Hunter 291

Chapter 291: Treasure Hunt: Annoying Boss Fight

The vampire Count was truly a peculiar creature. He moved and acted like a fully intelligent and relatively competent fighter. It nearly fooled Jake into believing that he was fighting a smart enemy and not an absolute moron. However, the illusion was dispelled every time the Count opened his mouth.

"This is the part where you fall down and bleed to death!" the vampire yelled as he fired out a crimson wave of energy. Jake dodged it easily, taking far more mental damage than physical from the exchange. The red glowing aura was still there, with the four clawed hands constantly trying to get hold of him. All in all, Jake would call the current attack pattern of the vampire more annoying than dangerous.

And yes, he would call the way the vampire attacked an attack pattern, as he could easily predict the next moves. He didn't even need his sphere or Bloodline.

Teleport, Jake stepped away as he dodged the blade that appeared from the red mist as the Count of Blood teleported to attack him.

Claws. The four clawed hands chased after Jake's fleeing figure as he nocked and fired another barrage of explosive arcane arrows, burning away at the aura but failing to actually injure the vampire. It did stop the attack, though.

Ranged blade waves of energy. In response to being pushed back, the vampire sent out more crimson waves of blood that would for sure tear up the nice room. The fight had been going for a few minutes now, and Jake had switched his tactic a little bit by incorporating an important element: stealing shit.

Jake leaped back and touched two very comfortable-looking chairs, making them disappear into his inventory just before the sword waves came. To save all the furniture was impossible, but he would do his best to take what looked the nicest.

His next target was a bookshelf filled with old tomes as he summoned bolts of arcane mana to blow up the grasping claws. This bought him enough time to make a hastily charged Arcane Powershot. The aura around the vampire was resilient but not resilient enough to block even his fastest-charged Arcane Powershot using a stable arcane arrow.

Once more, the vampire was blasted back, an arrow embedded in his shoulder seeping out poison. Said vampire ripped it out and chased after Jake. It was predictable to the level of boredom, but at least it bought Jake enough time to swoop up the bookshelf and even a nice dining table and accompanying chairs.

He didn't bother with the paintings, though. Too gaudy even for his taste, and all of them depicted the damn Count of Blood in different obnoxious poses anyway. Most of them were him leaning against the sword, trying to look cool. Some would perhaps argue he did… but Jake wasn't one of those people, though he was somewhat biased.

That is when the Count once more used his most powerful ability.

"I shall paint the carpet red with your blood!" the vampire boss yelled, making Jake cringe back.

"The carpet is already fucking red, you absolute moron!" Jake yelled back.

Balancing his desire just to kill the Count and actually looting stuff in the chamber before it all got destroyed by their fighting was a difficult challenge. Sadly, Pride of the Malefic Viper's defense against mental attacks didn't work against the bullshit spewed by the Count.

"Then I shall deepen it as I slit you open like the livestock you are!" the Count rebutted, making Jake groan. Don't entertain his stupidity… just clean out his room and finish him off… don't let him get to you…

Before today, Jake had fought only one being that was higher level than the Count. The Heartwarden in the Undergrowth dungeon had been 162, seven levels above this vampire. If Jake were honest, he would say they were about even. Both were a bit strong… but not truly powerful for their level. The Altmar Census Golem was level 150 only, but it was far stronger despite its lower level compared to both the Heartwarden and this Count of Blood. Of course, one had to remember this was from Jake's perspective. Match-ups mattered a lot too.

Considering how much stronger Jake was now than when he fought the Census Golem, his victory against the Count of Blood was pretty much assured. This was why he had the leeway just to dodge attacks and take potshots while looting everything of value he could.

He had already tried to take the coffin, but that was clearly bound to the Count in some way, so that would have to wait. Besides that, there was only furniture and other knickknacks like chandeliers, candle holders, plates of different metals, a statue here and there, and even a few nice-looking blades that were more for show than combat.

Ten minutes later, Jake felt like he couldn't find anything more to perfectly legally acquire, as all the valuables that caught his eye were already nicely tucked away in the Hunter Mark storage. With all that settled, it was time to actually finish the battle. The current standstill only continued because, to be honest, Jake hadn't dealt any significant damage to the vampire but had instead just slowly been emptying out his opponent's resources.

Jake dodged a final blow as he cracked his neck. Time to get serious.

The carpet below him was ripped up as his body exploded with power upon activating Limit Break at 10%. Energy swirled around him even further as he infused his presence with mana. In a split second, the entire mood of the fight changed.

He stepped back with One Step Mile, appearing on a platform in mid-air. The vampire followed as it appeared to his side, but Jake was ready with an extended palm.

BOOM!

His hand exploded with arcane mana as he sent out a shockwave to push the still only half-appeared vampire away. Before even seeing if he had hit – he knew he would – Jake drew his bow and fired off a quick Arcane Powershot.

The vampire that was already flying backward was hit square in the chest and was blasted back even more, with a large gaping hole blasted through his mid-section. When the Count hit the wall, five explosive arcane arrows also struck, exploding a large section of the chamber.

All throughout, Jake focused his presence on suppressing the Count and possibly make the vampire feel a sense of despair at the obvious difference in power. Instead, he got…

"Foolish human, to force me to go this far is an honor!" the Count of Blood said as he dodged an arrow by teleporting, appearing atop the silver coffin he had woken up from. "Now behold! The true power of a superior being!"

Jake had never seen a more obvious transition to phase two of a boss fight.

The entire silver coffin began glowing as deep red as runes covered it. Like a current of blood, each of them spat out energy that entered the vampire, and the Count himself waved his hand as a bottle that looked a lot like a health potion appeared.

His opponent gulped it down, and Jake saw the entire body of the vampire bulk up as the Count's entire body began changing. He grew nearly half a meter, all his hair fell out, and his clothes tore as two leathery white wings sprung on his back along with his muscles growing and becoming far more pronounced. A more powerful aura than before spread throughout the room, and Jake also saw the extended aura retract back into the body of the Count.

The sword was now gone, and instead, both hands had grown in size and had large beastly claws that Jake could see and feel excreted some kind of venom. The head looked almost to have been cut in two as a slit went up between his eyes. A slit that Jake soon came to learn was its damn mouth as the entire front of the face split open to reveal several rows of teeth.

"To lay eyes upon the true form of a Balnar Vampire… you can now die with dignity!"

Sadly, even with a fucked up mouth, the Count could still talk. It was now clear mental attacks would have no effect on the moronic vampire, so he would just have to finish him the old-fashioned way.

Jake fired another barrage of arrows, waiting to see what tricks the Count now had.

The Count saw the attack and swiftly dodged to the side with a flap of his wings before beginning to charge him. Jake swiftly adjusted and fired another arrow. The Count tried to dodge again, but Jake used Gaze as it penetrated his chest.

It failed to slow down the now roided up vampire that just continued his assault. He swung his claws while flying, sending out waves of red energy. Jake repeated his tactic of dodging around the room with One Step Mile to great success as he avoided the charge.

He turned and fired a Splitting Arrow with stable arrows. The vampire once more tried to dodge and again found himself frozen as he got hit by all five. This caused him to fall to the ground as he crashed down and tore up the carpet. The Count quickly got back up with an odd groaning noise and didn't simply charge this time.

"I tire of your running… Chains of the Underworld!"

For the first time in the battle, Jake was truly taken by surprise. Without even getting any chance to dodge, he suddenly felt himself be weighed down, and he felt like heavy chains were attached to his body. There was nothing visible, but when Jake focused on the mana in the room, he could detect the incorporeal chains now trapping him

"Escape is impossible!" the vampire yelled as he flew over. Jake tried to use One Step Mile but found it impossible. He could still move but slower than before. He began charging up a disruptive wave of arcane mana, but it was obvious it wouldn't be ready in time for the vampire's attack.

Fine.

Jake deposited his bow in his inventory and took out his two other weapons, also quickly splurting some of his blood on them. The Nanoblade appeared in his left hand and the Scimitar of Cursed Hunger in the right one.

Have it your way.

If the Count wanted a good old melee squabble, Jake was down. Raising his blade, he crashed with the claws of the vampire and found himself slightly outmatched strength-wise. But when it came to speed…

The Nanoblade swept up and left a long thin cut across the chest of the vampire as the Count barely even tried to defend himself. In turn, the vampire clawed at Jake's shoulder, but he moved in closer to dodge the blow as his disruptive mana wave was ready.

His entire body exploded with arcane mana, blowing back the Count of Blood and leaving light wounds on his chest. Jake pressed his advantage and moved in to leave a few more shallow cuts before being forced to block again and was knocked back.

He landed on his feet and had to instantly block again as the vampire let out a loud shrill shriek. For a fraction of a second, his entire body tensed up, and he failed to block as he was clawed across his left shoulder, sending blood flying into the air.

The shriek wasn't some mental attack but pure sound. Jake smirked as he didn't even react to his wound but returned the damage in kind as he cut the vampire. The two of them continued exchanging blows, Jake landing ten for every wound he took.

Perhaps the Count believed its venom would do the work, but sadly for him, Jake barely noticed it. The toxins simply weren't potent enough to overcome the legendary-rarity Palate of the Malefic Viper. Meanwhile, Jake kept inflicting the Count with poison, and clearly, vampiric resistance didn't beat out viperic resistance. Bad puns aside, the vampire was clearly slowly losing, and they both knew it.

In an act of desperation, the Count shrieked again, and his claw began glowing red as he tried to land a possibly lethal blow. Jake responded by freezing the large monster with Gaze simultaneously, completely ruining his opponent's momentum. Seeing his chance, Jake kicked the Count hard in the chest the moment he could move again, all the while releasing an arcane explosion to blast the Count away.

Both his blades disappeared the same moment he did this, and he drew his bow and fired another fast Arcane Powershot at the transformed vampire. The huge winged bulky monster didn't even need to be frozen this time but was forced to block without Jake using Gaze.

Jake shot again, sending out a wave of explosive arcane arrows. He rapid-fired after the vampire as he was forced back, the chamber now more or less completely destroyed from their fighting as explosions repeatedly blasted apart the environment.

His Mark of the Avaricious Hunter made him aware of where the Count was, and he had to admit, the charge had gotten big by now. Big enough for him to trigger it.

The entire chamber flashed up as Jake drew his bow to continue his attack. The vampire wasn't dead… but he sure wasn't feeling good either. Jake placed another Mark on his foe as he fired another arrow, aiming to finish off the damn thing already.

"I… ENOUGH!"

Jake heard the voice echo through the hall as a giant wave of red energy crashed towards him like a tsunami of blood. He put away his bow and held up a hand to summon a barrier of arcane energy to block it before-

With wide eyes, he stared as the Count of Blood didn't fly to attack him but instead zoomed past him close to the wall. The vampire wasn't headed for Jake or even the coffin, but instead somewhere entire else:

The exit.

That's right, the damn monster was running away.

Jason scoured the room as he checked for anything hidden in what he and his party guessed had once been a meeting hall or something.

"Found anything?" he yelled over to his party member at the other side of the hall.

"Got a carving knife or something; it's uncommon-rarity, so not bad," the warrior yelled back.

"I think that's all we're gonna find here. Let's regroup with the others," a third party member chimed in.

They were a party not affiliated with any large faction but had joined as free agents. They had talked about joining a city or faction simply due to the conveniences it offered, but so far, they hadn't found a place to settle down.

Half an hour earlier, they met a group from Saya and the Noboru clan who were heading out of the tower in a hurry but still found time to help Jason and his friends. Unfortunately, they didn't have a healer, so it was more than welcome when the other party's healer came and offered to top them all up. Maybe they should head to Saya after the Treasure Hunt? He liked that idea.

Jason and his two comrades left the hall and returned to the center, making sure to avoid the Blackguards. Those were nasty, and they had already lost a party member to one.

"Yo, any trouble?" their party leader, an ice mage, asked once they met up at the balcony, overlooking the huge atrium with the top and bottom both visible.

"Nah, this area seems pretty clean already; I think we should move on up a few floors," Jason answered with a shrug.

"Hmm, I guess you're right, we shou-"

SWOOSH!

Jason barely had time to react as a figure swooped down and crashed through the balcony. He swiftly turned his head and saw a large hulking winged figure kneeling down over his party leader. Jason steeled himself as he drew his sword, and the warrior to his side was already charging the creature. He himself was a bit more reserved and used Identify first instead.

The creature got up, and Jason saw his party leader… or what was left of him. A dried-up husk remained as the creature turned around, a large open maw where a face should be. The warrior he was with swung his sword, and Jason saw it be embedded barely a centimeter into the thick chest muscles of the monster as it didn't even attempt to block. Its body was already covered in wounds all over for some reason, but Jason saw them all slowly begin healing.

With a single swipe, the warrior was smashed away by a huge claw. Jason stood wide-eyed as he turned to run. He had barely taken a step as he felt a shadow looming over him, and the final thing he saw was the result of his Identify as the maw of teeth closed around his head.

[Count of Blood - ???]