

## Hunter 287

### Chapter 287: Treasure Hunt: History Lesson

Jake searched his inventory and found a stone chair he had swiped before. He summoned it and sat back as he listened to the projection talk. This wasn't a case like in the Undergrowth dungeon and that Altmar elf. This was just a recording, nothing more, nothing less.

"This place is – or perhaps was – once called Yalsten. We were always a secluded small world with few exits or entrances since this place was created. For many years it was a paradise. A place of study and learning, free of war and conflict. A united people under the banner of the creator. We cultivated resources, trained fighters, and did as we were commanded. But, alas, this would not last.

"The creator was known as Yal, the world named after him. A mighty A-grade on the crux of advancement. Yet time was coming for him. He sought to advance but found himself unable. He sought power but faltered. Do not misunderstand; I do respect the creator for making this world... but I have long been disillusioned towards his person. He was just another greedy mage seeking to advance through any means possible. This world is ultimately nothing but a prison for his family to be kept safe forever. It was a place for his family to be kept safe..."

Jake looked up to the black ash-covered ceiling as he listened, hoping it would soon get to the good part. So yeah, some space mage or something had made this world and put a bunch of people in here, including his family. He guessed the next part was about how shit had gone wrong.

"While his life was long, he knew it was ending. So the creator sought ways to extend it. Natural Treasures consumed in droves, forsaken rituals of old, everything in his power he sought out. Everything appeared to be in vain... until he showed up."

Jake frowned at that. The projection had perhaps not done it on purpose, but he felt the intent and will injected into that word - the pure hatred, powerful enough to survive even within an otherwise completely powerless projection.

“He came bearing a gift that would turn out to cost more than Yal could ever afford. The creator accepted the gift as he underwent the Ritual of Blood and joined the vampiric race to extend his lifespan and-“

“Oh damn, vampires,” Jake muttered out loud. “So, this is vampire land? I hope it’s the cool sort of vampires...”

“-throughout the years, he began offering this same gift to his family. Once his family converted, they spread it to their servants, who then spread it to their families, and within a few decades, nine out of ten had joined the vampiric race. The last ten percent were still on the fence or not deemed worthy. I must admit, my ancestors also joined them... and this entire change led to a period of prosperity.

“The creator reached S-grade not long after, and this world began creating C-grades like never before who left to join the wider world outside. Our kings grew to B or even A-grade, and we became a powerful family under the banner of the vampiric race. All signs indicated that we would prosper more than ever before, and our future was bright. Until the Bloodless Night happened... and everything changed.

“Without the power of the True Ancestor, we were forced to feed... we were made to consume the lives of others to sustain ourselves. As a third-generation inheritor of the True Ancestor, the creator was harder hit than anyone else and went insane. He died only a month after the Bloodless Night, hunted down by the Templars of the Blessed Sun. Our kings, fearing for the future, tried to hide our world away entirely, cutting off all connections to the multiverse.”

It was quite a lot of information at once, and Jake frowned a bit at the many terms used. So... Bloodless Night, True Ancestor, Templars of the Blessed Sun... Jake had the feeling this recording expecting him to know what all these were about. Naturally, he had no clue. But man, True Ancestor and Bloodless Night? Totally vampire-related. The Templars? Jake remembered hearing those were often associated with the Holy Church, so did the vampires get hunted down by an army of paladins?

A bit cliché.

“However... this was not a suitable solution. We needed to feed to live, and if we locked ourselves away, we would not be able to get livestock. We tried to nurture some, but it was not feasible in any way. Our time of prosperous growth ended up being one of the primary causes of our downfall... without proper livestock, the most powerful of us deteriorated and, in the end, had to leave this world behind to try and make it outside.

“Those that remained tried to find ways to survive without life energy. Alchemists kept us going for a while, but it was far from enough to sustain us. So we kept looking... and finally, someone came up with an idea.”

“This is where he tells me about how they made some fucked up experiment or ritual that ended up creating that mist which ruined the entire place for good,” Jake spoke out loud.

“A ritual was theorized-“

“Fucking called it.”

“-to change the nature of the mist that hung over our world.”

“Shit.”

“The mist was but a natural part of this world. It had always been. The mist held special magical properties, allowing certain Natural Treasures to grow, and was no doubt one of the reasons why we could grow as we did. So, the one remaining Vampire King – a powerful A-grade – came up with the idea to transform the mist. Make it into one of life that could sustain us forever. The way of doing this? A grand ritual of more livestock than ever before.”

“So the Vampire King left, and a century later, he returned. He came with several planet’s worths of livestock. Most of them were humans, but it also included elves, scalekin, beastfolk, and most enlightened races. More than a trillion. All to be the fuel of the ritual.”

“Okay, that’s kinda fucked up,” Jake said. He knew – or at least hoped – that Villy was just joking with the whole planetary sacrificial ritual thing, and now he was hearing that was actually a legit thing. Seriously... a trillion was a fucking lot. That was more than a hundred times Earth’s population before the system. He did understand that planets could hold far more people now due to how massive they were, but it was still just too much.

“This Vampire King was a master of curse magic, so he thought it would be smart to create a special kind of curse to infuse all the livestock into the mist. He would not kill them... no, he would seal them. Make them constant batteries of life, turning their entire souls into fuel. I do not know the details... only that he succeeded. In fact, the ritual was a massive success, and for years everything seemed to be perfect once more. He was hailed as a hero.

“But the thing about curses is that they are very much alive. This particular curse evolved. Grew. It began to slowly develop, and so did those it affected. If you have been to the plains, you have seen the results of continued exposure... monsters that dwell within the mist. Once proud members of the vampiric race, now reduced to nothing.

“We were forced to flee. Take refuge underground or hide within the towers to keep the mist out, live here, and try to survive on alchemical products and what little livestock we still had. The King was more affected by his own curse than anyone else, and in an attempt to not be corrupted and fix everything, he tried a different ritual... one that ended up causing even more harm. Within the next decade, 99% of this world was consumed by the black mist. Naturally, the King died too.

“Not a single being above C-grade managed to survive this period. Our most powerful Kings, Dukes, and Marquesses died. Only the Counts remained to lead us. They tried... I truly believe they did... but it never became the same. Thousands of years passed like this, us just hiding in towers, sometimes single individuals ventured outside, but the creatures in the mist never disappeared. They were always waiting. Always hungering. Six hundred years before this message was recorded, the last gateway to the outside world closed, sealing us in completely.

“It was a slow death for us all. We deteriorated... but soon, we did see one spot of light. The mist began being cleansed. The curse weakening. All we needed was time... and so we waited. The Counts entered Eternal Slumber, and the rest of us tried to make it. This recording being necessary should make it clear we failed.”

Jake sat there, still listening to this massive history lesson. He did learn a few things. First, the mist was good for treasures and a natural part of this world. Second, the vampires had lived in these towers, and the creatures outside were mutated vampires. Third, the curse had been weakening. Fourth... there was something special about that center plain.

“Behind me is a recording of our history and some tomes with all the most valuable information we have learned through the ages. Be it regarding alchemy, smithing, construction, tailoring, or any other

profession; it is there. I hope you will take this and spread the knowledge to allow Yalsten to live on, at least in some form.

“Additionally, there are many treasures hidden all over the plains and even within the hidden treasuries of these towers. Claim it all, for we have nothing to use it for anymore. All I ask is that you remember us.”

The projection stopped talking for a while and just stood there. Jake stared at it intently for a while. Don't you fucking dare scam me on the information about the greatest treasure...

Just before he was about to waste his time tearing the recording a new one, it spoke again.

“Finally, I offered to provide the location of the greatest treasure in this world... and I will stay true to that promise. In the center of the Mistless Plains lies a hidden structure that contains this treasure. Power left by the True Ancestor Sanguine, brought here by the creator. One that can only be accessed when the keys of nine kings come together. These kings themselves have long died... but the Counts of Blood still lived at the time of this recording, and they now hold the keys. One of these Counts resides within this tower. However, be warned... for the Counts have entered Eternal Slumber, and if they still live and awaken, they will be hungry. If you can even reach their quarters, that is. I wish you luck.”

With those words, the entire projection disappeared, leaving only Jake and the bookshelf behind in the room. Everything else was just piles of ash. Jake walked forward and looked over the bookshelf. He saw a shitload of books on so many topics. He counted about five hundred books total on the bookshelf... and there was no way in hell he was going to sit down and read anything here and now. Sure, maybe there would be some information within giving him information on where treasures could be located, but he would prefer to blindly just look for himself.

After putting the entire bookshelf inside the storage, he headed out again. He opened the huge gate and looked to see if the trap had managed to damage it in any way. It naturally hadn't, but what he was more interested in was if the hinges were damaged. They were not.

The doors were attached through huge poles of metal on each side embedded in the stone. Jake very much wanted to steal them, but that wasn't possible without breaking down the stones. He had tried with the Pillar, and the stones were just too powerful. His arcane-affinity also didn't help much. Jake had tried everything he could and-

Oh...

Looking at all the ash, Jake remembered something. Something he probably should have remembered a bit earlier. What did Jake do the last time he came across contraptions he could not break? Because he did have one weapon. One made specifically to break down objects:

Alchemical Flame.

Jake smiled as his eyes glimmered. It was time to steal the god damn doors off their hinges.

Miyamoto walked through the mist-filled halls of the hill he had entered. A hill he came to learn was, in actuality, an underground bunker. One that had long been abandoned. Only the beasts that dwelled within the mist remained. Their claws were sharp and their attacks powerful... but compared to his blade, they all came up short.

Another figure flew in from the side as he walked past another doorway. It was only a faint shimmer in the air, but it failed to completely mask its presence. A single slice and the beast

was cut in two as its bisected body splattered onto the wall.

This was but one of many. Beasts, not even the old man's own level, sought to challenge him. He would find it insulting if their general lack of intellect weren't clear. At least the ones in the plains had learned to stay away. These beasts that had been sealed in were far more aggressive.

After walking through the halls for a long time, he finally saw a gate. One with a large red magic circle inscribed upon it. He drew his blade and cut down the center where the slit of the gate was. The rune broke, and the door flew open.

Red mist poured out of the large chamber behind the gate as he saw a coffin leaning against the far side of the wall slowly open, a figure within.

[Viscount of Blood – lvi 135]

The being's eye opened abruptly as an aura spread, and Miyamoto smiled. Come.

Jacob sat in meditation at the middle of their hastily constructed basecamp in what he had come to learn was called the Mistless Plains. Little time had passed since they entered, yet they had already created large walls using earth magic and began putting down preliminary enchantments.

He, as the Augur, was not meant to join any of the fightings. This was not his role. No, instead, he would be the one directing everything.



“Group 4 should move in the 61-degree direction, and they will encounter a bunker. Have them secure it and wait for group 3 to arrive. Group 2 should move in the 146-degree direction, and they will encounter one of the mountains. There shall be an entrance along the base; I am not certain where. Once inside, scour it from the bottom to the top. I can see they will face challenges... it will not be as straightforward... the details are unclear,” Jacob muttered. “Oh, group 8 should avoid their current trajectory but switch to the 289-degree direction.”

Over a dozen mages and priests surrounded him, all with magic rituals and circles around them, allowing them each to communicate with a corresponding group. The only group Jacob personally directed was Bertram's, also known as group 1.

“Bertram, once you're done in that bunker, head for the location of group 2 and secure the tower. I fear we will have heavy competition.”

Jacob had seen many futures and realities, but one thing was certain in all of them: for this initial part of the Treasure Hunt, those towers would be the gathering point.