

Hunter 255

Chapter 255: Temple & Blessings

"Message received, over," Jake responded mentally to Miranda. "Another merchant god? How many damn merchant gods are there?" Jake also asked Chris as they stood before an overly gaudy statue made of what looked like gold.

"Finally, I was beginning to think the skill didn't work... Anyway, hey Jake, I evolved to D-grade and upgraded my profession, which got me a skill to contact you through some formation for communication. I was lucky I had the ingredients required on hand. It isn't cheap, but I wanted to test out if it worked," Miranda explained through the odd telepathic connection. A bit of karmic magic in there, too, Jake reckoned.

"For some reason, there seems to be a buttload of gods who do trade and money stuff. I heard from some people it has something to do with faith, but I'm not sure. All I know is that, yeah, there are so many. Maybe it's because they're more into investing in young talents? That's business-like, right?" Chris answered Jake.

Holding two conversations at once was a bit weird. Especially as one was in Jake's head and the other with the young man beside him. It was some next-level multitasking, and Jake couldn't help but try. He found it challenging to do... which was reason enough for him to do it.

"You forgot the 'over', over," Jake responded, teasing Miranda. "That makes sense, I guess. Our world revolved a lot around economics before; it makes sense gods who focus on it found many worth investing in here," he also answered Chris.

He kept up this dual-conversation, neither of the two people he spoke to wiser to that fact. It did help that Miranda only spoke a few more times, though. She quickly gave a rundown on things and said she

would be by the lodge the next day, which left Jake plenty of time to continue wandering about and even throw in a visit to the Fort.

“The range of this skill should be quite extensive. It’s rare-rarity and only works on you, so it has to be decent. I can’t even contact Lillian with it, though she already has a skill to do that, so it isn’t a problem. Also, I’ll be sure to bring some food from this new place when I visit. The System Store having foodstuff has added to the palate of the restaurants even more than before the dungeon. Anyway, see you then... over,” Miranda had finished, making Jake able to focus all his attention on Chris. Jake felt Miranda would have to cut off soon anyway as her voice was beginning to feel a bit faint, making him guess there was a limit to the skill on communication time.

“Wanna go to the east wing now? There are a few infused statues there. They have this insane aura, and people can even pray to them and get temporary bonuses... I even heard someone got a profession-upgrade due to one of the statues as well as a blessing,” Chris explained, as they were about done in the west wing.

The west wing had only non-infused statues. Quite a lot of them, even. Jake also noticed they all had some similar aspects, so he couldn’t help but ask: “Are all these made by the same sculptor?”

“Yes! They’re all made by Felix, a really great dude if a bit weird. He spends all his time making statues and has a backlog of ones to create even now, as far as I know. He even evolved his profession at level 100 and made the statue in the innermost chamber after that. The one with the Ladies of the Verdant Lagoon,” Chris said, delivering some nice exposition.

The two of them walked through the crowd and entered the east wing. While the west wing did have some people in it, it wasn’t that many. The east wing, on the other hand, was absolutely packed. Jake easily saw the reason why.

At the end of the room were eight statues giving off powerful auras. Divine auras. Jake saw Chris beside him unconsciously lower his head a bit as he entered the room. Most of the people in there were praying and stuff like that, but there was one group that stood out.

Over to the side of the chamber was an area with what looked like yoga mats. Around 20 people sat on their own respective mat with their eyes closed and sweaty brows. Most of their heads were held high, but they looked to be struggling.

Finally, one of them breathed out heavily, opened his eyes, and lowered his head. After a bit of labored breathing, he walked out of the room with unsteady steps. People made way and gave him a fast lane to get out, making Jake think it was a usual occurrence. On closer inspection... Jake was pretty sure two of the nineteen left on the mats weren't conscious.

"What's up with that?" Jake asked, nodding towards them.

Chris looked up at Jake, a bit confused, before answering: "They're training their resistance to auras. Mental states or something. They try to resist the aura to build up a tolerance when it's easier just to let it affect you."

"I see," Jake nodded. Well, he understood what they were doing even if he couldn't relate. The auras weren't an issue for him at all. Heck, Villy couldn't bring him down with his aura, so how could a bunch of statues from weaker gods.

The auras were weirdly clashing in the room. Each statue was ten or so meters apart, and each had an area of influence around them roughly based on their level of power as far as Jake could tell. Some statues had auras extending further than others. It could also have something to do with the one who infused it? The level of their blessing? A combination, perhaps? Luckily he didn't need to figure that one

out himself as Villy came poking. Jake felt like he was beginning to have too many people in his head these days...

"The statues possess an aura both dependent on the god and the one who infused it. The higher the rarity of the blessing, the more 'juice' is packed into the statue, while the god is the quality of the juice. By the way, wanna do something funny? I promise it will be interesting?" Villy said in a teasing tone.

"Will it include the death of one or more people?" Jake asked back to clarify. Half-jokingly.

"Nah, no one will get hurt permanently. But it will be funny and interesting. Promise," Villy insisted.

"No destruction of property either," Jake stipulated. He already had an idea of what Villy was planning. Jake wasn't sure it was a good idea; in fact, he was quite sure it was a bad idea, but he was curious. He wanted to see what would happen... which is why he also didn't resist when Villy's presence amplified.

"Deal."

It was a bad decision... but... a bit funny.

An aura descended on the entire east wing. Instantly, the eight statues were suppressed, and every single person – except Jake – fell to their knees and couldn't raise their heads. Jake, playing along, also crouched down.

It only lasted for around five seconds until the aura disappeared as if it had never been there. It took another ten seconds before the statues began exuding an aura once more and nearly half a minute before people began standing up, looking around confused and afraid. Some didn't get up at all but lay unconscious on the ground.

The 17 people who were still awake before on the yoga mats were all knocked out cold. Silly people tried to resist.

Panic seemed to overtake the entire wing as people began yelling and looking around. A few gazes landed on Jake, but with how many wore robes or cloaks in there and him staying crouched, he didn't stand out that much.

"What exactly was the purpose of that?" Jake asked the clearly bored Primordial.

"Shameless flexing. Those gods all felt it on their end. Just wanted to take a good wee all over my – well, our – territory to make them clear that while they got statues here, they ain't shit. Oh, and another small thing that you will find out about in a bit," Villy said. That last sentence sounded way too amused for Jake to feel comfortable.

"Wha... what was that?" Chris muttered, having managed to stay conscious and relatively put together. He did look a bit wobbly on his feet, but otherwise, he took it well. Jake was a bit proud of that; Villy's aura was quite something, after all.

Not that Villy used his full aura. Jake remembered feeling it back then in Villy's realm and back during the evolution of his profession. What had just been done felt like... nothing.

“How Villy, toss me a percentage. How much ‘juice,’ as you say, did you put into that one?” Jake asked.

“We aren’t in the percentage points yet. I can’t really unleash it all even if I wanted to. Well, I could still pour in enough for me to kill anyone, not at least in D-grade within a few hundred meters of you, but it really isn’t worth it. It’s tiring as fuck to do, and anyone it has any effect on you can fuck up yourself. So no, not applicable in combat at all,” Villy explained. Jake himself decided to stay in the real world.

“Must be something to do with those statues. Can you tell me about them?” Jake said, changing the subject.

“Oh... probably was just them... I don’t really get how these things work. Anyway, the statues depict-“

To summarise: the statues depicted a bunch of weaker gods or subordinate gods from larger organizations. Nothing interesting or fancy going on at all. Of course, to the populace of Haven, any god was an absolutely insurmountable existence. It kind of made sense. To a regular human. It didn’t matter if a black hole was small or large; it could rip you apart atom by atom no matter what. If atoms were still a thing after the system. Probably not. Did black holes still exist? Probably. Jake couldn’t wait to go see one. Event horizons looked dope in pictures, and seeing one in person would be awesome.

After Chris was done, he hesitantly asked. “Would you like to go pray at one? It offers a temporary buff to your status menu... it’s quite good...”

“You go. I already got a blessing,” Jake answered nonchalantly.

“Oh... you do? Well, that makes sense; I heard the best got them offered... I’ll be right back, okay?” he asked Jake, waving him off to go get his blessing. Chris was clearly anxious Jake would leave while he was gone. An unfounded fear for sure.

“Okay, one last trick. Have the kid come back,” Villy butted in unprompted. “Those stupid gods aren’t the only ones who can play... well, gods.”

“Actually, come back here,” Jake said just as Chris had taken a single step.

“Yes?” he asked and was already back before Jake again before Jake even had a chance to answer.

“Place your hand on the guy’s shoulder or something.”

Jake did so and placed his hand on the confused young man’s shoulder.

“Now, just want for him to get a temporary blessing and pour in a bit of mana.”

Following the instructions, Jake poured in a bit of mana, and he felt Villy also pour in something. Chris looked confused until he felt the energy enter him. He gaped for a while before making a huge grin.

“For real!?” he asked, excited.

“Yeah, go for it,” Jake said, smiling beneath his mask. Villy thought he was pulling a fast one but didn’t know that Jake already knew what he was doing. He had seen it mentioned in Jacob’s small booklet a long time ago.

Anyone with a certain level of blessing can, with the permission of their Patron, give out blessings themselves. In fact, the whole “meeting through evolutions” part of giving blessings was a rarity. Well, it had been a necessity for the new universe.

Jake understood why this was a thing. Gods shouldn’t waste time giving out every minor baptism or insignificant blessing themselves by meeting every prospect. So they had delegated that shit. And now Villy was having Jake act as a religious figurehead, blessing Chris.

As for why Jake let him? Because why not? Chris seemed like a nice guy, but blessings didn’t grow on trees. It would help the guy out, and also... it was kind of interesting, wasn’t it?

“Is this the first person on Earth besides me you blessed?” Jake asked the Viper.

“Ah, this is way less fun when you know. As for if you are the first... not telling,” Villy said, trying to tease Jake, but...

“So that’s a no. Good to know. Be nice to Chris, by the way. I don’t think he could handle you messing with him.”

“Talking directly to those you blessed isn’t just something you can normally do this easily. I can because you’re my Chosen. Also because it tends to fuck up the blessed person if you talk too often. Their feeble souls cannot handle it without dedicated skills for communication. Before you ask, yes, you are a freak of nature, and also, yes, I still want that sacrificial array deployed. We can compromise and go with a continental one except for a planetary?”

Jake wanted to respond with a quip, but before he could, something unexpected happened. Two arms wrapped themselves around him as Chris gave him a big hug. “Thank you so much! I can’t even begin to tell you... I’m just... what do you need me to do? I know nothing comes for free, and I swear I will do anything I can to make it up to you.”

“It’s fine, no pressure and no expectations come with it besides for you to do your best. So just... let go, please?” Jake said, Chris still hugging him tightly. It was very awkward.

“Sorry...” he muttered as he reluctantly let go.

“It’s just a lesser blessing. I already got my investments worth tenfold with that hug,” Villy laughed. Jake cut off the super rude snake god as he and Chris made their way out the room and headed towards the main chamber where only a single statue infused with energy resided – the Ladies of the Verdant Lagoon.

They came, they saw, and Jake had to say it looked great. He also noted that the aura didn’t affect him at all, as in, it didn’t even try to affect him. Chris also looked surprised and said he didn’t feel anything. Something to do with them being groupies of Villy, I guess.

To be honest, the main chamber wasn’t that interesting, yet it was even more packed. People prayed to statues that weren’t even infused, which to Jake just looked silly. Especially the one Jake assumed was meant to depict the Holy Mother – or at least her symbol, which was also the symbol of the Holy Church

– was super popular. For the record, her symbol was a pair of wings. A bit boring... though Villy's was just a snake. Both a bit boring.

Jake didn't want to stay long, and neither did Chris. Well, Chris just wanted to follow Jake. As he exited the main chamber, still thinking about where to go next, he saw someone approach him in a hurry. The moment he saw Jake and Chris, his eyes practically lit up, and he rushed over even faster.

"That's the sculptor Felix," Chris muttered just in time.

"You! You're blessed by a Primordial, aren't you? I felt it! I felt the almighty aura of a Primordial, and I still feel it linger even now! Haha! I never thought I would truly encounter one blessed by a Primordial this soon! Please help me in trying to display even a fraction of the brilliance of a Primordial with my meager skills!" the sculptor named Felix yelled at the entrance to the main chamber, drawing attention from all around.

Felix's eyes were directed straight at the one blessed by a Primordial:

Chris.