

Hunter 30

Chapter 30: Preparations for evolution

Jake coughed as another batch turned utterly black, and the horrendous stench of the tar-like residue invaded his nostrils. Yet this one wasn't even that bad, as this was just one of many attempts at making his very first common-rarity poison, and his first tries had gone far worse. He hadn't managed to craft anything the last two days, though he had gotten a level at one point. It turned out that you didn't need to successfully craft something to get a bit of experience.

He had eaten and acquired knowledge about the common-rarity moss and the blue mushrooms. The poison he was trying to make was relatively simple, requiring only those two ingredients along with some water. Yet it was still far more complicated than anything he had made of inferior-rarity by far.

After his evolution, he had gotten better at controlling his mana. A skill that only became more and more important the further one went with alchemy.

Doing alchemy was a bit like being a surgeon doing an organ transplant mixed with a chemist trying to mix up a bunch of acids, hoping it doesn't all explode in his face. Mana being the only real tool to help you accomplish this. The mixing bowl merely served as a medium to channel your mana into. On it was engraved thousands of minuscule runes that Jake didn't understand at all, he just knew it allowed him to shape and control his mana.

With mana, one had to extract the ingredients' valuable parts, integrate it into the mixture, and create a balance of sorts. Jake found it hard to explain as a lot of it came down to feel. There wasn't really any comparable action back on earth, except maybe some super-complicated puzzle games.

Another issue except the increased difficulty was mana consumption. Jake's plan of dumping his free points into perception became unrealistic as his crafting abilities improved. As he got better, his mana

expenditure increased immensely, and even with the many levels in his profession, adding a lot of wisdom, he still started having issues.

The common-rarity poison and its mana requirements were even more insane. More than a thousand mana was spent every attempt. This meant that without a full pool of mana, Jake had no way even to attempt it.

The reason why he was so set on making a poison of common-rarity was because of all the reading he had done on Records and evolution of classes, races, and professions. Difficult achievements or performing above what is expected of your current level resulted in more experience, but it also strengthened your Records.

Having lacking Records had many negative consequences. High Records, first of all, resulted in better evolutions of your class, profession, and even race. Having insufficient Records could even result in one being unable to evolve or level at all.

In fact, lack of experience was often not the roadblock for most powerhouses in the multiverse. It was a lack of Records. One could technically level nearly indefinitely by only taking extremely low risks or even get carried by others. For example, if one hunted beasts with protectors removing the hunt's danger, while you would still earn experience aplenty, no Records of value would be gained.

The same concept was naturally found with professions. Jake could technically keep churning out the easy inferior-rarity potions and poisons all day, just raking in the experience and levels with little to no challenge. This, however, would give him no Records of value.

Jake had no idea about his Records. Newly initiated universes were not exactly anything that was covered in any of the books. It talked a lot about relying on your inherited Records for the first

evolutions. Higher evolved beings would pass down a portion of their Records, giving their children easy progress at the beginning, removing any roadblocks.

Something he seriously doubted he had. Everyone was G-rank after all, a rank lower than any that even existed in the multiverse. There was, of course, a chance that actions before the initiation had allowed some amount of Records to be acquired, but he doubted it was anything meaningful.

He did have some things going for him, though. Challenge Dungeons were not something exclusive to the tutorial, but something found throughout the multiverse. The same thing was true for regular dungeons. Clearing these would often help to gain Records and was the go-to for many races and factions.

Another thing was his bloodline. According to what he read, bloodline abilities were weird, and there was no consensus about how they came about or why some have them, and others don't. It was, however, well-documented that bloodlines did influence a person's Records. This wasn't surprising, as according to what he read literally everything affected one's Records.

Bloodlines were also interesting for their genetic aspect as they were directly inheritable. The only element to appear on status screens, at least. Usual things such as personality traits, talents, and other genetic details like eye color, height worked a lot like before the system. It also stated that the more powerful the parent, the more powerful the child would naturally grow to be. He interpreted that as S-rank dragons not having F-rank babies, which kind of made sense.

All of the reading about genetics and bloodlines naturally led to Jake wondering how the hell he had a bloodline ability. It was known that bloodlines could be obtained through some extremely, almost impossibly, rare system-created events, but other than that, it was entirely random. A child of a layman could be born with a bloodline out of nowhere.

It was not like bloodline abilities were rare, though. They varied immensely and came in many types. Most bloodlines were even completely useless and sometimes even damaging. One example of a useless one was a bloodline merely giving a weird hair color. The negative ones also varied widely. Some led to early deaths, like ones causing cancer-like growths simply killing the holder, while others were mere annoyances, such as passively giving off a terrible stench.

After having read all that, Jake was delighted with his bloodline. At least it didn't seem to hold any inherently bad qualities. In fact, it seemed like an excellent bloodline. As to how good, he had no idea. The book's examples were only bad, useless, or classified as giving only insignificant benefits. Those holding strong bloodlines often didn't share the details of their abilities, which was rather logical, as openly advertising your strengths, and possible weaknesses did seem like a bad idea.

Despite his bloodline, Jake was still a bit worried about the whole Records thing. The importance of them was so apparent in all the books talking of levels and evolution. The uncertainty of potentially lacking in this paramount aspect of the system led Jake to try and go above and beyond and create a common-rarity poison before his first profession upgrade. One thing he was one hundred percent sure on was that his performance now would influence that upgrade immensely.

Even if it didn't pay off right away, at least it also helped him train his concocting skills far more than just spamming out weak poisons. He still had to survive this dungeon after all.

Taking a look at the dungeon window, he noted that nearly half his time in the dungeon was over.

Time remaining: 15 Days – 6:21:57

In this time, he had made significant progress. His profession had gotten to level 22, and he was getting very close to crafting the common-rarity poison. He just needed the last part down. By then, the evolution of his profession would be imminent.

Regarding evolution, it would likely be very uninteresting. A variant profession like Jake's was something called a legacy-profession and had a rather set-in-stone progression the first couple of evolutions. It didn't mean he couldn't be offered other types of professions or even alchemist-variants, but it did mean he would lose some things if he did. Alchemist of the Malefic Viper was a legacy-line passed down in the Cult of the Malefic Viper to their young alchemists.

From what he had gathered, the cult was an ancient religion of sorts following the snake turned dragon he had seen on the mural after the second challenge. They mainly specialized in alchemy, more accurately, poisons.

The books he read were naturally also left by them. This whole place was like a section of one of their academies or temples, ripped straight out by the system and tucked into its own little dungeon.

Jake had first thought that the system had created everything found in the dungeon, but he no longer did. Most of the books had authors, there were scribbles and drawings in many of them, and handwritten notes found nearly everywhere. Which led him to believe that the place was either taken from somewhere or perhaps simply copied. Naturally, he had no way to know.

However, he did know that today would be the day he succeeded in making the poison. He was in the zone, and all he needed was for his mana to regenerate fully. He had already used a mana potion and was currently eating some blue mushrooms.

The Bluebright Mushrooms were the main ingredient of his chosen poison, after all. They were also very dense with mana, helping his recovery speed a lot.

An hour or so later, he was back to full. The bowl was cleaned, the ingredients ready. He had even used the Alchemist's Purification he had chosen at level 20. He was unsure if it had any beneficial effects, but he did it anyway.

Looking at the skill, he at least saw nothing negative in using it.

[Alchemist's Purification (Common)] – Attempt to purify any alchemical ingredient. Purification can help remove unwanted properties from a component, making the finished mixture purer. Must have suitable ingredients. Must have suitable materials. Purification does not require any additional tools or equipment, but the skill's effect can be amplified using certain catalysts. Adds a minor increase to the effectiveness of Alchemist's Purification based on wisdom.

No book mentioned any negative side-effects either when it came to using it on the moss or mushrooms. Over the last two weeks, Jake had read a lot of books. He must have gone through more than thirty so far, and there were still hundreds left.

Talking of skills he had gotten, at level 15, he picked up Sense Poison as no new attractive options had come up. He was also slightly afraid of losing access to it after his profession evolved, so he decided to take no chances.

[Sense Poison (Uncommon)] – Gives a passive ability to detect poisonous substances and their toxicity level. An alchemist must be able to find the materials to craft his products after all. Adds a minor increase to the effectiveness of Sense Poison based on perception.

Even now, Jake could feel the poisons in the garden despite being in the laboratory. The skill didn't precisely pinpoint the direction unless he got really close to it. When he was close to it, though, he could feel exactly where it was. When that close, he could even get a general feel for their toxicity level.

This had become useful even in the dungeon. Not all plants had the same strength by default despite both being identified as the same item, which meant the skill allowed Jake to pick out more suitable ingredients. As an example, mixing too potent moss with a less potent mushroom would lead to an inevitable disaster when mixing. In the same vein, the mushroom couldn't overpower the toxicity in the moss too much.

Using this skill to pick out the ingredients for his first common-rarity poison was naturally done. It had taken some trial and error to get it down, but he was sure he had the best ingredients picked for this attempt.

The process of the mix was like it had been with the lower rarity creations. Purified water filled the bowl as the moss was put in. Mana was injected through the engravings on it, as the mana entered the moss and started extracting the valuable fluids found within, giving the water a green tinge.

When around half of the juices were out, he added a third of the Bluebright Mushrooms. The process of extracting started once more, as Jake focused as hard as he possibly could. He had done this exact process many times before, but he was still nervous.

Next, he added the mushrooms one by one as he slowly extracted their fluids. It was entirely possible to add all the ingredients at once, but it was easier, albeit far slower, to add them one by one. Jake did not feel like taking any risks, preferring to increase his chances of success slightly at the cost of time.

Reaching the final stages, he took a deep breath. This was where he had failed the last four times. At the very end, one had to bring it all together and finalize the concoction. This was often described as the most challenging step, and therefore often the point of failure.

Infusing the final bit of mana and focusing on bringing it together, he felt his entire body tense up. With every fiber of his being, he focused on controlling the mana.

Even his Sphere of Perception zeroing in on the small bowl before him. Slowly the content of the bowl started to take on a dark-blue hue, giving off a faint shimmer of the familiar blue light.

*You have successfully crafted [Necrotic Poison (Common)] – A new kind of creation has been made.
Bonus experience earned*

'DING!' Profession: [Alchemist of the Malefic Viper] has reached level 23 - Stat points allocated, +2 free points

'DING!' Race: [Human (F)] has reached level 16 - Stat points allocated, +5 free points

'DING!' Profession: [Alchemist of the Malefic Viper] has reached level 24 - Stat points allocated, +2 free points

Jake cheered out loud as the messages came in, and he smelt the aroma permeating the laboratory. It smelled like rotten beef. He didn't care, though, as he quickly started putting the concoction in one of his poison bottles.

Putting it all in, he used Identify on the bottle with the demeanor of a child opening Christmas presents.

[Necrotic Poison (Common)] – A poison with necrotic properties, infecting and killing off biological material in the affected area. Wounds caused by necrotic poison are extremely difficult to heal. The poison takes effect upon any contact with any biological material.

Alright, so the entire thing was a bit ominous and evil-sounding, but he was happy he had made it. The two profession-levels were also more than welcome. Even more importantly, he had crafted a common-rarity potion before his first profession upgrade.

He decided to split the free stats between perception and wisdom, as he had done for the most part during the last many levels. It wasn't a 50-50 split, but relatively close.

Opening his status window, he was once more reminded of his progress.

Status

Name: Jake Thayne

Race: [Human (F) – lvl 16]

Class: [Archer – lvl 9]

Profession: [Alchemist of the Malefic Viper – lvl 24]

Health Points (HP): 1010/1010

Mana Points (MP): 248/1250

Stamina: 287/360

Stats

Strength: 39

Agility: 42

Endurance: 36

Vitality: 101

Toughness: 50

Wisdom: 125

Intelligence: 27

Perception: 103

Willpower: 59

Free points: 0

Titles: [Forerunner of the New World], [Bloodline Patriarch]

Class Skills: [Basic One-Handed Weapon (Inferior)], [Basic Stealth (Inferior)], [Advanced Archery (Common)], [Archer's Eye (Common)]

Profession Skills: [Herbology (Common)], [Brew Potion (Common)], [Concoct Poison (Common)], [Alchemist's Purification (Common)], [Toxicology (Uncommon)], [Cultivate Toxin (Uncommon)], [Sense Poison (Uncommon)], [Malefic Viper's Poison (Rare)], [Palate of the Malefic Viper (Rare)]

Race Skills: [Identify (Common)], [Endless Tongues of the Myriad Races (Unique)]

Bloodline: [Bloodline of the Primal Hunter (Bloodline Ability - Unique)]

His combat-related stats were starting to lag behind by quite a lot. Only perception was at a pretty good level. Of course, this would likely rapidly change the second he got out of the dungeon. He had quite a backlog of poison and potions for him to use whenever he got out and said supply was only growing by the day. He couldn't carry much of it with his satchel, but he could take quite a bit.

Exiting the laboratory, he decided to take a break from making poisons. His mana was too low, and he was mentally strained despite his delight at the successful concoction. Instead, he went to cultivate some poison in the garden. He still had plenty of ingredients remaining, but he had already started making preparations to cure himself of the poison and leave.

He had some chosen plants that he had picked out with Poison Sense as they were the most potent. Using Cultivate Toxin, he was slowly improving them and making them grow while also increasing their toxicity.

He had decided to go with the concept of fighting poison with poison. He had come across some recipes with potential, but he was still far from settled on one. He was still searching for one that could incorporate the silver mushrooms.

Many plans had been made, and if everything went to shit, he had some recipes he would just give a shot, but for now, Jake would use all the time he had remaining. Seeing the dungeon challenge day timer tick from 15 to 14. Half the time was over - half to go.

Leaving the garden, he chugged a mana potion and headed for the laboratory once more. He wanted to get a bit more work done before heading to bed. Looming death was on the horizon, but right now, only the imminent profession evolution was on his mind.