

Hunter 92

Chapter 92: Willful Ignorance

“Fucking die already!” William yelled as the huge beast in front of him refused to submit. It was far from the first time he had fought the damn thing, and this had to be the time he would win.

The Den Mother was covered in wounds as the huge sawblade cut into its side, managing to cut into its guts until its dense muscles stopped it. The damage from the blow was far from lethal, but it was starting to build up.

William heaved for breath as his mana pool was far closer to empty than he felt comfortable with. It was barely enough for one more spear. It had to be enough.

Spear of Ferroras

He summoned the ornate spear and pushed himself forward with Metal Manipulation. The beast was one step too late, exhaustion making it slow and sloppy, as the spear penetrated it through one of its eyes.

With every last point of mana, he pushed himself and the spear forward, forcing it into the brain of the damn dungeon boss.

*You have slain [Den Mother – lvl 82] – Bonus experience earned for killing an enemy above your level.
124000 TP earned*

'DING!' Class: [Metal Savant] has reached level 59 - Stat points allocated, +6 free points

Seeing the notification, he let himself fall backward as he laughed out loud.

“Fuckin’ finally.”

He had spent more than a week in the shitty den, but it had all paid off in the end. He had finally defeated the last boss and cleared the dungeon.

It had been quite the journey. It took William only two days to get through the first Alpha, but then another five for the next room with the alphas and the Den Mother. He had to leave the dungeon a few times between to exit and grind out a level here or there to get an extra edge.

He even went outside at one point after he saw something interesting. After only a week remained of the tutorial timer, the dinosaurs were no longer confined to the inner zone. He had gone out and found tens of them rummaging through where Richard’s base had once been. It was quite comical that he had even considered not killing them when they would all have been ripped apart by beasts anyway. No way they could have resisted dozens of level 40+ raptors storming the camp. The dinos gathering in the camp had allowed him to kill a good deal, though.

It had been a long grind, and now it all felt worth it with the damn Den Mother lying dead. It was his 8th attempt where he finally managed to kill it. Luckily the design of the dungeon made it easy as pie to retreat if shit got bad. The tunnel between the rooms was too small for both the alphas and Den Mother to fit through, allowing him just to leave whenever.

Which was especially good after he was very close to dying after his first fight with the Den Mother. When three freaking alphas had appeared in the middle of it all and started chewing him out, he barely managed to retreat to the tunnel where he hid and meditated.

Afterward, he went in and out of the tunnel, killing the alphas around the Den Mother one after another, retreating and regenerating between kills. Finally, he had only the final boss alone, allowing him to focus solely on the oversized rodent.

He didn't know if he would call it lucky or unlucky that the dungeon didn't reset upon leaving and entering again. On the one hand, it was nice that his progress stayed, but on the other, a resetting dungeon would be a godlike grinding spot.

The grinding with the current setup had been rather mediocre, averaging just a bit over a level a day. It did get harder to level the further he went, so it really wasn't that bad. His main limiter was the long time it took for him to regenerate. His ability to absorb metal did help a bit, but it was far from enough.

Getting up from the ground, he looked at the corpse of the large Den Mother. He didn't bother dissecting it but couldn't help himself with kicking the corpse a few times and spitting on it before he moved through the last chamber.

A single lockbox with the loot was there, making him smile. He doubted he could get anything close to the armor Herrmann had made him, but he wasn't going to complain about getting free stuff.

He opened the box, grabbed the loot, and exited the dungeon. He did get a title giving him +1 in each stat, which he honestly didn't care for. There was less than a week left of the tutorial, and he still had that one last survivor to get rid of.

He didn't know how strong the archer had grown, but William doubted Jake would be worth much. From what he heard, he nearly died to Richard and Hayden, even taking severe injuries. Besides, he had spent a week exiting and reentering the dungeon without catching sight of the guy or any kills left by him.

If William didn't know better, he would guess that Jake was just hiding in some hole somewhere, hoping for the tutorial to end. A lamb waiting to be slaughtered.

But before finding him, William decided to grind out one more level, reaching 60 and getting yet another skill. No reason to take any chances after all.

He could almost hear the begging and pleading from the archer that had once nearly ended him. It was going to be so sweet to cut him up, one little piece at a time.

Checking the time, he began grinding once more, still daydreaming of ripping Jake apart.

Tutorial Panel

Duration: 6 days & 23:01:45

After finally getting the level, he checked it one last time and saw sixteen hours had passed. Being drained from the dungeon and farming, he decided to take a quick nap before continuing his grind while looking for the archer.

One where he dreamed once more – in it, a figure with green eyes came to him and whispered what he wanted to hear: His prey's location.

Jake didn't even exit the dungeon but was just thrown out the moment the countdown finished. Well, teleported out was perhaps more accurate as he found himself, still in meditation, suddenly in the dark hole outside the door where he had entered.

He continued his meditation for a bit and soon noticed an odd phenomenon. The dark mana in the hole started disappearing as he meditated. Only half an hour later, one could see through the once perfect darkness with the naked eye, and a full hour later, there was no trace the mana had ever been there at all.

Jake opened his eyes and saw that the door still appeared to leak small shrivels of dark mana, and in a day or so, the hole would likely return to the same darkness as before. Not that it was any of his business.

A quick Badger Jump later, he found himself atop the hole once more within the hollow mountain. Finally, he bothered to check his notifications, seeing that his titles had indeed upgraded once again.

[Dungeoneer IV] – Successfully clear a Dungeon suitable for your level. +4 all stats.

[Dungeon Pioneer IV] – Be the first to clear a dungeon suitable for your level. +12 all stats.

He was beginning to wonder if those two would ever cap out or something. It seemed ridiculous if he could continuously clear dungeons and upgrade the title infinitely. He could only imagine someone with Dungeon Pioneer M increasing all stats by 3000.... Actually, that didn't sound that bad, considering one would have to be the first to clear dungeons a thousand times, and the levels alone from that would likely make those stats insignificant in comparison.

He still suspected there was a cap, though. He wasn't sure; he just had a feeling.

The next part that had been updated was his one quest.

Tutorial Quest: The Beast Lords

The forest murmurs with rumors of a King ruling the forest from the shadows. The four Beast Lords each guard their dungeon as their King commanded, waiting for a suitable challenger to appear. With the death of his lords, the King is sure to be forced into the light. But be warned, the Lords will not meet their end that easily.

Two lords have now fallen. The King has taken notice but has yet to make a move. Continue with the quest, and you shall inevitably meet.

With the Nest Watcher's death, your presence is now beginning to become truly worthy of notice. The King of the Forest will not sit idle as you attempt to dismantle the careful balance his domain has attained. With only a single Beast Lord left standing, your quest is soon complete, and the King shall come.

Objective: Defeat the Beast Lords.

Current progress: 3/4

Reading it, he got a bit giddy as he finally faced the big bad King of the Forest. But before that, he still had a dungeon left to clear out. Checking the time remaining, he noted that he indeed was a little pressed on time.

Tutorial Panel

Duration: 6 days & 4:49:32

The sewer had been far longer than he expected. If the next one was the same, he wasn't confident in doing it and still have time to prepare and face the King. But he would have to make do with the time he had and hope that the final dungeon turned out faster.

Chugging one last healing potion, he began moving forward, his health, mana, and stamina all at a healthy level. He didn't have the luxury of delaying any more as he made a beeline for the next dungeon.

It was a bit lucky that he hadn't suffered as terrible wounds in the sewers as he had against the Great White Stag. Perhaps it was because the type of damage he received against the stag was of the light-affinity while the Nest Watcher's damage was dark affinity. He had been a lot more injured overall back then, though.

It was evident that he had great dark-affinity and horrible light-affinity. It did make sense that the two were opposing forces, and it was likely the same with fire and water affinities. He would have to ask the Malefic Viper or someone else with a bit more experience dealing with the system.

Running at a brisk pace, he headed towards the next dungeon. He did meet a group of raptors who decided to leg it when they noticed him, clearly not interested in a fight. It was a bit disappointing as he would have loved to try out the new Mana Blast from his gloves as he had decided to call it.

Not that it stopped him, as he practiced a few times while running. It reminded him a lot of the Explosive Punch he had unlocked quite a while ago. This attack didn't require blowing up his own arm, though, so it was a huge step up.

The other difference was, of course, that this one used mana. And while Jake didn't know how powerful the blow was, it sure did wonders on the boulder he tried it on, blowing it to pieces. It was like walking with a hand grenade in your hand, ready to explode whenever he willed it. In other words, it was awesome.

Continuing, he soon saw something he hadn't expected - a corpse. And it wasn't one he had killed himself, as he had never been there before. The wounds also appeared to have been made with blades or maybe daggers. Humans, not beasts, killed it.

He stopped up to look at them for a bit. Had some of the other survivors made it to the inner area?

It doesn't matter; it has nothing to do with me, Jake thought to himself as he prepared to keep going. Barely managing to turn around, he spotted something standing there on the hill leading up the mountain.

A humanoid figure completely covered in what appeared to be silver. It looked like a mannequin, but it was clear that it wasn't as it started walking towards him. As he walked, metal peeled away from the face, revealing a smirking face that Jake recognized.

"Missed me?" William said as he looked down on Jake. Both figuratively and literally.

"... What was your name again?" Jake asked, genuinely unsure. It was something with 'W,' right... William, I think?

William, however, froze briefly, not expecting that response. Had the idiot hit his head at one point?

"Are you fucking daft or what?" he asked with evident annoyance.

"Sorry, you haven't exactly been on my mind. I just remember you as this metal-casting backstabber..." Jake answered as he considered what to do. "I don't know... can you just go? I am kind of busy."

"Come on, stop playing around; you have to know what this is!" William declared in a mocking tone. "Two people remaining. The final confrontation between the last survivors! The decider! An epic battle of destiny where the true champion is found!"

"What the hell are you on about?" Jake asked with real confusion. Last survivors? What did he-

Total Survivors Remaining: 2/1200

...

How hadn't he seen it? He had checked the timer so many times. The number was always there, right below. Had he somehow overlooked it? Maybe it had, for some reason, not appeared?

However, William understood what was happening far faster than Jake as he saw the conflicted look on his face.

"Holy shit," William said as he started laughing. "And people call me a fucking lunatic... holy shit, you're for real! You cold bastard. I killed the last one like a fucking week ago. Jacob, that guy, had apparently become a lunatic and made them all go full-on Kool-Aid. Ah, but no worries, I killed him quickly, and I actually felt a bit bad about it, so we're all good, right?"

Jake just stood there as the guy kept talking, mocking him as his brain was trying to catch up.

"And you managed just to ignore it? I am honestly impressed; not even I could do that. And I even had a doctor tell me that I am indeed a fucking psycho, but you are just winging it!"

William spoke as he walked closer to Jake, now only a few meters between them as he continued.

“Or are you just a coward? Too scared to check. Ah, that’s it! You are just a damn coward hiding away in your own little world! So afraid of being a disappointment to everyone that you'd rather never see them again? So afraid of rejection that you would rather let them die while you do nothing? Hehehehe, this is a fucking comedy, man... and you’re the butt of the joke.”

“Just-”

“Oh, the coward spea-“

“- die.”

The distance was closed on an instant, the move far faster than the teenager had ever predicted. He covered his face with the armor in panic, but it didn’t matter.

A dagger coated in dark mana exploded down unto his chest, smashing into his prized armor and into his chest with a loud crunching sound. He was pressed into the ground, creating a small crater. His mind rattled as he failed to muster any response.

Jake didn’t let up and give him a chance to either as he punched down, releasing a blast from his new gloves. The crater only grew as Jake released another and another. He continued hitting, soon without any bursts of mana being released when he ran out of mana. But he kept slamming his bloody fists into the distorted armor below him.

He didn’t stop even when he got the notification. He just kept rampaging. Until suddenly, he stopped halfway through yet another punch.

“What the fuck am I doing...” he muttered to himself as he fell backward on his ass. He was sitting in a crater that had grown to several meters wide and nearly a meter deep, the distorted armor encompassing the metal caster’s body at the center - blood leaking out of every small crevice or tear in the armor.

Tears started to gather in his eyes as he punched his broken fist into the ground.

“WHAT THE FUCK AM I DOING!”