

Hunter 24

Chapter 24: Palate of the Malefic Viper

Jake focused as he felt the mana flow through his body and into the reddish mixture in the bowl before him. He felt that this would be the one. After nearly twenty failed tries, this had to be the one.

For nearly a full day, he had been attempting to make health potions. He had been very positive initially, believing that it would be a cakewalk considering his experience with the mana potions. But oh boy, was he wrong.

Much of the process had become far more straightforward than his first attempt to make a potion. But the mana injection still stumped him. He had to do it in a way that would bring forth the natural healing properties in the red lavender and successfully combine it with the Evergreen Grass.

It was changing the mana's properties by filtering it through the bowl and into the herbs. Normal mana was relatively easy to control, but it became more problematic when Jake had to transform it. The herbs and moss served as catalysts for his mana, binding itself to them.

The ultimate purpose was to make the liquid in the batch resemble the energy that is health points. Also known as vital energy. The herbs themselves already contained a lot of this energy, but he had to bring it out and make it into an actual potion.

To be perfectly honest, Jake still wasn't entirely sure how the whole thing worked; he just went by what the books said and what felt right during the moment. He had long learned that a lot the crafting was 'feeling' what to do more than just following some step-by-step guide. As long as your underlying methodology was serviceable, chances are you wouldn't go all wrong. At least with inferior-rarity potions.

Luckily, this time, he didn't fail. With a final push, the liquid gave off an invigorating smell, and he barely managed to contain his excitement as the system messages appeared.

*You have successfully crafted [Health Potion (Inferior)] – A new kind of creation has been made. Bonus experience earned.

'DING!' Profession: [Alchemist of the Malefic Viper] has reached level 5 - Stat points allocated, +2 free points

'DING!' Race: [Human (G)] has reached level 7 - Stat points allocated, +1 free point

He did a mini-cheer as he bottled the health potions. He only ended up making three from the whole batch, but a success is a success. One of the primary reasons why the number of potions varied was the purified water evaporating during the brewing.

According to the books, in a perfect scenario, nearly none of the water would disappear. This would, in turn, lead to more of the energy contained in the herbs not being wasted. Jake was currently wasting a lot of precious energy, mainly because he quite honestly still sucked.

But then again, he had only been an alchemist for less than two days. He could not be expected to be a potion master instantly. On a side note, his free points were once again just thrown into wisdom.

Apropos of becoming a master of alchemy. Having reached level 5 in his profession, another message appeared along with the level-up. One he had been looking forward to.

Alchemist of the Malefic Viper profession skills available

Jake didn't hesitate to open the menu. The first thing he noticed was that there were far fewer skills to choose from compared to his archer class. But that wasn't really a bad thing. All of those skills had been 'filler' so-to-say. Useless passive weapon skills mainly, all of which he had no interest in at all, and every one of them was inferior-rarity. The alchemy profession didn't have a single one of those. Instead, it had given him only six options. He started going through them one by one.

[Pill Consolidation (Inferior)] – The path of alchemy is diverse and methods aplenty, potion brewing but one of the major paths, another being pill consolidation. Pills come in many forms, but most have the purpose of empowering the one who consumes it, both temporarily and permanently. Must have suitable materials and equipment in order to create pills. Adds a minor increase to the effectiveness of produced pills based on wisdom.

Reading through the entire thing, Jake had to scratch his chin a bit. Pill consolidation did seem useful; however, Jake had no interest in it at all right now. He already had a hard enough time making potions, and he still had poisons to concoct on his timetable. On top of that, he was still somewhat unclear as to the differences between pills and potions. The description did offer a bit of a hint, mentioning permanent benefits. But it also compared the two 'paths' as similar.

While the promise of permanent buffs was tempting, unless those permanent benefits included not dying in less than a month, he wasn't that interested. So, learning about the wonders of alchemical pills was something for later, if ever. For now, he moved on to check the next skills.

[Geology (Inferior)] – Grants knowledge of minerals and other similar natural treasures found throughout the multiverse. These natural treasures can be combined with other materials to amplify or bring forth strong magical effects. An alchemist must be able to distinguish the magical rock from the mundane gravel after all.

[Metallurgy (Inferior)] – Grants knowledge of metallic materials and substances found throughout the multiverse. Many types of rare and powerful metals are found throughout the multiverse and can be combined with other material to amplify or bring forth powerful magical effects, not limited only to alchemical products.

Jake decided to group these together as they were somewhat similar. They were like his Herbology and Toxicology skills, only for stones and metals. Or well, geology does include things that can't strictly be defined as stones, but quite frankly, he didn't really care. He had always found geologists a weird bunch, and there was no way he was going to spend his days looking for, or studying, rocks.

Thus, he moved on swiftly.

[Sense Herb (Common)] – Gives a passive ability to detect herbs and a rough feeling of their properties. An alchemist must be able to find the materials to craft his products after all. Adds a minor increase to the effectiveness of Sense Herb based on perception.

[Sense Poison (Uncommon)] – Gives a passive ability to detect poisonous substances and their toxicity level. An alchemist must be able to find the materials to craft his products after all. Adds a minor increase to the effectiveness of Sense Poison based on perception.

These two skills were, in his honest opinion, quite necessary. It would be splendid out in the forest or anywhere else really, as finding herbs and toxic materials he could craft from likely wasn't just found lying about. Or maybe they were, he just wouldn't know without a skill to help him find them. Or he would be forced to scour through the underbrush constantly. But while he considered them essential, finding materials was not exactly a challenge in his current situation.

He would need them for sure. But the last skill made it absolutely clear he wouldn't pick any of them.

[Palate of the Malefic Viper (Rare)] – The Malefic Viper has honed its venom by devouring myriad toxins found throughout the multiverse. In the same vein, the Alchemist of the Malefic Viper can consume toxins to learn their effects and properties. Grants the alchemist immunity or resistance to most low-level poisons. Through consumption, may your power grow, through gluttony may your Records expand.

Okayyy... was his first thought after reading it. Most of the descriptions were rather direct, but this one was quite a bit more flavorful, especially in the last part.

Based on the name, this one was clearly associated with his variant of alchemist. Thinking about the effects of the skill, the prospect of eating the blue mushrooms came as both pleasing and horrifying at the same time. He did hate the damn things, so the thought of eating the bastards was nice, but on the other hand... they were blue magic mushrooms.

Shaking his head, he picked the skill. Surprisingly, he felt nothing despite getting another rare-rank skill. He had to open his status screen and check to make sure that he, in fact, did have the skill.

Confirming that he did, he walked to the cave and looked at the mushrooms. He decided to go for the Flyeater one. He picked it due to it being inferior-rarity. He assumed that even if his skills didn't work like he believed, it wouldn't kill him.

[Flytrap Mushroom (Inferior)] – A carnivorous and poisonous mushroom that eats insects to accelerate its growth.

Picking the fungus up, he inspected it closely. To call it appetizing would be a straight-up lie. Not that Jake was the best judge, he hated mushrooms even before the tutorial. According to him, the mere thought of people willingly adding them to salads was one of life's greatest mysteries.

He had never used them for... 'recreational' purposes either, even though he did know some who did during his university days. And yes, he had been offered plenty, despite him barely ever participating in social gatherings. One guy even knocked on his door at 4 am, randomly offering him a bag. Though he was pretty sure the guy was looking for Andrew, his roommate at the time.

Oh well, no better time to do mushrooms than when stuck in a dungeon with less than a month to live, Jake thought as he threw his first Flyeater Mushroom into his mouth.

The first thing that hit him was the taste. Or more accurately, lack of taste. It was a bit chewy, but it didn't have much flavor to it, honestly. He had half-expected it to taste like chicken. The juices coming out of the shroom made sizzling sounds as it came into contact with his spit. It did not hurt or was uncomfortable in any way; it was more akin to drinking carbonated drinks.

However, Jake did not have time to think much of it as a weird feeling of realization struck him. Akin to if one had been struggling with a math problem for hours, and then suddenly, something clicked, and the solution came to you.

He now knew a lot, not about the mushroom per se, but the poison it possessed. It felt familiar to him now. But he also knew that the knowledge was not complete. A single mushroom was not enough to truly familiarize himself with its properties, far from it. And as such, his feasting began.

The cave was big. Very big. Same with the garden. Jake knew there was no way for him to use all of the ingredients found here in 30 days, even if he was several times faster at doing alchemy.

But now he was starting to get a bit worried as he chomped down Flyeater after Flyeater. He had to be honest with himself; the taste was kind of growing on him. Or maybe it was just the feeling of quite literally eating himself to knowledge and understanding that he found so intoxicating.

After eating way too many, he finally stopped. First of all, because his stomach was starting to hurt from being overstuffed. Secondly, the diminishing return had kicked in hard. The first couple of mushrooms gave the most, but the later ones barely helped.

By now, he felt amazingly familiar with the little buggers. While he had no intention to confirm it currently, he felt like this familiarity would be incredibly helpful when concocting poisons later.

Feeling stuffed, he decided to go back to the laboratory. He felt a bit tired earlier from trying to make health potions, but now he felt strangely invigorated. Looking at this stamina, he noticed that it had actually gone up over his feeding frenzy. It was only a measly two points, but it had gone up. More surprising, however, was his mana. It had been topped up, him having restored more than 100 points.

The Palate of the Malefic Viper skill said nothing about restoring resources from eating mushrooms. And with his newfound intimate understanding of the shrooms, he knew nothing in the shrooms had the effect of restoring anything.

But thinking about it further, it did kind of make sense. While not containing a lot of it, the mushrooms most certainly did hold some mana. And him consuming them with the skill must mean that he directly devoured the mana within.

Feeling renewed, he began attempting to make his second successful health potion. He wanted to try making poisons soon, considering it was kind of the focus of his profession and all. But he decided

against doing so before he got a chance to eat some moss... something he was most certainly not looking forward to.

He did try to eat some lavender too. They tasted like shit and didn't give him any knowledge. So the skill did indeed only work on toxins.

After cleaning the mixing bowl, he poured water into it, before adding some Evergreen Grass. The flowers only came in later after the grass was correctly saturated with mana. That part of the process went relatively easy, far more so than before, and he quickly got to the point where he put in the red lavender.

This was the part that often stumped him. You had to inject mana into the herbs rather quickly, or it would ruin the mixture. But too fast, or done wrong, else the batch would also go bad. But once again, the ease of the process surprised him.

A couple of minutes later, he stood with another successful batch, even resulting in four bottles. Without hesitation, he got started on another round and was once more met with success, only resulting in three potions this time. But it did confirm it wasn't a fluke.

Two or so hours later, and a good number of potions, he was once more greeted with another level.

'DING!' Profession: [Alchemist of the Malefic Viper] has reached level 6 - Stat points allocated, +2 free points

As always, he put the free points into wisdom. At this point, his wisdom had become his second-highest stat, only behind vitality.

He brought up his stat page, feeling rather pleased. He thought about how nice it would be to see his skills on the menu, which it surprisingly just... did.

Status

Name: Jake Thayne

Race: [Human (G) – lvl 7]

Class: [Archer – lvl 9]

Profession: [Alchemist of the Malefic Viper – lvl 6]

Health Points (HP): 510/510

Mana Points (MP): 324/480

Stamina: 247/270

Stats

Strength: 30

Agility: 33

Endurance: 27

Vitality: 51

Toughness: 23

Wisdom: 48

Intelligence: 18

Perception: 46

Willpower: 32

Free points: 0

Titles: [Forerunner of the New World], [Bloodline Patriarch]

Class Skills: [Basic One-Handed Weapon (Inferior)], [Basic Stealth (Inferior)], [Advanced Archery (Common)], [Archer's Eye (Common)]

Profession Skills: [Herbology (Common)], [Brew Potion (Common)], [Concoct Poison (Common)], [Toxicology (Uncommon)], [Malefic Viper's Poison (Rare)], [Palate of the Malefic Viper (Rare)]

Race Skills: [Identify (Common)], [Endless Tongues of the Myriad Races (Unique)]

Bloodline: [Bloodline of the Primal Hunter (Bloodline Ability - Unique)]

He had gotten a lot more skills since he entered the tutorial, and it was oddly satisfying to see his growth laid out before him like that. He was still doubtful if just dumping everything into wisdom was the correct decision. Perhaps it was in this dungeon, but assuming he survived the challenge, he would barely have grown in his strength, agility, and perception.

But then again, it was still early days. Poisons were bound to increase Jake's offensive prowess significantly.

As he was pondering on the future, he felt a rumbling in his stomach. A rumbling that quickly got worse. This was the moment where Jake learned why this dungeon had a toilet.

Turns out that eating a bit of over a hundred mushrooms and having that be your only diet for two days isn't the healthiest of diets. What followed was Jake spending the better part of an hour stuck on the toilet, contemplating his prior mushroom-eating madness. He hoped the moss would be gentler on his bowels.

After the less than pleasant experience, he also learned why the bathroom came with a shower. Because he sure as hell needed one.

Before the tutorial, he was the kind of person that took a shower pretty much every day. If he went to the gym or had done a lot of archery, it often resulted in two that day. During holidays he could get a bit lazy about it, but he doubted he had ever been dirtier than these past few days.

The positive part of his toilet-tour, however, was his stomach feeling way less stuffed. He was not quite ready to eat the moss, but he was getting there. The mental exhaustion was also starting to get to him. His need for sleep had been significantly reduced, but he still had to rest occasionally.

With that in mind, he grabbed the book *Poisons: The Elementary*, and went to bed. When he woke up again, he would make some more potions, eat some moss, and finally get started on concocting poisons.