

Hunter 269

Chapter 269: Singular Focus

Jake sat with a book in one hand, skimming through it as he stroked Sylphie's feathers with the other. She lay napping on his lap, seemingly very content with the situation. She had been working hard as always based on how she managed to bring back the core of a D-grade monkey. He felt an odd sense of pride that she managed to solo kill D-grades while still not a fully-fledged D-grade herself.

She was getting there, though.

[Sylphian Eyas – lvl 91]

Considering how she only spent a bit of time every day hunting, it was impressive how she still got more than a level every two days. Hawkie had leveled far slower than she had. Of course, Sylphie could just sleep and reach level 100, but her hunting sped it up by quite a bit. Visually she seemed to have settled on her 'final form,' so to say.

A bit smaller than Hawkie, a good deal smaller than Mystie, and overall just a cute, cuddly green feathery ball of death. Others perhaps looked at her as something other than the adorable little thing she was, but Jake didn't care about those people. He was just proud of how strong she was.

Was she as strong as Jake had been at her level? No. Not even close. He had killed D-grades a lot earlier, and the monkey she had hunted down had only been around level 100 to 105 as far as he could tell from the core. That didn't make her weak, though, far from it. On the contrary, she was a damn strong beast for her level, and he was sure she would only grow stronger as time went on.

From what Jake had seen of her fighting, she had extremely high-level skills and abilities but struggled with prolonged battles and keeping up the pressure. She consumed insane amounts of mana with practically all her skills, even if they were a bit overpowered. Especially that green bubble she summoned to protect herself was impressive and was in part the inspiration to Jake's Arcane Barrier.

Ultimately though, it didn't matter. Jake didn't need her to be strong; he just wanted her to be happy. He understood that happiness and power were often tied together in this new world, and Sylphie did seem to have an innate desire to grow more powerful. Jake would happily help foster that if it made her happy, and if not... he would protect her. She was already like family to him, which made him think about his 'real' family. He hadn't gone and seen them yet, even if he really should have. But... some parts of him were afraid.

Caleb had adjusted well, but how about his mother and father? Caleb said they were well, which had put his mind at ease, but he still worried. He especially worried about how they would receive him. Jake felt like he wasn't the same person now that he was before the system. Far from it. He feared they wouldn't recognize or would reject him. Shit, he had killed more humans than most of the famous serial killers from before the system.

It was likely a senseless worry as their other son, the leader of a shadow-assassin-cult, was accepted. So they had to be adapted to the new world at least a bit.

Jake wasn't worried about Maja or his newborn nephew as much. He actually knew most medical issues from birth and all that were practically non-existent post-system. His only worries there were if the two of them were safe, and if Jake knew one thing about his brother, it was that he would keep his family safe above everything else.

Also... if they were ever truly in trouble, Jake fully expected Villy to give him a heads-up. If not, the two of them would have issues. Villy also fully knew this and told Jake not to worry but focus on himself. Well, himself and the bird. Even Villy seemed to have taken a liking to Sylphie and called her 'interesting,' which was Villy-code for someone he liked.

The small hawk on his lap roused from her slumber and shook her feathers a bit as she looked up at Jake with her big eyes. Jake smiled back and rubbed her head, and scratched her beneath her neck. She nuzzled up to his hand and looked to be enjoying it very much.

“You hungry?” he asked, getting a happy screech in reply as she flapped her wings in excitement.

Jake took out a pellet and offered it up to her. She gulped it down and nuzzled up to his chest.

“By the way, Sylphie, remember to not go too deep into the territory of those monkeys, and if you see one of the thin and long ones of them, get away from it. Those are pretty fast, and it may get dangerous, okay?” Jake warned her as he knew the hawk would dive into the forest again soon.

She looked up at him with doubt, not entirely believing Jake’s advice.

“Trust me on this, okay? Even your mom and dad can’t handle those without working together, so they may be a bit much for you for now, alright? I am not sure I could have taken them easily, if at all, before reaching D-grade myself,” he patiently explained.

Sylphie looked up at him, still skeptical, but seemed to accept what he said. Jake nodded as he gave her another pat, and she got up, ready for another day of adventures. He saw her off with a smile as he dove into his work again.

It was the day he had made his first common-rarity elixir, and for the rest of the day, he wanted to practice that. He hadn't consumed any of them yet but was waiting. It wasn't like Agility really helped with his alchemy, after all.

He had more than 600 stats to fill with eating or drinking stuff, and he had already decided to have most of that be Agility and Perception. Perception would be the best due to the whole percentage amplifiers, but Agility was a close second because it was great for combat.

Besides, it wasn't like he couldn't get more titles or maybe skills to also enhance Agility down the line.

Anyway, for now, Jake dove into spamming out batches of Agility elixirs like there was no tomorrow. Then, when he felt well-practiced, he would begin working on the uncommon-rarity version. It was a great plan, and he was sticking to it, and he was completely sure he hadn't missed anything important.

Vilastromoz considered if he should remind him. Should he? Nah, Jake remembered. He did, right? Sometimes the Primordial hated that no effective mind-reading abilities existed—another hard rule of the system, and the sanctity of the Truesoul and all that. You could skim and even enter and read the memories sometimes with special skills, but that was more like watching a movie of the past.

Actually, it was something pretty close to what the Viper really wanted Jake to remember.

Path of the Heretic Chosen wasn't a normal skill. Not at all. In fact, he had never encountered an identical one before. Well, skills to experience the past were, as said, not that special, but the way this one did was just something else. It pulled out Records directly; it allowed Jake to see the entire situation not just from the point of view of Vilastromoz either but also from other important actors and their interpretations of what happened.

Even more so was that Vilastromoz had no control over it. He knew that the Holy Church and many other factions liked to have these kinds of "experiences" for their members, but it was always a well-curated thing. It would show a pre-determined moment, and it would be one highly regulated and "edited" so-to-say. But Path of the Heretic Chosen? The god featured had not a smidge of control. So it was as equally frustrating as it was interesting.

Nearly half as frustrating as how Jake had not even recognized he had reached level 110 in his profession and had unlocked another use of the skill. Maybe he couldn't use it yet? Had the Viper missed him trying? Well, he couldn't read his mind, so maybe? Maybe not?

Well, his head was in other places, primarily alchemy, so it wasn't all bad. Jake still found time to relax with the Sylphian Eyas that was soon approaching level 100. Jake clearly cared for the bird, and Vilastromoz had to admit he could see the appeal. It was a powerful beast for its level, and Jake hadn't even begun to realize how much he had affected it. Being born growing up and in his presence had some... peculiar effects. It wasn't instinctively wary of him for one thing. So yes, the hawk was interesting too for sure, but not as interesting as Path of the Heretic Chosen.

Could Jake really have completely forgotten the skill because he was so damn focused on making some shit-tier elixirs and playing with an admittedly cute bird? Did he seriously prioritize that over a potential legendary skill and the ability to dive through time and space and experience Records of the first era and the rise of a Primordial?

No, that can't be it.

That was exactly it.

Jake had completely forgotten the skill as he was too engrossed in improving his elixirs, and the only breaks he gave himself was when Sylphie was back, and even those were spent reading books on elixirs meanwhile. The books were from the dungeon still, and he had to admit they weren't that useful anymore, but they had to do for now.

Should he have remembered Path of the Heretic Chosen? Probably, but his singular focus on elixirs wasn't bad either. Not at all. He had entered a near trance-like state, only focusing on his alchemy, cutting everything else out.

Days passed by as Jake grinded like never before. He churned out elixir after elixir and had a constant stream of ingredients coming in from Lillian, who monitored the System Store – both system offerings and from other people who sold through the store – as well as Sultan, who was also on the lookout.

Ten elixirs became twenty, twenty became forty, and forty became eighty. Soon, Jake had well over a hundred elixirs, all giving +3 Agility for anyone above D-grade. That is when Jake also switched to something else, primarily to introduce some diversity.

It took Jake less than thirty hours from when he switched to the first success.

You have successfully crafted [Vitae Elixir (Common)] – A new kind of creation has been made. Bonus experience earned

[Vitae Elixir (Common)] – An elixir created from a mix of common ingredients, along with a few uncommon ones and a D-grade Monstercore of a Deepdweller Warrior. Allows any who drink this elixir to receive some of the innate power of the materials, enhancing one's Vitality. +3 Vitality upon consumption

Requirements: D-rank or higher.

These ones Jake had no intentions of consuming himself at all. No, they were all for the System Store. Unfortunately, he couldn't make as many due to the use of Deepdweller Warrior cores, which he had significantly fewer of, but he would have to make do for now. Well, all in all, it wasn't an issue as he had even more Deepdweller cores than monkey cores. He only used a Warrior's for now due to how much more potent it was. When he got more skilled, he could switch to the regular ones. As for the Fungalmancer ones or the ones from the mini-bosses? He saved those for the uncommon and rare elixirs.

How much money he made, Jake didn't know and didn't care about. Jake just handed off the elixirs to Lillian by placing them outside his lodge and had her sell them. Later, he learned that Sultan bought a lot of them – apparently, elixirs of all kinds were a massive rarity on Earth. Shit, any item that increased stats was a rarity.

26 days till the Treasure Hunt, Jake had another major success as he crafted an item he had been hoped to make for a long time.

You have successfully crafted [Sensus Elixir (Common)] – A new kind of creation has been made. Bonus experience earned

[Sensus Elixir (Common)] – An elixir created from a mix of common ingredients, along with a few uncommon ones and a D-grade Beastcore of a Sunshade Eagle. Allows any who drink this elixir to receive some of the innate power of the materials, enhancing one's Perception. +3 Perception upon consumption

Requirements: D-rank or higher.

The core had not come from any merchant or his own hunt but delivered along with a dozen or so other cores of the same beast by Mystie and Hawkie. They managed to communicate that a canyon deeper within the forest was heavily populated with these eagles, and the two hawks primarily hunted those these days. Jake had a strong feeling neither Mystie nor Hawkie liked eagles very much.

Wait, didn't eagles hunt hawks? I guess it makes sense then, poetic revenge or something.

Anyway, they came by, took Sylphie with them, and returned within a few days with more cores before leaving again for a longer trip. He was limited in these cores, but for now, Jake would just make all he could. Oh, and these elixirs? They went straight to his belly.

You have assimilated a powerful energy of Perception.

+3 Perception

...

You have assimilated a powerful energy of Perception.

+3 Perception

24 days till the Treasure Hunt and Jake ran out of cores to use for his perception elixirs. He ended up drinking 23 of them, meaning a total increase of 69 Perception.

Nice.

But that he was out of materials didn't mean he stopped. It just meant he began pushing for the uncommon-rarity version of the agility-enhancing elixirs. This proved to be a quite different experience than other times he tried to push himself to upgrade a rarity. He dove in with an absolute singular focus and didn't hesitate to waste even rare-rarity materials – bananas included.

Jake went in with low expectations but soon discovered something... the method was the same. All it took was more energy and better ingredients. Thinking about it, it actually made a lot of sense.

Why would one not just consume a lot of common-rarity elixirs and just cap out that way? Jake had consumed over twenty without losing any effect. So perhaps that was why the system didn't see any reason to make higher rarities of elixirs that much harder. It wasn't like potions or poisons where every rarity was a significant qualitative increase.

Elixirs were mainly just more quantity... and while it took some more control, focus, and finesse, it wasn't that bad.

19 days till the Treasure Hunt, he did it.

*You have successfully crafted [Celerita Elixir (Uncommon)] – A new kind of creation has been made.
Bonus experience earned*

[Celerita Elixir (Uncommon)] – An elixir created from a mix of uncommon and rare ingredients as well as the D-grade Beastcore of a Tri-Lighttail Dervish. Allows any who drink this elixir to receive some of the innate power of the materials, enhancing one's Agility. +10 Agility upon consumption

Requirements: D-rank or higher.

Jake batched up the two elixirs as he also checked another notification. Another expected one with borderline little-to-no impact.

Skill Upgraded: [Craft Elixir (Common --> Uncommon)] – Potions for emergencies, flasks in preparation for the toughest of foes, and elixirs to build the foundation of power. Allows the alchemist to craft elixirs of uncommon-rarity and below. Elixirs are able to grant those who consume it a permanent increase to stats. Must have suitable materials and equipment in order to create potions. Adds a small increase to the effectiveness of created elixirs based on wisdom.

With another two elixirs in bottles, Jake didn't hesitate to fire up another batch as he also began working on the other uncommon-rarity elixir – the one for Vitality. He got Vitality done and was saving the Perception one for when he got more cores.

14 days till the Treasure Hunt, Jake had been working as a goddamn uncommon-rarity elixir factory, and someone couldn't wait any longer.

"Jake, for fuck's sake, check your notifications and check your goddamn Path of the Heretic Chosen skill!" Villy suddenly yelled at Jake after he finished another batch.

"Wait, what?" Jake asked, confused as he looked around. Oh... right... levels.

Jake had to admit the last two weeks plus had kinda blended together, and he barely remembered anything besides alchemy. Even all his meetings with Miranda had been postponed, and he hadn't really talked to anyone besides when someone came by with goods, that that had barely been an acknowledgment of their presence. Sylphie, Hawkie, and Mystie hadn't been back yet either, but he had a feeling they were fine.

He recognized that he had been a bit too focused and checked his notifications...

Oh.

' DING!' Profession: [Heretic-Chosen Alchemist of the Malefic Viper] has reached level 113 - Stat points allocated, +10 free points

...

' DING!' Profession: [Heretic-Chosen Alchemist of the Malefic Viper] has reached level 119 - Stat points allocated, +10 free points

'DING!' Race: [Human (D)] has reached level 124 - Stat points allocated, +15 free points

' DING!' Profession: [Heretic-Chosen Alchemist of the Malefic Viper] has reached level 120 - Stat points allocated, +10 free points

It turned out that Jake going into a bit of a trance had worked out well for him. In his defense, he had only just gotten that last level thirty minutes ago.

Anyhow, Jake should do this more often.

He wanted to go check out his new profession-skill available, but he had a feeling Villy really wanted him to check that Path of the Heretic Chosen first.