

Hunter 253

Chapter 253: Leatherworkers

Jake didn't find it in a jiffy. In fact, he didn't find it at all. In his defense, though, he wasn't really looking that hard. He was walking the city and checking different things out instead. The number of shops was insane, but even more so, he noticed the average level of the people around being quite a bit higher than he would have expected.

He saw many above 50 and even a good number above 60 managing the shops. Even more impressive were some of the people looking to be more combat-orientated, where he noticed a few around level 80. A strong party like them could likely escape a weak D-grade alive, making them quite respectable. Granted, they would still get fucked up by a single decent D-grade, but at least they were working hard.

Failing to hold back his curiosity, Jake checked out a few more shops. Some sold equipment, and some sold small interesting baubles. Other places had more regular clothes or food, making it seem more like a normal city. The clash of a large shopping window with a modern-looking dress behind it and the entire magical forest theme was also immensely entertaining.

Having already decided to improve his gear, Jake also decided to check out some stores selling equipment. Unfortunately, most had been a big disappointment. While he did find some leatherworkers with decent stuff, he hadn't come across anything he particularly wanted. Most were inferior-rarity still with a few common-rarity items here and there. While some of it had higher level requirements than Jake's current items, the rarities were just too low in comparison.

Just as he thought his quest was in vain, he noticed another leatherworker. This shop was quite a bit larger than any prior, but more importantly, was the level of the shopkeeper.

[Human – lvl 83]

It was a woman who was currently cleaning some leather with a rough piece of cloth. The entire shop didn't have a single customer and didn't exactly look inviting either, and the woman didn't even turn around to regard Jake when he entered.

Jake didn't go up to her either. His target was something else. On a wooden holder was a vest of some kind, giving off an oddly familiar aura. Using Identify, he quickly saw why.

[Vest of the Tri-Lighttail Dervish (Common)] – A vest made from the hide of Tri-Lighttail Dervishes, a monster known for its agility and weight-magic. It has been created through the collaboration of two talented leatherworkers. This vest contains some scarce remnant Records of the Dervishes and has even been touched ever-so-faintly by the concept of time. Enchantments: +100 Agility, +25 Strength, +25 Endurance

Requirements: lvl 75+ in any humanoid race.

He was honestly surprised. Who else had managed to hunt down Dervishes? Those monkeys were often around level 130. Shit, he was also surprised they had even found any, as Jake was pretty sure he did a number on the local Lighttail population.

Just as he was considering who possibly have hunted the monkeys down, the shopkeeper came over.

"A good piece came in yesterday. It ain't cheap, though. It comes from a D-grade beast. But you look like you ain't strapped, so don't try to pull a fast one; I know what it's worth," she said, speaking a rough tone.

"I know. Where did the creators come across these hides? Who hunted them down?" Jake asked curiously. Having evolved to D-grade, Neil could maybe do it with support... could the birds handle one? They should be able to if they worked together. Hm...

"Hah, a bunch of scavengers brought the hides, and I made the vest with my partner. The scavengers caught a lucky break as they explored the forest for valuables, primarily herbs and such, at the request of the City Lord. Heard they came across an area where some beasts had fought. Shit was torn up, according to what they said, and they found a shitload of corpses of D-grade Tri-Lighttail Monkeys of different variants. The beast that killed them took all the cores, though. Honestly, they were just lucky bastards, coming across the leftovers of some beasts battling. They made a shitload. Some of those beast corpses were mid-tier D-grades, for god's sake," she said, a bit of annoyance in her voice.

Jake just stood there, feeling his ears heating up as she went on. He didn't dare say anything as her rant continued, getting progressively more irritated.

"For fuck sake, who gets that lucky? Luck isn't even a stat, yet they just stumble into it so close to the city. Also, what kind of beasts just fucks up an entire horde of monkeys and then leaves their corpses behind like that? Well, I guess for anyone other than leatherworkers or cooks or whatever, the corpses aren't worth much, and only the cores matter, but the beast could at least have made them all into rotten mushes. It did it with some of them, completely ruining the hide and meat. Some fucking solidarity would have been appreciated. Guess you can't expect better from some stupid beast that can't even clean up after itself," she ranted before finally stopping and looking at Jake. "Anyway, wanna buy it? Make an offer."

His face below the mask had quite the grimace, but luckily she couldn't see it due to the mask. At least she didn't show any signs of knowing. As for if he wanted the vest? No, not really. It was an upgrade but a minor one. The embarrassment of wearing it and the constant reminder of this day simply wasn't worth 25 extra total stats.

"Hah, yeah. Lucky. Sorry, this wasn't exactly what I was looking for, but it's good craftsmanship," Jake said, praising the product. No matter how bad it made him feel, he couldn't deny its quality.

He didn't really regret not taking the corpses, though. He didn't want to fill up his spatial storage with stuff he didn't truly need, and he did take all the far more important cores. It also just felt kind of weird to him to know he carried around a bunch of corpses around his neck at all times.

Now, this only counted for the regular enemies... if he met a strong foe, he would sure as hell take the corpses now, like with the Altmar Census Golem. He didn't really get any other valuable corpses in that entire dungeon, as his poison did have the habit of destroying corpses. His arcane-affinity too. This is likely why a small vest was made from the hide of several Dervishes.

"It's good, right?" she smiled at his praise of her handiwork. "Too bad we didn't have the compatible cores. Can't really infuse them properly with Records without, so we had to make do with just going quantity over quality. Ah, I guess that would be a bit too much to ask. I reckon the beast that tore through their territory did it for those cores, to begin with."

"Ye... yeah. I guess that's why the 'beast' went through... you wouldn't happen to have any gloves, would you? Good quality ones. Price isn't the issue," Jake said. He nearly felt like he had to buy something with how much time he had spent in the store... it had nothing to do with how awkward he felt about the origin of the vest.

"Those over there," she said, pointing towards a table. Jake had already checked out that table with his sphere and seen that none of the gloves were better than his current ones.

Reading Jake's body language, she added on. "But we could custom-make something by commission. My partner is just out with a delivery of some pants. Do you have any idea how often people ruin their pants these days? People are good at defending their chest but suck at defending from attacks coming from below, so their pants and legs get ruined damn fast. And before you ask, no, we're still working on making that self-repair enchantment. That shit ain't easy."

Jake just nodded along once more, allowing her to rant. She continued on about how people expected the Self-Repair enchantment just because tutorial equipment had it and how it was clearly an easy low-level enchantment due to that. She cursed the system, the customers, the leather and hides, and even ended up throwing in a few off-hand comments towards those scavengers again. The number of times she mentioned the “moronic beast that killed the monkeys” also wasn’t just one or two.

He wanted to leave a few times but thought it would be rude as he technically had been the one prompting her to speak. Luckily he was saved. He spotted someone he recognized approaching in his sphere.

“Hey Olivia, stop bothering the customers wit —”

She stopped up as she looked into the room and saw who the customer was. Jake also looked back at her as he waved.

“Hey Eleanor, long time no see,” he said. “Making good progress, I see.”

It was the archer of Neil’s party that was the partner of this Olivia woman. Yes, Jake also just realized now he hadn’t ever gotten the shopkeeper’s name. As for Eleanor, she truly had made good progress.

[Human – lvl 96]

Great even. Eleanor was getting darn close to D-grade and with plenty of time to the Treasure Hunt to spare. She was going for the Perfect Evolution, too, as far as he knew, meaning she likely would be D-grade already if she didn't.

"Lord Thayne, I didn't expect you here," she said, clearly taken aback.

Jake didn't fare that much better. Had she just called him Lord Thayne? What? When had he shared his name, actually? Also, what the hell was up with it being so overly formal? Well, it was better than calling him the Owner or whatever, at least.

"Wait, this super-edgy dude is that Thayne guy?" Olivia cut in, looking at Jake skeptically.

"Rude..." Jake mumbled before looking back at Eleanor. "And just call me Jake, no reason to be so formal. I didn't know you made a leatherworking shop?"

"It isn't mine, it's Olivia's. We just work together on most projects. We have different profession-variants, and mine is better at handling some animal parts while hers is better at others," Eleanor explained before changing the subject. "Anyway, how come you're here? I heard from Neil you were in the dungeon."

"I was; I'm done with it. A truly nasty place that one. I wouldn't go with your party right after you all reach D-grade. You will need some solid anti-healing measures when you go, too," he quickly explained.

"What type of monsters?" she asked, and Jake quickly caught on.

“Hairless blind humanoids that look kinda creepy and have mushrooms growing within them. Nothing to skin there... unless you’re one sick bastard,” Jake told her.

“I see. So did you come for anything in particular?”

“Mainly just checking out the city. I am looking for some new gear, but I may just have Miranda look for something. Maybe have Lillian do it. Not sure. Anyway, it was nice seeing you, and I was actually on my way out. I may come by with a commission sometime in the future! Take care, see ya,” Jake said as he hurried out. The reason was simple.

He had seen Olivia begin to look very impatient, as if she was about to go on another rant. About what? He didn’t want to find out.

His only regret was that he forgot to ask about how they knew his last name. If they knew that, he assumed they knew his first name too. Another thing to ask Miranda about. All of that could wait, though, as he kept exploring the city. There was especially one place he wanted to check out – the largest structure in town.

“Seriously, that was that Lord Thayne guy? For real? I didn’t know you knew him? When did you meet?” Olivia asked Eleanor.

The archer just sighed and said. “Yeah, that’s him. I told you our party was one of the first groups to make it here. He saved Neil and the rest of us when we were in a pickle. Neil still thinks we owe him, and I kind of do too.”

“Damn, friends in high places. He doesn’t look like much, though, does he? He looks straight out of a videogame or something. That mask and cloak don’t make him any less conspicuous in the least. Heck, I think I know like half the people in the city, anyone trying to look anonymous and mysterious like that stands out like dog shit on a newly mowed lawn,” Olivia ranted again.

“Not sure we’re friends. I just know who he is. I’ve barely spoken to him more than a handful of times, and I don’t think we’ve interacted since that time with the bovines and the Fort. Also... you may judge his appearance as much as you like, but don’t do it in front of him,” Eleanor warned her friend.

“Why? Is the big bad Lord Thayne gonna eat me up? I’m sure I won’t have anything to worry about with you around,” Olivia chuckled.

“I am not joking, Olivia. The first time we met, he killed people without any hesitation and near-effortlessly killed two people who my party and I didn’t stand a chance against. The next time at the Fort, he slaughtered some D-grade that herded an army of thousands of cows. Today he just returned from a dungeon filled with D-grades. If he wanted to, he could kill every single person in his city,” Eleanor said rather gravely.

She didn’t have even the faintest hint of jest in her voice.

“That’s some heavy shit... but Neil also reached D-grade, didn’t he? Can’t he-“

“I doubt Neil can even handle those two birds of his alone, much less Lord Thayne himself. He isn’t normal. Just be happy he is on our side, and don’t piss him off. He seems to place a lot of trust in Miranda, so let’s hope things stay stable in the future,” Eleanor sighed once again.

“Enough about all that stuff. That Thayne guy is some monster, but he’s on our side, so who cares,” Olivia said a bit dismissively. Clearly, the topic was making her a bit uncomfortable. “Did that old guy like the pants?”

“Oh yeah, he liked them. I also stopped by and talked to Silas on the way. He seems to be settling into that school quite nicely and enjoys his job. He makes a good teacher, and he seems to like it. It also levels his profession damn fast,” Eleanor smiled, more than happy to change the subject.

“How about Levi and Christen?” Olivia asked. “Those two stopped slacking?”

“Both working in the smithy like there’s no tomorrow. That system store sure did them good. Too bad the leather wasn’t voted for. I reckon we will all reach D-grade within the next three weeks to a month max. Then we should still have a couple of weeks until the Treasure Hunt to get a few levels in. All of us with Perfect Evolutions, too,” Eleanor said proudly.

“Aw, you’re already perfect as you are,” Olivia said teasingly. “Anything else interesting happened?”

“Oh damn, I nearly forgot. It’s actually related to Lord Thayne. I mentioned those Tri-Lighttail Monkeys to Silas, and he said that Neil was pretty damn sure Lord Thayne is the one who hunted them all down. Apparently, he came straight from hunting them when he entered the World Congress. Quite the coincidence that he came by today and saw it, don’t you think?” Eleanor said.

“Yeah, that’s pret- oh... oh shit,” Olivia muttered.

“What?”

“I may or may not have spent five to ten minutes shit-talking whoever hunted down those monkeys...”

“Oh...” Eleanor said, lost for words.

She hoped Lord Thayne kept having a good day.

Jake had done all he could to repress the memory of the leatherworking shop and what transpired within. He now instead stood before a quite frankly massive structure. He could see it was cross-shaped and was the biggest building in Haven by a fair margin. The logs used to construct the walls had to be hundreds of meters long, and it was over a dozen meters tall.

People were buzzing about at the entrance, exiting and entering all the time. They spoke in loud voices, and he noticed that the majority were wearing robes.

The building had some serious enchantments placed all over the walls, and it looked damn hard to break into. Jake had a slight urge to try and fire an explosive arcane arrow at the wall to test its durability. He, of course, didn't. He just wanted to a little bit.

What he stood before was naturally the Temple of Haven – the next stop on his journey to explore his own damn city.