

Hunter 59

Chapter 59: Stamina

The warm flow went through his body as it quietly circulated through his system. The stream of inner energy was the natural cycle that was ever-present in any living being who possessed the energy and subsequently required it to function.

This was also why there was a passive drain of stamina whenever awake. Whenever the body was moved, a minuscule amount of this energy would get used. Of course, skills took far more energy as they easily drained hundreds of times the typical stamina consumption in mere moments.

Which was likely where the name stamina came from. It was the resource that allowed physical actions and skills.

It was very similar to mana in many ways. Except stamina was the 'mana' of the body. Much like a caster without mana would be unable to cast a single spell, a human without stamina would be unable to even move a finger.

The two energies were so similar in so many ways. Which made sense as there were ways to change one to the other. But if Jake could do so much with mana... why couldn't he do it with stamina? But instead of injecting it into an item, why not inject more of it into some regions of his body?

He could already kind of do that currently. Whenever he used Powershot, he infused his arms, shoulder, and upper body with incredible energy. Enough so that if he channeled for too long, his body started taking damage from it.

Whenever he used Hunter's Sight and Archer's Eye prior, he also did so with stamina.

With these skills, no conscious effort to move the energy was made by him. It was the skill and, subsequently, the system doing all the guidance. He simply had to think he wanted to use Powershot and focus on doing it. Yet he remembered the feeling he got while doing so.

Which was what he was currently trying to do. At first, he couldn't find this flow of energy coursing through his body, but eventually, he managed to feel the slight wisp of energy.

He focused on the feeling as he followed the flow. It was an odd sensation feeling the energy travel through channels in his body he was never aware of. Or perhaps they hadn't been there before the system reformed his body upon entering the tutorial for the first time.

If one were into eastern martial arts and medicine, one would call these channels meridians. Jake had no way to further learn about these channels' details, but he was nevertheless determined to discover the basics.

He did discover that these 'meridians' weren't actually physically present. They were more metaphysical channels within his body that could change and weave to deliver energy as they pleased. He also discovered that the core of it was around his heart... the same place he felt his vital energy exit from.

Time slowly passed as Jake sat deep in meditation. Every single shred of his consciousness was solely focused on the stamina traveling through him. Slowly he started to try and nudge it a little here and there. Speed it up, slow it down, even perhaps try and change the way it traveled slightly.

While he did find minor success in the first two, he got nothing when he tried to change the direction.

The energy was his own, to begin with, a part of his body. It was energy just like mana was. So he tried experimenting with treating it more like it was mana.

Attempting some of the methods he used when making potions, more specifically stamina potions, he started to find rapid progress.

The artificial sun had already come up once more at this point, as Jake finally opened his eyes.

Standing up, he started punching the air. Or shadowboxing if one wanted to get fancy with the wording. Partway through, he started speeding up slightly as he focused on enhancing himself. It was a small difference, but it worked.

He tried increasing it as he got faster and faster. His fists started whistling through the air as the power got higher and higher. As his movements began to look like a blur, he suddenly felt something was very wrong. He felt numb in his arms, followed by pain, not unlike when he used Powershot for too long. But this was far worse.

He tried to stop the flow and the influx of stamina but found himself unable to. The speed stopped increasing, and he kept boxing, needing some kind of outlet for the energy.

The veins on his arms started bulging and turning red, his fists moving despite Jake trying to stop them. By now, he was entirely out of his stupor and discovered how utterly stupid he had been. He had focused so much on being able to do it and not at all on how to stop.

Finally, the flow reached a crescendo as both his arms suddenly burst open like they were overinflated balloons. Blood spewed everywhere as he screamed out in pain, falling backward unto the ground.

The stamina consumption had stopped, no longer having a medium to travel to with his arms no longer being there.

Below his shoulders, he now only had two small stumps left. The pain was nearly unbearable, but Jake managed to summon a healing potion from his spatial storage, as he somehow managed to uncork it and empty the small bottle down his throat through the use of mana strings and his teeth.

He felt like an idiot as he lay on the ground. He had believed himself to be on to something genuinely remarkable. And while he kind of had, it at the same time was perilous to play around with. He couldn't help but laugh a bit to himself. Within such a short period, he had managed to lose three arms, counting the one he lost to the raptors. Quite impressive.

He also found it absurd how little he cared about it. Before the system, losing an arm would be a lifelong disability. Now, he just found it a minor inconvenience as it took slightly longer to regrow an arm than heal an ordinary wound.

Looking at his health points, they had only decreased by a bit less than 1000 despite losing both his arms. An amount that was nearly instantly regenerated upon drinking the health potion earlier.

But he had learned something. His practice was not entirely useless. If he could control his inner energy a bit better, it should help his use of skills. Say, what if he tried to speed up the charging of Powershot by forcefully increasing the flow of energy?

One of the benefits of Powershot was the immediate release of energy whenever he let go of the string. All the inner energy stored in his limbs was released at once into a single devastating blow.

Compared to his disastrous shadowboxing earlier, where the energy just kept building up without any sign of stopping or outlet. He could let out a bit of energy with every punch, but far from enough.

It was a bit like having a power supply in a computer. While the power supply was technically drawing power from a source able to deliver far more energy than necessary, it would only take what was required and then deliver that to the other computer components where needed.

What he did before was to hammer two nails into a power outlet and attach two cables directly to his graphics card, frying it real good. Sadly for him, the body didn't have any natural breakers or security systems build in.

But at least it only targeted his arms. He could only dread what would have happened if he tried to speed up the flow in his entire body. While it would likely grant a significant increase in power, it would equally as likely result in a rapid decrease in being alive.

While the thoughts spun in his head, his arms were slowly regrowing. At the same time, the system popped up in front of his eyes.

Warning Skill selection still in progress. Postponing or delaying your choice may lead to adverse effects.

Oh shit, Jake thought, as he was reminded of what he was doing before his small moment of disastrous enlightenment.

Opening the menu once more, he subconsciously checked the list and was surprised to find another new option.

[Explosive Punch (Inferior)] – A reckless strike may lead to an expected victory. Punch an enemy with extreme strength, dealing the same amount of damage to the enemy as well as yourself. Adds a small bonus to the effect of strength while using Explosive Punch.

Reading it, he felt rather insulted. Yet it also helped confirm his suspicion that one could somehow unlock skills through their actions.

He did wonder why he hadn't seen anything related to his bloodline, though.

It provided at least two tangible abilities. Sphere of Perception as he called it, which of course, allowed him to 'see' everything in a sphere around him and the danger sense, which gave him a supernatural sense of how dangerous something was, or if something was dangerous at all.

These two were just among the more tangible benefits. The everyday help from his instincts, along with his intuition, both also did wondrous work.

And yet it didn't provide anything but the bloodline ability. Jake opened the window to see it to confirm and was a bit taken aback.

[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 Jake Thayne. Grants the Sphere of Perception. Grants an improved sense of danger. Enhances all instincts and intuition. +15% to Perception.

The description had changed. It hadn't been a massive change, but it had changed nevertheless. Looking at the log, he couldn't see the old version of it. But he could remember the wording quite well. It had merely said that it enhanced innate instincts, enhanced perception of his surroundings, and enhanced his perception of danger.

Did the system just copy my thoughts? he pondered as he kept reading the ability. The function of the ability hadn't changed, and he didn't feel any difference either. It was just the wording. The wording used was the same terms he had made up on a whim to describe the ability more easily.

The ability had always been rather special. First of all, it was the only system message Jake had ever seen that mentioned his name. Even those that alluded to his name did so by addressing him. But this one clearly said that Jake Thayne was awakened, speaking of him in the third person. Making Jake wonder that if others somehow obtained this ability if it would say the same.

Warning Skill selection still in progress. Postponing or delaying your choice may lead to adverse effects.

Yeah, yeah, Jake thought as he dispelled the message that popped up once more to warn him of how much time he wasted just thinking about stuff.

In the end, he settled on the Splitting Arrow skill.

Skill Gained: [Splitting Arrow (Uncommon)] – One arrow becomes many; one fallen prey becomes a field of death. Fire an arrow that splits into several copies while in flight. Each arrow strikes with the power of the original. Adds a small bonus to the effect of agility and strength when using Splitting Arrow.

This skill would give him a more practical approach to handle crowds of enemies and provide an additional attack he could use during direct combat.

In the end, Basic Nature Affinity just didn't appeal to him that much. His intuition told him the same, and as he had just gone through, that one was good enough to warrant its own unique ability.

Feeling the knowledge enter his mind, he instantly wanted to try out the skill. Remembering his current lack of limbs, however, he sadly had to postpone it as he sat up.

The dead beasts were still all around him, and his sphere didn't pick up anything within it - nothing of importance anyway.

He decided to meditate once more to regenerate his stamina and mana faster. While his mana was pretty much full, his stamina was reduced to less than 30% after his battling and experimentation earlier. So calling his reckless use of stamina inefficient would be a colossal understatement, too, it seemed.

Jake focused on the vital energy during this time. Meditation had the considerable drawback of completely cutting off all senses in the body. Except for touch, that is, which meant that he could still feel the energy moving about as it reconstructed his limbs.

He didn't even attempt to influence it in any way. Perhaps he could have tried to speed up the healing process, but he decided just to let it do its work. He had done enough experimentation with the energy for now.

Learning from the movement, however, wasn't out of the question. This energy didn't move through any set channels but inhabited every single piece of Jake's body - his flesh, blood, bones, everything.

The vital energy-concentration in other parts of his body started gathering towards the two limbs as they slowly regenerated. Rapidly being restored by some unseen source around his heart at the same time.

The bone grew out as if it were a small tree slowly reaching towards the sky. The flesh was like the moss and bark growing on the tree as it slowly piled on top. If one looked from the outside, it would look like the small stumps gradually extended down his arms, as the ends of it seemed to ripple slowly. Disgusting, to say the least, but far above what any modern medicine could achieve.

It took a few hours before the regeneration finished. Jake's arms still felt weak, but they were nearly perfectly fine once more. As it wasn't his first time losing a limb, he knew that in just a few hours, they would be as good as new. Or, well, as good as old. He also found his bracers that had been blasted away and put them on again.

Having more spare time, he took out his mixing bowl from his necklace. No reason to slack off even if he couldn't fight properly.

Besides, he still had to replenish his poison storage at some point. His blood infused by Blood of the Malefic Viper was undoubtedly strong, but the common-rarity necrotic poison was more potent.

But even more importantly, his blood could only take on the necrotic properties. He still had other more acid-like poisons, hemotoxins, and he was even thinking of concocting some powder he could turn into gas.

He had held himself back from doing so before. He still had some moral inklings. Using poison mist or powder was no different from many modern chemical weapons. Something outlawed by every civil society, and its use was generally considered an atrocious war crime. As he had no way to control the poison mist or gas once released, he was very reluctant to use it.

Yet he was slowly beginning to get over some of those moral barriers now. If poison would help bring him such power... it was worth it. He still had his own morals, his own code. The weapon, no matter how despicable, was always just that: A weapon. His deployment of said weapon was the only thing worth considering.

The mixing itself was soothing, and he went on a bit longer than he anticipated he would. After hours, he was finally rewarded with a level.

'DING!' Profession: [Prodigious Alchemist of the Malefic Viper] has reached level 46 - Stat points allocated, +5 free points

'DING!' Race: [Human (E)] has reached level 38 - Stat points allocated, +5 free points

Smiling, he enjoyed the warm flow of the stats. He had decided to try and get his profession to 50 before the end of the tutorial. He was pretty damn sure the skill offered would turn out to be useful, considering the epic skill he got last time.

Checking the tutorial panel to see his time remaining, he was a bit shocked.

Tutorial Panel

Duration: 22 days & 22:54:11

Total Survivors Remaining: 204/1200

The number of survivors had dropped... significantly. As he had it open, he saw the number go down.

Total Survivors Remaining: 203/1200

First time catching it, he thought, but seconds later, it happened again.

Total Survivors Remaining: 202/1200

And again...

Total Survivors Remaining: 201/1200

Total Survivors Remaining: 200/1200

Total Survivors Remaining: 199/1200

What the hell is going on?