

Hunter 299

Chapter 299: Treasure Hunt: Broken Tower

The Viscount tried to close his mouth but was unable to as it encountered material far too tough for his razor-sharp teeth to get through. To make matters worse for the vampire, he was repeatedly stabbed in the chest with an envenomed anti-vampire weapon while it struggled as the merciless human finished him off.

Jake only lifted his foot that he had stomped inside the vampire's mouth when he got the notification, also quickly checking that the vampire hadn't even managed to make a single mark on the boots. To be honest, he felt genuinely bad about this kill. Nevertheless, he had gone in and stuck with his desire to test out the anti-vampire weapon... and he had done so.

The hills were all actually grave hills and were entirely filled with ghouls. The doors to keep them closed weren't completely able to keep out the mist entirely, making the halls filled with it. He had stormed through and easily located the tomb of the Viscount. There, he found one of the great metal gates with a magic circle to stop him from getting in. Well, he broke that one with some arcane energy, and the moment he did so, the vampire awakened... and what was before him looked like a damn kid.

Mind you, it wasn't a kid, but what Jake guessed was a dwarf, but Jake still felt bad about the entire ordeal. The vampire dwarf could at least have had a beard to make it all less awkward as Jake borderline curb-stomped the much smaller enemy.

Am I racist? Jake asked himself as he looted the Mark of Blood and went over to a newly opened side-room and also swiped that empty. Is it considered racist to feel bad about fighting certain races?

He began burning off the gate with Alchemical Flame as the thoughts kept coming. I remember it being a common trope that men refuse to fight women, which is often called sexist. Now, that would be

incredibly dumb with the system making physical differences not matter... and size doesn't really matter too... but... why the fuck did the dwarf have to look like a kid?

Seriously, it felt like a mental attack struck him every time he hit the dwarven vampire. To make it worse, even the voice sounded childish. If at least that had been overly manly, he could have looked past it, but come on... shit, he still held doubt that maybe it was a kid considering the trope about vampire children never growing up.

No, Jake, your murder of little people was fully justified.

Jake committed himself to hunt down enemies without any prejudice and bigotry. He would be an equal opportunity hunter.

After finishing burning off the door, he did a final check of the room. Surprisingly enough, the wooden coffin the vampire had been in wasn't an item at all. But upon closer inspection... he had a feeling it had been. Maybe it had run out of energy or stopped working, or maybe it was just a cheap one-time thing with the Counts having the good coffins.

Leaving the tomb, he swiftly moved on as he stormed towards the next tower. The issue was that there were more than nine of the large mega-structure mountains, but only nine Counts as far as he could tell. Or maybe there were more than nine, and they only had a chance to drop a key? Wait, perhaps it was just the first nine that dropped one?

Either way, he would have to find a mountain that wasn't already being attacked by another powerful faction. He didn't really feel like getting into some big fight with the Holy Church or that Valhal place or anything like that. Not quite yet, at least.

So, he headed towards a mountain tower even further away from the Mistless Plains. The plains were the center of this Treasure Hunt, and the further you got away from there, the fewer people. So, he went deeper within the dense mist than he had been before and deeper than he had seen anyone go.

While he ran, he inspected the weapon in his hand. It was the sword from the Pure Ones' armory, and it was now pristine and clean once more as the vampire blood on it had evaporated. He had absorbed a bit of the venom on it and gotten a basic understanding earlier but now understood it even better after a live test.

As the name said, it was anti-vampire venom that had the primary function of stopping healing. It was actually a bit like his hemotoxin, except this venom only worked on vampires. And it truly did only work on vampires.

Jake hadn't taken any damage from the venom he had inflicted himself with, at least not from the venom directly. Of course, it had still taken a small number of health points to dispel the inherently antagonistic energy, but he would compare it to the time he used poison arrows on the Cloud Elementals. Sure, the poison did technically do a bit of damage simply due to it being foreign energy, but the anti-vampire properties of the venom didn't actually do anything to a human like him.

If he compared it to his own uncommon-rarity necrotic poison, Jake's was far superior when it came to dealing damage, even to the vampires. The venom from the weapons was better at stopping them from healing themselves, though. From the Viscount, it also seemed to make it harder for the vampires to use their magic, at least somewhat.

Determining what was better was difficult, but only if taken in isolation. Because using the venom meant Jake had to use the Pure Ones' weapons. And among those weapons was no bow or arrows, and while the melee weapons were fine, he preferred the Nanoblade and the scimitar. Also, no, he couldn't use his regular poison with the fancy anti-vampire weapons. Toxins just didn't play well together like that.

With the way the venom worked, he also had to compound it by dealing constant damage. Which meant less time spent shooting with his bow. Also, while he now had a lot of recipe books to make a poison to counter the vampires, it really wouldn't be worth his time to sit down and do alchemy here and now.

Exiting his thoughts, Jake entered another mountain building. This one was much like the other one, but once he got inside, he did notice some differences. More accurately, one major damn difference. The mist hadn't been kept out.

It filled the halls as he sprinted through them, Jake making a mental note to steal the gate on his way out.

The further inside Jake got, the more apparent the difference between this mountain and the other one became. While the other mountain had been a mess, he wouldn't exactly have called it a ruin. The walls were whole, all the stone furniture was still there, and overall it didn't look like a tornado had torn through – this one being exactly that.

Walls had been broken somehow, the rooms were unrecognizable, and the entire thing looked absolutely ruined. Jake frowned at first but soon felt something from beneath his feet. A faint pulse that he instantly recognized as the response his boots had to a natural treasure.

It came from far above. Jake chose to head towards where he expected the atrium to be to get a faster way up than looking for a stairway that wasn't completely broken. He had seen a total of two former elevators too, but both of those were blocked, making them unfeasible too.

However, just as he crossed a corner, four signs of movement entered his sphere. Judging by their reactions, it was obvious they were aware of his position too.

How? Jake wondered as he recognized their forms. The four of them turned a corner not long after, entering his line of sight.

[Reanimated Blackguard Golem – lvl 113]

[Reanimated Blackguard Golem – lvl 111]

[Reanimated Blackguard Golem – lvl 109]

[Reanimated Blackguard Golem – lvl 111]

Jake stared at them as they charged him with abandon, and Jake just sighed as he raised his hand and fired out a blast of arcane energy, stopping them in their tracks. He then took out his bow and fired down the hallway. While it was around ten meters in width and six meters in height, making it as large as a hell hallway by Earth standards, it was still considered a narrow space by D-grade standards. Much more so when one got bombarded by exploding arrows.

It took him only a few minutes to finish them off as he promptly continued on his journey. Yet, he had barely managed to get down a single hall before another group of those Blackguards appeared. Only three this time.

A few more explosions later, and they were dead. If living armor could even die. Well, the system said Jake had "slain" them, so he counted it as killing. Too bad they didn't give any experience, but then

again, they were weak as hell. Their only really dangerous attack was their self-destruction upon death, but Jake used this awesome technique called not being close to avoid that.

Jake moved down another corridor with even more golems coming. This repeated over and over again as Jake left a trail of carnage behind him before he finally made it to the atrium. When he got there, he saw that the destruction wasn't only limited to the entry area.

What looked like a grand indoor space in the other tower now looked like an absolute ruin. Several of the balconies were broken, pretty much every railing torn apart. To make it worse, Jake saw golems. Not just a few, either.

Standing in that open space, Jake felt the attention of hundreds of beings upon him. Well, that's something, ain't it?

Now, the usual and reasonable response to being seen by hundreds of foes between level 105 to 140 would be to run or maybe try and find a better position to fight them from. But, what Jake did wasn't reasonable at all. He stayed in place as he welcomed them. If he wanted to explore the tower... he would have to clean it out first. That much was certain.

Like a horde of rampaging zombies, they stormed him. By now, it was clear... this tower would not hold secrets as the last one. That didn't mean it would hold no secrets, just not the same ones, and he also severely doubted a Count still resided within. When he looked up the atrium, he saw the dark mist hang above, including around the floors where he would expect a Count to be.

I'll go check in a while, Jake thought as he cracked his neck as the hundreds of golems approached.

To describe what transpired next as a fight would be facetious. It was simply a desperate struggle from an unfeeling army of golems trying to slay one person. Jake felt them all close in, and with his bow in hand, he moved.

Arrows flew and exploded, arcane bolts blasted everything away, blades appeared and cut and tore apart his foes as he moved in between them, teleporting away whenever necessary. Jake was bombarded with attacks himself, including some golems with bows, but none even got close to hitting him.

A hundred golems died within the first half an hour, Jake barely with sweat on his brows.

Two hundred and fifty died within an hour as he began to get the hang of it.

Five hundred were dead after two hours, Jake getting a bit sweaty and taking a few minor wounds.

Seven hundred golems and two and a half hours after the battle began, they stopped coming. The mist turned silent once more, as the only thing that moved was a single human sitting and breathing heavily in the middle of the atrium, the ground around him entirely scorched from the Scorched Plains attack from the bow. He had seen the result versus the Count and had repeated it again, this time to kill nearly forty grouped up golems at once to finish the fight.

As he closed his eyes and entered meditation to relax, he went through the notifications, but only the ones that gave experience as he just filtered all the other ones out.

You have slain [Reanimated Blackguard Golem – lvl 134] – Bonus experience earned for killing an enemy above your level

....

You have slain [Reanimated Blackguard Golem – lvl 132] – Bonus experience earned for killing an enemy above your level

Besides the Blackguards, there were also five Knights springled in for good measure towards the end as they had descended from the upper floors.

You have slain [Reanimated Black Knight Golem – lvl 136] – Bonus experience earned for killing an enemy above your level

...

You have slain [Reanimated Black Knight Golem – lvl 140] – Bonus experience earned for killing an enemy above your level

It sounded like a lot... seven hundred or so golems... but only twenty-three had actually granted him any experience, including all five Knights. In fact, he had a feeling those five gave more experience than the eighteen Blackguards put together.

To his surprise, when he was done with spring cleaning, he had actually gotten a level.

'DING!' Class: [Avaricious Arcane Hunter] has reached level 131 - Stat points allocated, +10 free points

It shouldn't be a surprise to get a level after so much killing... but his class drawbacks weren't there for nothing. He knew that any other class would have gotten a lot more experience overall. At least he thought so, but now he wasn't entirely sure.

Jake knew it couldn't be simply due to those twenty-three golems he killed that he leveled up. Unless he was damn close to a level after the Count, he didn't see it happening. So... maybe it was due to the presence of all the other golems? Due to the added difficulty? Jake knew experience gain wasn't just black and white, where an enemy at X-level gave Y-amount of experience when killed. It depended on an endless amount of variables that even Villy wasn't sure about.

Jake was also acutely aware that his skills like Mark of the Avaricious Hunter and hidden buffs to experience gain from higher-leveled enemies muddled the water. This is why he ultimately decided trying to figure out some grand formula was a waste of time. Him knowing wouldn't change his level-up speed, and he already knew the most optimal way to level up was to fight foes many levels above himself.

During the fight, Jake had been smart enough to drink potions to limit his downtime once done, so he would soon be ready to go again. More than resources, he needed to relax his mind after the fight as he sat in meditation for a good fifteen minutes while thinking over all of those experience-related things and going through notifications. He was still relatively low on mana, around forty percent, but he would manage. Also, it was mana potion time in twenty minutes.

Also, while the bow wouldn't empower his arrows while it recharged itself, he was okay with that and would manage without.

He continued up the tower, and soon, he was forced to do something he hoped he could avoid. He stopped flying just before he reached the black mist as his body became covered in dark green scales, and with his hands, he formed a barrier of arcane mana around him as he entered the mist.

The layout of the topmost floor was identical to the one with the Count on it, besides a few minor changes.

Jake got to a large gate that wasn't there in the last tower, right at the entrance to the web of halls that would eventually lead to the Count's chambers. And behind the gate, he saw the movement of black living armors wandering aimlessly as he sighed internally. Well, these ones are at least all Knights.

He went closer to the gate, and it instantly responded merely to his arcane barrier touching it as it began opening by itself. As it opened, the entire gate cracked and slowly fell apart into hundreds of fractured chunks of metal, thick black mist giving off a strong sense of danger thrown everywhere, forcing Jake to quickly retreat.

As he did so, the golems behind the door reacted too. Nearly fifty empty helmets turned his way. Even more of them deeper within. Jake did the only thing reasonable and turned around and began running back through the halls he had come from to get a better position to fight them from. In other words, somewhere, he wasn't surrounded by cursed black mist, such as the atrium down below. Mind you, Jake hadn't actually planned to pull them right away... but what's done was done, and now he would have to fight.

He needed to clear these Knights out anyway, not just for experience, but because Jake was certain of one thing... the natural treasure was located where the Count's chamber would usually be. By now, he was also beginning to believe his original assessment of there not being a Count's chamber was wrong.

Jake just seriously doubted he would find any Count within... which made him think what else could now dwell within.