

Hunter 54

Chapter 54: Class Evolution

But he understood. He had been soft. He had been forgiving and hopeful to the point of naivety, and it had nearly resulted in his death. His mistake wasn't to approach Jacob and the others to talk. It was not to be strong enough in case it went south.

If he had been more powerful, it wouldn't have mattered. It would be inconsequential even if the rest of the tutorial showed up to kill him if he only was powerful enough to tell them all to sit the fuck down and listen to his explanation.

So he needed power and a lot of it. He was done having fun with fights for now. He couldn't stop himself completely from enjoying a good fight, but he wouldn't go out of his way to challenge himself. At least not now. He was on a timer until the tutorial ended. May as well make use of the time properly.

His most immediate objective was to feel anything other than pain. Luckily, he slowly became aware as he felt his senses return one by one. His Sphere of Perception first and, unluckily, smell being the second.

A horrid stench entered his nostrils. A stench, he quickly recognized as the smell of rotting flesh. His sphere promptly made him aware of the source of the stench as three half-decomposed corpses lay around him.

Still unable to move, he could only lie there with his eyes closed. He didn't feel the sunlight from the artificial sun making him aware that it was nighttime now. His meeting with Jacob and the others had been before noon, meaning at least 10 hours had passed since he collapsed here.

Luckily no one had followed him through the barrier. Or perhaps they were unable to. He had no way to know and quite honestly didn't care. He could only be happy that he was left alone.

As for the raptors... he could barely remember how the hell he had killed them but based on their states, it involved a lot of poison. Though they sure had done a number on him based on his missing left arm.

Another random occurrence was that the stench seemed to keep away the other beasts. It was dark, so if the creatures here adhered to the same rules as the ones outside the barrier, Jake should be good.

Still unable to move, he decided to use the time to go through his notifications but didn't get further than the second one, after that first warrior he killed with a bottle to the face.

You have slain [Human (E) - lvl 28 / Apprentice Spearman of Embers - lvl 41 / Builder – lvl 16] – A small amount of bonus experience earned for killing an enemy with a class above your class level. 624.458 TP earned

That... was the red-robed man with the spear. What the hell? How did he die? Jake did land a Touch of the Malefic Viper on the guy doing some damage, but far from enough to kill him. Caroline and other healers were also close, meaning healing him should have been entirely possible.

Even without healing, his natural vitality should keep him alive. And yet he had died. Meaning someone or something else had finished him off. Once again, suggesting that the situation wasn't so black and white as he first believed.

Had he just been a pawn for Richard to finish off Hayden all along?

And speaking of manipulating bastards, where was William? He wasn't present in the fight. Luckily. Jake doubted he would have made it out if that metal caster had been there as well. Hayden, Richard, and the others packed a punch for sure, but he still felt that the William he had met days ago would come out ahead.

William was weak defensively, but he could likely take down both of them if he played it smart. It would take him some time, but it should be possible. If he faced them together, though... yeah, dead William.

Going on to the next few messages, he saw that he had indeed managed to kill the three raptors alone. Despite not being aware of exactly how the hell he managed that.

You have slain [Bluehide Raptor – lvl 40] – Bonus experience earned for killing an enemy above your level. 40000 TP earned

'DING!' Class: [Archer] has reached level 24 - Stat points allocated, +1 free point

You have slain [Redhide Raptor – lvl 39]. Bonus experience earned for killing an enemy above your level. 38000 TP earned

You have slain [Greenhide Raptor – lvl 40]. Bonus experience earned for killing an enemy above your level. 40000 TP earned

One level in archer after the first raptor. The experience indeed was great. Great enough, in fact, for the next message to have appeared.

Class Evolution Requirements Met

You have hunted beasts far above your level with great resolve, showing both ambition and perhaps a bit of foolhardiness. A determination to face that which you shouldn't. It has been a lonesome hunt, not shying away from confronting these foes alone. Skilled with a bow as well as melee, you have shown diversity in your art of killing, willing to resorting to any means to obtain the final victory.

Begin Evolution now?

Y/N

WARNING: Postponing evolution for too long may have adverse effects, and no further class-experience can be earned before evolution is completed.

The warning at the end did scare him a bit, considering he had been out cold. He also had a vague feeling that actually choosing to evolve right now maybe wouldn't be the best idea. He had no idea if something unexpected would happen like when he upgraded his profession.

So he patiently waited as more and more feeling returned to his body. When he finally moved a bit, he managed to summon a health potion from his necklace and use a mix between mana control and his feeble hand to drink it.

He instantly felt the warmth flow through his body as his body healed at a visible rate. His severed arm even started growing out in a far less scary and disgusting way than he thought it would. It was like it just slowly grew out like a tree-branch that ended in a hand.

Moving the arm, it felt the exact same as before without any issues. With a sigh of relief, Jake managed to sit himself up as he started meditating.

A few hours later, he opened his eyes, feeling in a good enough condition to evolve. While he wasn't in top shape, he was good enough for now. Checking the notification window once more, he accepted the evolution.

With little fanfare, five options appeared before him, just like when he upgraded his profession. Like last time he started going through them one by one. The first one being the expected linear upgrade.

Veteran Archer – An archer who has proven himself to be of some skill and possesses some amount of experience. A safe and sure step forward, taking no risks but staying on your proven path to power. A class focused on ranged combat, mainly using bow and arrow, coupled with light options for melee such as short-swords and daggers. The class is fast and flexible, focusing on agility over strength. You have yet to truly prove yourself outstanding on your path, but perhaps you will find your stride and true potential in the future. Stat bonuses per level: +3 Per, +2 Agi, +2 End, +1 Str, +2 Free Point

The first option was kind of... boring. The description also more or less insulting whoever picked this as being unremarkable. Jake also remembered seeing the archer he had killed together with the green aura warrior having this class. Poor guy must have been so disappointed when he saw two of his friends get cool classes. Everything about it just screamed mediocrity. Likely an option anyone meeting the evolution requirement as an archer would get.

Even the stats were underwhelming. Giving only 10 stats total. Half of what his Prodigious Alchemist of the Malefic Viper currently provided. And that was on top of classes usually providing more stats than professions based on his reading during the challenge dungeon.

Naturally, he moved on swiftly as he went to the next option.

Novice Mana Archer – An archer not just relying on his bow, but the wonders of mana. A class focused on combining magic and archery to create something greater than the sum of their parts. While still using a bow and the occasional light melee weapon, you have shifted your focus to the magical aspects of fighting and still exploring how to truly use it. Your focus is split, but you believe this diverse path may lead you to the pinnacle, even if you have only just begun treading it. Stat bonuses per level: +2 Per, +2 Agi, +2 Wis, +2 Will, +2 Int, +1 Str, +1 End, +2 Free Points

This one was instantly far more interesting. It seemed to focus not only on archery but also on magic. Something similar to the warrior who had the Aspiring Blade of Nature class or the spearman? Integrating magic into a more physical fighting style.

The stats were a bit underwhelming, providing only 14, but still far better than the Veteran Archer. However, he felt that the class would provide far more powerful skills and a further chance of evolution than the Veteran Archer option. It was only called Novice Mana Archer, after all, leaving plenty of room to grow.

He did have his reservation, though. It didn't appear that strong, and it did make Jake wonder if he went wrong with his mana training somewhere to not unlock anything better.

He was honestly still quite tempted, but he still had three options to go through, with the next one being quite the departure.

Apprentice Rogue of Umbra – The rogues of Umbra are known for their cunning and stealth, striking while one with the shadows. You are but an apprentice in the craft, still early in your journey, but you have shown promise so far. A class focused on light melee weapons and stealth, along with ranged options such as bows and crossbows. The class is fast and flexible, focusing on agility over strength. Compared to many other types of rogues, the Rogue of Umbra does not shy away from the powers of magic, however, openly embracing the power found in the shadows. Praise be Umbra. Stat bonuses per level: +3 Agi, +2 Wis, +2 Int, +1 Str, +1 Per, +1 End, +1 Vit, +1 Tough, +3 Free Points. WARNING: Skills pertaining to the Archer class may be lost or changed upon becoming an Apprentice Rogue of Umbra.

Straight from mana archer to evil shadow assassin. Or maybe just an ordinary shadow assassin. The class was also quite a shift in focus, going from a ranged class to one more focused on melee.

But it wasn't the typical kind like the one he had fought. This one also seemed to incorporate magic quite a bit together with the regular rogue-ish approaches.

As to how he got the option? Well, likely a combination between his bracers with the word Umbra on them and the skill Basic Shadow Vault of Umbra. On top of that, he had also fought a lot in melee with daggers, acting quite rogue-ish if he had to say so himself.

Not that he had any intentions of taking it. While it did provide one more stat point per level than the prior one, there were just too many red flags. First of all, "Praise be Umbra"? This was clearly some religious shit - he said to himself only a few hours after having a chat with a god.

He had in his sphere seen the looks that the Hall Master tried to hide during his conversation with the Malefic Viper, ignoring whatever she used to hide her facial expressions. She had looked mortified whenever he cracked a joke and looked like she half wanted to strangle him and half kneel before him the entire time - quite the vexing experience.

Becoming a Rogue of Umbra would also very likely create a link to another god. Which he still wasn't sure was a good or a bad thing. The Malefic Viper was a nice dude, but he doubted all gods were the same as him. It didn't take a genius to know that it could lead to complications later if getting this class came with the expectations of joining some weird assassin club or something, which he had no intention of.

As a departure from the archer class, it also meant that he risked losing some skills. In general, if he had to pick, he would rather go with Novice Mana Archer. Luckily, he had two other options remaining.

Bowman of Decay – The Bowman of Decay seeks not simply the pleasure of a good hunt but the pinnacle of death itself. The ultimate beauty of all life is its inevitable decay as death takes hold. You have learned to inflict such decay upon others. Having moved away from the usual path of archers, the Bowman of Decay focuses on afflicting their foes with slow, excruciating deaths. While still using a bow and the occasional light melee weapon, you have shifted your focus to the magical aspects of fighting. Your bow now but a medium used to inflict your magic of death and decay. Your path is sure to leave behind much desolation in your wake. Stat bonuses per level: +3 Int, +3 Per, +2 Wis, +2 Will, +2 Agi +2 Vit, +1 Tough, +1 Str, +2 Free Points

Yeah... what the fuck, Jake thought as he finished reading it. Was he really that terrible? So bad that the system decided that he surely would be an excellent wandering war-crime. Taking a step back, he decided to still evaluate the class, though he was sure as hell not picking it.

It gave 3 more stat points per level than the Rogue, but this time it got more focused on magic than anything else. It was practically a magic archer, the highest bonus even in both intelligence and perception.

If he looked at it from an objective view, the class would likely synergize exceptionally well with his profession. It would maybe even make his poisons even more powerful and give him methods of empowering them.

The thought of becoming a mage also did seem very tempting. Jake had been practicing hard in his mana control and had improved tremendously in his own opinion. Though he had nothing to compare it to, he felt like it was pretty good. He had even managed to break free from the attack earlier by overflowing every pore of his body with mana. Which, in retrospect, wasn't a very effective way of doing it. Nevertheless, this class would, without a doubt, make far more use of his growing control of mana than an upgrade like Veteran Archer.

Yet... he just didn't like it. If he had to choose, he would still pick the Novice Mana Archer one over this. It may just be him being a bit of a hypocrite considering how many people and beasts he had killed by literally rotting their flesh away, but he didn't want that to be his main focus. He could live with doing it, but not for it to be what ultimately brought him to the top.

He reaffirmed himself to skip over this one, moving on to the final option.