

Hunter 281

Chapter 281: Better Boots

While Jake was working on his elixirs in a trance-like state, everyone else around the globe also progressed. Parties dove in dungeons, hunted down more and more powerful beasts and crafted items more potent than anything they had ever created before.

Every single day more D-grade appeared, and in these last two weeks, it was easily in the triple digits every single day. At this point, Neil and his party had also all managed to reach D-grade and begun hunting as a group to get in a few more levels.

Sultan had spent fewer days within Haven but gone hunting himself with the one remaining slave who remained under his charge to get some more levels in too. Miranda had taken charge of the other, and she would also join the Treasure Hunt.

There was some bad news, though.

Miranda was in her office in Haven, Phillip in front of her, sitting slumped over on a chair.

"I guess I'm just not really that up to it anymore," Phillip said as he sighed.

Miranda also sighed as she sat together with the man. He looked a bit thinner than last, and his eyes were a bit sunken. He had gone hunting many times but always returned faster than anyone else. His entire demeanor was just that of a tired man who looked to have stretched himself thin. He was still high level... but his progress had stopped.

[Human - lvl 99]

He was level 99 but had not gotten any chance to evolve. His class was not maxed out yet, but it too had only gotten slower. Miranda was fully aware of what it was all about.

Phillip had lost his purpose after she and Jake had come to take over the Fort. Phillip wasn't someone who had risen to the occasion out of desire but out of responsibility. He was a career-man in the military, and the soldiers at the Fort were his to lead, so he led them. He sought power not because he wanted to but because of the constant pressure from the bovine hordes. In the tutorial, it had been the same, as he only progressed because he had to, not because he wanted to.

But now? Now, he didn't really need to do anything. He still led the soldiers in day-to-day operations, handled personnel, and acted as head of what was essentially the police, but that was it. The man had little to no desires outside of this and only really worked due to obligations.

To say it in the nicest way possible, then he was burned out and halfway to retirement. In a less nice way? He had gotten lazy and complacent when his own personal power stopped mattering as much. The meeting with Sultan seemed to have fully pushed him over the edge. Phillip didn't believe such an event would never repeat itself. One where a single individual could just show up, and he and the soldiers under his employ would be powerless to do anything.

Miranda did have some sympathy towards him. She herself only had a purpose now because she was given one. Without Jake, she knew she would have also been directionless, only trying to survive. She would likely have settled down somewhere and maybe worked with the local smithy or a group of craftsmen. Maybe she would have tried to start a company or something. She sure as hell wouldn't be the leader of one of the premier cities of Earth, have a Divine Blessing, and work directly under the Chosen of a Primordial.

“Have you considered a replacement yet?” she asked him.

The conclusion was clear. Phillip was planning on stepping down within not that long. He would still work, but he would not be the one in charge, more a supporter who helped where needed while otherwise enjoying the retired life.

“I have a few in mind, and I swear they’ll do good. It will still be a while before everything is finalized, but I’m working on it,” Phillip said with a tired smile. “Thanks again.”

“You gotta look out for yourself sometimes,” Miranda just said, returning his smile. “I’m sure we will be able to find a way to manage without you, and I’m sure your successor will do wonders. Just... no rush, and if you want to stay, we can always find a position or change things up. But ultimately, the choice is yours and no one else’s.”

The two of them discussed a few more details before the man left, leaving Miranda alone in the office. Things like this could just... happen. Unless Phillip experienced some massive change in mindset, he would never even reach D-grade, and if he did, that would surely be where his road ended. He likely wouldn’t ever reach the mid-tiers of D-grade.

It was an unfortunate reality, but one everyone had to accept. It was the truly driven and often a bit ‘off’ people who truly did well. Sultan, Jake, Arnold, the fanatics of the Holy Church, heck, even herself were examples of this. All of them weren’t exactly normal by old-world standards anymore. They were now all driven with strong internal motivation. Miranda wanted to do her best, not because she had to, but because she wanted to. She would dream of the ways Haven could expand, of where she could stand in a decade or a century, and how far she could go.

Nearly all of it was reliant on Jake, of course. She had resigned herself to that, and while he could be a bit... challenging to deal with, one thing was for damn sure.

If anyone were driven by internal motivation, it was him.

“And another brew done, and another brew done, and another batch in the pot,” Jake sang slightly offbeat as he finished up another batch of elixirs. This was his ninth successful batch of the uncommon-rarity Sensus Elixirs, and he was feeling quite good about himself. Lillian had even come by with a shitload of cores and ingredients for his perception-elixirs earlier, making him a very happy man. He had spent most of the time these last ten days just pumping out agility elixirs, so he was happy he could now focus more on perception.

He bottled it up in two bottles and Identified them both before chugging them down. That meant he had consumed eighteen uncommon-rarity perception elixirs total. Along with that, he had also downed another fifty-one of the common-rarity version for a total of +243 more perception.

[Sensus Elixir (Uncommon)] – An elixir created from a mix of uncommon and rare ingredients as well as 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. +5 Perception upon consumption

Requirements: D-rank or higher.

He still had 433 stats to fill out even with so many elixirs consumed. Well, he could just bite the bullet and consume some of his many agility or even the vitality-increasing ones, but that would have to wait.

With the successful brewing also came a notification. It was Jake's third level during these past ten days. It turned out that churning out elixirs was a damn efficient way of leveling, even if it wasn't as fast as his last trance-like state. That one had been quite intense, and as his familiarity with making elixirs increased, so did the diminishing return of crafting similar things kick in. Still, three levels in ten days wasn't bad at all.

'DING!' Profession: [Heretic-Chosen Alchemist of the Malefic Viper] has reached level 129 - Stat points allocated, +10 free points

'DING!' Race: [Human (D)] has reached level 129 - Stat points allocated, +15 free points

Jake had reached level 129, and now his class, profession, and race were all the exact same level again. Additionally, many would argue 129 was close to 130. Naturally, this meant...

It was time.

Jake packed up his cauldron and instead summoned the token he had been saving.

[Token of Akashic Awakening (Epic)] – Infuse into a piece of equipment to attempt to awaken or amplify the Records within, upgrading the item to a maximum of Epic-rarity. If the item is already Epic-rarity, it will try to amplify existing effects through awakened Records. Overall effects may be unpredictable. WARNING: Touching directly upon the Records of an item may make others related to the associated Records aware.

Requirements: User must be below lvl 130.

He had been saving the token for this day. His boots on his feet were ready to be blessed and become better boots. All he hoped was that their comfy feeling would remain untouched as he would despise losing that. They were the snuggliest boots he could imagine, and he remembered those times he walked with bare feet, such as when he washed. It was far worse. Truly, the boots were superior to all other types of footwear.

Identifying his beloved boots again, he did note that their stat values were a bit... outdated.

[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 have 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.

This was one of his oldest items, gained from an ancient Challenge Dungeon that the Malefic Viper, one of only twelve gods at the time, had made. Jake wasn't sure if the boots were from all the way back then, but to him, they had always felt old. If they truly had relations to the first universe, the Records simply from the passage of time had to be quite something.

Jake took off his boots and held up the token. He had tried it before, and with little fanfare, he activated it.

A soft glow encapsulated the boots, and with his sphere, he saw them within. Visually, not a single thing was changing, and it actually made Jake fear something was wrong. The token had not been cheap, and he had really been looking forward to the upgrade.

But that doubt was quickly dispelled as he felt the aura of the item change. He felt it become stronger, and as the item was already bound to him, he suddenly felt an influx of stats. At that moment, he knew it had been a success.

The entire process hadn't been flashy in any way, but just like those times he upgraded items back in the tutorial. Then, as the glow faded, he saw the boots, looking exactly the same as before, and he didn't hesitate to identify them.

[Boots of the Wandering Alchemist (Epic)] – Boots once offered to an alchemist before setting out on a journey to experience the world outside at the behest of his master. Despite being made of simple leather, the Records of the ancient alchemist have left a deep mark on this item, allowing it to transcend many ranks. Further amplified by a Token of Akashic Awakening, these Records are now more prominent than ever, heightening their effects, although only a fraction remains displayed. Enchantments: +125 Endurance, +100 Agility, +75 Perception. Reduces stamina expenditure from all movement-related skills by a moderate amount. Increases sensitivity towards earthbound plants and Natural Treasures.

Requirements: Lvl 125+ in any humanoid race.

The changes were subtle... but it did give a bit more info now. First of all, it now made clear the alchemist was male and that he had set out because of his master. It had also gone from improving not only his sensitivity towards earthbound plants but to now also include earthbound Natural Treasures. To be perfectly honest, due to his high perception and Sense of the Malefic Viper, that effect had always been kind of useless. Maybe it would be a bit better now.

In the stats department, it was a huge improvement too. More endurance, more agility, and most importantly, they also even gave perception now. Jake was over the moon with the stats, as all of them were important, and none made him get capped out in anything.

He did still wonder about who the boots could be related to. Was the Viper the master spoken of? Who was the alchemist in question? A disciple of the Viper at the time? It couldn't be Duskleaf; Jake was pretty damn certain of that. Duskleaf had become the Viper's student far later on, after all.

Jake was also aware the person was no doubt dead by now. If not, it would have to be one of the other eleven Primordials, and he seriously doubted it was one of those. Well, ten Primordials, as he was pretty darn certain that Stormild didn't wear shoes.

I'll find out eventually, he told himself as he did something he had been looking forward to. He slowly put his feet inside the boots one by one and walked a bit back and forth on his porch. His face was filled with unabashed shock as the impossible had been achieved: the boots had got even snuglier.

After just walking around for far longer than could ever be reasonable, he did the only next logical step: more alchemy. He wanted to spend these last two days grinding out a few more elixirs, make new batches of his best poisons and potions of all kinds with all his stat gains and whatnot. Of course, he had also planned on making potions for everyone else in Haven who would enter along with him, so that was what most of his time would be spent doing for sure.

That was the final preparations for the Treasure Hunt he had in mind. His Path of the Heretic-Chosen still didn't respond, so he couldn't attempt to upgrade another skill yet. He didn't have time to make any other new types of creations either, as, well, a bit over two days wasn't a long time.

There was no transmutation to make either. The Nanoblade was not really fit to be transmuted at all, and chances are he would only break it or make it worse. The true value of the blade did not come from

its magical properties but the materials used and the craftsmanship. So yeah, that one was out of the question.

He didn't have time to go hunting either, at least not properly. He had chosen to prioritize making elixirs and get his stats maxed out from consumable items.

Lillian had come by and told him they would have a meeting around 24 hours before the Treasure Hunt to make sure everyone was ready and do some strategizing, so he also had to do that. Jake reckoned he would be done making elixirs and would hand out all his excess ones during the meeting for those who wanted them. Well, Sultan would have to buy them. The two slaves too. So yeah, he would give some to Neil and his party as well as Miranda. Besides that, he really was set for the whole event. The Treasure Hunt was surely going to be an interesting experience.

Jake could barely contain a smile as he remembered a certain someone he was sure would attend - the old man known as the Sword Saint, who was the only one to truly make him pause. They had a fight scheduled, and Jake was looking forward to it nearly as much as the event itself.

But for now...

For now, it was just a bit more alchemy.