

Hunter 91

Chapter 91: A final gift

Jake felt like he was suddenly submerged in oil. Everything went completely black, and his entire body felt like he was deep underwater. Even sound seemed to disappear as he was left with nearly no external stimulus. He said nearly as two things still worked - his sphere and his roaring sense of danger at what was heading towards him.

He tried jumping back fast enough but took a deep cut across his chest as he jumped backward. It was followed up by another strike that sought to impale him through his heart. He managed to barely weave to the side of the blade as he felt it brush past him, the dense mana surrounding the huge sword burning his side.

It wasn't just that Jake had gotten slower. The ratman had gotten stronger and faster. It moved as if it hadn't taken a single injury during their entire fight. But in his sphere, he clearly saw what was truly going on.

The ratman was burning up with mana. It came out of every orifice, and even the puncture wounds Jake's arrows had caused earlier. Every vestige of energy was being burned, and it was only a matter of time before it would collapse.

But Jake didn't have that much time, as he barely managed to avoid a swipe of its sword but was still caught in the wave of dark mana, blowing him back. He felt the dark mana dig into his body as he felt the energy within him being drained. Health, stamina, and mana all took a hit as the mana ravaged through him.

Dodging once more, he used his Shadow Vault to dodge an overhead blow and instantly regretted it. The moment he turned into the ethereal shadow, the dark mana dug into him, draining him at an

alarming rate as he quickly disabled the skill. To make it even worse, this resulted in him failing to dodge away as far as he wanted and was blown away by the blade smashing into the ground.

He knew he couldn't keep it up. He needed to change the status quo. Dodging was not an option, and he was slowed down far too much by the domain of darkness to flee. His evasion skill was more than useless. So, instead of trying to avoid the enemy, he charged.

The ratman was faster and stronger than him, but it did have one major disadvantage; its weapon and fighting style. The heavy sword was great at medium range, and its waves of dark mana allowed it to even fight well at long range.

At short range, it had issues. The blade was too long to properly land hits, and coupled with the Nest Watcher's giant size; the small human was a difficult target to pin down. However, Jake needed an opportunity to get in close, and the ratman seemed more than content to keep him away. So he played one of his final cards.

He ran straight towards the rat without any intention to dodge - his Venomfang in one hand and his shortsword in the other. The Nest Watcher responded with an overhead smash. The raised blade descended like a meteor as his danger sense exploded out with warnings of him being obliterated.

But just before the blade hit him, it seemed to stop mid-swing. The roaring waves of mana slowed down, the smoke-like mana pouring out from the ratman moving in slow motion.

Moment of the Primal Hunter

Jake, the only one unaffected by the warped time, dodged the blade easily as time resumed to normal once more. The ratman was still confused as the dagger cut into its right knee. The hunter had held nothing back as the Descending Dark Fang penetrated the wound left by an arrow earlier and utterly shattered the kneecap.

Despite the dark mana's effects buffing it up, the Nest Watcher still could no longer use the leg as he knelt down on the other one. The ratman would likely be able to do a quick repair and resume motion in a short time. If Jake let him.

A sword and dagger cut into it once more from behind, stabbing into its back and shoulder. It tried to swing its sword behind it but failed to hit anything, as the two weapons dug into its flesh again.

Jake avoided the armor covering the Nest Watcher with his blades. It only covered parts of the body, and a lot of it had broken off by now anyway.

After landing two more blows, he decided that enough was enough and retreated backward once more. He had injected far more poison into the ratman, and even if the dark mana was keeping it at bay currently, it would still spell the doom of the Nest Watcher.

The ratman kept kneeling as he tried standing a few times but failed. Soon the domain darkness was dispelled as everything returned to normal once more. As normal as a sewer dungeon filled with constant darkness could be.

By now, the ratman was well and truly spent. Down on both knees with the blade dropped to the side. Cracks covered the ratman's entire body as the dark mana had clearly taken its toll.

The ratman looked up at Jake, who stood only a few meters away now, its eyes fixed on his.

“You kill King truth?” It asked, the words barely coming out.

“That or I die trying,” Jake answered truthfully.

“King strong. Very strong. Trapped nest,” the Nest Watcher said, as it picked up the fallen blade slowly. Jake didn’t react as he could see that it genuinely could barely lift it. “I hate. If you truly kill... I help. Nest died long ago. You do... revenge.”

“Help me? How?” He asked, a bit confused. He doubted the ratman could exit the dungeon even if it wanted.

“I make plan... but I weak. Trapped. Never leave. But you leave. I give curse, you kill King,” It said, as it lifted the blade and held it in both hands. “You accept?”

“Sure.”

At his confirmation, dark mana started leaving the body of the ratman as it entered the blade. At the same time, the blade started shrinking down into a small marble. As the mana was channeled, he clearly felt the ratman grow weaker and weaker.

"I done. Take gift. Kill King. Revenge Nest," the Nest Watcher barely managed to get out before the last remnants of life left its body. Its eyes closed as he saw a final wisp of energy enter the bead in its hand.

*You have slain [Nest Watcher – lvl 96] – Bonus experience earned for killing an enemy above your level.
152000 TP earned*

' DING!' Class: [Ambitious Hunter] has reached level 64 - Stat points allocated, +4 free points

It was a solemn end, but it had been a good fight.

It... no, he fought well, Jake thought as he walked up to the dead Nest Watcher. He nodded at the corpse as he accepted the gift it had used its last remaining life to hand him.

[Dark Bead of the Nest Watcher (Epic)] – A bead made of condensed dark mana. The last hope of the Nest Watcher to get revenge on the King of the Forest. Can be thrown at foes to inflict them with a powerful Curse of Darkness upon shattering. The curse will severely limit perception and drain energy until dispelled. All of the resentment of the nest will be unleashed if used on the King of the Forest.

The bead was clearly a powerful weapon. It was a one-time use attack. One clearly made for the King of the Forest, and Jake would happily reserve it for just that. It would maybe give him the edge he needed.

Jake put the bead in his storage. While he planned to face the King all along, he now had just a little more motivation.

He started limping towards the dungeon's exit when he was reminded of the one remaining Incubator. It was still just lying there on the stones, seemingly unaware of everything that had happened. The small molerats surrounded the three other incubators' corpses and appeared to be nipping at them.

With disgust, Jake downed a healing potion and took out his dagger and sword. No matter how much respect he held for the Nest Watcher, its nest was now dead. There was nothing left to salvage, and he may as well finish the job.

Ten minutes later, he walked out of the reservoir with two bloody blades in his hands. The job was done, and the final Incubator, as well as all the rats, were now dead for good.

You have slain [Molerat Incubator—lvl 85] – Bonus experience earned for killing an enemy above your level. 130000 TP earned

' DING!' Class: [Ambitious Hunter] has reached level 65 - Stat points allocated, +4 free points

' DING!' Race: [Human (E)] has reached level 58 - Stat points allocated, +5 free points

He read the notifications and continued onwards. As expected, this was indeed the end of the dungeon as he entered a new small room with a wooden door leading into it. The room held two lockboxes summoned by the system, but also many other things.

In one corner was stacked hides from what appeared to be dead deer. The hides were faded, gray, and dirty, obviously having been there for a long time. It wasn't hard to conclude that this was where the Nest Watcher had lived.

The rest of the room was simple. There were no books or any type of entertainment - just a bunch of old hides and some rudimentary furniture such as a single chair and tables all made of the same bricks as the walls and floor.

For the powerful Nest Watcher to live in such terrible conditions... Jake could understand why he hated his existence. It also explained why he had been so slow to react to the hunter's initial assault, which allowed him to kill two Incubators before he even appeared.

Jake felt a tinge of sadness. It reminded him of his own experience in the challenge dungeon. Except the Nest Watcher didn't have any endgame. He was stuck in the hellhole that was this sewer with no way out. And with the door to exit the dungeon in his very room...

Jake shook his head to dispel the thoughts as he turned his attention to the lockboxes. He could do nothing for the Nest Watcher now but get stronger and kill the King of the Forest. Perhaps this was the ratman's intention all along. Find someone powerful enough to possibly stand up to the King and then give them the bead that he had clearly been preparing for a long time.

One of the two lockboxes was large and rectangular, with the other one small and square. Jake decided to open the small box first.

Within, he found a rather nice-looking pair of black gloves. Picking them up, they felt leathery and not the cheap imitation leather-leathery. The gloves only covered the hand and only extended a few centimeters up the arm, meaning they didn't get in the way of his bracers at all.

[Gloves of the Nest Watcher (Rare)] – Gloves made from the cured leather of an unknown creature. Provides strong protection against both physical and energy attacks. User can channel mana through the gloves that can then be released as a blast of mana. The blast's power is based on the user's wisdom and intelligence, along with the mana consumed on use. Enchantments: Self-Repair. +35 Intelligence.

Requirements: Lvl 55+ in any humanoid race.

Reading the description, he was rather pleased just by the simple fact that he could use them. Interestingly enough, they didn't appear to be of the dark affinity at all. It wouldn't have stopped him from using them as he wouldn't encounter compatibility problems like with nature and light mana, but he still preferred affinity-less equipment. He felt like it fit him more.

The effect was also exciting but had to be tested before he could draw any worthwhile conclusion. It appeared to be strong, and he was always looking for ways to better use his mental stats during combat.

Enchantment-wise it was relatively simple. Self-Repair appeared to be a staple of system-made equipment, and while the stats on the gloves didn't benefit Jake much, they were nevertheless welcome. Intelligence, if nothing else, did make his Infused Powershot marginally more powerful.

Turning his attention to the other box, he opened that one too.

What was revealed was leather armor for the upper part of the body. It appeared to be made of the same material as the gloves and even sported the same colors. It had long sleeves and covered everything from the bottom of the neck to the edge of the pants.

Jake couldn't help but be ecstatic.

Finally, a god damn shirt! For far too long had he gone with a bare chest. Far too long spent getting scratches all over his upper body and having to feel half-naked. Some decency had finally returned to his life. His happiness only increased as he identified the armor.

[Armor of the Nest Watcher (Rare)] – A chestpiece made from the cured leather of an unknown creature. Provides strong protection against both physical and energy attacks. The Nest Watcher's life force runs through this armor, blessing the wielder with great vitality and toughness. Enchantments: Self-Repair. +75 Vitality, +50 Toughness.

Requirements: Lvl 55+ in any humanoid race.

The armor didn't have any ability or extra effect. Instead, it just provided a buttload of stats and solid defenses, which quite honestly suited Jake just fine. Though, he would have worn it even if its only ability was not to be torn whenever something even remotely touched him. Yes, he still hated that damn cloak.

He took on the armor first, and he felt the warm flow of stats after he injected mana into it, binding it to him. He felt like it would take a few minutes before his body adapted to the increased stats. But more than anything, it just felt great to finally have some measure of defense between his bare skin and the claws and teeth of the beasts.

Next, he picked up the gloves. Putting them on, he once more felt the increase in stats after yet another injection of mana, binding them as well.

They fit like a glove, Jake joked to himself, the horrible joke fully intended. Perhaps the solitude did have some adverse effects.

He did a few stretches in the new armor, feeling out the flexibility of it. It almost didn't impede him at all, and he felt great wearing it. He had nearly forgotten the feeling of being fully clothed after going the better part of a month not being so.

Heck, he even looked quite good if he had to be honest, though a bit edgy with the whole all-black theme going on. Well, all-black except for his old brown boots that still looked like they were about to tear and break at any point. An appearance they had had since the moment he got them.

Feeling comfortable in his new armor, he flopped down to the ground to meditate. He considered doing it outside but decided to get as much meditation time before the dungeon would kick him out, making full use of the faster regeneration from the dark mana.

One dungeon left, Jake reminded himself as he entered meditation.