

## Hunter 292

### Chapter 292: Treasure Hunt: Count Down for the Count

Fucking shitty bullshit boss, Jake thought as he chased after the damn vampire Count. It had been barely a second ahead of him, but that second meant that when he reached the entrance to the trap room, the damn barrier was back, blocking his way. It had a slight red glow now, and there was no illusionary barrier trying to conceal it either... in other words, it was just there to slow him down.

Jake fired explosive arrows to blow it up, and while that process only took about ten seconds... ten seconds could be a lot. He rushed through the broken barrier and down the hall as he made it to the atrium. While he couldn't see the Count, he could still pinpoint the direction of his foe with Mark and feel the poison running through the vampire's body.

But... he could also feel the poison weakening significantly by the second. It was like the vampire was just chugging down healing potions or something as his body kept getting infused with vital energy again and again.

Rushing even more than before, Jake soared down past the countless terraces towards his target, both blades at the ready as he just wanted to stop the Count from doing whatever he was doing to heal himself as fast as possible, and he didn't have a line of sight to shoot an arrow.

He saw what the Count was doing just a few moments later as the scene entered his sphere. Five dead dried-up husks that Jake barely recognized as humans were on the floor, a sixth person was in the grasp of the Count being rapidly drained, and a seventh person was lying on the floor with both legs crushed under the vampire's feet. Likely the next meal.

Luckily, that would never come to pass.

Jake crashed in from the side and swung his scimitar that was now surrounded by a mix of arcane and dark mana. The guy the Count was holding was already dead, but the woman under his feet was still alive and even struggling to get free.

The Count tossed the nearly fully drained corpse away and moved to block Jake's blow. The blade extended and cut across the room, even cutting the flying corpse in two just before it struck the vampire. His opponent was blasted away with two nasty cuts on his palms from Descending Dark Arcane Fang, the wounds infected with the dark and arcane mana.

Jake quickly checked the woman with the crushed legs and tossed her a healing potion before he charged the vampire again. She looked confused but still managed to catch the potion by instinct – Jake already gone before she managed to open her mouth and say anything.

To say that he was pissed was an understatement. While it was doubtful Jake could have stopped the Count from running away; he was still mad that other people had to get involved in their fight. He was equally mad at the Count for running away like that. Was it a good tactic by the vampire to go and consume the life energy of others to revitalize himself? Sure was.

It didn't make Jake any less mad, though.

He pushed Limit Break even further as it jumped to 20%, and his aura intensified. His presence was infused with even more power as four arcane bolts condensed around him during his charge. The vampire got up from being blasted away and yelled loudly.

"Mere livestock dare interrupt my meal! I shall-"

"Just shut the fuck up," Jake answered as he pressed the attack. The four arcane bolts were fired first, making the vampire dodge to the side. Jake responded by nudging them to follow the hulking monster using his presence-empowered mana control. At the same time, he reached melee range.

With the first swing, he broke his opponent's guard, and with the second, he left a deep cut. This was also the time the four bolts reached them, and the Count was struck in the side, leaving Jake another great opening as he stabbed the vampire through the chest with the long Nanoblade.

"I SHALL NOT FALL!"

Jake was pushed back by another red wave of energy, but this time he didn't even bother using an arcane barrier as he knew this attack wasn't meant to damage but only force him back. His scales were good enough.

The Count of Blood didn't attack Jake but flew past him again towards the woman on the floor that had just consumed a health potion.

Oh no, you fucking don't.

Just as the vampire was about to grab hold of the woman, he himself was taken hold of as Jake used One Step Mile into the air, and with a flap of his wings, dragged the vampire out over the balcony and into the open space of the atrium.

Jake held one of the Count's wings with his right hand, and using the left, he cleaved down at the wing's base.

The Count shrieked as Jake cut off the entire wing and, with a spinning kick, sent the vampire flying downwards. He had also seen that the bottom of the tower was cleared of any activity as people who had entered to explore had begun moving up the many floors... and he really wanted to keep the damn bloodsucker away from anyone else right now. Other people were just walking health potions for the vampire.

Jake took out his bow and fired off a quick Arcane Powershot. The vampire failed to stabilize himself properly and was hit by the arrow and sent crashing down into the ground. Jake began charging his Arcane Powershot right away as power began swirling around him.

Before this, the fight had happened in the confined space of the Count's chambers. No one had been aware that someone had already rushed to the top of one of the towers, somehow obtained a Rune of Blood and unlocked a boss in this short time, and was now fighting it. No one before now.

Only a few dozen seconds had passed since the Count entered the atrium and even less since Jake's arrival, yet the balconies were fast being filled by humans. The fight had sent mana and shockwaves echoing through the tower, making anyone not deep within a room aware of the battle taking place.

Under usual circumstances, Jake wouldn't be a fan of so many people staring at him, and he was even less so now. All of them were just prey for the vampire. This meant Jake would have to finish off the boss before he got a chance to feed.

The Count below got up from the ground, a nasty wound on his chest. Jake stared down at it as his Arcane Powershot charged. His opponent had been hit by this specific attack of his many times and was prepared to dodge.

Prepared being the keyword here, as it still stood in the middle, getting ready to dodge. Jake needed to stop it, but Gaze wouldn't have enough duration... so he decided to take a card out of the Count's playbook.

His presence intensified as he prepared to land a mental attack. He opened his mouth and spoke in a taunting voice as he infused it with his will. Even a bit of his heretic side joined in.

"That True Ancestor Sanguine was a coward and a weakling. Worse than livestock. Just. Like. You."

The words echoed through the entire atrium as the Count froze. He looked at Jake for a moment, his red vampiric eyes wide as suddenly the slits on both narrowed and began glowing an even deeper red color. Jake had found his opening, and he felt his presence infused by Pride of the Malefic Viper strike right at the Count's mind as he had hit where it hurt.

In response, the Count didn't even yell back. He didn't make a snide remark or cringy comment. He just shrieked as the mouth opened wide. A new wing instantly sprung out, fully regenerated, and he flew up towards Jake, now filled with pure rage.

So filled with rage, he didn't dodge when Jake released the arrow but instead refused to back down as the Count swung his claws and sent out an absolutely massive wave of blood energy. It was powerful for sure, likely the strongest blow the vampire had made this entire fight... but compared to a nearly fully charged Arcane Powershot?

The wave of blood was blown apart as the onlookers from the balconies had to take cover from the explosion. The Count of Blood was struck by the stable arcane arrow just after and had a huge hole blasted through his body as he was sent smashing into the ground below, leaving a crater.

Still filled with rage, the vampire tried to get up again but was hit by five explosive arrows.

Jake stared down at the scrambling vampire as he drew the bow once more. This time another kind of arrow emerged. A large one, looking almost like a spear and made of dense, arcane mana. It was the ability of his bow, and has about to scorch the damn vampire into dust.

"I would take cover," Jake warned, infusing with voice with willpower. He felt over a hundred eyes on him, and the warning was to them. He knew the destructive power of this blow, and luckily, there were no people on any of the lower floors.

Power swirled around him and the arrow as he released it and sent it flying straight down towards the vampire, the gemstones on his bow dimming. The Count seemed to have finally come more to his senses and tried to avoid the massive energy-filled arcane arrow.

He failed as Gaze of the Apex Hunter stopped him.

In a last-ditch effort, the vampire sent out a wave of blood-red energy that crashed with the arrow as the entire tower became bathed in pink-purple light. Jake even focused his presence to attempt to control all the arcane energy and nudge it towards spreading out less and focusing more on the center of the explosion.

**\*BOOM!\***

The ground shook, and Jake heard several yells as barriers and shields sprung up on all the balconies with observers as the people moved to defend themselves.

Arcane energy scorched the entire bottom floor as the destruction wormed its way across the ground, leaving everything destroyed and pulsing with pink-purple cracks of arcane energy. Yet, despite the devastation done by the attack, Jake didn't let up his guard.

He threw a look in the direction of the closest party of humans to the bottom of the atrium and, in concert, the vampire. Jake began flying down and just in time.

A figure flew out of the cloud of dust and debris, headed straight for the unsuspecting party. The Count was bleeding from everywhere as his skin was cracked and broken. One of the wings was once more ripped off, while the other one was filled with holes. Even one of the arms was gone, as the vampire had clearly tried to block. The only pretty much fully intact part was the head.

Due to his preparedness, what the Count encountered in his path wasn't a party of living health potions but a blade covered in arcane mana. The vampire moved to block the blow and ended up with a long gash on his one remaining arm.

The vampire was truly desperate now and went for the only source of vitality nearby:

Jake.

The Count of Blood rushed him and ignored it as Jake stabbed two blades into his chest. A large gaping maw opened up right in front of Jake's face as he ripped out only the Nanoblade and then did three things at once.

First, he triggered the Mark of the Avaricious Arcane Hunter, making the Count light up out of every opening in his body, dealing catastrophic damage to the vampire.

Secondly, he froze him with Gaze of the Apex Hunter, buying him enough time for the next part.

The third move was a horizontal swipe of the arcane-covered blade with both his hands. The head of one of the nine Counts of Blood was sent flying through the air, the mouth still wide open as the red glow in his eyes dimmed until it fully disappeared.

\*You have slain [Count of Blood – lvl 155] – Bonus experience earned for killing an enemy above your level\*

\*'DING!' Class: [Avaricious Arcane Hunter] has reached level 130 - Stat points allocated, +10 free points\*

\*'DING!' Race: [Human (D)] has reached level 130 - Stat points allocated, +15 free points\*

The moment the light fully dimmed, the vampire's entire body turned to dust, leaving only a few items floating in the air. A blade – well, two, counting Jake's scimitar that had been stabbed in the Count's body - a black key and a large red gem.



Without any hesitation, Jake scooped them all up, with the intent of checking them out later. Unfortunately, now wasn't a good time for several reasons - more than a hundred reasons, in fact.

People were staring at him from all around. Most of them with wide eyes, some with abject fear, and others just seemed unsure how they should react. One thing was certain, though... they all looked at him with some level of respect, even if more than a few seemed to hold some doubt. The party that the vampire had been headed for didn't look doubtful, though. They were on a balcony only a hundred meters from where Jake had finished off the vampire and looked at him with clear gratitude.

"What was that thing?" one of the people on another balcony yelled.

"Who are you? Are you a part of the Treasure Hunt?" another chimed in.

"What city are you from?" a third yelled from far above.

"That's Lord Thayne, the leader of Haven," someone answered two of the people asking before.

Jake just closed his eyes briefly. He thought about if he should say something considering he was the center of attention. A part of him felt like he should, and another made him believe it was expected of him to say or do something. The thing is... Jake didn't really want to, so he just said a single sentence as he flew upwards, back towards the Count's chamber.

"Take care people, sorry for getting you all involved in my hunt."

Neveah stood shaking on one of the balconies overlooking the atrium. She was surrounded by her party members, all of them still alive and well. Looking to her side, she saw her party member just shake his head.

How fucking stupid had they been when they first came to Haven? They had heard rumors of Lord Thayne, but those were just rumors, after all. Then they met him during the meeting with the City Lord, and he had seemed absolutely terrifying... but afterward, they had talked.

Clearly, the man had used some kind of skill or something to make himself appear more intimidating. This made them unsure if he was truly that powerful or just incredibly good at fronting. Was he just all bark and no bite?

Well, today, they saw the bite, and it was absolutely terrifying. When Neveah saw the Count of Blood for the first time, the only thought in her head was to run. It was an absolute monster, and she saw it tear apart an entire party roughly equally as strong as theirs in a matter of seconds. The only way to survive the wrath of such a being was to get lucky while running the fuck away.

And then... then an even bigger monster had entered the scene. The explosions of that odd energy, the sheer physical strength, and speed, the magic... everything Lord Thayne did was just utterly overwhelming.

So... she asked not only herself but the entire party the same question she kept asking herself. A question likely every single person who had ever doubted the rumors asked themselves right now.

"How fucking stupid were we when we said Haven was weak?"

Because why the hell would you need an army when you had a single individual that could rip one apart?