

## Hunter 38

### Chapter 38: Broken

Many herbs were still in the garden and cave. After all, Jake had never made anything above inferior-rarity in potions and still had all the common-rarity ingredients left entirely untouched. With the spatial storage able to store plants, he needed a way to get them into it.

He quickly discovered he couldn't just will them to enter it. Sadly, the spatial storage couldn't just tear them out of the ground.

So, the next one and a half hours went by as he dug them up by hand. He also went by the cave afterward and collected all of the mushrooms and moss.

It didn't take him long to gather everything - his improved physical stats finally being used constructively.

With less than half an hour left in the dungeon, he did the only logical thing he could think of and took a shower. He didn't know when he would next get access to a nice bathroom, something to be made use of as much as possible while he still could.

After cleaning up and putting on his clothes once more, he went to the garden as he waited for the time to end. Looking at his reflection in the pond, he saw the minor changes the evolutions had brought about.

It had made him a bit more handsome if he had to say so himself. His features all a bit sharper. He was initially a bit on the short side but had grown a couple of centimeters too from the looks of it. His

fashion-sense did ruin his improved looks a bit, though. The brown cloak, leather bracers, and old worn boots were standing out like a sore thumb.

He looked a bit funny if he had to say so himself. He wore some old linen clothes he had found in the bedroom dresser if one looked below the cloak. His old clothes had been wholly ruined a long time ago.

As his thoughts wandered, time ticked on, and with a final look at his reflection, he disappeared from the dungeon.

Caroline exited the cabin with Richard after reporting what she had just learned. Casper had made himself known once more.

Two weeks ago, he had wandered out of the camp in the middle of the night. Their expectations were broken as he just vanished without a trace. No one had heard or seen anything from him before today, making them believe that he was actually dead.

He wasn't. He had contacted them through a stake outside their base... addressed to William.

Casper hadn't headed towards the enemy camp... instead, he had gone back. Back to where they had entered the tutorial initially. And now, she and Richard were thinking of what to do.

A small sphere was around them, blocking out all sound as they walked through the camp. "Just send William... wouldn't it be better just to kill him already?"

“Casper or William?” Richard asked.

“William, of course. Casper hasn’t done anything for two weeks... we can have him return,” she said, almost pleadingly. Jacob had been in a slump emotionally ever since Casper disappeared... and guilt had been gnawing at her too.

“... Fine,” Richard conceded. Even if William dies, I can figure something else out. The only positive thing one could say about William was how little he had done for the last two weeks. He had only been hunting beasts really and spent the majority of his time with the Smith.

However, despite all that Richard tried, people began to question too many things. He was also relatively sure Jacob knew that the kid was way off. He had wanted to get rid of William and Hayden already, but sadly no opportunity had presented itself.

Now, with Casper calling out William directly, too many had begun connecting the dots. Richard was unsure of what to do. If he acted like he didn’t know anything, he would appear incompetent. So, he went with the most straightforward solution of hopefully just having the two kill each other.

Can I still use this to lure Hayden out? he thought as he began to gather his hunting-party with Caroline. Not to go after William... they had to keep leveling themselves too.

Casper sat on the ground, meditating.

He knew he was coming. The narcissistic bastard wouldn’t be able to resist.

For the last day, he had prepared the clearing. Everything was ready for the ritual. He just needed that one final piece.

His last two weeks had been... eventful. It all started when she died.

Her name had been Lyra. His shining star in this hellhole. He had fallen head over heels for her instantly. They had begun a relationship that never had time to truly flourish. He had been too cowardly, and their time too short. She had been murdered.

Hatred overtook him. He didn't care about some war; he didn't care about the other faction leader, claiming that his son died. He was past caring.

So, he made traps, traps to slay the beasts in human skin roaming through the forest. It was his personal mission to thin out the herd as much as possible before he joined her. Casper had no naïve hope of surviving the forest. He knew it would be his final resting place, and he would lay down here gladly to rest eternally beside Lyra.

Yet, at that moment, as he was weeping alone, he heard a whisper - a call from the forest. One he followed.

There he found a door leading to a challenge dungeon. The dungeon hadn't contained any challenge. It was just an island with a single tower on it, surrounded by a black sea. Not of water, but a black sludge that Casper hadn't dared to touch.

Within the tower, he met him. Or at least a part of him. And that being offered him a deal, one he couldn't refuse. It helped prepare him, evolve as his race reached level 25. A level he still sat at now. He couldn't progress further quite yet.

Throughout the clearing in which he sat, hundreds of spikes of dark metal were embedded. Runes were running down their surface as each impaled the corpse of a beast.

Casper felt a jolt as he opened his eyes, aware once more, as he looked up and saw the blue-eyed, blonde teenager of his former camp staring back at him. William.

"Hello, oh master of traps and deceit," the teenager said as he did an exaggerated bow towards Casper. He had a playful look in his eyes and a friendly smile on his lips. Yet he was staying pretty far away, not daring to enter the clearing entirely.

"You actually came," Casper said, a part of him a bit surprised despite his words.

"It is a free tutorial, mate, ain't nobody telling me where I can and can't go," William answered with a laugh, clearly mocking Casper.

"No, but you follow their whims nevertheless," Casper mocked back. "So, why have you come, William?"

William completely ignored the first part as he responded to the second. "I am just curious why you asked for me; I don't recall us having any beef?"

“Stop being willfully ignorant already. Your attempt at starting a war is clear as day to anyone not constantly stuck inside the camp. Richard knows. Half of his men know. So just stop this silly farce and speak as your true self for once,” Casper said, a bit annoyed.

The young teenager's demeanor changed as he looked back, his smile remaining, but his eyes were cold. “Fine. Let’s talk. But I go first... what the hell is your plan out here? Your plan with recklessly trying to hunt down Hayden and his men for days and then just disappear in the middle of it?”

“I wanted revenge, you bloody moron, for what they did to her. I know you didn’t directly kill her, but you still fucking caused it!” Casper yelled before taking a deep breath to calm himself down once more.

William looked at him. Obviously, a bit bewildered at the outburst.

“Gonna be honest, I don’t get why they go so much overboard when killing, and I think torture is quite dumb. But isn’t it equally illogical to react to it like you are? You risked your life needlessly by going closer and closer to their base instead of just going for the easier beasts. Don’t you care about tutorial points or experience at all?”

William didn’t ask to provoke. He was honestly curious. He didn’t understand it. He had been lost on why the reaction had been so violent from Hayden, to begin with. He had lost his son, an essential asset for sure, but why the response?

Casper looked a bit at the youth before he answered with a question of his own. One, he already knew the answer to. “Have you ever lost someone you loved?”

"Let's say I have; why would that make me seek revenge to the level of forsaking all logic like you?" William asked, a bit confused by the question. He had quite honestly always been a bit stumped when it came to the term 'love'. It seemed like a somewhat undefined emotion, and he was very unsure how exactly it worked.

"If you love someone, they become important parts of your world. If you love someone enough, they become your entire world. Then, if someone takes away that world, wouldn't you want to take theirs in return?" Casper asked, unable to hide his emotions. He hated himself for not realizing how much Lyra had meant to him. They had only spent a week together.. he knew it wasn't logical, but he couldn't let it go.

"But will taking their world away give yours back? If it doesn't... wouldn't it be better to try and construct a new world? Though it does seem a bit stupid to invest so much in something that you lose everything by losing it," William said. He could kind of understand the analogy, but he still wasn't entirely sure.

"You wouldn't understand, William. Love is an emotion far too complex for one such as you to comprehend," Casper said. Purposefully trying to rile the young man up a bit: Petty revenge, if you will.

"Define love?" the youth asked, a bit annoyed.

"You won't ever get it, William. You won't ever understand the feeling of losing someone. Truly losing someone," Casper said as he smiled at the youth. "And that is your biggest weakness."

"What the fuck are you on about?" William sneered. A weakness? What was this moron on about?

"You are broken - even more than I am. You believe emotions are a weakness... when your inability to feel is the true weakness," Casper said as he stood up.

"If they are so important, then why don't you explain them? Make them actually make sense for once?" the young caster said, as he was preparing himself to strike. "Because from what I've seen, the only thing emotions bring with them is stupidity."

"I am not going to waste my time engaging in futility," Casper chuckled.

William, now well and truly pissed off, went back to a tried and tested method. Threats.

"If you do as I say, I promise not to kill you. You know what I am capable of."

Shaking his head, Casper could only sigh. "William, that threat only works if the person you are threatening cares about living. Oh, also... I'm stronger."

As the words left his mouth, they both made their move. Daggers flew out from William as he simultaneously summoned his wall to protect himself against any attacks. Internally, he already summoned up the energy to create his disc.

Casper, on the other hand, just spread out his hands... and the forest hummed. All of the spikes around him began to glow with a ghastly light as tendrils of shadows extended out from each of them. Gathering in a giant sphere of darkness floating above his head.



The daggers didn't even get halfway before they fell to the ground harmlessly, the mana within gone; his control of them lost. William's wall also disintegrated as the mana holding it together was overwhelmed. The energy he was building up to summon his disc was utterly suppressed by the mighty aura of the dark sphere.

"Wha-" William yelled out as he froze up.

"Resentment, William. The resentment of the fallen. Pure emotion turned to power, a curse left by beasts and men alike," Casper explained as he looked up at the sphere.

He wasn't controlling it. He couldn't. It was power far above what he could wield... the result of the magic circle taught to him.

"This is what you call weakness. Look at you. How weak and insignificant you are. Observe the kind of power you are too broken to even attempt to grasp for."

William could only stand there, wide-eyed, his mouth quivering. "Pl... don't kill me! I didn't kill- I won-"

"Oh, I am not going to kill you. It would be pointless, anyway. Another has already claimed you. Neither my teacher nor I have an interest in attracting unnecessary conflict. No, you are a witness," Casper said as he smiled.

From below his cloak, he took out a spike. The same kind he had made countless traps with and killed dozens of humans. On it was more complex scripts than any of the ones around him.

“Goodbye, William. I shall take my leave from this accursed place first. May we never meet again,” he said as he impaled his own heart. The dark runes, spreading from the spike into his own body.

The sphere above reacted to his death, finally finding something to inhabit. The energy of resentment dove down and bore into his body through every orifice as he slowly began decaying. William just looking on at this, horrified and confused.

Moments later, with all the energy now within the dead archer, the runes transferred from the spike lit up. The mana of death spreading from the body. Which was when the final part activated.

An amulet, formerly hidden, activated. And with that, Casper disappeared from the tutorial.

“He did well,” the being said as he nodded in satisfaction.

“Adequate,” a female voice concurred.

“Our Patron gave express orders after all,” a third chimed in.

They had been observing a seer-stone moments earlier as they saw Casper disappear. A powerful magic circle before them activating at the same time. Immense amounts of mana were mobilized as a figure appeared standing in the middle of the circle.

"It's done," the newcomer spoke as he walked forwards, bowing to the three of them.

He had done everything as told. He didn't necessarily know why he had to do all the things he had done. It was just a part of the pact he had made. William had been led to the intended spot, and he had witnessed what he had to witness.

"Well done, Casper. The Patron is satisfied with your performance," the first figure said with unabated envy in his voice as he motioned with his skeletal hand for the young undead to rise. "And welcome to your afterlife."