

Hunter 267

Chapter 267: Five Lights in the Darkness

Jake made his way back to Haven with only a few stops on the way. Arnold was still trying to improve the Nanoblade, and Hank was still busy, so Jake didn't need to meet anyone but just checked in from a distance.

He left behind Miranda, Lillian, and Neil with Sultan to figure out some final things. Nothing major, just where he could set up shop, and for him to sell some stuff to those three too. Jake wasn't afraid of him causing trouble even if Sultan was the strongest person at the Fort now. After all of what he went through to get in the good graces of Jake, that would just be moronic.

The only one who followed him was Sylphie. She was also a happy little hawk as Jake had bought a dozen of those Beast Pellets as the final thing before he left. Sylphie wanted them all right away but had only gotten one. So Jake shouldn't spoil her too much. A little was okay, though.

Once he got back, the first thing he did was switch out his two chest pieces. He gained 150 toughness and 75 endurance from that but lost 25 vitality. It did suck to lose a bit in a stat, but what can you do?

Looking at his stats, he saw that he could get a bit more than 1000 additional stats from gear overall. A whole lot better than before the dungeon. He was certain that when his boots were upgraded and coupled with another upgrade or two, he would be damn settled for the Treasure Hunt.

Speaking of the boots and the upgrade token... while Villy had told him to buy it and use it on the boots, the god hadn't said when. Jake had already guessed that Villy knew the origins of the boots, and was of course, related to its Records. He wondered who would become aware when he messed with them. He would find out eventually... but not now.

Because the Token had a level cap of 130, while Jake was 118 in his race. Basic deduction told him the Token would upgrade an item to be close to his own level... so why not wait till he was closer to 130? He had around one and a half months before the Treasure Hunt, so he would just have to do the upgrade before then.

He did take a look at his boots, though.

[Boots of the Wandering Alchemist (Rare)] – Boots once offered to an alchemist before setting out on a journey to experience the world outside. Despite being made of simple leather, the Records of the alchemist has left a deep mark on this item, allowing it to transcend many ranks. Enchantments: +20 Endurance, +15 Agility. Reduces stamina expenditure from all movement-related skills by a small amount. Increases sensitivity towards earthbound plants.

Requirements: Lvl 25+ in any humanoid race.

They were old, worn, and looked to be falling apart. But Jake loved the damn boots. It was his first Rare-rarity piece of equipment, so of course, he would. They were also just too damn comfy. He looked forward to upgrading them and finding out who the alchemist in the item was.

But, for now... it was alchemy time.

Considering his cave wasn't done and making poisons would just lead to an ecological disaster, he would stick to potion and elixirs for now. He had gained so many materials, and he still had the System Store to splurge from. Speaking of the System Store, Lillian would come by later to drop off a whole load of items. During Jake's dungeon run, she had bought at least a few uncommon-rarity goods a day and sometimes even a rare one.

Having employees was tight.

The first type of elixir he would craft would be to enhance Vitality. He would use the Lifevines and eventually the Core that he still had absorbed with Palate.

[Indigo Fungus Mycorrhiza Lifecore (Epic)] – The Lifecore of an Indigo Fungus Mycorrhiza. Contains a massive amount of life-affinity mana and vital energy. Can be used in a myriad of alchemical creations. +25 Vitality upon consumption.

He had the Lifecore absorbed for nearly two months now, and he had learned plenty from it. The description with Identify had even expanded slightly, now also specifying how many stats it would give. He had learned far from everything, though. That would take years. But he had learned enough... at least enough to rather learn about the perception-enhancing eye.

Jake opened his mouth and spat out the Lifecore, quickly tossing it in his inventory. Afterward, he took out the eagle eye and absorbed that, storing it in his metaphysical magical time stomach. With all of that in order, he moved on.

With Sylphie allowed to sit on his head as he wasn't doing poisons, he sat down and got to work with making a few potions to warm up. After that, he would begin wasting ingredients like a madman, tossing away money to progress just a tiny bit faster.

That's right; it was time for another prolonged alchemy session.

Time kept moving as Jake sat on his ass doing alchemy while playing with a cute bird.

With the Treasure Hunt coming closer day by day, all the factions worked to realize their full potential in time. A push for as many D-grades as possible to enter and maximize their gains. Parties progressed together, honed their teamwork, and improved as a group.

While individuals would often dominate a fight, a party that mutually amplified each other could fight above the sum of their parts. Before, they had trained to counter beasts and the less intelligent lifeforms around, but now they worked to counter humans.

No doubt the Treasure Hunt would lead to plenty of human on human conflict. Most predicted there would also be more environmental challenges, but humans would likely still be the primary threat. As a Treasure Hunt, naturally, there would be treasures to steal from others.

All the strongest factions had these powerful parties. Haven even had Neil and his group. And while that one was powerful... it wasn't even close to the top.

The party moved through the cave system as they struck down foe after foe. This was their first D-grade dungeon ever, and just in time with around a month before the Treasure Hunt would begin. At the front was a defensive warrior with a large shield bathed in light, and behind him was a young man with long blonde hair and a sword shining with lunar light.

The backline was made up of a female archer in all red clothing and a bow that seemed to glow with embers, a male caster with two floating mirrors above his shoulders, and a woman in a long pristine white robe with many trinkets hanging from it.

The warrior in the front was Bertram and the leader of the group. They entered a new cavern, and the darkness from the golem in front of them encompassed their bodies and tried to suppress their magic.

“Lucian, attack from the left; I’ll take the front. Noor, defensive barrier. Maria and Joshua begin your preparations, Joshua release first, Maria follow-up,” Bertram’s voice echoed in the head of them all through a telepathic connection.

They all followed his commands as the swordsman Lucian turned into a beam of light and flew to the left of the nearly 30-meter tall shadow golem. It was the third mini-boss of this type they had encountered, and this one was 130 while the last one had been 120, the one before that 110. They chose to apply the same tactic this time, hoping their more honed movements would give them an advantage from the start.

Noor, the priestess, summoned her staff and slammed it into the ground as a bubble of light exploded out from her, pushing back the darkness. She was already beginning a second spell to put up light barriers to block the expected incoming attack.

Maria drew her bow as she began charging a skill similar to Powershot as her body became cloaked in flames. Joshua angled his two mirrors and began channeling a beam of light that started to bounce between the two mirrors, constantly amplifying itself.

Bertram was the first to make contact as he blocked the giant fist descending towards him. His entire body was protected with D-grade plate armor, with an extra layer of magical light armor on top of it. The fist hit his shield, and the man, more than 20 levels below the golem, took the blow like nothing as he stood firm.

A giant blade of light came in from the side and cut into the golem's arm, leaving a deep gash in the dark metal. Several quick flashes of light followed it up as more cuts appeared on the arm. The golem tried to raise its arm, but Bertram stepped forth and sent out two chains of light from his shield that held it down.

The golem attacked with its other arm as it tried to get free, but this one was blocked by a barrier of light that exploded just as it hit it, sending what looked like shards of glass flying into its body. Then, before it had time to make another move, the attack from the light mage arrived.

He moved the mirrors closer to each other until they nearly touched, and then he angled them towards the golem. An intense beam flew forth and began burning into the chest of the golem, illuminating its entire body and making it roar in pain as its shadow magic was temporarily suppressed.

More flashes of blade light cut into its exposed form, and Bertram also took this time to rip the chains from his shield and slammed them into the ground like spikes, anchoring the arm entirely, freeing up his own ability to attack.

"Maria, now," he said to the primary damage dealer of the group.

An inferno exploded from behind them. The flames did not hurt the light mage or the priestess at all, but the golem would not be as lucky. She released her string and sent out an explosion of flames roaring towards the golem.

The golem, still weakened by the beam of light, was hit hard and was sent flying back a bit until the chain became taut, making it fall forward. A large wound was on its chest as the flames kept burning, and Maria breathed heavily as she took a knee to recover.

Noor raised her staff and cast a recovery spell on Maria, making her wounded arms and upper body rapidly heal. Joshua was also already preparing his next spell as the golem entered its second phase.

Many cracks opened up all over its body as a wave of darkness was emitted. It encompassed the entire room, and only the small area around Noor was spared from being completely darkened. Bertram and Lucian both quickly retreated into the bubble and prepared as they had experienced the same with the last golem.

A golem, that wasn't actually a golem, but an elemental.

Dark energy exited the massive form and took the shape of a far smaller and thinner figure. Finally, the remnant dark energy took the shape of smaller shadow creatures, all still in D-grade. The party struck them all down with coordination and engaged the elemental itself.

The priestess suppressed it, the mage burned away at its appendages, while Bertram kept it locked down. Maria bombarded it with burning arrows while Lucian practically teleported around it, leaving cut after cut on its shadowy body.

Everyone in the party was between 107 and 113. Maria was the strongest at 113, Lucian at 112, the priestess at 110, the light mage 109, and Bertram the lowest at 107. He was chosen as the leader due to his role as Guardian of the Augur, which gave him many advantages. Everybody in the group supported this decision and was loyal members of the Holy Church. Everyone except for Maria.

"Alright, finish it," Bertram said, as he and the swordsman both used their strongest skills to make the elemental unable to fight back for a time.

The light mage held out both his hands as he conjured a wand of light. Noor, the priestess, waved her staff and sent a beam of holy energy into the man, making the wand glow even more. Then, he pointed the wand at the elemental and fired out a giant Holy Bolt.

It exploded on impact, enveloping the elemental in holy energy as it let out an unnatural roar of pain. But this would not be the end of its suffering.

At the back of the group, a figure leaped up as wings of fire spread out behind her. She drew her bow and charged the shot for a second as the wings moved from her back and onto the bow, transforming into an arrow.

“Galeshot of Gwyndyr,” she spoke as she released one of the signature moves of her Patron god.

A fiery wind flew out from her and towards the elemental. A split second later, she released the arrow as it sprouted wings in mid-air, carried forward by the scorching winds.

It impacted the already-weakened elemental and exploded in a giant inferno of deep red flames.

Maria fell to the ground and collapsed down on both knees as she coughed out blood. She got a heal thrown her way and was quickly up again as the group finished off the elemental that was already on its last legs. Or, well, shadow tendrils.

Not long after, the group got their notification. The fight had been completely one-sided.

You have slain [Guardian of Nocturna – lvl 130] – Bonus experience earned for killing an enemy above your level

“Good job, everyone,” Bertram said as the darkness in the cavern faded. It was still dark due to the dark-affinity mana dominating the air, but it was far better. The group settled down as they rested, Noor’s staff embedded in the ground to create a holy bubble for them to sit within.

That a group of light, holy, and fire magic users found themselves within a dungeon of solely dark-affinity enemies was no coincidence. The Augur had led them there as it was a dungeon their group was extremely suited to handle. As a result, they practically countered everything the dungeon could throw at them.

One may question why a group with four members of the Holy Church had a party member that was not a part of their faction. The reason was simple: she was strong. Besides, they trusted her. Maria was not a member because she was already a part of Gwyndyr’s faction. A faction of mercenaries.

The Augur had hired her only weeks after the tutorial. Their meeting had been no coincidence, and no one knew what he had offered her or what the terms were. Well, Bertram knew, but he wasn’t telling. All they knew was that so far, she had been a core member of Sanctdomo from day one.

Not that any of them complained. They were just happy to have her on their side. She was, after all, the strongest archer of Sanctdomo and likely the strongest overall fighter of the city.

Some even began to think she was the strongest archer on Earth, period. Believing she had a shot against the mysterious Lord Thayne of Haven.

Bertram didn't agree with that at all... he knew exactly how much of a monster Jake was.

A monster that was currently training harder than anyone.

"You can't catch me!"

Jake ran through the forest yelling with a small pellet floating behind him suspended in a mana string.

A green bird was chasing after him, trying to eat the pellet.

The human laughed while Sylphie screeched in indignation every time he moved the pellet away from her beak.

Truly, these were actions only worthy of the strongest.