

## Hunter 279

### Chapter 279: Scorching the Plains

Hello there. This is not a part of the chapter, but I have to write it here instead of in the author's note because scalping bots don't copy those when people steal my novel and put it on pirate sites.

Reading this novel on any site where I do not officially host it hurts me both mentally and potentially legally and financially. One place where it certainly hurts me is time-wise, as I have spent the last 2 days that were meant to be my holiday to recharge instead trying to deal with it. This isn't cool.

I already publish it for free on Royalroad.com.

Please don't be assholes and if you give even the tiniest little shit about the novel, don't read it on pirate sites, because you doing so only contributes to less being written and me getting one step closer to being burnt out. There is a lot of nuance and complications to dealing with a pirated novel and I HAVE TO GET IT REMOVED OR GET CONTROL OF IT or I will be fucked in several ways.

Additionally, make it clear to your resident pirate site, that pirating ALREADY FREE CONTENT seriously isn't okay. We can argue about taking from certain Chinese websites (and I would be on your side), but to copy something that is already free and hurt the author... really?

To make it clear, I considered just posting this notice and not a chapter till it was taken down, but decided to be nice because of people who actually aren't assholes. So, if you want to keep an author happy (and productive)...

Don't be an asshole. Read on sites where the Author actually hosts the novel.

Trying to explain to two anxious hawks that their daughter was just relaxing with a Primordial that also happened to be a living natural disaster wasn't the easiest. They seemed more than a bit worried, but Jake kept assuring them it would all be fine. It did help that Sylphie was still on top of his head, looking to be asleep.

Anyway, the two of them got the gist of it quite quickly and overall seemed to be approving of the entire situation even if it wasn't optimal. They did get that now Jake and Sylphie had "solidified" their relationship, which appeared to be the most important aspect to them. In the end, they waited in silence for Sylphie to also wake up.

Jake also had a few other things he had to go through himself during this wait, so the silence was welcome. One of which was a notification, or rather, notifications. Ones he had gotten during his time in the space with Stormild, but he hadn't checked through them yet as he knew what they were about. It was the most random levels Jake could remember ever getting.

\*'DING!' Profession: [Heretic-Chosen Alchemist of the Malefic Viper] has reached level 124 - Stat points allocated, +10 free points\*

\*'DING!' Profession: [Heretic-Chosen Alchemist of the Malefic Viper] has reached level 125 - Stat points allocated, +10 free points\*

\*'DING!' Race: [Human (D)] has reached level 127 - Stat points allocated, +15 free points\*

Two levels for... nothing? Or perhaps something. He decided to send a quick one towards Villy to get an explanation.

“So, what was all that stuff about? And why did I get two profession-levels for it?” Jake asked his Patron Primordial.

Villy responded promptly, having no doubt expected Jake to demand an explanation.

“I just gambled with your life to get a few personal benefits without telling you beforehand. Alright, in all seriousness, I expected the response you had there. Why do you ask? Because do you have any idea how hard it was to even give you a blessing? One that wasn’t even conditional in any way, but a pure benefit? You don’t even seem to be aware of how damn annoying it was in the first many months. I felt constant aggression through the connection. That has disappeared now after your evolution. So yeah, I put two and two together and reckoned your bloodline – and thus you – hated ever being put in a position where you have to recognize another existence as superior. The rest of it was just exploitation of a loophole in Stormild’s skill by using our peculiar bond and the opening your bloodline made. And the levels? Well, because you did something very heretic-chosen of you,” Viper said, giving a lengthy explanation.

“And what do you get out of it?” Jake also asked, accepting the rest of the explanation. Those things kinda made sense, right? But the Viper didn’t answer what skin he had in the game.

“Knowledge. Stormild has insights into soul magic I do not, and I wanted to find inspiration through her skill. I couldn’t tell you about it beforehand because then you couldn’t have accepted the contract if you knew as you would have done so partly with the intent of breaking it from the start. As I said, it was a gamble. Honestly, what I get out of it has little relevance to you. I would have told you if it was possible, but then you wouldn’t have gotten those levels or made the contract, so everything turned out fine, right?” Villy continued justifying his actions.

Jake could hear in the Viper's voice he actually was trying to justify it. It was a weird kind of apology, but Jake understood. Apologising wasn't something he liked doing either, but sometimes something was just your fault, and it was better to apologize. He also perfectly understood the Viper not wanting Jake to harbor some hidden resentment or anything like that. Hence he dispelled that right away.

"Well yeah, I guess stuff turned out fine. I reckon you knew Stormild enough to predict her reaction, even if she does seem a bit eccentric. Just give me a heads-up when you can, and if nothing else, I'll be sure to get some petty revenge, alright?" Jake answered back as he smiled, getting a weird look from Hawkie and Mystie.

"Sure thing, mate. See you around and take care," the Primordial said, sounding a bit relieved.

"You too," Jake answered out loud, still smiling. More weird looks from the hawks. Jake just ignored it as he stayed silent and waited for the smallest of the hawks, the one sitting on his head, to awaken.

Five minutes later, Sylphie woke up. Her awakening wasn't as dramatic as Jake nearly falling off his chair, but she just opened her eyes, made a cute yawning sound, and oriented herself. However, she did not appear to have any intentions of getting up but shook herself a bit back and forth to sit more snugly on top of his head.

"So, did you and Stormild have a nice talk?" he asked.

Sylphie made a small screech of confirmation before she began a bird-charade of everything they had talked about. Jake naturally didn't get half of it, but her parents were sure interested.

Jake began instead inspecting what this whole Union Oath ritual had all been about. He could vaguely feel a connection to Sylphie, but only when he really focused. It wasn't like anything he had quite experienced before, and the connection felt far weaker than the one he had with the Viper. Jake had assumed this one would be stronger, but it evidently wasn't.

He did feel a certain quality to it. Like he couldn't break it no matter what, which was the same as what his bond to Villy had changed into after his last evolution. The connection was naturally of the weird metaphysical sort, so it did make him wonder if he could use it to communicate with Sylphie across vast distances or something.

It did make him consider one thing, though. One he probably should have a long time ago. The thought if he could maybe feel if Sylphie was in danger popped into his head, but he already could do that before. That is how he managed to come and stop the Prima in time. Was it just pure intuition from his bloodline? Did they have some hidden connection before already? He had no idea, and quite frankly, it wasn't something he cared much to explore. It was there, it was good. Ultimately, the whole bond was worth it just for Sylphie's ability to enter the Treasure Hunt and likely also get some Records and stuff from Jake. Apropos the Treasure Hunt...

"Sylphie," Jake said, getting her attention as she stopped chatting with her parents. "The Treasure Hunt is in a bit under two weeks. I give you thirteen days. Thirteen days, and if you aren't level 110 by that time, you aren't coming along to the Treasure Hunt. Oh, and if you get in trouble and need help again – which I will know or have Stormild tell me – you also won't come. This is all for your own safety, so do I make myself clear?"

Sometimes a bit of tough love was necessary. Jake wanted to take Sylphie along, but he didn't want to unnecessarily take any risks or hamper his own abilities during the hunt. They would very likely be splitting up or something for a lot of the time, so she needed to take care of herself and also get used to her new strength as a D-grade. She was green in all ways when it came to fighting – and in color – and she needed to be able to stand on her own feet, even if she was young.

Mystie was the first to answer as she made a screech and motioned for them to leave. Jake shut that down right away.

“No, this is Sylphie. Unfortunately, you and Hawkie can’t come along to the Treasure Hunt, and she will need to learn to fight alone. It will only hurt her in the future if she gets too used to having her parents as support and build her fighting style around that, so this time Sylphie has to go alone,” Jake explained.

Mystie answered with an angry screech, but Hawkie came in and calmed her down, agreeing with Jake. Jake threw his old bird-pal a nod, and while he felt like Hawkie didn’t like it, the hawk at least understood that what Jake said was the truth.

As for Sylphie?

“Ree!”

She screeched with determination as she got up halfway through her mom’s protest. All the focus turned to her as she made a few more screeches making her mom back down and her dad look incredibly proud. Jake didn’t need to speak hawk to get the gist of it. She, too, approved of his message, even if he could feel her feet shake a bit atop his nogging as she was obviously a bit nervous. She had never really been hunting enemies truly around her level or above alone before. She did kill D-grades solo before level 100... but none were able to truly challenge her.

Without wasting any time, she jumped down on Jake’s shoulder, rubbed her head against his cheek, and took flight. Her parents stared after her for a moment, made a screech at one another before they also took off – in a slightly different direction than Sylphie. They clearly didn’t want to be too outdone by her, even if they couldn’t join the Treasure hunt.

Jake was also proud of her. He did guess Stormild had also said something, but that didn't have any impact on his pride.

Go get them, Sylphie.

He himself didn't pull out his cauldron. No, instead, he took out his bow. It was the new bow he had gotten from Sultan that during the fight with the Eagle Prima had proven to be more of a liability than anything else. Looking at it in his hand, he Identified it once more.

[Embered Bow of Scorching Plains (Epic)] – A bow made from an unknown type of wood that has been soaked in potent fire-affinity mana for a long period of time without being burned and then infused with a dozen of other valuable materials. All brought to life by an incredibly talented bowyer. The bow's structure is resilient yet flexible, the string near-unbreakable for anyone below C-grade, and the two gemstones passively absorb and transform mana into that of the fire-affinity, making all arrows fired by this bow be imbued with fire energy. The two gemstones can be emptied out of energy to release a large burst of fire-affinity mana in the form of a giant arrow that explodes on impact, scorching the plains below. Enchantments: Ember Arrows. Scorching Plains.

Requirements. Lvl 105+ in any humanoid race

Jake instantly spotted the issue right away in the description. It had a passive function to imbue every single arrow fired with a bit of fire energy, making them, in theory, more effective. This would make all normal arrows deal a bit extra fire damage and make arrows already of the fire-affinity even more powerful, which made sense if that bowyer Maria was an archer focusing on fire magic herself.

The issue was, Jake didn't shoot regular arrows but arcane arrows. Heck, the only reason his arrows played well with his poison was that it was his poison and not someone else's. The fire mana, in this case, was without intent and should hypothetically not mess with anything, but Jake's arcane-affinity was a bit iffy to work with, especially his more destructive variant.

With his destructive variant, the fire mana would just fight the arcane mana and end up being destroyed, expending a bit of arcane mana, resulting in a net-negative. The stable version was better in that it completely rejected the fire mana. All this did was make the fire mana disperse into the atmosphere and not have any effect.

The final part of the bow was the Scorched Plains enchant. He hadn't tested that one yet.

So, he went to do that. Jake naturally planned on transmuting the bow, but he wanted to get a bit more familiar with it before doing that. He already had an approach in mind, and his understanding of the bow was naturally one of the primary factors for how effective a transmutation he could make.

Jake took flight as he headed out of Haven and onto the empty plains. He made sure not to go where people traveled to and from the Fort, but a good distance away from any civilization. He ended up going to the area where the Minotaur Mindchief had once been, thinking that the old barn would be a nice thing to use to test it on. He also wouldn't feel bad about burning that shithole down.

When he got there, he noticed only a few beasts in the area. Most of the cows were just chilling, doing nothing. Seeing no reason to roast any beef, Jake activated his Pride of the Malefic Viper and infused his presence as he yelled loudly.

"FIRE DRILL!"



His voice was even infused with his willpower, echoing far and wide. That quickly got all the bovines' attention as they began mooing and fleeing from the area. He did feel a bit bad about scaring the rather harmless cows, but it was better to scare than kill them.

He took out his bow and started out doing some simple tests. Then, using his old uncommon-rarity quiver, he drew an arrow and fired it. As he drew the string, he felt fire mana be infused into the arrow, and he saw the arrowhead begin glowing, and the wood had fiery red lines run through it. When he released the string, the arrow flew forth and broke apart when it hit the ground, sending the fire mana into the soil.

Actually quite decent, Jake thought. Far less powerful than his arcane arrows, but not bad at all. He especially liked that the arrow didn't just explode but sent the fire mana into the target it hit – it was excellent attention to detail.

Jake kept practicing for a few more hours, just using the uncommon-rarity arrows. He inspected how the mana moved and how the two gemstones collected atmospheric mana and transformed it into fire mana—all of it with the sole intent of transforming it into an arcane variant. Jake didn't want to lose the ability to infuse the arrows with more mana, just making it all arcane mana instead.

By that time, the entire area around him was devoid of life, and he decided it was a good time to use the ultimate move of the bow.

He didn't need to be told what to do; the item allowed him instinctively to know. Jake took position on a platform of mana under his feet as he began. Raising the bow, his intent became clear, and it responded.

The entire body of the bow caught fire, and the two gems on each end began glowing. Jake drew the now red-glowing string as mana gathered from the gemstones. A long, almost spear-shaped arrow appeared on the string, more than three meters in length. It was even bigger than nearly all of his arrows from Arrow of the Ambitious Hunter if not all of them.

Both gems stopped glowing nearly instantly, and the arrow hadn't even taken a second to condense.

Letting go of the string, a torrent of flames was released as the arrow descended, surrounded by an inferno. When it hit the ground, it didn't explode. At least not per-se, even with what the enchantment said.

No, instead, it sent out an almost entirely horizontal pulse of flames that, quite literally, scorched across the plains. The fire hugged the ground as it flowed almost like it was liquid across the landscape, burning the ground in its path, leaving only ashes behind.

The barn had the fire simply snake up its sides as it consumed the entire building in moments, leaving only ashes behind.

In but a few moments, the entire landscape more than five kilometers in diameter was reduced to only a huge circular burn-mark. Not a single building remained, and everything had been flattened. The power of the strike would have likely killed most beings below D-grade before they even got a chance to respond and injured many, if not most, low-grade D-grades quite badly.

"Yeah, I can work with this," Jake said as he smiled. He had a feeling the transmutation would turn out just fine.