

Hunter 35

Chapter 35: Blood of the Malefic Viper

A scrap of paper floated in the air as if a small string was attached to it. It was slow as it weaved out the door, evading obstacles in the way. It finally floated into another room before it landed in the palm of a hand, as a small cheer sounded out.

Jake could barely contain his laughter as he finally succeeded in his exercise. He had made it a habit to do this kind of practice daily, following the advice of the Malefic Viper.

Through mana alone, he had managed to lift and manipulate a physical object. It didn't seem like much, but for Jake, it was huge. Through sheer mana manipulation, he had managed to create a small tether or string that he had then attached to the paper. It was incredibly weak, no more durable than a thread of spider silk. But it was something.

He had hit the books hard on the aspect of mana and how to use it and found a lot.

Mana was, after all, a natural force found throughout the entire multiverse. It was known as one of the big three prime energy sources. Health Points was also known as the vital energy, Stamina, the inner energy, similar to martial artists in legends.

Mana, on the other hand, was the worldly energy. It is the energy used to shape the elements, the laws of the universe itself.

One might be led to believe that one of these energies were superior, but that assumption would be wrong. In many ways, mana was simply another form of stamina, stamina, another state of health, and so on and so forth. One type of energy was able to transform into another.

Potions were perhaps the most straightforward example of this happening. In crafting a health potion, only mana is spent, yet it directly restores health points upon consumption, which isn't to say that health potions are liquified energy of life. While the ingredients did contain some life-energy, most of the potion was still the original crafter's mana. That mana would be transformed, with the entire potion held together by system-fuckery.

In addition, some beings only possess stamina, some only mana, and some don't even have health points. An example of this was a race known as the automatons. According to the books, the automatons are a powerful race of mechanical beings who only possess mana to keep their bodies running.

Another example of peculiar races was the very plants he so often made alchemy with. Some plants had the power to evolve and gain levels and sentience, the most powerful even achieving sapience. These plant-like lifeforms very often don't have stamina but simply have health and mana.

Stats naturally also changed according to race. These stats' names varied and often had similar functions as the ones humans had, but some also changed significantly. Having nine different stats like Jake also wasn't a necessity. Some had less, and some had more.

But the point was that all the resources one had available could, through specific methods, achieve most of what all the others could. None of the books detailed any of such methods, keeping it very vague.

Through the two weeks since the meeting with his new snake pal, he got a better grasp on why the Malefic Viper had told him to focus on mana. It had helped immensely with his concocting, and his practice was very close to reaching fruition.

Looking at the timer, he took a deep breath.

Cured yourself of poison 0/1

Time remaining: 23:58:42

Less than a day remaining. The thought that he could be dead in less than a day was a bit weird. For nearly a month, he hadn't felt anything from the poison whatsoever.

But his progress had been impressive. Actually, impressive was an understatement. Around two weeks had allowed him to grind more alchemy than ever before. He had leveled and leveled a lot, which had even ended up netting him his first "true" race evolution at 25.

The evolution was as he had expected. It had come with a prompt telling him: "yay, you made it to 25, this is just the first step, keep it up, pal!"

There had been little fanfare during the evolution itself, either. Nothing special had happened; he had just appeared in the weird middle-of-the-universe-place again. There he waited, marveling at the absolutely insane density of mana, before being returned back to his bed.

Not that he was complaining about the evolution and what it came with. First of which was the improved stat gains.

Human (E) – A human confidently climbing the evolutionary ladder. The human race is known as one of the most balanced and numerous races of the multiverse, being able to walk many different roads on their path to power. Stat bonuses per level: +2 to all stats, +5 Free points

What was a bit different was that the evolution had actually come with a skill.

[Meditate (Common)] – Enter a state of meditation, cutting off the outside world. While in meditation, regenerate stamina and mana significantly faster. While meditating, no other actions can be taken, and your perception of the external world is reduced immensely.

Meditate was very similar to sleeping. Once one entered it, all one's senses would be muted to nothingness. One couldn't smell anything, hear anything, or see anything. Only the feeling of touch remained... for most people.

Jake, however, was a bit different. All his senses were pretty much completely cut off like everyone else... but his Sphere of Perception remained. Completely unaffected. This meant that he could meditate without being completely defenseless. But more importantly, it meant he could keep practicing mana manipulation within his sphere.

And oh, speaking of his bloodline, it too evolved with him.

[Bloodline of the Primal Hunter (Bloodline Ability - Unique)] – Dormant power lies in the very essence of your being. A unique, innate ability awakened in the bloodline of the newly initiated human, Jake

Thayne. Enhances innate instincts. Enhances the ability to perceive your surroundings. Enhances perception of danger. +15% to perception.

Another 5% added. Jake couldn't detect anything besides that. Not that he was complaining.

On the profession-leveling side, he, of course, had gotten a lot also. His grind had allowed him to reach level 43, getting a bit more than a level a day on average. It didn't seem like much, considering that he grinded out the first 25 in less than two weeks, and that also including way more research through books and him learning the basics of alchemy.

But one had to remember that leveling got more challenging with every level gained. So for him to keep up such a good pace was, in Jake's own opinion, quite... prodigious.

Horrible jokes aside, through the progress of the levels, he had naturally gotten some more skills too. Sadly the rate at which he earned them had decreased. Now it was only every tenth level.

At least the first skill came at level 30, though. Jake had been offered five new skills, and they were all... well... a bit fanatical?

Just checking out one of the skills sent a shiver down his spine.

[Preach (Uncommon)] – As a humble servant, the will of your Patron is your privilege to spread. Allows the alchemist to spread the sacred words of the Malefic Viper. Makes the alchemist appear more trustworthy when speaking to others about the Malefic Viper. May his word be law. Adds a minor increase to the effectiveness of Preach based on willpower.

Yeah, fuck that, was his first thought after checking it out. The four others weren't any better either. One of them was quite literally related to sacrificing people.

Luckily for him, though, he had learned something valuable from the Viper he could apply at this moment. It was common knowledge that two closely related skills could fuse... so he picked Sense Herb.

[Sense Herb (Common)] – Gives a passive ability to detect herbs and a rough feeling of their properties. An alchemist must be able to find the materials to craft his products after all. Adds a minor increase to the effectiveness of Sense Herb based on perception.

After picking it, nothing happened right away. Jake felt the instinctive knowledge begin to enter his mind, the thought of the Malefic Viper having possibly trolled him occurring to him for only a moment before another notification had come. Telling him of the two intended skills fusing, as a new skill appeared.

[Sense of the Malefic Viper (Rare)] – Fusing the skills of Sense Herb and Sense Poison, the Prodigious Alchemist of the Malefic Viper has earned Sense of the Malefic Viper. The Malefic Viper sought out many natural treasures on its path to power; it is only natural to learn to sense them. Gives a passive ability to detect herbs and poisons in different forms and a rough feeling of their properties. Allows you to far better sense the poison you have inflicted on others. Adds a small increase to the effectiveness of Sense of the Malefic Viper based on perception.

With the two skills fused, he had gotten an even more useful one. He wasn't exactly sure if it could sense herbs and poisons equally well, and his testing had been inconclusive so far. However, the fact that it now allowed him to sense poison he had inflicted on others was likely going to be very useful.

Jake was a bit surprised the fusion wasn't mentioned in any of the books, though. It was two fundamental skills for Alchemists of the Malefic Viper, so it being noted wouldn't be out of place. Jake had a sneaking suspicion that the system had somehow removed this information, or maybe the skill just didn't fuse like that back in the day?

It wasn't as if the books didn't have any actual examples of skills, items, and even ways of unlocking new evolutions. It had to be said that the information wasn't that plentiful on skills and evolutions, as it could all just be boiled down to one word: Records.

But his skill gains didn't end there. Ten levels later, at 40, he got this second chance to get one. He half-expected to once more be disappointed by choices trying to make him into a cultist but was pleasantly surprised instead. Very pleasantly surprised.

[Blood of the Malefic Viper (Epic)] – The blood of the Malefic Viper is a toxin more deadly than most poisons. Allows the Prodigious Alchemist of the Malefic Viper to turn their blood poisonous, imitating their Patron. The blood can be used as an ingredient in alchemy and as a deadly weapon against your foes. The nature of the poison is determined based on the Records of the Alchemist. The blood's toxicity level is based primarily on vitality and wisdom but receives an increase from all physical stats.

It was his very first epic-rarity skill and a juicy one at that. He predicted Epic to be a tier above Rare mainly due to videogames.

The skill itself was great. A bit disturbing to think about your blood turning into a deadly poison, but Jake was kind of relieved to find out that it wasn't a passive ability. He had to actively channel mana according to the skill into his blood, and with that, it would turn toxic.

Using Identify on the poisoned blood didn't yield any results, but he could clearly feel it was different. His new Sense of the Malefic Viper gave him a good idea of how different it was to regular blood. The

toxin was somewhere in between high-end inferior-grade poisons he had made and the weaker common-grade ones.

He hadn't had the chance to test the nature of the toxin yet, so he saved that for later. Of course, the blood couldn't only be used as a weapon, but also in alchemy.

At first, he hadn't thought that his blood as an ingredient would have any usefulness. It turned out he was wrong on that one. His blood was an excellent catalyst, especially in concert with the blue mushrooms. Just adding a bit to the mix also made the mana-injection far more comfortable, as he was literally adding a bit of himself.

This had given Jake newfound confidence in his plan for completing the challenge dungeon, and he had been working tirelessly for the last two, nearly three days since he got the skill.

He had found recipes for potions and even toxins that could cure poisons and had even crafted a couple at inferior-rarity to practice. Still, he was unsure as to their effectiveness on whatever had infected him.

His plan wouldn't have worked weeks ago, but he had confidence with his newly improved stats. Speaking of his status, it had gone through a metamorphosis along with him.

Status

Name: Jake Thayne

Race: [Human (E) – lvl 26]

Class: [Archer – lvl 9]

Profession: [Prodigious Alchemist of the Malefic Viper – lvl 43]

Health Points (HP): 2460/2460

Mana Points (MP): 2890/3150

Stamina: 528/580

Stats

Strength: 61

Agility: 64

Endurance: 58

Vitality: 246

Toughness: 139

Wisdom: 315

Intelligence: 90

Perception: 205

Willpower: 159

Free points: 0

Titles: [Bloodline Patriarch], [Forerunner of the New World],[Holder of a Primordial's True Blessing]

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)], [Alchemical Flame (Common)], [Toxicology (Uncommon)], [Cultivate Toxin (Uncommon)], [Malefic Viper's Poison (Rare)], [Palate of the Malefic Viper (Rare)], [Touch of the Malefic Viper (Rare)], [Sense of the Malefic Viper (Rare)], [Blood of the Malefic Viper (Epic)]

Blessing:

[True Blessing of the Malefic Viper (Blessing - True)]

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

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

His stats had naturally had a meteoric rise with the levels. Primarily his vitality and wisdom had grown immensely. As for free points, he had mainly chosen to distribute them between perception and wisdom but had recently also put some into vitality and toughness. His way of curing himself of the poison would likely require him to be quite durable after all. He had even found out that his exploration of the status had been insufficient.

For example, Jake found that he could bring up how he had distributed his free points if he wanted to.

Free point distribution:

Strength: 1

Agility: 1

Endurance: 1

Vitality: 21

Toughness: 22

Wisdom: 100

Intelligence: 0

Perception: 100

Willpower: 0

Total Distributed: 246

Some perfectionist part of him couldn't help but bring wisdom and perception to 100 each. The percentage increases had also truly begun to show their worth.

Expanded Status Stats: Base stat: Amplifier: Final value: Strength: 53 10,00% 61 (58) Agility: 54
10,00% 64 (59) Endurance: 53 10,00% 58 Vitality: 205 20,00% 246 Toughness: 127 10,00% 139 Wisdom:
263 20,00% 315 Intelligence: 82 10,00% 90 Perception: 164 25,00% 205 Willpower: 133 20,00% 159
Total: 1.134 15,00% 1337

The most noteworthy on this entire screen was, for some reason, the parenthesis. Looking down at his forearms, he had kind of forgotten that he was wearing the bracers at all times. They had kind of become a part of him by now, and he only took them off when he showered, even keeping them on while he slept. Those 3 strength and 5 agility sure being handy.

This screen also demonstrated the power of the percentage amplifiers. Jake got a total of 195 stats from the percentages. His wisdom alone increased by 52.

He also discovered that, sadly, the items weren't affected by percentage-amplifiers.

Closing all the various windows, he went straight back to work, having finished his mana-control training. He doubted he would have time to train that further before he got out of here... if he got out of here.

His plan to cure himself was relatively simple, honestly. Concoct a poison to kill the other poison.

Over the last day or so, he had started to finally be able to feel what was infecting him. With every second moving him closer, he could feel it more and more. It felt powerful yet subtle. But more

importantly, it felt far more magical than physical. Narrowing down what type of poison it was should be possible if he had more time, but sadly he didn't.

With Blood of the Malefic Viper, his plan had changed slightly. The goal was still the killing poison with poison approach, but now he would actively use his own blood and align the 'cure' with his own body.

On the herb-side, the main ingredient would be the silver mushrooms from the first challenge room.

[Argentum Vitae Mushroom (Rare)] – A silver mushroom only grown in places with extremely high mana density. The mushroom has a solid exterior, that if broken, reveals the actual mushroom within. This type of mushroom's juices usually are highly poisonous, but this mushroom has evolved to bring life instead. +1 vitality upon consumption.

His highly toxic blood would be used in place of water. Aged Moss of common-rarity, on which he had used the Cultivate Toxin skill on daily for the last two weeks, coupled with the concentrated juices of the blue mushrooms, which he had also been cultivating.

The Argentum Vitae Mushroom would then be the final ingredient. The vitality in those was overpowering and would add powerful energy of life to the concoction. The creation would be volatile and would need to be consumed shortly after being finished based on all his deliberations.

He would consume the creation just before the poison flares up. Two extreme bursts of toxicity would then ravage through his body, one of immense death-attuned mana, and the other poison containing overpowering life-energy.

If everything worked as he hoped, these two would cancel each other out while his powerful body kept it all together.

Which was also the reason he had invested some points into toughness and vitality. He had severe concerns if his body could handle the sudden influx of energy.

The plan was a bit stupid and extremely reckless, for sure, but despite the dangers, Jake was looking forward to it. There was also a part of him that was a bit greedy... if he consumed the ten mushrooms as-is, he would get 10 vitality. But if he could achieve some kind of synergy, he should be able to get even more.

Jake believed it would work, and if it didn't, well, Jake would go out on his own foolhardy terms.