

Hunter 166

Chapter 166: Jake & Mystie Airlines

"We'll be back later today, Hawkie, so just take care. If things get dangerous, just go into the lodge with the egg. I doubt anything can really destroy that thing in a short amount of time," Jake explained as he gave the egg a final pat before parting.

Hawkie gave an affirming screech as Jake and Mystie prepared themselves to leave. Well, there weren't really any preparations besides telling Hawkie to take care of the soon-to-be-chick.

Since last night after Miranda left, Jake had gotten a good night's sleep, and this morning he went for a bath in the pond, cleaning himself off properly. He felt great, even if he was a bit worried about what he was about to do.

Of course, he planned to have Miranda do most of the talking, but he still felt unsure about approaching strangers. Yet he knew he had to do it if he wanted to improve the small outpost that was their city. Miranda clearly wanted to make some kind of contact; she just needed that final push.

So Jake would support her by standing behind her as she went to negotiate. Make it absolutely clear that while they didn't have to be allies, they sure as hell wouldn't want to make Jake and his little city an enemy.

He knew that he would be a bit intimidating himself but more due to mysteriousness. He was intimidating because he was an unknown threat. It was a lot easier to just bring a known threat along. Such as a D-grade beast.

Yeah, this is just work. Regular old office work where you have to visit a potential customer, so you bring your best people. Yep, totally normal. Also, using animals in marketing is also not out of the ordinary.

Jake did a lot of mental gymnastics to justify it in his head, but ultimately they would without a doubt be seen as a threatening invading force. He wanted just to make sure that they were the kind of invading force that didn't result in the other side thinking they could actually put up a fight. No, they would be the kind of invading force where you just give up and let them in.

Mystie flew around above him as he walked out of the valley, finally getting a good look at the small settlement still under construction. They had already made three longhouses and were planning on another.

The fifteen newcomers had also begun making some smaller buildings for themselves, having quite the versatile caster with earth magic among them. Hank had apparently given them the approval to do this and told them where they could make it and how big it could be.

It appeared that Miranda and Hank had the whole construction-thing well under control and had even done city planning. No doubt Miranda got experience from doing such things, and chances are Hank would get some too as a builder.

A few people noticed him and threw him a cautious gaze before scurrying away. Jake was wearing his mask and full get-up, not comfortable walking about with his face out in the open. Miranda had also emphasized that keeping up his aura of mysteriousness was beneficial to her. It made it all a lot easier when he seemed like an unapproachable entity that only she could manage rather than if he was just another random person living there. Even if he was strong.

And today, he amplified that aura of mysteriousness and power even more as the Mystsong Hawk descended from above the trees and landed on his outstretched arm. As he was practically in the middle of the settlement with nearly a dozen people throwing glances his way, it sure made a bit of an uproar.

Miranda came out of the central building, a large two-story wooden building that served as the City Lord's residence and office, and she threw him a slightly admonishing smile for his theatrics but still greeted him with respect as she put on her professional persona.

"Sir, the expedition force is gathered inside, if you and your companion would follow me," she said with a bow as she motioned towards the office building.

Jake followed her into the building, which was already covered with a barrier of sorts. Jake quickly recognized it as Neil's work, and a quick inspection made him aware of its functions. It was quite simple, actually, just blocking out sound.

The office windows were also enchanted with something that allowed them to switch from see-through to one-way. It was quite nice and impressive that they have constructed it all in such a short timespan. Skills and magic were sure a game-changer for the construction industry.

Inside he saw Neil and his party as well as a scarred woman he recognized as part of Abby's entourage and a man he hadn't seen before. He reckoned he was one of the newcomers.

"Most of you know him, but this is the owner of the city," Miranda said, introducing Jake. Yet the people's attention wasn't on Jake but the hawk that was sitting on his arm.

Neil looked shocked while Christen subtly moved Silas behind her, and Eleanor took a step back to create a bit of distance between them. Levi was the only one that didn't move much, but he did slightly move his hand towards his sword.

The scarred woman and the man Jake didn't recognize both reacted widely differently. The scarred woman barely reacted while the man took several steps back with a frightened expression while speaking up.

"Is the owner a beast!?" he said with disbelief as he looked at the hawk.

What? Jake thought. Wait, did he think he was the servant of the bird or something?

"Of course not; this Mystsong Hawk is the owner's companion," Miranda answered, clearly experiencing a sense of schadenfreude towards the man. Jake got the impression that he was the annoying type.

"The Mystsong Hawk is D-grade, is it not?" Neil asked after collecting himself. His party also calmed down, as clearly nothing was going to happen. "Truly surprising... this is my first time seeing a D-grade beast up close. Quite the aura..."

Jake looked at Neil and used Identify, seeing that the space mage had also grown a bit over the last few weeks.

[Human – lvl 57]

He had been level 53 when Jake first met him two or so weeks ago, and while 4 levels didn't seem like a lot, it was a decent pace. Everyone in his party had grown a few levels, though he guessed the majority were from profession-levels.

They had insinuated that they wanted to take a break, and Miranda had said that they had spent nearly all their time within the small city. They had been on the run for a while based on what Neil had explained, so it made sense that they wanted to relax. Not everyone was a junkie for improving themselves and finding new challenges like Jake.

Miranda, noticing that Jake didn't plan on saying anything, continued the conversation. "Sir, these two are Lillian and Miquel. Lillian has taken the role of my assistant, and Miquel was the leader of our newest arrival of citizens. He led a small caravan of 16 people to join."

Jake just gave them both a nod before walking into the room and taking a seat on one of the chairs. All the furniture in the room looked new, which made sense... as it was.

He Identified the people around the room and got a feel for their levels.

[Human – lvl 49]

Miquel was level 49, which was quite respectable. He had likely been above 40 by the end of the tutorial, making him well-ahead of the curve. Of course, he was still beaten by people like Neil and his party and monsters like Jake, but he was better than someone like Hank. Hank had been considered strong in his tutorial's context by being barely level 30, so it did make sense that Miquel would be looked to as a leader.

[Human – lvl 34]

Next was Lillian at level 34. He didn't remember what level she was before or if he had even identified her, but he was pretty sure she was quite a bit lower than that. Is assistant to the City Lord a profession? he asked himself before noting the level of said City Lord.

[Human – lvl 41]

Despite the relatively low level, Jake found it very impressive. When he left last time, she was level 34, and now she had grown 7 race levels in total. Her profession clearly grew at an impressive speed, but Jake also heard from her that she had gained class levels too. She still hadn't evolved her class before, so the levels came easy with the many bonus stats.

It was good that her level improved. It would give her more credibility to be of a high level, and of course, the stats would make her stronger and make it easier for her to defend the city. While she wasn't much of a fighter, Jake was sure that there existed ways for people to fight even without direct confrontations.

The lighting in the room was done by a small crystal-like stone hanging from the ceiling. Jake reckoned it was the work of some profession he didn't yet know of, so he just ignored it as Miranda began laying out their plan as everyone had calmed down and at least partly adapted to the presence of the D-grade bird.

"We will approach the fort with the people we have here and establish contact. As I explained, we will offer them to come here for refuge and help build the city. But it will be on our terms and our terms only," she said.

“Some diplomatic concession should be made if we don’t want to create dissatisfaction, and if a large number of individuals come, it will be hard to not give some political power to them... it would be easier to just approach with a promise of partnership,” Miquel said, still throwing glances at Mystie.

“I discussed this with the owner... and there will be no concessions,” Miranda said firmly.

“But what if-“

“None,” Miranda reaffirmed. “If we - or more specifically I - find it beneficial for the city to give them influential roles, I will do so. But it will be at our discretion, not a concession.”

“Are you sure about this?” Neil said, looking a bit worried. “This seems like a very heavy-handed approach...”

“We aren’t forcing any of them to come here; we are offering it. While we do need them, based on the reports that your own team brought back, they need us even more.”

“That is true...” Neil said as he sat silently in contemplation.

“Do we even have the capacity for them to come here if they all choose to?” Eleanor asked. “While I couldn’t get a good headcount, the fort is big, and I saw a lot of movement... I doubt they have anything less than two thousand people.”

"I am sure they will gladly help shape the city as founding citizens and contribute to the construction. We made it without houses for a while, and so can they. We already have a new longhouse prepared we can use if they have some people with special needs, and construction is fast," Miranda said as she continued her explanation.

"As for land to build on, there are no issues there either. We have plenty of space on the ground within the owner's domain, and Hank and I have also considered building vertically. The trees are far more robust than anything before the system, and I am sure some profession or classes can make the idea of building on them feasible."

While she spoke, Jake just sat there stoically, Mystie not bothering much with the conversation either, but inspecting the peculiar enchants around the building. Jake was actually very invested in what she said, mainly because he had to admit that the thought of giant magical treehouses sounded awesome.

"If that many people come, we will have issues with security... they will just assimilate us, and it will be us joining them and not the other way around. What stops them from just claiming leadership?" Miquel asked skeptically. He was clearly against the idea of even making contact with the fort.

"Why are you here?" Jake asked. It was the first words he spoke, and it got a small jump out of the man.

"I came here with my companions and-"

"I am talking about this room. Why are you here?" Jake clarified.

"As a representative of my comrades and me, I-"

“You are here because Miranda allowed you to,” Jake finally said, answering the question for the man. “And so will you leave if she tells you to. They will be no different.”

The man looked like he wanted to say something more but didn't dare to. Jake understood his perspective; he truly did. He just didn't agree with it, not anymore. Miranda has also begun to come around, likely empowered by having him support her.

Jake could totally see the other side wanting to fight... and if they did, he would be sure to instantly crush their spirits. He and Mystie would release their auras, perhaps an attack or two, which should be enough to stop the opposition from daring to fight.

It was like showing up to a fistfight in a tank. Sure, the other side could have many times more people, but they sure as hell weren't going to start punching the vehicle.

The rest of the discussion centered around their general method behind their approach before leaving the building and setting out. Miquel was coming along together with two other men from his entourage. Both were level 39, so they weren't that bad, but not good either.

It would only take a few hours to get the 130 or so kilometers with their fast speed, though to Jake and Mystie, it was slow as hell.

Who even walks places these days anymore? Jake jokingly thought as they had just set out. Eleanor explained a bit on their way about the area's layout and the harassment of beasts that the fort dealt with.

After having walked only for fifteen minutes, Jake could clearly feel Mystie feeling restless. Jake made eye contact with the bird that was flying overhead and saw its annoyance and slight anxiety. It wasn't hard for him to piece together that the mama-bird was worried for the egg back home and wanted to get this over with as fast as possible.

Jake looked up at the bird, and it looked at him questionably, the human understanding right away.

"This is too slow," Jake said. "Let's fly."

They all turned to look at him, confused as Jake summoned his two wings. Miquel and his two followers looked frightened, with the others only looked a bit surprised.

Jake began weaving two solid ropes of mana as he motioned for Miranda and Lillian to come over. At the same time, Mystie touched down as it landed on the ground.

The Mystsong Hawk shone in a magical light as mana extended out from her figure towards Neil and his party, along with Miquel and his two men.

"Don't resist," Jake said, not even considering that Miquel and his two followers didn't have any idea how to properly resist foreign mana.

Jake wrapped his two own ropes around Miranda and Lillian as he lifted them off the ground. He had practiced lifting boulders for so damn long, and it was finally time to put that training to use.

Skillfully, Mystie took to the air with eight people being lifted along with it, some of them trying to suppress screams as they were forcefully lifted.

Jake, on the other hand, struggled quite a bit to keep the ropes stable. Not in the sense that they wouldn't break, but in the sense that it would be very... uncomfortable for the two women to be lifted as if were they just tied to him, dangling beneath his flying figure.

It took him a bit longer, but soon they took to the air - a winged human and a magical blue hawk flying through the air with ten people telekinetically lifted along.