

Hunter 27

Chapter 27: Evolution

Jake got to work right away after waking up, concocting poisons like never before. The process kept getting easier and easier. After a couple of hours and a lot of poison later, he was a bit surprised by the lack of a level-up. It seemed like the experience gain had slowed down after reaching double digits.

However, one negative aspect of his increased speed was shown as his mana pool emptied. His pool was a lot higher by now, and he had honestly doubted that he would've been able to empty it with his daily poison eating and regular mana potions.

Speaking of mana potions, it was about time he made some more. He still had a lot left, but their quality had a lot to be desired. His skills had increased significantly over the last couple of days, having learned a lot from both health potions, and of course, the poison. All of that was ignoring his increased stats.

Jake, with his increased mana usage and capacity, had tried to replenish it by eating his ancient rival. The blue mushrooms shone brightly in the cave, oblivious to the man walking towards them to devour as many as his stomach could handle.

Which turned out to be only one mushroom. Those damn blue bastards were full of mana, regenerating plenty of mana but also making him quite ill. His health points began ticking downwards as he, for the first time, was actually poisoned. Luckily it wasn't more than he could handle, and it did come with benefits.

Jake learned a lot about the mushrooms from that single one. Turns out, the poison in them was incredibly potent and had necrotic properties. This was obviously not a surprise to Jake, as necrosis was one of the most horrific things he knew of, quite literally rotting the flesh on a still-living being. For the mushrooms to have such an evil property was only natural.

He also had to reluctantly admit that the cursed shrooms tasted damn good, though. Not that he was going to eat any more just yet.

After a brief ingredient-collection-run to the garden, he got to work once more, making mana potions. After making a few batches, he got right back to making poison. A couple of concoctions later, he finally got a level.

'DING!' Profession: [Alchemist of the Malefic Viper] has reached level 11 - Stat points allocated, +2 free points

As he saw the message, he instantly noticed the lack of a race level, but before he could ponder it further, the system appeared once more.

Race Evolution Requirements Met

Your body and soul have been accustomed to the energies found in the multiverse, allowing you to truly become a being of the new world. Evolution is a natural step for all multiverse entities, with nature and benefits associated with evolution dependant on all Records.

Begin Evolution now?

Y/N

WARNING: Postponing evolution may have adverse effects, and no further race-experience can be earned before the evolution is completed.

Well, that sure answered why his race didn't level up. But thinking back, it made sense considering what else he had seen so far in the tutorial. All beasts at level 10 and above got significantly stronger, so the same thing happening to humans was not out of the question.

But he was unwilling to spend a lot of time deliberating the system's evolutionary process after seeing the last line. He still took minor precautions, leaving the laboratory, going to the bedroom, and sitting down on the bed.

Taking a deep breath, he agreed to the system-prompt.

The second he accepted, his vision went black.

When he came to once more, he was in a black void surrounded by small bright dots. Inspecting them further, he noticed they were stars. Jake was suspended in what seemed like the middle of space as he felt his body slowly change.

Thinking back, this was possibly what happened to him when he first entered the tutorial. The only difference was that he now was far more aware of his surroundings.

The seconds ticked by as he simply looked around and relaxed. His body felt numb, but he could still sense something changing within him. As he floated there, he also started to get a weird feeling. He felt

something. He could not put his finger on what it was, but something was clearly present all around him in the blackness.

As he focused on the feeling, it only became more apparent. The feeling was oddly similar to the one he had when he examined the alchemical ingredients during his potion brewing. More specifically, the kind of energy he felt when making mana potions.

Suddenly it clicked for him. This was mana he could feel. Mana was an ever-present aspect of the multiverse. Before, he only knew it was there due to reading about its presence, but now he could finally feel it.

He had wondered if he was for some reason inept at it, as nearly all the books he had read had references to feeling mana and examining mana density as if it was something everyone could just do. It turns out; he needed to evolve.

The changes in his body had started slowing down by now. Jake had his eyes closed, testing his newly acquired ability to sense mana when he suddenly felt something more. Within him, a change was occurring that wasn't purely the race evolution.

A vortex at his heart formed as it absorbed energy. Jake could feel the mana move and enter his body, but not where it disappeared to. It just entered a space somewhere around his heart. He felt like his heartbeat sped up, but physically it didn't. It was an inexplicable experience.

Then it all just stopped, and Jake's vision shifted as he found himself back on the bed in the dungeon once more. Not that he knew if his physical body had ever left the room, to begin with, or if it had all been some kind of out of body experience.

Jake did not feel any different, though. The only significant change was that he now could distinctly feel the mana in the air. It felt far less dense than up in the space-like area, but it was still easily discernable. But his body felt the same. Looking at the system prompt, it indeed did confirm the evolution, though.

Race Successfully Evolved

Human (F) – A newly initiated human having taken the first step up the evolutionary ladder. Your body has now become attuned to the energy of the new world. The human race is known as one of the most balanced and numerous races of the multiverse, being able to walk many different roads on their path to power. Stat bonuses per level: +1 to all stats, +5 free points

‘DING!’ Race: [Human (F)] has reached level 10 - Stat points allocated, +5 free point

The level-up bonus changes were minor, earning him just 4 more free points per level. He had gotten those four extra points with the level, though, meaning he now had 17 free points still not allocated. So that was kind of nice.

He had not gotten any skills from the evolution, but he did get one unforeseen benefit as he read the next message.

Bloodline Ability Evolved

The evolution has stirred your bloodline, allowing it to evolve along with you.

***Bloodline Ability Upgraded*:** [Bloodline of the Primal Hunter (Bloodline Ability - Unique)] – Dormant power lies in the very essence of your being. A unique, innate ability awakened in the bloodline of the newly initiated human, Jake Thayne. Enhances innate instincts. Enhances the ability to perceive your surroundings. Enhances perception of danger. +10% to perception.

Not much of the description had changed, and focusing on his sphere did not show anything either. But then again, a big part of his bloodline ability was either passive or only made itself known during a crisis. No, what had instead changed was the flat stat bonus to perception. While an increase from 5 to 10% did not seem like a lot initially, it could get massive down the line.

Even more importantly, it indicated his bloodline ability's possibility of growth. If it was 10% now with him only being F-rank, what was to stop it from getting far higher later on. It also quickly answered the question of where that extra vortex of mana came from. He was sure that was his bloodline evolving.

With that in mind, Jake decided to simply dump all of his 17 free points into perception. While it may not be the smartest choice in the short run, he believed it was the best on a long-term basis. It may also be the euphoric feeling in his body he felt after the evolution that messed with his head.

After he had put the points in, perception instantly became his highest stat. Due to the immediate stat increase, he felt slight vertigo as all his senses improved, and he felt his sphere of perception grow both in range and quality.

It lasted for less than a second before everything was back to normal except for his improved senses. He opened his status window, happy with all the improvements.

Status

Name: Jake Thayne

Race: [Human (F) – lvl 10]

Class: [Archer – lvl 9]

Profession: [Alchemist of the Malefic Viper – lvl 11]

Health Points (HP): 660/660

Mana Points (MP): 610/610

Stamina: 300/300

Stats

Strength: 33

Agility: 36

Endurance: 30

Vitality: 66

Toughness: 31

Wisdom: 61

Intelligence: 21

Perception: 70

Willpower: 40

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)], [Cultivate Toxin (Uncommon)], [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)]

Remarkable growth across the line. The only thing Jake felt bad about was intelligence being his lowest stat by quite a bit. Not because he needed the stat for any of his skills, but more due to its sentiment. Well, at least he was a wise guy full of vitality with exceptional eyesight.

Jake had to admit that the whole evolution felt a bit underwhelming outside of his bloodline evolving. He imagined those without a bloodline ability would find themselves quite disappointed by it. Or maybe he had missed something? Some hidden new power, or perhaps his evolution had gone wrong somehow?

The ability to sense mana was great. Yet that was mentioned as something one was meant to have from the beginning.

The thought kept nagging him. Luckily for him, he had a library with a wide assortment of books. While all of the books were on alchemy, many were also about random topics only tangentially related to the profession.

After going through the books for a good while, he found a couple of ones with potential. They were mainly about professions and leveling, but they did have parts on evolutions.

As he started reading, the word Records kept coming up more and more. One apparently needed to have 'sufficient Records' to evolve one's race. The same went with upgrading one's class and profession.

However, what confused Jake was that it kept mentioning the first evolution for class, profession, and race were all at level 25. This was clearly not the case for him, though. He also found some interesting notes on how even the level 25 evolutions were unique, but it didn't elaborate.

He kept reading the books on the issue, and it was only after several books where he stumbled upon a side-note in a chapter about the connection between mana sensitivity and race rank:

"... while evolutions and their associated level-requirements have never known any credible cases of deviation, there is a rumor among some scholars that some races found in newly integrated universes have more evolutionary stages. F-stage is widely known as the lowest possible stage, but these new races start at a stage below even that if these rumors are to be believed.

It must be noted that none of these cases have ever been officially validated. However, it is hypothesized this has to do with the absence of mana in the newly integrated universe. According to the hypothesis, this stage may act as an adaption period, allowing the new races to get used to mana. The origin of this train of thought is not known, but notable figures of the multiverse have commented on it.

This hypothesis truly gained traction when it was confirmed to be accurate by Reverend Izzshaldin of the 91st universe, one rumored to herself to be a new initiate. Many believe it to be accurate with endorsement from such a figure, despite the lack of any verifiable evidence. While a god's words are not to be doubted, it cannot be taken as the complete truth either. Especially considering the lack of comment from other prominent divines. For alas, only the divines may know the whole truth.

Once more, it must be emphasized this has never been confirmed. Many also question the possibility of a universe absent of mana ever existing. Even the most extreme cases of mana-starved areas have some remnants of mana remaining, and complete absence has only been observed in very severe cases. For an entire universe to be without it is therefore highly improbable, and honestly asinine to propose.

In conclusion, this rumor is likely to be just that: A rumor. An unfounded idea based on faulty logic and lack of understanding of mana. Mana is as essential to existence as the natural laws and the system itself, making it an insult to one's intelligence to propose a world without it."

As Jake finished the segment, he was quite amused. This researcher must have felt like scientists from Earth did when they heard someone propose that the Earth is flat. It was quite understandable that the book's researcher came off as a bit pissed for even having to address the claim.

It also explained the lack of mention in all the other books. If it only happened to the first generation of those integrated, there couldn't be many cases. Jake had a suspicion that immortality, or at least something close to immortality, was possible with a high enough level. However, he still had doubts about how many still lived from when the last universe was integrated. Heck, the book mentioned gods and divines, and if a god wasn't even immortal, it had to be a pretty sucky god.

With such a small sample size, it was apparent that it was considered a waste of time to address, according to most authors. Perhaps that would change now, with an entirely new universe being integrated into the multiverse. Then again, there had to be other integrations before.

Not that any grandiose thoughts of changing the mainstream evolutionary theories existed in Jake's head. For now, he had to deal with the small problems in life. Such as not dying from poisoning.

He sat up on the bed and put the books to the side. He had wasted enough time reading for today. It was alchemy time!