone it for now. He would also need someplace to properly grow the Bluebright Mushrooms.

One could think that it would be smart to do the mushroom-growing down in the cave by the dungeon due to the mana it leaked, but the issue was that the dungeon portal leaked life-affinity mana, while the mushrooms primarily had death-affinity or perhaps rot-affinity mana. Chances are the mushrooms would get worse if put down there, or possibly mutate if Jake got lucky and gave it enough time.

No, the cavern was far more suitable to grow other kinds of herbs and plants in. There were many different types of mushrooms too, and ones used in hemotoxins or many other types of toxins would still grow just fine down there.

Luckily he wasn't in that much of a rush as he could save all the herbs he wanted to plant later in his spatial storage.

Anywho, Jake spent a damn long time grinding alchemy, eating mushrooms, making bank, and having the occasional playtime with Sylphie or meeting with Miranda and/or Lillian. All in all, it was quite relaxing, and his goal was to get his first uncommon-rarity poison done within the first month. After that...

Dungeon time.

Miranda took a deep breath as the mana hummed to life. A green sheen overtook the entire area as the light danced and weaved in seemingly random patterns. But there was a method to the madness as she began chanting words in a language she truly didn't understand. It wasn't a question of her translation skill not working either; it was that the words she spoke truly didn't exist, or perhaps weren't real words, to begin with.

They did hold power, though.

A green top-down view appeared, and she saw her targets. It was an old enemy most in the city would recognize as an Oakwood Tiger – the kind of beast that had nearly killed her, Hank, Louise, and Mark before Jake saved them.

She saw nearly a hundred of them grouped together around a large peculiar tree - likely a natural treasure of sorts. Out of all the tigers, one of them was special. It had a small mark on it that it could neither detect with its mana sense nor see with its eyes. It was a green sigil depicting a circular mark, looking a lot like a green lagoon. It was the Verdant Mark.

Miranda didn't have a typical combat class but was a witch. While they could fight with regular magic, flinging fire and ice like any other caster, their specialty lay in mysticism and ritual magic. Such as the ritual she was currently doing.

Around her was a magic circle over 5 meters in diameter, her standing in the center. Candles burned around the perimeter, and several items were placed in key spots of the formation. Among these items were the heart of an Oakwood Tiger she had killed days prior, leaves from the forest, bark from many different kinds of trees, and several catalysts she had bought using her Credits from the Ore & Metal category, as well as some things from the Foodstuff and Herbs categories.

Using the Verdant Mark, she weaved her spell, and through it, she would bring them death.

Concentrating, she evoked even more mana, and the items placed around the circle began burning with green fire as the spell activated.

“Verdant Feast Of the Lagoon’s Insatiable Depths.”

The Oakwood Tiger rubbed its barkskin up against the bark of the magical tree. It was a natural treasure that served as a natural gathering point for all the Oakwood Tigers in the area. It was their domain, and no other beast had been able to go near for months without being torn apart.

Some beasts had tried, but most didn’t. Many types of natural treasures – this one included - functioned better for some beasts than others. This tree was highly beneficial to the tigers but wouldn’t help many other types of monsters or enlightened races.

None of them knew that today would be their doom and that this haven they had named their home would be their grave.

At first, it was subtle. A few of the tigers noticed a shift in the air as a green wind seemed to sweep through, with even less noticing the green grass below them growing an even deeper green.

By the time they knew anything was wrong, it was already too late.

Suddenly a green hand sprung up from the ground and grabbed hold of the leg of one of the tigers. It struggled, but another arm came up, followed by a dozen more as they began dragging it down. Down to the depths of the lagoon.

All of the grass beneath their feet melted together as it began resembling a still lake. Every single tiger was assaulted at once by the greedy hands that sought to bring them down, and no matter how they cut or tore at the hands, a new one would just come to replace whatever they broke.

The ground then stopped simply looking like water as it actually turned swampy, and the hands began succeeding in dragging the tigers down. The first to be grabbed was also the first to be fully submerged as it failed to keep itself afloat and was pulled under.

Once it was entirely under... the tiger saw them - human-like creatures with maws for mouths closing in on it. They were all half-corporeal but physical enough to bite and tear into the tiger as it struggled. As a monster growing up in a forest, it had never fought in water nor was built to do so. Needless to say, it was heavily outmatched and outnumbered.

Its other comrades also joined it below as they too suffered the same fate. They did all struggle, and they managed to "kill" many of the creatures trying to devour them, but there were just too many. They did notice that these creatures didn't respawn and no new ones appeared... so if they could somehow defeat them all...

The struggle ended up lasting for nearly half an hour before the depths below became calm, with only the occasional munching sound was heard.

Above, surrounding the natural treasure, the grass turned back to its old color as the aura from the ritual faded. Not a single trace of what had happened or a single body left over. All had been devoured at the Feast.

Miranda collapsed to the ground, sweat pouring down her face as she breathed heavily. A bit of blood even flowed out her mouth as she had taken a bit of damage towards the end from pushing herself too far. Yet, she had a light smile on her lips as she had succeeded in her most significant and powerful ritual yet.

The ritual circle around her had already died down, and all the catalysts burned away by the green fire. It had been an expensive one, and it had taken quite a bit of work to set it all up and make all the preparations, but it had been worth it.

You have slain [Oakwood Tiger – lvl 89] – Experience earned

You have slain [Oakwood Tiger – lvl 80] – Experience earned

...

You have slain [Oakwood Tiger – lvl 92] – Experience earned

' DING!' Class: [Neophyte Verdant Witch] has reached level 91 - Stat points allocated, +3 free points

' DING!' Class: [Neophyte Verdant Witch] has reached level 92 - Stat points allocated, +3 free points

It was some damn good experience to get two entire levels from a single ritual, and she chuckled through the pain as she began cleaning up the magic circle around her. She kept some of it as it could be re-used and was more or less an all-purpose ritual circle for Verdant magic. It had taken nearly all of her personal credits to get that one built...

Miranda also didn't get any race levels because, well, she was already capped at 99. Had been for a week now due to the immense amount of profession-experience she got from managing the city. She had even gained two levels from the World Congress.

She had decided to go for the Perfect Evolution due to the advice from the Sisters, and she didn't dare go against it. Jake also agreed she should do it, as, in his words: "everything counts."

Also, her class wasn't that bad to level, and one of the best parts was that she could do it from the comforts of her home. The ritual she had just performed was done from the cellar of the mayor's office/City Lord residence of Haven, more than 100 kilometers away from where she had just killed a massive group of Oakwood Tigers.

That was the beauty of being a witch and rituals... it was all a bit more metaphysical, and distance didn't always matter as much. She did have to mark a target in person, but once that was done, all she had to do was wait and then use the Verdant Mark as a casting point for the ritual.

There were some downsides, though. Such as the fact that Miranda honestly found her own spells scary, at least at first. Now, she had begun to be okay with them. Verdant Ritual Magic was its entirely own school of magic, recognized by the system itself. There even was a Verdant-affinity. One Miranda didn't at all understand and knew she wasn't supposed to understand any time soon.

It was an affinity much like the holy-affinity, which was bound to the Holy Mother or the blight-affinity by the Blightfather.

Or, of course, the malefic-affinity of the Malefic Viper.

Shaking her head, she finished cleaning up the basement, went to a small room with a staircase and a sink where she quickly cleaned herself up before she headed upstairs again, passing through a myriad of wards on the way. Sadly, those only gave experience if someone actually interacted with them.

Miranda walked into her office, where Phillip was already waiting. The man himself had also gained quite a few levels over the last few weeks as he was one of the people identified as able to reach D-grade by the time for the Treasure Hunt to begin.

"Any news?" she asked.

"Well..." Phillip said, scratching his head. "Arnold keeps insisting he wants to talk with the owner. Apparently, only he can do what the madman wants. Should we ask Jake if he is fine with meeting him?"

"I'll bring it up next meeting. Anything else?"

“There has been a single more application to the temple, and a few people unsatisfied with not being able to buy all they want from the system store, but besides that, everything is going fine. Oh yeah, one last thing. Neil expects to reach D-grade within the month, and I, for one, am looking forward to seeing what a D-grade space mage can do,” Phillip answered, looking a bit expectant.