

Hunter 33

Chapter 33: True Blessing of the Malefic Viper

As his vision started to return, the only feeling in his body that remained was a constant searing pain in his hand, extending up his arm and into his entire body. It didn't feel malicious, just far more powerful than Jake's body was capable of handling.

The moment his feet hit the ground, he also collapsed down on his knees, heaving for air while clutching his chest. The pain gradually faded away and was instead replaced by a strong feeling of power. It was unlike any level-ups he had felt before, and certainly far more than when he evolved his race.

He basked in the feeling for a while before everything finally calmed down. Raising his hand, he could feel that he got gotten stronger. The Viper had done something. Given him something.

Opening his status screen, he was met with a slew of messages, but the first one alone gave him great pause.

***Blessing received*:** [True Blessing of the Malefic Viper (Blessing - True)] – An alchemist recognized by the Malefic Viper himself. Few throughout the ages have found themselves blessed by the Primordial, despite their desire to be so. Through your direct karmic connection, the wisdom and willpower of the Malefic Viper empower you. +10% Willpower, +10% Wisdom. Grants access to many new paths. Only one blessing can be held at a time.

Jake was confused as he read it, before finally actually getting a bit annoyed. "Could have at least asked first," he muttered to himself.

Renounce the Malefic Viper as Patron? All faith-based skills, titles, and Blessing will be lost.

“What? No, no, no, it’s fine. Jeez,” Jake quickly said as the prompt disappeared. While he was a bit annoyed, it wasn’t like he wanted to throw away free stats like that.

Wisdom had been his highest stat before his evolution and would likely remain to be for quite a while, so getting 10% extra was already giving him bonus stats in the double digits. Willpower was also a great stat to increase.

Jake had believed that willpower was what allowed him to stay so calm and controlled throughout the tutorial, but he would have to reconsider that.

However, reading the description, he was confused, as the blessing described him not as a god but a Primordial. Perhaps they were the same thing? Though he doubted it was just semantics, as he added something else to hit the books on. Nevertheless, the willpower bonus was nice, and if nothing else increased his mana regeneration, which was always welcome. Besides that, he didn't really see much use for it currently.

Moving on down the list, he noted how he had apparently unlocked his profession upgrade after he got the blessing.

Congratulation, you have successfully evolved your profession

Prodigious Alchemist of the Malefic Viper – A Prodigious Alchemist of the Malefic Viper has come far from when first concocting his first poison. You have displayed speed and skills at the pinnacle. Allows the alchemist to combine the natural treasures of the world, and make potions, pills, transmute one

material to another, with a slew of other mystical means to be discovered. This rare type of alchemist specializes in the production of poisons, contrary to the craft of potions. Your proven talent as an artisan of death stands above all peers, signaling the coming of another harbinger of decay following in the footsteps of the Malefic Viper. Only his chosen may walk this path. Stat bonuses per level: +4 Vit, +4 Wis, +3 Will +2 Tough +2 Int, +5 Free Points.

'DING!' Profession: [Prodigious Alchemist of the Malefic Viper] has reached level 25 - Stat points allocated, +5 free points

'DING!' Race: [Human (F)] has reached level 17 - Stat points allocated, +5 free points

Not anything was out of expectations there, besides perhaps the massive influx of stats from the profession and race leveling up.

With the profession evolution, he had naturally also gotten some skills. But contrary to when he got the profession, the upgrade only gave two new skills.

Gained skill: [Alchemical Flame (Common)] – The flame of an alchemist is one of the most critical aspects of the crafting process. The flame itself is affinity-less and not polluted by the impurities of burning a catalyst. The path to refining one's alchemical flame is a long and arduous one for all alchemists seeking the pinnacle. Allows the alchemist to create a small alchemical flame, emitting heat. Adds a minor increase to the effectiveness of Alchemical Flame based on wisdom

Gained skill: [Touch of the Malefic Viper (Rare)] – With a single touch, the Malefic Viper has slain countless foes. Attempt to inject poison into a being through physical contact. The nature of the poison is determined by the user. The alchemist can only use toxic effects he has concocted or created prior.

Some toxins cannot be used. Adds a minor increase to the effectiveness of Touch of the Malefic Viper based on intelligence and wisdom.

According to the books, the first one was a fundamental skill that all alchemists got at level 25. The next one, however, was more interesting. This could easily be construed as the first combat-related skill he had acquired from his profession. A rarity, but not an impossibility if the excellent books were to be believed.

It wasn't immediately useful, still being stuck in a dungeon and all, but he could see it being a valuable skill outside. It was also great to make use of his high wisdom and growing intelligence stats.

As he moved on down the list, the last two notification were... What the hell

***Gained Title*:** [Holder of a Primordial's True Blessing] – Obtain the True Blessing of a Primordial. Many have claimed divinity in the vast multiverse, numerous pantheons rule, but the Primordials are few. Even fewer still, those truly blessed by a Primordial. May you bring glory to your Patron. Grants the skill: [Shroud of the Primordial]. +5 all stats, +10% all stats.

That title was just straight-up ridiculous and explained where the feeling of power he felt came from. 10% to all stats was just insane. Even now, it gave him so much, and he couldn't imagine its value down the line as his stats grew.

Then again, he was unsure as to how common percentage-multipliers were for stats. He currently had four already, after all. one from his Bloodline Patriarch title, one from his bloodline ability itself, and two from the blessing and title he had just gotten. Which meant that he had technically only obtained them from two sources – the blessing and his bloodline.

Though he was sure, there had to be more out there.

Moving on to the last skill, the surprises only continued.

***Gained skill*:** [Shroud of the Primordial (Divine)] – A shroud surrounds your very being, your Records masked, your status inaccessible. Scryers weep at the thought of tracking a single of your steps, as you remain an enigma to their sight. Using Identify on you, but a futile effort. The karmic threads in your wake, an endless web impossible to unravel. One does not merely peek behind the Shroud of the Primordial. Hides your Records and Status from all but the most powerful of prying eyes. Hiding ability increases based on willpower.

He had little clue what most of the skill did, but it seemed to hold some kind of obscuration effect on people trying to use magic to locate him, and it could block people using Identify on him. This also finally confirmed that the Identify skill could be used on other people. Perhaps his could now after it had upgraded to common-rarity, but he would have to wait with testing that.

Besides that, he felt like most of what this skill did was something he would never be aware of it doing.

The final point was the rarity. Divine. As in god-tier. Which was kind of insane to imagine. His second-highest skill-rarity was rare, and even those skills he felt were damn strong. How many ranks above rare was divine even?

The only sad thing was perhaps the fact that the skill had such a peculiar nature. If it were a defensive or offensive skill, it would likely be an unimaginably powerful trump card. The passive shroud was nice, but the grass is greener on the other side and all that. He could see several advantages in being harder to track with magic, and of course, with Identify being blocked.

After going through all his new skills and titles, he finally opened his status screen to see the final result.

Status

Name: Jake Thayne

Race: [Human (F) – lvl 17]

Class: [Archer – lvl 9]

Profession: [Prodigious Alchemist of the Malefic Viper – lvl 25]

Health Points (HP): 1220/1220

Mana Points (MP): 1560/1560

Stamina: 459/460

Stats

Strength: 49

Agility: 52

Endurance: 46

Vitality: 122

Toughness: 63

Wisdom: 156

Intelligence: 38

Perception: 120

Willpower: 81

Free points: 10

Titles: [Forerunner of the New World],[Bloodline Patriarch], [Holder of a Primordial's True Blessing]

Class Skills: [Basic One-Handed Weapon (Inferior)], [Basic Stealth (Inferior)], [Advanced Archery (Common)], [Archer's Eye (Common)]

Profession Skills: [Herbology (Common)], [Brew Potion (Common)], [Concoct Poison (Common)], [Alchemists Purification (Common)], [Alchemical Flame (Common)], [Toxicology (Uncommon)], [Cultivate Toxin (Uncommon)], [Poison Sense (Uncommon)], [Malefic Viper's Poison (Rare)], [Palate of the Malefic Viper (Rare)], [Touch of the Malefic Viper (Rare)]

Blessing: [True Blessing of the Malefic Viper (Blessing - True)]

Race Skills: [Endless Tongues of the Myriad Races (Unique)], [Identify (Common)], [Shroud of the Primordial (Divine)]

Bloodline: [Bloodline of the Primal Hunter (Bloodline Ability - Unique)]

The stat increases were massive across the line. A bit of quick math, he also confirmed that stat percentage bonuses were additive and not multiplicative. Which still resulted in a 20% increase to his wisdom and willpower stats from the titles gained today alone. And that was beside the bonuses from the levels and the 5 in all stats.

Not bad... not bad at all. I should go meet snake-gods more often, Jake thought jokingly to himself, smiling at the ridiculous nature in which he had gotten all of these massive gains. Imagine what he would have given me if I had brought along a gift... note to self: bring blue mushroom next time.

Richard sighed loudly as the man finished his report. The former archer, now upgraded to a class called Scout, had brought more bad news. A daily occurrence at this point.

“Sir, that kid is way too volatile. We should just put him down already,” the scout said. “He is too stuck in his own world to notice anything around him. He believes himself some kind of god. Just say the word, and I will have an arrow in the back of his head within the hour.”

Richard shook his head. “No, just keep shadowing him and keep track of his movements. I have seen plenty of his type before. He is an arrogant whelp, but his skills are the real deal. Someone like him is useful if controlled.”

The scout sighed as he turned to the door. “I hope you know what you’re doing, boss.”

“I do too honestly,” Richard said, returning the sigh. He had to admit that he was beginning to regret his decision to let William run wild. The kid was too

self-confident, to the level of being pure ignorance. For god's sake, if his rampant killing hadn't made him stick out, the fact that everyone in the damn camp could see his way too high level with Identify did. The young man had held back on learning a profession, not upgrading the Identify skill. He appeared to not even know it got upgraded, despite it being common knowledge around the camp. And now, after having gotten a profession, he still hadn't put two and two together.

No, he had just utterly ignored everything. Instead, he focused on his own foolish mission. Drumming up war. And as much as Richard hated to admit it, the kid's actions were effective. Too effective.

For a while, the conflict had escalated, and all hell finally broke loose a week ago when the other faction leaders' son was killed. And not just killed. William had sent his head flying into their base with a dagger stuck in his head.

To make matters even worse, he had written, "Richard says hi" on his forehead. Needless to say, Hayden, the other leader, was royally pissed. He had personally gone out and slaughtered an entire group from Richards faction. From the looks of the battle, he hadn't just killed them but tortured them to death, likely attempting to find the culprit behind his son's murder.

After that, it had only gotten worse. Lines that should never be crossed had been. Now the fights were no longer simply killing each other. Richard could handle that. He had done plenty of that while overseas. But what was happening now was just wrong.

It had reached a point where anyone not from your faction was automatically designated an enemy. The unaffiliated ones, the ones merely trying to survive on their own, had also become victims. There had even been a single occurrence where two people from the same faction ended up fighting out of pure paranoia, one of them even dying.

Hearing the door to the cabin open, Richard looked up to see Jacob and Caroline entering. Perhaps a small bright spot in this entire nightmare was two people finally finding love through adversity. Richard was genuinely happy for them. Jacob had also proven himself to be invaluable in managing the camp.

"I heard about your friend. I am sorry for your loss," Richard said as they took their seats in some wooden chairs across his desk. Ahmed, one of the base casters, had been one of the people who fell today. Not by William, but by a group from the other faction. A necessary sacrifice.

“Thanks,” Jacob said, looking dejected at the other man. “You know, today marks half of my colleagues and I either dying or going missing.”

Hearing that, Richard smiled internally at the unexpected queue. “Speaking of that archer, what are his whereabouts?”

Taken aback, Jacob looked at the man in bewilderment. He hadn’t seen or heard from Jake since the day they parted, and quite honestly, despite his early confidence in him, he was beginning to doubt he still lived. While Jacob hadn’t expected him to actually come back and check on the regular, he had expected some kind of contact for what was now nearly a month.

“I have no idea where he is or if he even lives,” Jacob answered honestly. “But if he does live, I would expect him to have perhaps made his way through the barrier somehow.”

The barrier was something they had encountered as they went further into the forest, right in the middle of the entire dome that was the tutorial. They had yet to figure out how to enter it, but at least nothing had exited it either.

“Perhaps,” Richard said. He didn’t actually think the archer was involved, but he was a potential red herring. “I have a feeling someone is pulling strings. I have felt it since the very first of their groups got killed. No one ever took credit for the first kills. I have heard no chatter or rumors as to who did it. I fear that a third party may somehow be involved.” Richard said as he leaned back on the wooden chair.

“You think that could be Jake?” Caroline asked, turning the attention of the two men to her.

“It is entirely possible. It may also just be Hayden and his men behind it all,” Richard said.

“I really doubt Jake is involved. I have known him for a while, he isn’t a homicidal maniac. You have seen what people do out there. That isn’t Jake,” Jacob said adamantly.

“I am not accusing anyone. Let’s just not ignore a potential threat. Now, what is the progress around the camp?”

Jacob sighed but complied as he went over the newest key numbers.

More and more combatants had started learning professions to gain more stats and race levels. One of the primary reasons was the general lack of high-level beasts providing experience in the forest. Another reason was the hugely increased danger with the faction war going on.

Levels got harder and harder as you progress, but this difficulty applied to professions and classes separately. Those with high-level classes even had an easier time leveling professions than those focusing solely on professions due to their higher stats.

A balanced approach between the two was deemed the most efficient. Getting a profession to 10 could quickly be done in a couple of days, including unlocking the profession itself.

Even Richard had leveled smithing as that profession gave the best stats for him. The current 'meta' was getting level 25 in one’s class and then focused a bit on one's profession.

Jacob reported that Joanna was the first to get her profession evolution. She had gone from Novice Tailor to Experienced Seamstress. The stat gain had doubled from 4 to 10 per level and had, of course, come with some valuable skills.

The second part was that despite the brutality of the conflict escalating, the number of actual deaths was not. It wasn't exactly a surprise, considering the vastly reduced number of survivors. Opening the tutorial panel,

Tutorial Panel

Duration: 33 days & 23:45:06

Total Survivors Remaining: 423/1200

They were close to 200 people by now in their faction, and they needed some way to identify each other out in the forest, as simply remembering everyone wasn't plausible. To fix that, they had code-words for all those going out to hunt.

Finishing the conversation, they said their goodbyes, and the two left the building.

Richard leaned back in his chair, closing his eyes. He had made a lot of gambles this tutorial. Far more than he liked. Hayden and his faction had proven a challenge. William was a useful tool to spur on action. It was also good to have a scapegoat in case too many caught on.

Opening his quest window, he squinted at the progress. Soon he would have half of the entire tutorial in his grasp. After getting rid of Hayden, it should be possible to throw William under the bus as the instigator of the war and try to lessen the resentment between the two factions. It was a plan filled with flaws, but it should be workable.

William had finally picked up a profession, but it didn't appear to him at all how stupid he had been in the past. He also made a mental note to make William go after the trapper, Casper. The trapper had begun to get suspicious of Richard and William, but more than that... he was becoming unstable. William was at least predictable, but Casper was just pure emotion. Richard couldn't help to shiver at the traps he made.

This tutorial was to be the foundation for what he would build in the new world. Sadly, Casper didn't fit into that.