

Hunter 239

Chapter 239: Justice From Above

"Yes, that's good. A bit more detail there to the le- yeah, just like that."

Miranda directed the young man before her while he controlled his flames with grace and beauty as he carved the large statue. It depicted three hooded humanoid figures standing on top of a Lagoon with small rune-like symbols inscribed upon it. The details were impeccable, and she had spent many weeks with the sculptor to get the details down to perfection, or at least as close to as mortally possible.

Felix had done wonderful work on all of the statues he had carved and had already made ones for several gods. He was the resident statue-maker of Haven and was so far the only one who had crafted them, always in collaboration with someone blessed by the god in question or someone knowledgeable about said god. As to why it was him every time? For fairness, so there wouldn't be any discussions about better sculptors being allowed to make certain statues.

Well, there was still a bit of light bias as Miranda had waited with the statue of the Sisters of the Verdant Lagoon till after the young man evolved his profession. She thought it was a shame, but the young man had been adamant about only focusing on sculpting and not his class, thus missing out on the Perfect Evolution. She could tell he wasn't confident in fighting at all and began sweating just at the thought of it. Some trauma, she reckoned.

It wasn't anything new. Trauma from certain events still happened now, even if it was a bit less than before the system. People had an easier time overcoming it due to their willpower stat, but one had to truly try and overcome it to make any progress. Doing nothing and expecting things to improve on their own never worked before the system and didn't work now either.

Felix had found a new path that he had thrown his all into. He had, in some ways, turned his trauma into pure focus elsewhere. It had worked well for him as he had evolved his profession at level 100 and

would reach D-grade at some point without a doubt. Not before the Treasure Hunt – not that he would join it anyway – but surely he would in the future.

His level of skill was incredible, and he improved by the day. So far, of the over a dozen statues for different gods he had made, nearly half of them belonged to the Holy Church, and one of them was of the Holy Mother herself.

That statue was standing right beside one of Umbra, and the one she had just gotten made would stand even more prominently than both of those. This had earned some criticism, but Miranda didn't care. Some believed a statue like that of the Holy Mother should be in a higher position, but they didn't have any power to change it.

As with the statue of her Patron Gods, the statues didn't actually depict the gods in person, but more often just their symbol or some persona of them. No mortal sculptor dared to truly try and depict a god. At least not one only at E or D-grade.

The reason why someone blessed had to be involved was so they could 'imbue' the statues. It gave them a faint remnant of the god's aura and allowed them to serve certain functions. One could pray to a god or make an offering and such using the statue.

Miranda went up to the newly made statue and placed her hand on it. She made a small prayer and got an almost automatic response as her blessing activated and sent a sliver of energy into the statue. The statue began giving off an aura reminding her of her Patrons, albeit far less intense and completely bearable.

"I will have the statue moved to the temple. Thanks as always Felix, great work again today."

She had it relocated into the temple, which was a huge wooden structure with large logs used as walls. It was the largest building in all of Haven and was quite frankly massive. It was the kind of building that couldn't possibly be built pre-system, mainly because trees hundreds of meters long didn't exist then.

The entire building was formed like a cross with three sections to it. The left and right sections were primarily for "lesser" gods, while the one straight ahead was for the "greater" gods. Deciding where things should go was actually quite easy, as the auras of the statues semi-clashed, and if a weaker god were in the same room, its aura would be suppressed. An exception to this was if the gods were affiliated. All gods of the Holy Church didn't at all interfere with each other.

Her statue of the Sisters of the Verdant Lagoon was placed in the highest hall straight ahead. Miranda knew that her Patrons weren't at the same level as those like Umbra or The Holy Mother, but she still placed it there, and its aura was more powerful than any others – because none of them had any aura infused yet.

How the hell would Haven have gotten someone blessed by Umbra or the Holy Mother to come? They were just made in case Caleb Thayne or the Augur decided to pay a visit. There were only four statues total with an aura infused, and three of those were from people related to the Holy Church. The last one was an unknown god of trade one of the traders knew of. The fifth one was just added today, with the Sisters.

There was still one statue they hadn't dared make. One that would require the involvement of the god's Chosen himself – the Malefic Viper. A spot at the highest point was already reserved, and Miranda would rather leave it empty than put anything else there. They only needed Jake now.

He had been gone for four days since he entered the dungeon, and Miranda expected it to last a while longer. She hoped he was making good progress as that would be vital for the Treasure Hunt.

It was just a normal day in the village. The Deepdwellers spent it covering themselves in mushroom spores, praying to mushrooms, infusing energy into mushrooms, tending to mushrooms, talking about mushrooms, and thinking about mushrooms.

Their evil acts had attracted a hero of justice. One who had come to put an end to their villainous ways. Justice would be swift and effective, but more importantly, highly explosive.

It came from above in the form of four arrows that spread out over a large area. They touched down and blew up entire parts of the village, leaving the Deepdwellers scrambling. Their leaders began mobilizing to face the threat, but they hadn't been prepared for the sudden attack.

Not just arrows fell, but orbs of pure crackling arcane mana also descended, creating far larger explosions than any of the arrows. These explosions didn't do even close to as much damage to the Deepdwellers, but they did plenty to destroy the village and the environment and cause widespread panic and chaos.

Fungalmancers began spreading their influence to bring the situation under control, but the first one to step forth had an arrow penetrate it through the top of its head and out its leg – the arrow having run it all the way through before hitting the ground in a glorious explosion caused by the Arcane Powershot.

It survived for a moment, but the next arrow split into three just before they hit the already lying down Fungalmancer, ending its life. All of its wounds were festering with necrotic energy, making sure even its own healing powers didn't have time to activate.

The swift death of the Fungalmancer caused hesitation, and hesitation created openings. Even more death rained from above before finally, a figure stepped forth that could bring some order to the mess.

It was a large bulky Deepdweller around four meters tall, with a large shield that looked like a mushroom cap.

[Deepdweller Shroomguard – lvl 142]

It was a Deepdweller much like the Warlord, except far more defensive. It jumped up and blocked an arrow aimed at a Fungalmancer and barely reacted to the explosion as it stood hidden behind its shield. It was damn tanky, that's for sure.

But it had one issue – it wasn't very fast. Another barrage of arrows fell at the other end of the village, killing or injuring more of the Shroomguard's brethren. It made a screeching noise in anger as it stopped trying to passively defend its village but instead sought to engage the attacker.

A green aura surrounded it as it soared upwards towards the culprit of the village's destruction: a small figure standing on air right at the dungeon's ceiling.

The hunter above was ready as he fired an Arcane Powershot down towards the Shroomguard. Jake then tried to freeze it with Gaze of the Apex Hunter but found that he couldn't - the damn Deepdweller's entire body was hidden behind the mushroom shield, not allowing him to make visual contact.

Just as he fired, the Shroomguard dodged to the side, making Jake miss his shot. Well, he said miss, but it still ended up hitting a Deepdweller Warrior below, heavily injuring it.

The Shroomguard noticed, and this made it even more furious than before. It flew straight for Jake, intending to crush him between the shield and the dungeon wall. Jake had no plans of being turned into a human smoothie and avoided the attack quite easily as the Shroomguard smashed into the wall.

BOOM!

A large crater was created from the impact, sending rock flying everywhere. Jake wondered how the hell a mushroom could be so durable but didn't have time to ponder on mushroom physics as the Shroomguard charged again. Once more, he dodged, two black wings on his back offering him far more mobility than the Shroomguard. The Shroomguard couldn't make tight turns but only move in straight lines or make abrupt direction changes, often at nearly ninety-degree angles.

Meanwhile, Jake dodged gracefully as he fired potshots at the Shroomguard while in the air.

This wasn't his first time facing a Shroomguard. Far from it. They were a lot like Warlords, and there was often only one in every village. Jake had been on the Deepdweller warpath for the last three days since he parted with the troll and had gone further and further into the dungeon, destroying any village on the way and claiming any Golden Mushroom he came upon.

He had gained a few more levels, killed a lot of stuff, and mostly figured out the Deepdwellers. They tended to be extremely protective of Fungalmancers, making those the best targets. Fungalmancers had a lot of support options, also just making them smart to take out first.

Regular Deepdwellers were just fodder for different spells and rituals or annoyances during combat. Having an army of them gang up on you could be annoying, but they didn't have any skills of note besides their mushroom poison, making them mostly non-threats.

Warriors were the primary combatants. They were a lot like the regular Deepdwellers but far more suited for combat. They had better weapons, higher stats and levels, and he deemed them medium-threats. Being ganged up on them and surrounded could heighten them to a high-level threat, especially if they were with one of three leader types he had encountered so far.

Warlords had extremely good synergy with warriors and even normal Deepdwellers. All of them wielded crystalline weapons that they could stab themselves with to mutate and hulk out by absorbing their comrades. Even without being pushed to do that, they were strong in their own right and buffed up all others around them and made them more organized.

Shroomguards like the one he was currently fighting were highly defensive enemies. Jake had only fought one once before, and it had taken a damn while to kill. Regular Deepdwellers only had high vitality but low toughness, which meant they were easy to hurt but healed the damage incredibly fast. Shroomguards were both tough and had high vitality, making them a pain to take down. Their shields were also just annoying, and worst of all, they were god damn mushroom caps.

The last one of the stronger Deepdwellers he knew of was one he had only seen and not fought. It had been called a Deepdweller Heartwarden and had been the first creature Jake had seen since evolving to D-grade that he couldn't identify. It had been in a group of a dozen Fungalmancers, two Warlords, and two Shroomguards, so Jake had made the wise choice of not engaging them.

They had appeared to be in a rush as they sprinted back from some cave where Jake saw some dead monster within. Jake had followed them till they split up, and the current Shroomguard was the second one from that group he was now killing. It had returned to its village only to be slaughtered along with its brethren.

Shroomguards were durable, but their offensive options were limited. They did have a few annoying attacks, but mostly just charged and tried to hit with their fist or shield. They were not as dangerous as

Warlords at all but were more just annoyances that would cause issues because they protected the Fungalmancers and gave them time to cast some of their rituals.

Sadly for it, Jake knew exactly how to finish them quickly. He went on the offensive and dodged the many tendrils it sprouted out of its shield to try and entrap him. Jake kept the battle in the air due to its limited mobility, and he knew it wouldn't disengage as its purpose was to defend the Fungalmancers below.

He danced around it, cutting it with his blades and poisoning it slowly. It fought back, and Jake knew it would take a while to finish it the normal way, which is why he aimed his blade at certain areas. He cut it in places that limited its mobility, making it harder for it to defend itself from behind.

Finally, when he was done cutting it up, he moved in close and gave it a good hug. It flew back and smashed him into the dungeon wall with its body and tried everything to get him off, but he held on as he channeled Touch of the Malefic Viper.

Four minutes later, a corpse fell to the village from above, turning into mush as it impacted the ground. The fact that it had survived for so long while having Touch inflict it continually along with his other poison was a testament to its toughness – even if he had only used common-rarity poison.

You have slain [Deepdweller Shroomguard – lvl 142] – Bonus experience earned for killing an enemy above your level

With the Shroomguard dead... the rest was just a cleanup. Fungalmancers sucked when they didn't have strong fighters with them, and while the warriors tried to put up a fight, they had the major flaw of being unable to fly. A few had tried to climb the walls during the killing of the Shroomguard but hadn't even made it up to him in time. Others had thrown stuff, but they couldn't hit him.

It didn't take long to finish the job, and as the last Fungalmancer fell, he got a level. He finished cleaning up the rest of the warriors and all the regular ones a few minutes later.

'DING!' Class: [Avaricious Arcane Hunter] has reached level 120 - Stat points allocated, +10 free points

Jake stood in the middle of what had once been a Deepdweller village. Craters and corpses surrounded him, and the entire area still burned with purple veins of arcane mana. Nothing in the whole village lived except for him and one more thing, hidden in an underground chamber.

He stepped over to a collapsed tent and blew off all the debris. With another blast of mana, he removed the upper layer of soil and revealed a mushroom of sorts that Jake knew served as a trapdoor. He assumed there was a way to open it but didn't bother finding out how to as he placed his hand on it and used Touch of the Malefic Viper. It withered in seconds, and he pulled it up to reveal a small underground cave with magically reinforced walls. Inside he found the Golden Mushroom, which he promptly claimed.

Jake didn't leave the chamber right away after that but sat down and began meditating as he reacted to one more system prompt – one he felt like he hadn't seen in oh-so-long.

Avaricious Arcane Hunter class skills available