

Hunter 284

Chapter 284: Treasure Hunt: A World of Mist

The mist rolled over the hills as the vast open plains that were otherwise desolate suddenly saw movement. First, a figure appeared, a hawk still on his shoulder. Then, another person appeared a second later, and within two minutes, over fifty people stood there.

Jake saw Miranda had entered with both the slave woman and the thief. He wasn't sure what she had done, but both seemed to be under her charge for now. As far as he could tell, it wasn't any kind of slave contract or something like that, but there clearly was some kind of control involved. But, ultimately, it wasn't something he bothered dealing with.

The Treasure Hunt was far more important.

He noted they were currently within a transparent bubble of sorts. Likely there until everyone had entered the Treasure Hunt. While the others were talking, Jake decided to spend this time more efficiently as he tested some things. The first of which was his divine connection.

Jake felt inward, and while he could feel his connection with Villy, he couldn't pull on it. It was like the World Congress with the gods completely cut off. He was fully aware this was advantageous to him, and he was more than happy to have the system block it out. It meant far less bullshit would go on, and it would just be mortals fucking up other mortals.

Seven minutes or so later – when the original invitation time was over – a notification appeared as the bubble around them faded.

Welcome to the Treasure Hunt!

The Treasure Hunt takes place in the ruins of a fallen realm, one where civilization still left behind many signs of its existence. Explore their world, challenge the many monsters that still roam these lands, and most importantly, claim their treasures.

A mist hangs over these lands, hiding many secrets and forgotten places. Venture through it to discover the dangers and opportunities that lie within or stay in the safety of the plains. The choice is yours, but be warned of what the mist may hide.

Each Treasure Hunter has been given a Hunter Insignia that allows them to store treasures within. All spatial storages are restricted during the hunt. This insignia can be activated to transport the Hunter out of the Treasure Hunt prematurely at the cost of leaving all rewards behind.

The final reward will be calculated at the end of the Treasure Hunt. The Treasure Hunt will last a total of ten days. May fortune be with you!

Time remaining: 9 days, 23:59:59

Jake read it over and nodded to himself. He was currently standing on a grassy plain, except he noticed the grass has a neon blue color and was even giving off a very faint amount of light. The first thing he did was test the insignia versus his spatial storage. Jake tried to activate his spatial storage and easily took out his bow. He deposited it again without any issues.

Existing items I brought in are unaffected, he noted. Next, he picked up a small handful of grass from the ground and tried to put that in his spatial storage. It didn't work. Next, he tried to put it in the insignia storage, and that worked just fine.

All items from in here must be put in the insignia. Pretty simple, Jake thought with a nod. The insignia itself could be summoned anywhere on the body at any point and was just a box with some runes he couldn't recognize within. He saw some people had it appear on their hands or arms, with the back of the hand seeming like the preferred position for most.

Jake also naturally listened in to the chatter all this time. It had been going on since anyone entered, and he was looking forward to leaving, but he still took the time to hear if anyone had any interesting insights he didn't'.

"The mist is dense," he heard someone with a bow say - an archer of some kind.

"I can't see shit," another one answered.

"I think we should stay in the plains for now..."

They were all currently standing in the plains and not very far from a barrier of mist. It was like a wall, but Jake could see it curving slightly, making it more circular in shape. If his guess was correct – which he was certain it was – then the plains were the center of this entire Treasure Hunt with a ring of mist around it. Jake looked to the side, and far off in the distance, he saw another group of people. Looking inwards, directly away from the barrier, he also saw people far off in the distance. Further, into the plains, he even saw a few buildings scattered about. The mist was still present in the plains, but it was far thinner and more just a light fog.

This place is fucking huge, he thought as he peered into the mist. He saw it moving a bit uphill away from the plains, and far off in the distance, he saw the outline of what looked like tall hills or mountains. Wait, wasn't a tall hill just a mountain? Or did it have something to do with how rocky they were? Hm...

"Everyone, let us split up here," Miranda said. "A larger group will be able to find far fewer treasures, and considering that our relative safety is guaranteed, there is no need to stay as a larger target, is there?"

Jake scoffed a bit internally. Of course, Miranda didn't want to bother with these independent D-grades either. Not that he thought they wanted to deal with her either. He decided to be a bit nice for once and gave them a warning.

"Be warned, there are unnatural movements within the mist; my guess is that creatures hide within," Jake said, having all the independents turn to him. Considering he still had a lot of goodwill from the potions and now the warning, he got a few thankful smiles and nods. It was the easiest brownie points of his life.

Five people took off individually just after he spoke without a word but still giving Jake a nod in thanks. They had likely just stayed behind to be polite to him and Miranda and saw both him and her speaking up as approval for them to leave.

Miranda looked over at Jake, and he looked back and smiled beneath his mask as he nodded. She would handle the rest, and now... now it was time for Jake to do what he was good at.

This was a Treasure Hunt, and he was a Hunter. A Treasure Hunter, even, as the system called him and everyone else.

And Jake was very good at hunting.

Miranda observed as everyone left one by one or in smaller groups. Most went into the unknown mists after some discussions, while others left for the plains. Neil and his party had chosen to enter the mist, too, Eleanor's abilities as a scout offering them some comfort.

The only people remaining were Sultan, the two slave women, the potion thief, and Arnold.

"I don't care what you do," Miranda said to the one slave woman and the thief, "just don't cause any trouble. Now, get out of here."

The two of them didn't have to be told twice as they both took off towards the inside of the plains. Together. She didn't question that one but just assumed they saw each other and decided to stay together for now. Miranda would bet a thousand Credits they were gonna fuck over each other the moment they found anything of value.

"What are your plans?" she asked Sultan, who was standing there patiently with his one remaining follower.

"I would ask you the same," he answered with a smile. "Should we perhaps go together? Strength in numbers, and I do believe we have powers that would mutually benefi-"

"No," Miranda shut it down. "Thanks for the offer, but I am perfectly capable on my own."

The man shrugged. "In that case, we shall leave."

With those words, he and his slave entered the mist. Miranda saw an aura be emitted from the man, and she felt a slight prickle in her mind looking his way. No doubt it was some kind of soul-magic, likely to scout the area after Jake's warning.

She turned to Arnold to ask him, but the man just stood there with his damn tablet out, pointed towards the ground. He also repeatedly looked at the insignia that he had summoned on the back of his hand, and he even took a small needle to it, put the needle in a small slot in the tablet, and nodded in understanding just after. Miranda had some serious doubts if Arnold coming to the Treasure Hunt was a good idea, but he had chosen to attend. In the end, she just shook her head and asked anyway.

"What will you do, Arnold?"

He looked up at her briefly. "The objective of this Treasure Hunt, naturally."

Arnold was already looking down again as he walked a bit back and forth; the tablet still pointed down, and he sometimes did stuff on it. Miranda shrugged as she also left. "Good luck, I guess."

With that, she also entered the mist to find her own fortune.

Now, if only she could see more than a hundred meters ahead of her, it would have been nice. She summoned wisps of verdant light that flew out in all directions to at least give her some awareness of what was happening further ahead.

Arnold finished his scanning and located a suitable spot. He opened his jacket and took out a small pen, pressed a button, and saw it enlarge nearly a hundred times over. He placed it in the ground as it began drilling. Then, opening a small pouch on his belt, he took out a handful of small objects that he tossed into the air.

None of them fell to the ground but took flight on their own as they began scouring the plains. Finally, Arnold took out what looked like a mix between a rifle and a cannon and pointed it upwards. He pressed the side of his glasses as they showed grid lines in the sky.

BOOM!

He fired as his entire arm hurt. Unpleasant but necessary work. Five more shots later, and he felt like his entire arm was paralyzed. Thankfully, he was done with his part.

Arnold summoned dozens of mid-sized drones that he sent into the air and into the mist. Once they were sent off, he saw that the drill was about done. It had managed to get nearly fifty meters down, which should be enough.

The drill was pulled back up with a command on the tablet, and he placed a final drone on the ground. Then, he jumped down into the hole and let himself fall till he reached the bottom, where he sat down in the cramped space. Finally, he took out what looked like an umbrella that opened and pierced into the dirt, also making a platform beneath him to sit more comfortably.

A swipe on the tablet later, and the drone above began filling the hole up, the umbrella making sure he wasn't covered. Once it was done covering the hole, it would self-destruct to make it look like a fight had been going on, masking that a hole had been dug.

As a final thing, he took out an armchair from his spatial storage and sat back.

He looked down at the tablet as hundreds of small displays appeared from his many drones sent out. Then, a minute later, another message appeared.

Satellite uplink successfully established.

Countless factions and powerful individuals had entered the Treasure Hunt. Many with their own agendas, but the majority only with the hope of finding treasures to help themselves advance in this new world.

Anyone that had managed to reach D-grade was at least partly driven and competent. The majority of the larger factions quickly entered the mist, but a bit of reshuffling was necessary for some groups. An oft-forgotten ability was more essential than ever in this event:

Scouting.

The mist made seeing even a hundred meters ahead of you a major challenge for the common D-grade. An archer or other class with scouting skills, especially the near-omnipresent Archer's Eye, and its many upgrades did help alleviate this issue somewhat.

A majority of these parties had made it as far as they did by being careful and organized. The Holy Church used light mages to create a path through the mist while carrying giant light-torches burning like the sun.

The undead summoned ghosts or apparitions to scout ahead for them when they didn't have a more regular scout class available. The Court of Shadows were naturally stealthy and carefully snuck through the mist as many of them spread out tendrils of darkness to warn them of any approaching threats.

People found solutions and were careful. Everyone tried different skills and tactics to safely explore the new environment they found themselves in. They knew things could turn deadly, not just by the hand of other humans but also potentially the environment itself.

But... some parties and overconfident people did none of that. Some parties and individuals had gone with the tactic of trying to get as good a headstart as possible. They were quick on their feet and identified that the better rewards would be deep in the mist, and the moment they get the chance, they rushed into it.

One such person was currently swiftly flying close to the ground as he found flying any higher incredibly difficult because the mist appeared to press him down. He was a level 104 caster, a competent fire mage who had never quite found a party he got along with, which was why he had entered this event alone.

He kept flying, sending out fireballs to light up the way. One of his blasts revealed something reflecting light ahead of him. Without any hesitation, he headed towards it. Yet, he wasn't a complete moron, so he stopped a distance away and surveyed the area as he landed.

What was ahead of him was a metal staff impaled into the ground. He Identified it and saw it was rare-rarity... an item he could use for sure. The mage carefully approached, his eyes flickering back and forth as a mantle of flame covered his body in case he triggered any traps.

Nothing happened as he walked up to that staff. Then, he put his hand on it. Still nothing. He poured mana into it and bound it to himself, a huge grin on his face as he-

SWISH!

The air ripped as there was movement in the mist, but just as it appeared, it disappeared again. The mage's eyes opened wide. He didn't even think about triggering the insignia to escape... that function of his mind was already gone as he looked to the side only to see a gaping maw.

Half a minute later, all that was left was a dried-up corpse that soon turned to dust and became one with the mist - the creature that killed him already gone.

Not a single trace of either's existence was left behind.