

## Hunter 300

### Chapter 300: Treasure Hunt: Root of Resentment

The difference between Knights and Blackguards was slight and primarily laid in the level difference. They even looked the same, with the Knights being slightly slicker and a bit faster and more agile, but that also came with the knights being slightly less tanky.

Now, slightly less tanky didn't mean they weren't tanky. In fact, due to their levels, they were tankier than nearly all Blackguards. The only good thing about them was that they were what Jake would classify as trash mobs. Filler enemies that individually would rarely be a challenge to anyone of equal level, who didn't really possess any interesting skills or dangerous abilities. The only thing the Knights could do was to blow up when they died, just like the Blackguards.

However, what they did have were numbers and their durability. Enough numbers and durability to make Jake pretty much run out of mana after he had killed thirty of them. Luckily, he had a mana potion at the ready and consumed one to keep fighting with close to optimal power.

Even during the previous fight, he used Limit Break at 10% throughout, and now he pushed it a bit further to 20% to finish it off as quickly as possible. He could afford to lose the stamina as his mana expenditure was far larger.

In the end, while the Knights were stronger, Jake was far stronger than even that. One had to remember that these Knights were enemies that could be taken down by the regular parties of humanity, by groups often more than twenty levels below them.

His only struggle was with his resources, but he could kind of keep up by using potions and switching to a more low-maintenance fighting style. He stopped using Splitting Arrow and One Step Mile whenever possible. He limited his use of magic attacks and pretty much returned to an older style of just swiftly switching weapons between melee and ranged. The only active skill he used was his arcane arrows.

Yet to his dismay, they kept coming. The gate that fell apart when he touched it had housed an army of those Knights. He had believed there was perhaps a hundred total with an average level around 135. After killing that number and seeing how more came, he had to reevaluate and realize he had severely lowballed it.

They just kept fucking coming. Jake's low-maintenance style could keep him going for a while. Still, he did have to make some sacrifices in the form of willingly taking less dangerous hits to avoid wasting stamina or mana on teleporting or making a barrier.

But another, perhaps even larger issue than his resources was just how tiring it was. More so mentally than physically. He had to constantly dodge and filter information from his sphere, constantly consider when to attack and find openings, and even a second of inattentiveness would result in him taking severe damage.

Jake kept retreating inside the mountain, going down hallways as he fired arrows after those who chased him or cut them with his blades. Sadly their self-destruction did nothing to harm their comrades but only cursed Jake whenever he was hit. And he did get hit by the remnants of some explosions, as it simply became unavoidable.

The entire ordeal began taking far longer than it should, as he was forced to constantly flee and wait for the moment he could chug down another mana potion to get another period of serious damage output. His brain ended up going on half-auto pilot as he dodged sword swing after sword swing, narrowly avoiding black waves of dark mist sent his way by spear-thrusts and ducked under arrows surrounded by black mist.

He cut another golem and kicked another as he finally used a mana potion. He also used the oft-forgotten enchantment on his pants - Life Burst - as he was flooded with both vital energy and mana at the same time, giving him a second wind.

Jake pressed the attack as he fired off explosive arrows, cut down golems, and tore them apart one by one. The curse in his body did accumulate, but the scales still on his body took the brunt of it, even if it was yet another source of mana expenditure.

This continued as he killed Knight after Knight. Jake was little more than a machine churning through golem after golem. Hundreds of hallways had been left scarred. The atrium had been passed a dozen times as he circled the building, with clear signs of their battle. Then, finally, he kicked away a golem, it exploding a moment later as he drew his bow and prepared an arrow. Yet he stopped up, a flash of confusion passing his otherwise tired blank eyes.

There was no movement in the hallway.

Jake just stood there with an arrow nocked for five or so seconds as nothing happened. Realization finally struck him as he lowed his bow and dispelled the arcane arrow. He exited his battle haze and only had the energy to summon the same comfy lounge chair he had used in the puzzle room.

He fell back in it as he breathed loudly, not caring about the blood he dirtied it with or the bow that fell on the floor beside him. Jake closed his eyes as he slowly slipped into meditation, which quickly became him just taking a nap.

Hours later, he reawakened, his body still sore from the incredible overuse of Limit Break and from having his pools so strained during the fight. "Fuck those tin can fucks," Jake muttered. They weren't even fun to fight; it was just god damn tedious.

Looking at the timer, Jake saw the Treasure Hunt had now officially entered the second day, and by quite a few hours even. He had spent far longer killing those damn Knights and Blackguards than expected, just because he felt a natural treasure somewhere above.

Sadly, he couldn't just go up right away, as he was still low on resources and felt sore. So he chugged a stamina potion and entered meditation again as he went through all the notifications.

\*You have slain [Reanimated Black Knight Golem – lvl 131]\*

...

\*You have slain [Reanimated Black Knight Golem – lvl 142] – Bonus experience earned for killing an enemy above your level\*

\*'DING!' Class: [Avaricious Arcane Hunter] has reached level 132 - Stat points allocated, +10 free points\*

\*'DING!' Race: [Human (D)] has reached level 131 - Stat points allocated, +15 free points\*

\*'DING!' Class: [Avaricious Arcane Hunter] has reached level 133 - Stat points allocated, +10 free points\*

\*'DING!' Class: [Avaricious Arcane Hunter] has reached level 134 - Stat points allocated, +10 free points\*

\*'DING!' Race: [Human (D)] has reached level 132 - Stat points allocated, +15 free points\*

Jake had killed... a lot. Three hundred and eleven Knights in total, two hundred and ninety-two of which gave him any experience points. That had resulted in three whole levels... which meant that in the day since Jake entered this Treasure Hunt, he had already gotten five total class levels. He had to admit that he didn't think it would lead to this much experience when he entered the Treasure Hunt. However... it wasn't all great.

While the levels were good, there was one negative aspect... he had just spent nearly a full day without getting a single piece of loot. The damn reanimated armors blew themselves up upon death, and whatever metal was left behind was rusted and broken like the metal gate that broke apart. It also only fell into smaller pieces and tried to curse him when he touched it. In addition, Jake had killed so many, but none of them dropped an orb or a fragment or a shard or anything like that.

At least he still had more than eight and a half days left to get something, as he could well and truly say that his idea of speedrunning the Counts had been utterly ruined.

Hours passed as Jake healed up and consumed potions whenever he could. He was a bit surprised not a single person had come to the tower during all this time... but maybe it was because it looked abandoned and the constant mist within? Or they chose to focus on towers closer to the Mistless Plains and their basecamps? According to Reika, all the large factions had made temporary camps on the plains, after all, so it made sense if they wanted to stay close.

When he felt up to snuff, he picked up his bow with a string of mana, and got up off the comfortable lounge chair, and put it back in his inventory, hoping he hadn't lowered its value too much by getting it bloody. He had also discovered that the reason it was so tiring to recover was that damn curse again. He was really getting fed up with these curses.

So, of course, his next course of action was to dive straight into the cursed mist again, scales and arcane barriers at the ready. He had slaughtered a damn army of Knights, so he sure as hell wanted to see what they were hiding.

He flew up and began walking through the now empty walls as he tried to keep the curse at bay, heading straight for where his boots told him the natural treasure was. His Sense of the Malefic Viper or any of his other senses didn't give him any information about the treasure at all; it was only his boots. He reckoned it was due to the curse that his Sense didn't work. As for why the boots worked? Because they were awesome, that's why.

Jake finally made it to the final corner-turn, and by now, he could only see a dozen meters ahead of him even with his insane perception. He reckoned most more normal D-grades would barely be able to see their outstretched hands.

With the Sphere of Perception, he could naturally see far further, and soon the gate into what he presumed was the Count's chambers appeared. To his utter surprise, the gate was there, good as new, with the same magic circle as the one he encountered last time that required the Mark of Blood to open.

The chamber is still intact? What?

He was genuinely confused. Everything else was broken and completely eroded by the curse, yet the gate leading into the chamber didn't look any different. The magic circle seemed utterly unaffected by the curse, and as it protected the gate, no signs were left on that either.

Jake pushed onward through the cursed energy, walking up to the gate. Behind it, he saw destruction, yet it was all a bit vague. It was like how he hadn't been able to see in the dark-affinity dungeon the Forgotten Sewers before he got used to the dark-affinity. In other words, it wasn't that he couldn't see

anything. It was that there was too much to see. The fact that it was only like that behind this gate meant one thing... the curse was magnitudes more powerful on the other side. Far more than even what it had been when he tried to fly up along the side of the mountain.

At the same time, his danger sense didn't respond. It was an odd dichotomy... his logic told him what was behind the gate was more dangerous than anything he had ever met in this Treasure Hunt, yet his instincts told him there was no enemy. He looked up and saw the same words on the gate as the last tower, and Jake promptly summoned the Mark of Blood as it resonated with the gate, dispelling the magic circle and making it open.

A flood of pure darkness washed out of the chamber, yet Jake stood in his place as the mist oddly enough just skirted around him. It only went a few dozen meters down the hallway behind him, mingling with the existing black mist before it stopped spreading. By now, it was apparent – this mist wasn't natural but controlled.

Within his sphere, he saw something. A shape appeared, looking oddly human, yet not entirely. It was made up entirely of the cursed mist, and the moment it appeared, an aura spread that was even more powerful than the Count.

Jake narrowed his eyes, and simply by using Identify on the black mist before him, he got a response.

[Yalsten Shade of Eternal Resentment – lvl 160]

"Hello there," Jake greeted into the darkness. It squirmed and changed, evermoving, as suddenly the voice of a man sounded out.

"How do you carry the Mark of Blood yet remain unturned? Who do you serve?"

Before Jake could answer, another voice came... followed by a god damn choir.

"It's a human."

"How did he come here?"

"He is with the vampires, is he not?"

"A traitor to the Pure Ones."

"Perhaps he is with the Pure Ones?"

"I wanna go home..."

"Silence, child."

"Are you with the Pure ones?"



"Who do you serve?"

"Who are you?"

"What are you?"

"Identify yourself."

Jake stood there, being bombarded by voices, many of them echoing and hard to discern, talking over each other and interrupting in the middle. These were only what could be construed as sentences too... for in total, hundreds if not thousands spoke. Thank Villy for high perception once again.

"I'm a hunter, squarely not on the side of the vampires, and I'm here to hunt down the Counts and kill all the vampires in this place. I have already killed one Count of Blood, and as for who I work for? Well, I would self-identify as more freelance than working for anyone," Jake said, leaving out the part about stealing all their stuff or the Pure Ones being all dead.

A moment of silence followed before the voices came back with a vengeance.

"Enemy of the vampires?"

"A paladin? A holy warrior?"

"Slayer of the unclean."

"Kill them all?"

"Ally?"

"He has a free lance?"

"He said hunter... a vampire hunter?"

"But does he lie?"

"A liar?"

"Lies?"

"He may work for the Counts."

"He said he killed one."

"He lied."

"Traitor."

"We demand proof."

"Evidence."

"Show us proof."

"Proof."

"Proof."

"Proof."

Rather than words, Jake responded simply by summoning the key and the heart of the Count. He held them both high before speaking towards the intangible form before him:

"I told you, I'm a hunter here to slay all the vampires. Will you get in my way, or what's the deal?"

The last words were spoken after he unleashed his mana-infused presence. He hadn't been speaking only for the fun of it but to try and understand what kind of creature he stood before, and he soon found what it was. Behind the pitch-black form of mist was an item that connected to it. Right where the altar had been in the last chamber. It was also this item that gave off the response of a natural treasure.

Once more, the Shade was silent for a few seconds, just taking in his presence. Jake had infused it with his desire to kill the vampires. A genuine emotion that he believed the personalities dwelling within the Shade understood.

"Truth."

"He has slain one."

"But can he slay them all?"

"Counts he can."

"But what of?"

"No..."

"Impossible."

"But what if we help?"

"Help."

"We help."

"If you swear to slay them."

"Slay them all."

"Slaughter them."

"Kill them."

"Kill."

"Kill."

"Kill."

"Kill"

"Yeah, I'll kill the vampires; that's the damn point, I promise," Jake said. He was beginning to get a damn headache from the many voices echoing throughout the hall simultaneously and the constant infusion of will trying to inflict him. While the curse didn't try to harm him, it did try to make him into a bloodthirsty vampire slayer.

Just as he was considering if this entire ordeal was worth it or if he should risk a fight, the Shade once more responded.

The dark mist in the area began swirling and gathering towards the natural treasure like a black hole. Jake was entirely unaffected, and only a second later, he noticed how he could already see a bit farther ahead as the density of mist decreased.

Jake observed the natural treasure for the first time as it gathered energy and saw what it was. It truly had been the chamber of a Count, and he saw the coffin and altar just like in the previous tower. Or what was left of them.

The altar was cracked into many pieces and the coffin shattered as a root descended straight down from the ceiling and penetrated the coffin and broken altar. Within the coffin lay only ash, and Jake saw that the entire root that descended was entirely rotten and hollow beside the sharp tip of the root and a meter or so up its length.

He used Identify on the root, and at the same time, he felt the presence of the Shade disperse as the intensity of the curse in the room returned to normal. Except the curse energies didn't hurt him... for no black mist got within five meters of the black root.

[Root of Yalsten's Eternal Resentment (Unique)] – A wooden root from an unknown tree that has absorbed the curse energies of the black mist that has hung over Yalsten for unnumerable years. The deep and eternal resentment towards the vampires that permeates the curse has now been absorbed and concentrated. Will cause disastrous damage and curse any vampire it comes into contact with; however, it can only be used once. While in possession of this root, the cursed mist will not see you as an enemy. Be warned that while the curse will not seek to damage you, it will still influence you. This effect grows as it absorbs the curse energy of any cursed vessels related to the curse in Yalsten.

Jake stared at the description as he walked up to it, and with an easy pull, he got it out of the coffin. The rest of the root that extended towards the ceiling also turned to dust the moment he claimed the item.

He saw that the mist still didn't get close to him but that he now had a five-meter area around him completely cleared of black mist.

I'm sure this will come in handy.