

Hunter 288

Chapter 288: Treasure Hunt: Armor of Mist

One man's trash is another man's treasure. Many would say that in a Treasure Hunt with high-rarity items spread throughout a large area, one should not stay in a single place for a prolonged period to procure things that didn't even count as items. Most would argue that was a waste of time. But to Jake, the true treasure was not the huge metal gate: it was the sense of victory he got when the first door finally fell off the hinges and slammed into the ground, making the entire archive shake and all the ash be lifted off the ground for a brief moment.

Totally worth it, Jake thought as he put the huge thing in his inventory. Swiftly he moved on to the next door and spent another half an hour slowly burning away at the hinge. Was this truly worth the metal of the door? Maybe, Jake really didn't know as he was quite clueless when it came to metals. He had just decided he wanted the metal, so he got the metal.

All arguments for it not being worth it were swiftly removed, though, as the entire process forced Jake to take a different approach with a skill he often took for granted. Alchemical Flame was a core skill for all alchemists, and Jake just used it to control the heat of the cauldron usually. That usage hadn't really led to anything... but spending over an hour focusing on improving the flame as he got the doors off? That sure helped.

[Alchemical Flame (Common)] – The flame of an alchemist is one of the most critical aspects of the crafting process. The flame itself is affinity-less and not polluted by the impurities of burning a catalyst. The path to refining one's alchemical flame is a long and arduous one for all alchemists seeking the pinnacle. Allows the alchemist to create a small alchemical flame, emitting heat. Adds a minor increase to the effectiveness of Alchemical Flame based on Wisdom

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[Alchemical Flame (Uncommon)] – The flame of an alchemist is one of the most critical aspects of the crafting process. The flame itself is affinity-less and not polluted by the impurities of burning a catalyst. You have just embarked on the path of refining your alchemical flame, and may your path towards the pinnacle be swift. Allows the alchemist to create a moderate alchemical flame, emitting heat. Adds a small increase to the effectiveness of Alchemical Flame based on Wisdom

Jake got the notification halfway through getting the second door of the gate off. The change in the description was minimal, and honestly, he couldn't feel much of a difference. Just that his flame could get slightly larger, heat up or cool down a bit faster, and was generally just all-around improved. Which was nice. Once again, stealing doors was totally worth it.

With the gate gone, he decided to head onwards. He still had a lot of the tower to explore, and according to the recording, there were hidden treasures. It made sense he couldn't just sense them outright, as, of course, hidden treasures were... well, hidden.

Walking out of the hallway leading to the library, he frowned as he heard sound echo up from the bottom of the atrium. Jake slowly walked over to the edge of the balcony with an overlook all the way to the base of the tower and towards the top.

He looked down and saw movement in the open space below. Jake saw several groups of humans running around, and even a few that flew or jumped up a few stories. They seemed hesitant to split up, though. He wondered why for a moment but soon got his answer.

Out of one of the terraces flew a figure covered in dark armor. It looked to emit black smoke out of all the gaps in the armor and swung a dark two-handed blade as it chased after a mage who shot a fireball at it to try and blow it away.

[Reanimated Blackguard Golem – lvl 110]

Jake wondered why he hadn't encountered any of these himself. Then again... he had barely been around the tower. He had walked down two hallways total, one to get to the atrium and the other to enter the library, skipping everything in between.

Looking at this armor a bit closer, Jake felt that the black smoke coming out of its gaps was actually mist. The same mist as he had encountered far above. This made him frown... how had the mist entered the tower? Were there breaches somewhere?

He kept looking down and seeing how the humans below handled these golems, which they were doing quite well. A party of four took it on, and the mage who was being chased was swiftly saved as a warrior with a shield stepped in.

A Powershot from an archer hit the golem not long after, and when a rogue-like person struck it from behind, its end was clear. Yet, something still felt off. Jake frowned a bit as the golem was on its last legs, and just as the rogue struck it in the head from behind...

The golem exploded in a cloud of black mist.

A loud scream echoed up the entire tower as the rogue fell to the ground. A healer that was not from their party, as far as Jake could tell, came over as another two people joined the party of four. The healer began doing what a healer does, but Jake just shook his head.

Yeah, good luck.

The rogue had been hit point-blank with the cursed mist. Maybe they could fix it, but with the rogue's low innate durability, he doubted it. He was proven right less than a minute later as the rogue chose to activate his insignia and exited the Treasure Hunt.

When the rogue disappeared, a large floating coin with the Hunter Insignia inscribed on it was summoned in his place, floating where he had been. The coin was about the size of a human head, and it didn't take a genius to figure out this was what contained the rogue's loot. Which made a lot of sense... having everything a person had looted just appear in the air and not within a spatial storage would be a bit silly. If albeit extremely funny as Jake could imagine a metal gate crush some unsuspecting person if Jake ever left the Hunt.

Jake kept looking for a bit longer as the two groups got into an argument about the floating coin, and in the end, it ended up being a third party who came in from the side and stole it. Jake laughed a bit under his breath as he saw the thief use Shadow Vault of Umbra. It was nostalgic to see that old skill and a little funny to him too. This was pretty much exactly what he had told Caleb the Court of Shadows should do during the Treasure Hunt.

Shaking his head, Jake decided to stop wasting any more time.

That humans would come into conflict during this Treasure Hunt was unavoidable, and he was actually a bit happy they didn't just try to kill each other outright. It had barely been a few hours since the entire Treasure Hunt started, so it would sure get bloody if people already began slaughtering now. Once again, though, he was sure that would come later.

Jake jumped out over the balcony and flew upwards. He felt a single gaze land on him from below, but that was it. He turned and saw a single archer look up towards him, but she swiftly averted her gaze when he returned her peeking.

He flew up all the way towards the top where he had been told this Count would be. If Jake could find any good challenge or good loot, it had to be in the vicinity of this boss-type enemy. He was still internally trying to figure out if all of this was 'real' or more a scenario of sorts made by the system. Or perhaps a bit of a mixture of both. True history, but perhaps a made-up place?

Well, it was 'real' in many ways, no matter what. But the tutorial, as an example, was partly system-constructed scenarios. Everything was just too neatly set up, just like this. Seriously? Collecting keys to access some big final boss, all of them conveniently sealed away in their respective boss rooms? All of it was just too artificial and game-like.

When he got all the way to the top, he noticed that the layout changed a bit. The mountain narrowed the higher one got – as mountains tend to do – and Jake saw only four total hallways at the top, each of them a good stance from the very top too. Jake presumed all of them led into special rooms like the library.

Jake looked over towards one of the hallways and saw movement. While flying up, he had been wondering why no one had gone to the very top from the start. It turns out... some had. A group of five were far inside one of the hallways, battling three foes.

[Reanimated Blackguard Golem – lvl 132]

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It was the same kind of golems as the one below but at a higher level. One of the golems used a two-handed sword, another dual-wielded shortsword, and the last had a spear. All of them were quite competent with their weapons for being reanimated suits of armor.

Simarlily the party was a coordinated group with two warriors, a healer, and two mages. The warriors kept one golem busy each, while the healer summoned magical barriers and transparent chains of mana suppression the last one. During this time, the mages were trying to swiftly finish off one of the golems, one using lightning and the other water magic. A nice combo, Jake reckoned.

They seemed to be doing quite well, as Jake looked on from a distance. As a general rule, he didn't wanna intrude in an ongoing fight as he didn't really like when people did that to him. He still remembered the asshole birds up on the cloud island. Putting into their fights was fine as they did the same shit, and besides, he was with Hawkie then. It was a bit of a dickmove just to force his own hunting policy on his feathered friend.

Just as Jake considered if he should just go elsewhere and leave before the party noticed him, the situation changed. A wooden door at the far end suddenly slammed open as another figure stormed out. This one had a sword and shield, and its armor looked slightly different. He naturally Identified it.

[Reanimated Black Knight Golem – lvl 138]

With that use of Identify, Jake already knew the party was in deep shit, and while he generally wanted to avoid butting into the fights of others, saving their asses wasn't out of the question. So he summoned his bow, marked all the golems with Mark of the Avaricious Hunter, and took aim as he began charging.

At the party of five, the Knight entered the fray. The warriors were all busy, but their competency showed once more. One of them used a skill to make his hammer smash one of the armors away from the group and managed to intercept the Knight.

He blocked with the handle of his hammer, and Jake saw him buckle under the pressure. The healer fired a spell towards him, and the warrior moved to get up and push the Knight back a step... at least he looked like he did. Instead, the Knight simply stepped back as the warrior pushed to dodge the blow and then, with a dexterous blow, cut the warrior deep in his shoulder and smashed him in the chest with its shield.

The man was blasted back as the shield sent out a pulse of mana. At this time, the mages had picked up the pace and had just finished off one of the three Blackguards, freeing up the second warrior. Sadly he had no way to intercept as the Knight went for the healer who was still holding down a Blackguard by himself, and only the lightning mage could do anything too as the other was sealing in the explosion of mist in a bubble of water. And even if he wanted to help, the Blackguard smashed away before was now charging towards him.

As the Knight raised its blade to cut the healer across the chest, it was clear this was a catastrophe to the party. But to Jake? To him, it was an opening.

He released the arrow as an Arcane Powershot tore down the hall leaving a wake of arcane mana. The Knight froze just as it noticed the blow and failed to do anything to minimize the damage. As a result, it was hit square in the chest, with the arrow piercing straight through and sending it flying back until it smashed into a wall.

The party stood frozen as Jake shot again. This arrow split in five and went in between the five people and the two remaining Blackguards straight towards the Knight. Five explosions of arcane mana filled the halls and sent wisps of arcane mana through the entire hall, barely not reaching the party.

Another arrow came just after, hitting one of the Blackguards in the side of the head, sending it smashing down the hall with an arrow embedded in the helmet. Arrow after arrow pierced through the

hall, the party having now all stopped moving as the Blackguards had all been blasted away – now neatly grouped up together at the end of the hall.

A good barrage of more explosive arrows later, sending echoes through the halls, and Jake used One Step Mile and appeared amid the party. They looked frightened for a moment, but none made a move.

Jake looked down the hall as the dust cleared, and the three golems slowly began getting up, their armor cracked and broken as pink-purple lines of pulsing arcane mana had joined the black mist. He looked at the three of them and smiled beneath his mask.

Boom.

Three flashes of arcane mana lit up the hall for a split-second as the Arcane Charges on the Marks activated. At the same moment they died, they all exploded with black mist, but Jake simply raised his hand and sent out a blast of arcane mana, blowing it away from him. With the distance between him and the golems, chances are the explosion wouldn't have done anything anyway.

You have slain [Reanimated Black Knight Golem – lvl 138] – Bonus experience earned for killing an enemy above your level

You have slain [Reanimated Blackguard Golem – lvl 133] – Bonus experience earned for killing an enemy above your level

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Jake quickly checked the notification to confirm the kills before closing them all and turning to the party. The last explosion the mage handled was already fixed as the bubble had been sent flying away and exploded harmlessly to release the mist. The healer – and leader of the party as far as Jake could tell – was the first to speak as he bowed.

“Thank you for the assistance, Lord Thayne. We would have lost party members without a doubt without you. Once more, I thank you on behalf of myself and my party as well as the Noboru clan,” the man said with gratitude. “Please, take this as a token of gratitude; we found it in the plains outside.”

The man offered up a rare sword for level 105’s that he summoned from his Hunter Insignia. Jake looked down at it and shook his head. “Keep it. If you want to do something, deliver a message to the Sword Saint...

"I'm looking forward to the duel."

The party looked at him bewildered for a moment before the healer bowed again. “I shall be sure to relay your words. I am certain the Patriarch will happily test his mettle against you, Lord Thayne.”

Jake nodded, and with that, he turned and walked over towards the three corpses of the golems. The five staring after him, their looks now far warier than before.