

Hunter 272

Chapter 272: Skill Choices Are Hard...

After a good conversation with his resident god, nothing was better than a new skill selection.

Jake did want to use Path of the Heretical Chosen right away again, but the skill didn't respond. He assumed he didn't meet that magical unknown threshold, as it didn't feel like the skill had a cooldown or some other limitation.

Jake had gotten some inspiration besides Pride. Especially the moment all those magic attacks had hit the scales of the Viper gave him some food for thought. All of that was for later, though, because now... now it was skill-selection time!

Heretic-Chosen Alchemist of the Malefic Viper profession skills available

Every skill selection was exciting to Jake to see what the system had cooked up. He already knew he would avoid all the shitty religious skills and stick to alchemy. A hallmark of his profession so far had been an overflow of high-rarity skills that he thought sucked ass because they wanted him to become a priest or some shit.

So with tempered expectations, he went into the skill selection. The first one was a very familiar one but in a new and improved version.

[Transmute (Rare)] - Attempt to transmute any object into one of greater value. Transmutation is an ancient art used by alchemists since the beginning of time. Must have suitable materials. Transmute does not require any additional tools or equipment, but the skill's effect can be amplified with the use of

certain catalysts. Adds a small increase to the effectiveness and chance of success of attempted transmutations based on Wisdom.

That one brought Jake back a long time. Man, when was it, level 10? Heh, been a while, Jake thought with nostalgia. Ah, being trapped in a Challenge Dungeon on a timer before you will die to poison. Good times.

Back then, Jake didn't really think much about transmutation. He was a bit busy with the whole not-dying thing and had found himself too busy to pick up the skill. With all the other skills also coming along, he had never picked it up until he eventually upgraded Touch of the Malefic Viper.

Would this skill benefit him? For sure. Jake wasn't sure exactly what he could properly transmute, and his current way of transmuting things was crude as fuck and pretty much just a way of screwing up items to make them Soulbound to himself.

And to be honest, that was good enough for now. The only thing interesting about this choice was that it proved Jake had the potential to pick up old skills he passed as higher-rarity ones now. That wasn't enough of a reason to pick Transmute, though.

Hence, Jake moved on. The next skill was also a Rare-rarity one.

[Refine Core (Rare)] – Cores from beasts or many other types of monsters are one of the most numerous kinds of treasures in the world, but does that mean one must simply accept their current state? Allows the alchemist to refine cores and empower the Records within. Refined cores will, in most cases, be more effective, and you can also choose to amplify specific effects. Adds a small increase to the effectiveness of Refine Core based on Wisdom, Willpower, and Intelligence.

Now there came a skill Jake knew a lot about already. It was one he had come across in many books when studying elixirs and even other unrelated books. It was mentioned nearly everywhere. The reason?

Everyone fucking had it.

Not even all alchemists. Everyone.

Blacksmiths, leatherworkers, tailors, jewelers, even the damn cooks got it offered. It was just one of those skills that were useful to everyone as the use of cores was so universal. Practically every crafting profession would get it at some point, and the only impressive thing was that Jake could get it as Rare-rarity right off the bat, as he had read it came as Uncommon-rarity by default.

Now, just because something is popular doesn't mean it's bad. In fact, many things tend to get popular because they're good. Movies, games, brands, and even things like books. Of course, sometimes they only got lucky because the consumers didn't know better and kept consuming products despite the obvious lack of quality. Luckily, this skill was not one such case.

This skill was picked because it was genuinely so damn useful. Enhancing Records of anything was just too valuable to pass up on. So, if Jake was logical, he should get it just for the ability to do it himself, likely better than anyone else around too.

One thing to also note was that this skill was not one at all easily replicated without a skill. Not at all.

In summary, Jake kind of knew he would need this eventually, and it would be up to the last three skills if he just went with it or not. The next one was a step-up as an Epic-rarity skill and an upgrade to one of his existing skills.

[Arcane Alchemist's Purification(Epic)] – Your skill has evolved, and by deploying your arcane, you can stabilize the existing properties and destroy the unwanted. Attempt to purify any alchemical ingredient and reduce it to its most basic state while stabilizing it, or use Arcane Purification to eliminate unwanted properties from an ingredient, making it purer. Must have suitable ingredients. Purification does not require any additional tools or equipment, but the skill's effect can be amplified with the use of certain catalysts. Adds a minor increase to the effectiveness and chance of success of attempted purifications based on Wisdom and Intelligence.

WARNING: This skill is unlocked by and will serve as an upgrade to your Alchemist's Purification.

This one just felt more like a slap in the face than an actual skill offering. What the fuck had Jake been doing with his Alchemist's Purification all this time not to get at least get one damn upgrade to it? Seriously, this skill spelled out how to improve it, and it was so damn obvious.

His arcane-affinity was all about destroying stuff or being super stable. Most often a mix of those two. So why didn't he use that destruction on Purification, considering what the skill did was practically destroying an ingredient's unwanted properties? Man, he would have to get that shit done.

Naturally, he didn't pick the skill. That one looked like one he could easily upgrade to himself without losing a skill choice. It wasn't like Mark of the Avaricious Arcane Hunter, where he had a super-valuable skill he could upgrade, one, he had no idea how to upgrade by himself.

Jake moved on to the next skill. This one was Ancient-rarity. Surely, it would be great?

[Heretical Ritualism of the Malefic Viper (Ancient)] – Claim power without reverence, sacrifice to none but your own will, and-

It wasn't great.

No, just no. Fuck that; I read the last ritual skill, so fuck off already with that shit, Jake thought as he shook his head. When would the system understand he wasn't going to be a fanatical manic who would sacrifice his planet in some huge ritual?

Actually... maybe he should stop joking about doing that? Nah, it should be fine. He swiftly moved on to the last skill - a legendary-rarity one.

[Legacy Teachings of the Heretic-Chosen Alchemist (Legendary)] – To be taught by a Chosen is an honor most would embrace wholeheartedly. To be taught by a heretic a crime most would shun away from. But to be taught by a Heretic-Chosen is to learn both the endorsed and the unorthodox heretical knowledge at once. A true paradox you can now pass unto others. Allows you to far more easily convey knowledge of alchemy and your path to others, and your teachings will have a larger impact on the paths of others. Allows those who listen to your teachings to earn experience and Records and reward you for their progress. The time to pass down your Legacy and your Records begins now, as you spread your unique path. Adds a noticeable increase to the effectiveness of Legacy Teachings of the Heretic-Chosen Alchemist based on Wisdom and Willpower.

Finally, it had come. Jake had expected but also feared this would one day happen. The day where the system would try to force upon the same title as his little brother, which would inadvertently lead to teasing about Jake just being a copycat.

In Jake's defense, his brother was a schoolteacher, while Jake would be a teacher of being a dick to gods and cool-ass alchemy. If in a school context, he would be the most irresponsible chemistry teacher around, just telling people to throw shit together and hope it doesn't explode. Also known as everyone's favorite teacher.

Back on topic, Jake truly wasn't sure what to think about the legendary skill. The reason why he felt it was expected was that... well, it was pretty much a staple of D-grade to get some teaching skill to begin offering pointers to those hopeless E and – god help us all – F-grades. Someone needed to teach them how to brew stuff good and concoct poison even gooder.

So he had known this would appear sooner or later; he just hadn't expected it to be legendary-rarity right off the bat. He quickly came to understand why, though. It wasn't just a simple teaching skill... it was one meant to pass down a Legacy. To spread a path.

The system clearly liked unique paths. It wanted Jake to spread Records about himself and teach others, even if Jake was pretty damn sure his teachings about being a Heretic-Chosen weren't the most useful. What should he do? Go up to people and go:

"So yeah, just meet a Primordial, and then don't really care about them being a Primordial. You only need to be immune to their passive presence and suppression, be kind of weird, be able to detect if the god will be open to your antics, and hope they end up liking you and not just killing you anyway. Good luck."

Yeah, that wasn't gonna fly. It would probably get a lot of people killed, though. Or maybe not? All the gods Jake had met so far had been pretty chill and seemed okay with him just treating them like people. But, of course, he knew this was primarily due to him being the Chosen of the Malefic Viper, so he just borrowed his friend's clout.

Anyway, would Jake use this teaching skill? Maybe. It said it helped him teach alchemical knowledge but also stuff about his path, so did that also mean other stuff? Like philosophy-stuff and the One True Path of putting every single free point into perception?

Joke's aside; Jake had a hard time imagining himself as a teacher of any kind. He was fine with giving advice and pointers here and there, but if he imagined himself in front of a classroom of hopefuls, he could only cringe. He remembered this one time Jacob had him come along to a university to talk about how great their workplace was to convince the innocent students to get unpaid internships. Jake only spoke for like five minutes while Jacob spoke for one and a half hours, but Jake still hated it.

Yet... that legendary tag. It also said it would reward Jake for the progress of those he taught. That was kind of nice. He just had to find someone to teach, or equally as importantly, someone who wanted to actually learn from him. Considering how shitty a teacher Jake would be, he doubted he could find anyone.

Despite so many reasons not to, Jake just found it hard to resist. There was also an additional reason in the form of his race. Jake was a human – a shocker to everyone – and with that came a certain race skill:

[Legacy of Man (Unique)] – The human race has been around since the very first Era, and has stood on the pinnacle from the beginning. This is not simply due to extraordinary individuals in your midst, but your ability to stand on the shoulders of your ancestors and pass down Records. While each human's lifespan may be short, your race's collective knowledge is perennial, and through generations, humanity will prevail. Allows you to far more effectively pass down Records and makes anyone you teach far more likely to unlock new paths.

As a human, Jake was practically made to teach others. The system at least believed him to be.

He ended up just sitting there for a bit, mulling over the skills. He even went back a bit and saw other potential choices. Should he just take teachings? Maybe he wanted to in the future. He could see it as a new challenge, maybe? If he did a good job, it said it would reward him too, hopefully with more than just the satisfaction of seeing a student succeed.

Then again, Refine Core was a great skill. Maybe he could even find a way to upgrade it further. It would improve his elixirs for sure and have many other uses.

Skill choices are hard... Jake complained internally. In the end, he just went back to the best method – a coin toss.

Jake took out a coin.

Heads for Legacy Teachings of the Heretic-Chosen Alchemist. Tails for Refine Core.

He flipped the coin as it flew nearly ten meters into the air and spun at incredibly high speeds. Jake sighed and nodded as he picked Legacy Teachings of the Heretic-Chosen Alchemist.

The coin landed a few seconds later on heads.

I guess that settles it, he thought as he felt the knowledge of the skill enter his head. There wasn't much, and it wasn't a skill he would use here and now... but he had it.

Anyway.

Time to test out his new Pride upgrade and churn out some more elixirs to reach his goals before the Treasure Hunt.

While Jake was back at Haven grinding out levels, a group of three was far within the forest.

Three flying figures soared through the air, chasing a large eagle. The eagle was nearly six meters from tail to beak with long powerful talons and a bulky body. It was physically more powerful than all the three hawks chasing it combined, but what it had in brawn it lacked in magical prowess.

The three hawks were naturally Sylphie, Hawkie, and Mystie, and their foe was a Sunshade Eagle higher level than any of them.

[Sunshade Eagle – lvl 139]

Sylphie was still only level 99, so she wasn't the primary damage dealer, but just there for support and the occasional strong hit that still did a bit of damage. It was mainly Hawkie and Mystie doing everything to allow her to land some hits to help her reach level 100 soon.

They had stayed on the outskirts of the canyon for the most part but sought deeper in this time to find stronger prey. The hawk family had found what they wanted. These eagles tended to be easy to hunt down as they always stuck to themselves and weren't overly powerful. They didn't have any noticeable magic either. The Sunshade in their name referenced their ability to fly high and appear almost invisible while in direct sunlight – only leaving a shade.

It didn't take long before the eagle died to a blast from Mystie and a blade of air from Hawkie as it succumbed from its accumulated wounds. The beast impressively kept flying till its very last moments, hoping to get away. Away... or back somewhere.

All three hawks felt it - a natural treasure. The two older hawks stopped in their tracks, aware of what this could mean. They were wiser than most other beasts. They had the wisdom that comes with age and experience.

Their third member didn't. Sylphie made a beeline for the aura of the natural treasure, her parents screeching at her stop. They were already too late as Sylphie had been a bit ahead of them from the start, and they could only chase after her as the young hawk failed to restrain itself.

Hawkie caught up to Sylpie quickly and cut in front of her to make her stop, which she did. She looked confused but also a little embarrassed as Hawkie threw her a look. Mystie joined them soon after.

However, they didn't have time to dally as Hawkie motioned for them to hurry up and get away before the-

"SCREEEECH!"

- local alpha detected them.