

Hunter 57

Chapter 57: Metal & Nature

The inside of the cabin was far too hot for William, and yet he couldn't make himself look away. With every swing that brought the hammer down and every spark released upon impact, he got more and more entranced.

The Smith had been planning all of this for a long time. He was currently doing the finishing touches on his magnum opus with vigor and skill that William could only sigh in admiration at.

He was making what looked like a breastplate at first sight, but if one looked closer, it could be seen that the shape was slightly off. This piece was only part of the final product, after all. A single layer of the armor that would be combined with the rest upon completion.

William's greatest weakness was, without a doubt, his defensive capabilities. While he could kill almost anything in moments, the same was true for himself, being killed in return. The fight with Jake was a great example. A single cut and he had nearly croaked.

The Smith was aware of this weakness. Or he at least had assumed it was so. What he was making was not just a chestplate, but an entire set of armor. The metal looked like silver but based on how hard the man was hitting it, and how little it gave away, it clearly was something else.

He wanted to ask but based on the man's facial expression; he seemed to be in deep concentration. William had quite a bit of insight into metals due to his class's nature, and he could nearly see the mana and stamina oozing out of the man as it entered the armor. But what was even more impressive was how easily the armor absorbed everything.

When he injected mana into metals to attune them to his use with his manipulation skills, it usually came with a lot of waste. Especially if he had to take control of metal, he had not used before. But this armor greedily took in everything like a famished man at a feast.

He briefly considered it worth killing the man just for the metal alone, but for some reason, the thought just felt... wrong.

Wiping the sweat off his brows, the Smith smiled at William as he summoned another piece of the final armor as he started attaching them together. With his hammer raised once more, he continued the work. It looked simple, almost comically so, but William could see the intricate patterns in which the mana moved through the hammer as it entered the armor with every hit.

Hours passed, and even though it had been so long, neither of them felt the passage of time. William was too engrossed in the creation process while the Smith was wholly absorbed in his work.

Nobody came to disturb them during this time. Everyone was busy preparing for the final fight with the now-dead Hayden's faction. With the isolation barrier in place, the cabin's intense creation process didn't make any disturbances to outsiders either.

Finally, the Smith breathed a sigh of relief as he put the hammer down. Taking the completed piece off the anvil, he smiled in satisfaction as he started cleaning it. William wanted to jump forward and grab the armor but decided against it. It was his, to begin with... but it felt wrong to take it before the Smith gave him permission to.

With a nod, the man finished cleaning the now shining silver armor. It looked like only a piece of plate mail that only covered the chest. It was solid but looked easy enough to move around in. But of course, William knew it wasn't so simple. The Smith had attached several pieces of armor to it. Parts now

seemingly integrated into the plate mail - a complete set of armor covering one from head to toe. Helmet, leg-guards, bracers, gloves, all of it had been melted into this final piece of armor.

This clearly showed how prepared the Smith had been. All of these were made from the beginning. He only had to do the final part. And for some reason, he had wanted William to bear witness to this last part of the armor's creation.

Placing the now finished armor on a table, he called over the young man waiting in the room with him.

"Come over here, kid," The bearded smith laughed. "Check out the armor. Not bad, eh?"

Not hesitating, William went forward as he identified the armor.

[Expanding Blessed Mithril Armor (Rare)] - An expertly crafted full suit of armor created by a skilled smith pouring in all their talent. Reaching a high rarity, if barely, this achievement has been achieved not through intricate enchantments but through pure strength of the materials used and the craftsmanship required for its creation. Extremely high ability to absorb and store mana. Enchantments: Expanding Armor. Kinetic Force Diffusion.

Requirements: lvl 25+ in a humanoid race.

William couldn't help but be impressed and yet slightly disappointed at the same time. He had hoped for stats or something, but it sure was powerful. What he didn't understand was what the Kinetic Force Diffusion did.

“What is that Kinetic thing about?” William asked the smith, who, in turn, was closely observing him back.

“Something you sorely need is what it is,” The Smith laughed. “It does so you won’t get turned to mush inside the armor when a guy hits you with a big hammer or something like that. It disperses the force throughout the armor’s surface instead of a single point, effectively allowing the armor to absorb more of the blow.

“In other words, it does so even someone like you can take some hits,” the Smith finished explaining.

With wide eyes, William did a complete 180 with his disappointment. That sounded damn overpowered. Of course, he didn’t know precisely how effective it was, but it sure as hell made the armor way better. He could easily see himself get killed by substantial impacts if he didn’t have it.

“So, are you satisfied?” The Smith asked as he smiled at the young man.

“Satisfied for sure!” William smiled back. Not the fake smile he was used to but a genuine one. This armor was well worth the wait. He felt... grateful.

William hadn’t had that thought with anyone else in this tutorial. But for the first time, perhaps the first time in his life, he felt indebted to someone. He felt like he owed the bearded man something. For him to possibly be at least a bit the person, the Smith believed him to be.

"I am happy to hear that," the tired crafter said, as he handed William a plate of metal covered in cloth. "I have left some information on this for you... it's about the war and the armor and what I hope for you to do. Open it when we're done."

As he said, he had a sad glint in his eye for a second before continuing. "Now... for the second part."

The hunter was faster than thought possible by any pre-system human as he sprinted up the mountainous path. Despite his speed, however, what chased him was faster.

No higher than up to his waist, the small beasts zoomed up the path as they crossed several meters with every footfall.

Their sharp teeth all dripped with acidic spit, making sizzling sounds whenever it hit the ground during their chase.

The hunter still managed to stay ahead as he turned into a shadowy form and flew forward, avoiding their assault. The second he landed, he turned around as he fired an arrow hitting the small beast, making it fall to the ground.

The wound left by the arrow quickly started festering and rotting as the beast thrashed in pain and confusion. The other creatures simply ignored its death-throes as they leaped over the soon-to-be-dead comrade of theirs.

The beasts were relentless. Relentless and numerous.

They had started chasing Jake nearly half an hour ago after he sniped a big buffalo-like animal. The beast had managed to survive the Powershot and had promptly charged at him. Jake had believed himself to be safe considering the nearly 100-meter tall cliff that he stood on as he shot at the beast below.

Oh boy, had he been wrong! The beast just started literally running vertically up the wall. It was honestly one of the silliest things Jake had ever seen, but sadly he had been too occupied not getting smashed by the massive beast to appreciate the comedy.

The fight had been rather long and only ended after he managed to mount the beast while injecting the Malefic Viper Touch.

He had won the fight, but it had made quite the spectacle - a spectacle that had attracted a few of these pests. To his dismay, the first one who saw him started making loud shrieking noises, which attracted even more of the damn things.

They were small green raptor-like animals, the size of golden retrievers. But they were incredibly fast and agile while also having highly toxic bites. Jake could handle being bitten as the poison didn't really affect him due to his Palate of the Malefic Viper, but it still hurt like hell.

He had already killed more than ten of them, and yet five still chased him. The buggers were nothing but determined, at least.

Shadow Vaulting once more, he managed to slip away from the two that had gotten closer as he landed another poisoned arrow on one of the beasts, making it tumble to the ground.

In return, he got four spits of acid his way fired by the other small dinosaurs. The speed of the liquid was too fast for Jake to avoid as he simply covered his head and let it rain down on him. It did hurt a bit, but it honestly wasn't that bad.

It had to be said that the poor beasts were incredibly poorly matched against Jake. Their power focused on the use of acid and poison, two things Jake had significant resistance to. At the same time, they didn't really have any particularly strong poison resistance of their own.

Their speed was impressive, and they had dodged a majority of Jake's attempts to strike back, but in the end, it was a battle of attrition.

Jake was able to take the buggers down in one shot, while they could barely harm him. Their damage came through the venom excreted through their bites, which in the end only helped Jake recover a bit of mana every time they took a bite out of him. He couldn't just tank their attacks, but he could easily handle their occasional strike that landed.

Which was why it only took a few more minutes before the last beast was dead on the ground. When it was down to two of them, Jake didn't bother dodging anymore as he simply met them in melee. Getting hold of them one by one, he used Touch of the Malefic Viper to take them down swiftly.

Exhausted from the chase, he lay down on the ground as he stared up at the sky. Another reason he had switched from using his bow was slightly more embarrassing... he had run out of arrows.

Despite having two quivers, his starting one, and one taken from the archer who was with the nature warrior, he had used all the arrows in both of them. Mainly because of the damn beasts constantly dodging him.

If he found another upgrade token, he, without a doubt, would want to upgrade the quiver. It should also help make his arrows better, making them not always break whenever he shot them. Even now, they often broke when he hit a beast.

Speaking of the quivers, he took the one he had stored in his spatial necklace out, as he started injecting mana into it along with the quiver on his back. Another perk of being better at handling mana was not making direct skin contact with an item while injecting mana. Though it did make it way faster and more efficient.

As he relaxed, he started going through the fight. In the end, the battle had been rather fruitful. Opening his notifications-menu, he saw that he had gotten two whole levels from the struggle with the dinos and the buffalo. The dinosaurs' levels weren't that high, but he had killed quite a number of them.

You have slain [Acidtooth Compsognathus – lvl 42] – Bonus experience earned for killing an enemy above your level. 44000 TP earned

The highest leveled one had only been 42, with the rest of them being between 38 and 41. But the experience had gotten him to the next threshold nevertheless.

'DING!' Class: [Ambitious Hunter] has reached level 30 - Stat points allocated, +4 free points

* Ambitious Hunter class skills available*

He was excited to finally get to some new skills in his class. While he had technically gotten Hunter's Sight and Big Game Hunter, the first one was just an upgrade to what he already had, while the other was passive. He had felt that ability during his fights. It was subtle, but he did feel like he got slightly faster and stronger whenever he fought beasts of a higher level.

If he weren't perceptive, he wouldn't have noticed it or just brushed it up as adrenaline or something like that. Not that he knew if that chemical compound even had any effect or was even a real thing of consequence after the system and stats became a thing.

As was customary by now, he started going through the skills one by one. The ones before he evolved his class were still available save for a few exceptions. Some of them clearly because they had upgraded versions available on the list below.

The first skill was entirely new, however.

[Basic Nature Affinity (Inferior)] – One with his surroundings, the Ambitious Hunter finds inspiration and solace in nature itself. Grants the hunter the nature-affinity. Allows the hunter to change his energies into one with nature-affinity, granting it slight healing and regeneration properties. It also allows the user to absorb mana of the nature-affinity more easily.

This skill was his first time encountering an Affinity skill. He knew this type of skill was prevalent among many mana-users throughout the multiverse who wanted to use a kind of mana they didn't have a natural affinity to.

As for the skill itself, it held quite a bit of attraction to Jake. But it was still in the area of only being 'a bit'. Everyone held natural affinities by default, and from the sword earlier, he more or less confirmed that he didn't have the nature-affinity.

An affinity skill wasn't an active skill. It would allow the user to change the property of the energy, but that was about it. Jake could already use his mana currently, but not that effectively quite yet, as he was still practicing and improving. His little explosion of mana during the trap was a great example of this.

Mana could be used for pretty much anything. Nature-affinity mana was just another subcategory of a type of mana. Jake had even read that if one becomes sufficiently skilled in a kind of magic, their type of mana could change, so the status window started showing "nature mana" instead of just mana. While this would undoubtedly limit the individual in many ways, it would also significantly empower whatever used nature mana.

The skill would also open Jake up to many new skills when he reached level 40. There was even a chance that the affinity skill itself would come with another skill, though he doubted it.

But while the skill would open a lot of doors, it would close far more. It wouldn't make acquiring other, more opposing affinities impossible, but it would make it astronomically more difficult. In other words, he just didn't feel like committing to a path currently. He was also afraid if it would have any adverse effect on his alchemy.

While he knew it likely wouldn't hurt it, probably even improve his skills in making potions, he did have a lingering fear it would adversely affect his poison concocting. It was just a little fear, but his intuition advised him against it. And if he had learned one thing, it was to trust his instincts above anything else when it came to decisions like this.

With all that in mind, he moved on to the next skill.