

The Primal Hunter

Chapter 1161 - Laying Much Groundwork

pile of gemstones was perfectly balanced on top of intricate magic circle that had been painstakingly carved beneath it. This was but one of over fifty piles that served as focal points for massive formation that had been constructed in a vast cavern beneath a certain palace within territory of Panon of Life.

It had been about a year and a half since Jake had agreed with Jasper that he would help little fella evolve, and after spending first three months researching, Jake had begun constructing ritual circle.

As for cavern, well, Jasper preferred to be underground, and seeing as cellar wasn't big enough for what Jake was planning, he decided to do a minor home makeover by adding a cellar to cellar.

With permission, of course... though in truth, Artemis sounded like she didn't give a shit even if Jake blew up entire palace and constructed a magic circle on bare mountaintop.

ritual was still not done yet, but Jake had made great progress and was quite confident in design he'd gone for. entire thing was a lot more personalized than when Jake had helped birth Vesperia or even helped Demon Prince. He even had Jasper deciding where to place his piles of loot, and Jake n carving focal points of ritual circle beneath m.

Was he confident it would work? Kind of. thing is, re didn't exist any ritual to do exactly what Jake was planning, as nobody else had his Primeval Origin Energy. He was limited in wisdom he could borrow from previous generations, but that didn't mean he was entirely empty-handed. In fact, he'd based this entire ritual circle around two existing ones he'd haphazardly merged through guidance of his gut feelings.

first one was a ritual circle used by Shimmerfur Warpsnatchers and or variants of species. More accurately, it was ritual circle of a slightly weaker variant than Jasper that wasn't able to absorb Records and energy from collected loot as easily, requiring m to construct an actual magic circle to assist.

Second was a magic circle used by Order of Malefic Viper to try to pour Records into ors. It was, to be perfectly honest, a really fucked up ritual. Its most common use case was to try to force Records into slaves or prisoners just to see results. Forceful Record infusion wasn't really a thing in multiverse, as it always led to horrible results and ruined people's Paths when it was done. A bit similar to when Jake had "opportunity" to turn into a Malefic Dragonkin back in day, or even Demon Prince. Content originally comes from novel.fire.net

In those instances, it had worked out, but that was exception, not rule. Of course, Jake wouldn't try to force a bunch of Records into Jasper, but just needed aspects of this ritual to allow himself to infuse loot piles spread out in place.

That's right, Jake wasn't actually planning on injecting Jasper with Primeval Origin Energy directly. Instead, he wanted to funnel it through loot piles, absorb energies and Records from those, and n allow Jasper to absorb it.

He'd even talked with little bugger about this after Warpsnatcher reached peak C-grade and finally got his evolution quest. quest had been exactly as expected, and honestly... it was a slam dunk for what Jake was trying to do.

Jasper's evolution quest required him to gar a sufficient treasure hoard and absorb all energy and Records from what was gared. Apparently, this kind of evolution quest wasn't all that uncommon, especially not for monsters walking a Path like Jasper or Sandy, who were all about natural treasures rar than fighting.

This being evolution quest meant Jake would effectively just be adding his own flavor to entire process. It truly was lucky, seeing as this was Jake's first attempt at trying to infuse energy into a monster semi-directly.

It was kind of a middle step between infusing a core with Primeval Origin Energy and having monster absorb it and infusing energy directly into ir bodies. If this ritual went well, an even more direct infusion would be next.

However, re was one problem... Jasper wasn't ready to evolve yet. Due to Warpsnatcher mainly chilling after getting to Jake's place and being from a less-than-ideal Hunting Ground before that, accumulated hoard wasn't good enough yet. At least Jasper wasn't satisfied.

That's why Warpsnatcher had spent nearly a year coming and going with new treasures. Artemis had kindly provided Jake with a token for little guy, and once more, Jasper had shown that while he still wasn't super good at talking, he wasn't stupid.

He instantly understood how teleportation gateways worked and, with an information crystal outlining general geography and power levels of Great Planet, began to actively use m to jump around it to find suitable loot-garing spots.

Needless to say, resources on a Great Planet were vastly superior to a Hunting Ground, and while it was certainly also more dangerous, Warpsnatchers were notoriously elusive and good at running away. Every time Jasper returned, Jake would hear stories from little thief, most impressive ones being when Jasper managed to steal a treasure from under the nose of two mid-tier B-grades fighting.

Also, no, Jake or others couldn't help Jasper by donating to loot piles. In the same vein that Jake would get nothing out of Villy or Artemis bringing him a half-dead B-grade for him to kill, Jasper would get nothing out of having loot handed to him.

Anyhow, that was the state of Jake's ritual circle project, and he was confident about being done with it before Jasper was ready. As for his other projects, things were also steadily progressing.

Power was growing with every passing day, and Jake was working hard on creating his first epic rarity poison... well, his first one that didn't appear only due to Malefic Viper's Poison, anyway.

Jake also already knew what kind of poison he wanted to make, and it was one unlike anything he'd made before. Actually, that wasn't entirely accurate. Jake had made something similar once, though it had been with the help of Malefic Viper's Poison and had happened during his fight with Minaga in Nevermore.

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Previously, he'd impromptu created a kind of poison he now wanted to purposefully make. As for the one he'd made back then?

[Volatile Malefic Soulbane Poison (Ancient)]

Nothing in its name mattered besides "bane" portion, because it was that kind of poison Jake wanted to create. To clarify, bane poisons were an entire classification of poison, and its name bane was always paired with something else. Back in Nevermore, he had made a Soulbane poison, which was admittedly one as broad as could possibly be made.

Bane poisons were toxins aimed at very specific things, or more accurately, at very specific Records. A bane poison would be far more effective than a regular toxin on its specified target, while it would have zero effect on anything else. In simpler terms, it was a way to focus all the energy of a poison.

In some ways, it was a bit akin to the entire concept of scale and intensity. Rather than have a poison work on every target, one could empower it by having it only work on very specific ones.

It wasn't hard to guess, but Jake's ultimate goal with working on this type of toxin was to create something he'd dreamed of making ever since he learned what bane poisons even were:

Dragonbane.

If Jake, being a poison archer, wanted to hunt down a dragon, he would naturally need his very own Dragonbane poison to go along with it. Of course, process of actually making a bane poison wasn't easy at all.

First of all, it required materials from monster in question. To put it another way, Jake needed parts of a dragon. Luckily, all of that could be purchased, much of it even from Dragonflights themselves.

Dragons were fully aware of just how overpowered they were as a species and actively capitalized on it by selling their bodies. They would purposefully infuse scales, blood, and even bones with their own Records and sell them off. Especially Wildflight, which fortunately had a significant presence on Great Planet, was well known for this.

Sadly, there was one or minor issue with Jake's plan... difficulty of a bane poison tended to correspond to power of target. This is to say, if Jake wanted to make a Dragonbane poison, he would need to be quite decent at making bane poisons in first place, and there was no shot his first bane ever could be Dragonbane.

On the lucky side, Jake didn't need to make a Dragonbane poison to upgrade his Concoct Poison skill to epic rarity. All bane poisons were epic rarity by default, so as long as he could make any version of it, he would be good.

As for what bane poison Jake would make first, he'd already decided. All books made two things clear, which both played into why he'd chosen this kind of bane. The first one was that the more familiar one was with the set of Records one wanted to target, easier it was to make a bane poison for it.

The second one was that it was universally agreed there was one bane poison easier to make than any others throughout the whole multiverse... Humanbane.

Did learning that suck? Yes. Did it make sense that it was the easiest? Also yes. Oh, and to Jake's relief, humanbane poison tended to kinda suck in its raw form, as it was still considered a very broad kind of toxin. Beastbane and Elementalbane were also both super easy, but even less effective than Humanbane poison. Oh yeah, Elfbane, Dwarfbane, and such were also considered on the easier side, but seeing as humans remained the most numerous of all enlightened species, it was the easiest.

This, combined with Jake being a, well, human, this option made the most sense for him to start out by making a Humanbane poison. Now, as for how it was going to actually

make one... work in progress. Jake still had a lot of groundwork he had to get done before he could even begin his crafting attempts.

Besides, he also had to dedicate a lot of time to meditating and reading tome left by First Sage, with goal of upgrading his meditation skill while hopefully killing two birds with one stone by also fixing his Palate.

On that front, Jake had a hard time saying how close he was to upgrading skill. If he wanted to, upgrading Meditate to legendary rarity would be a breeze, but he was still reluctant to go ahead and just do it. He wanted it to at least be mythical right off bat and to ensure that version he created was future-proof. Also, there was a good chance that he would need it to be at least mythical if he wanted to use it to fix his Palate of Malefic Viper.

In all honesty, Jake kind of hoped he would just one day know he was ready to finally synthesize and combine all knowledge he'd gained from First Sage's tome into a singular skill upgrade. Trusting his gut and doing things when it felt right to do so had rarely turned out badly, so hope was he could just do that again.

Now, if it wasn't already clear, Jake was right now in a state of studying and not really creating. He did craft a little here and there when he wanted to test something for his poison research, but it was very little. That's also why it had taken him more than one and a half years to get a single level in his profession.

'DING!' Profession: [Heretic-Chosen Alchemist of Malefic Viper] has reached level 319 - Stat points allocated, +35 Free Points

Compared to setting up and blasting a B-grade or two from orbit, leveling his profession was a lot harder and took a lot more time. There were bursts of experience here and there, but most reliable and best way to level was still slow and steady approach.

Besides, Jake wasn't actually annoyed at not having gained more levels. One more and he would reach level 320, which would grant him another skill selection. More research and more Records Jake gathered before then, better options would be.

Additionally, while experience points were low now, Jake was planting seeds for a lot of levels once it was time to reap. Upon executing Jasper ritual, he would definitely gain a lot. When he finally succeeded in creating his first bane poison and subsequently mass-produced it, he would more easily learn to make more or easy bane poisons, resulting in a significant increase in levels.

Finally, there was one other thing Jake had wanted to do during this year and a half that he sadly didn't get opportunity to do... and that was actually to spend some quality time with Artemis.

Seeing her was half reason Jake had gone to Panon of Life in first place, so it sucked a bit that she only occasionally sent an avatar to talk or bring Jake somewhere. Even when she did that, it was clear she was distracted and her mind was somewhere entirely different when she was with Jake.

Ultimately, Jake hadn't addressed it, though. He respected that Artemis was busy dealing with her own stuff, and he even had a pretty good idea of what she was doing. Nature's Attendant had also given a few scarce context clues here and re that made Jake more confident in his guess.

If Jake was right, Artemis was currently preparing for a breakthrough of some kind. Likely to Godqueen. He already knew that whatever Villy had given him as a gift for Artemis was far from simple, and it wouldn't be a surprise if that item was what she was currently busy assimilating with her true body. If that was indeed case, it would make a lot of sense why she couldn't dedicate a lot of mental energy to anything else.

She was still around now and n, though, and she remained insistent on wanting some level of involvement with Jasper's ritual. Her level of involvement likely wouldn't go beyond being present for it, but she seemed happy enough with that.

So... yeah, Jake had a generally calm time studying, only occasionally interrupted by Miranda telling him about what sounded like a much more stressful situation back on Earth.

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Chapter 1162 - Change

Change was greatest impetus for gaining new Records.

Meanwhile, routine and habits were enemy of progress. Regardless, everyone had to consistently challenge mselves and be willing to undergo some level of change.

But... it was simply too easy to fall into a routine. Even unknowingly. For mortals, this was one of ir biggest killers when someone finally found a chance to settle down and got complacent with ir lives, and by time y realized y needed to change something if y wanted to continue on ir Path, it was too late.

Gods were same, except y didn't have cruel march of time chasing m to ir deaths. This was both a boon and a curse in some ways, as it was very common for gods to live a life of habits simply as a result of ir unlimited lifespans.

A god could choose to sit down and meditate in emptiness of space for ten eras in a row if y wanted to. Some even did things similar to that, especially those from Dao Sect, all with excuse of tempering ir minds and wills.

Not to speak badly about it, as it clearly worked for m. Especially when y returned to world after ir pilgrimage with a new perspective, and perhaps more importantly, even if y didn't change much, world would have.

Additionally, more entrenched in habit and everyday life one became, more any form of change could lead to growth.

That's also why every integration was a massive opportunity for gods to progress, as it was a wake-up call for nearly every god to get moving and do something. An integration was biggest change multiverse could undergo, and it introduced an entirely new universe of Records and experiences for gods to participate in.

Of course, gods had to engage with new universe actively to reap greatest rewards. If y didn't, y would still benefit a little, but far from as much as gods actively taking part in happenings of newly integrated universe.

This was also anor argument for joining large factions, as a god would benefit and have an easy way to engage with new universe through ir faction. One of se ways was naturally through mortals, with most popular and effective way being to bless people and harvest Records from exploits of blessed.

In fact, Blessings were a great way to get all new Records. only problem was that se Records tended to be low in both quality and quantity compared to what a god needed. Even n, merely engaging with those one blessed on a regular basis allowed a god always to experience at least a bit of change here and re.

re were many or ways to experience change and try new things, though most of m had negligible effects at best. benefits tended to be barely worth time invested, and it was likely just done as a favor for someone.

One of examples of a minor thing a god could do to potentially give a bit of Records was helping out with a project of anor god. This could take many forms, but one example that rarely yielded benefits was donating an image to a certain World Wonder.

At least Artemis had never expected much from it. In fact, she'd only agreed as a favor to Wyrmgod and due to how stuck she felt in her Path.

Throughout years, she'd gradually grown in power, passing through Circles of Divinity and gaining more influence within Panon of Life. However, she had been one step away from Godqueen for more than four eras now.

Becoming a Godqueen wasn't simply a question of getting another level, but of fully realizing one's journey through Circles of Divinity. It was a step many gods ended up struggling with, with Artemis being just one of them, even within Pantheon of Life.

For reference, Pantheon of Life had under a hundred at Godqueen level or above. Meanwhile, it had just about three thousand in the same situation as Artemis, sitting just a step below.

Moreover, Artemis knew the difference was even worse in places like Holy Church or among the Risen. Her rarity was one of the reasons why a Godqueen or Godking was a valuable asset of any top faction, but it was also proof that a god had the potential to go beyond Circles of Divinity and become an Empyrean God.

Artemis would be lying if she said she hadn't been anxious about whether her Path would truly allow her to become a Godqueen, especially after it had been so long without any tangible progress.

Sure, she'd improved, but there was no feedback on whether her improvement was taking her in the right direction or not, much less when it was enough. The way to become a Godqueen was to condense one's Path, and one could continue improving while at the peak of Circles of Divinity; however, based on the quality of foundation, it became increasingly difficult.

For at least the last two eras, she had felt in a limbo, treading water with barely any progress while just stuck in the same routines. Even with new integration, she felt little change despite actively engaging with the new universe.

It had seemed like yet another integration that wouldn't do much for her... and then Jake happened.

The actions of her image within Nevermore had set in motion something no version of Artemis could have predicted. However, a part of her wanted to believe that her image had sensed something back then. In a state where both of them were roughly equal in power, Artemis' image had a perspective that a god version simply couldn't have.

Going to Nevermore right after getting recording had been an impulsive—and perhaps even a little reckless—decision. Yet what happened there had been the first true sign of progress she'd felt in a long time. In a short span of time, she went from barely meeting her former Patron and Primordial of Life to sitting in a room with half of the Primordials in the multiverse present.

There, she'd witnessed things she really shouldn't have, including her first real encounter with Jake. Initially, she had a hard time understanding why her image had acted as it did... until the clash between Valdemar and Jake, that is.

That was first time Artemis began to understand. Feeling his aura, she felt her heart skip a beat, same way she was certain her image had.

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At least in her eyes, and eyes of many who had lived long lives and reached high grades, outward physical appearances didn't matter. Monsters could change ir own physical shapes to look however y wanted, for most part, and enlightened races strived toward forging ir body in ir most ideal selves. Someone looking good wasn't even a factor in Artemis' eyes when it came to attractiveness.

One's presence was what mattered instead. Everyone had ir own unique presence and energy signature, and y all carried traces of person's Path and who y were as individuals. re wasn't a type of presence and aura that everyone universally agreed was attractive, but what people liked varied heavily from person to person.

Artemis liked Jake's presence. She found it attractive, which was first important step in wanting to get closer to someone. Luckily for her, he seemed to reciprocate that attraction, allowing m to move forward slowly.

Attraction wasn't enough to build anything meaningful, though, and Artemis knew that, which was why she'd wanted to take things slow in first place. She wanted to get to know Jake while allowing him to know her, too. fact that it had quickly turned into archery training was only a green flag in her eyes, and battle truly was a good way to get to know one anor.

gift from Malefic Viper also carried with it a heavy meaning. mere fact that a Primordial had given him a gift specifically for her clearly communicated that he didn't disapprove, but it also meant something else. In many ways, it was an equalizer.

As a god, it was only natural that relationship would be inherently one-sided. re were a myriad of ways she could help Jake, while he wouldn't be able to do anything for her in return. At least not yet.

Usually, mere prospect of a relationship between a god and a mortal being equal was preposterous, as mortal would never even be able to view himself as equal to god. Jake was opposite and couldn't ever view himself as anything less than equal to someone else.

Anor green flag, by way.

gift from Malefic Viper had made clear this equality wasn't only in feeling but in actions and what he could help her with. While it appeared accurate on surface that Jake himself couldn't do much for her, he had connections that could. Again, this notion seemed to be preposterous, as why would Malefic Viper do something as silly as

helping Jake help her? However, Jake had made it clear many times that he and Malefic One weren't merely Patron and Chosen, but genuine friends of equal standing.

If any or mortal had said this, she would have expected to see m struck dead by divine punishment, but knowing Jake, she couldn't even imagine it any or way. Granted, Artemis still had a hard time understanding why Malefic One, a Primordial of immense power that she knew even Mor Tree was wary of, would simply accept his friendship.

Alas, it wasn't something she wanted to question, and she definitely saw appeal of being Jake's friend.

One of things she'd learned about him was that while Jake usually seemed apatic towards many things and didn't want to get involved in annoying matters, that wasn't case if it involved his friends. Quite opposite.

Jake was frighteningly loyal to those he cared about, and he always paid back his debts. He'd invested a lot of time and opportunity cost by asking Yggdrasil to revive Unique Lifeform, now known as Golden Forest King, and in process, had even given up control over a valuable asset. To ors, it likely seemed silly, but Artemis wholeheartedly approved.

Warpsnatcher was anor example. According to Jake, little critter had helped him out once by allowing him to stay within his little underground cave while he was injured. While that was certainly something to be grateful for, it already felt like overkill to use his authority to pay little guy back. What he was currently doing with ritual was just downright disproportionate...

But also anor massive green flag.

To Artemis, concept of protecting one's pack was incredibly important and a trait she valued a lot in ors. From brief conversations she had with Dina, he'd also been a pretty good Nevermore teammate and was skilled at watching out for ors, even in combat.

All of this is to say he had more than just an aura that she found attractive. He had some very good traits, which only made her curious to learn more about his personality. She'd expected this to take a long time, but it turned out to be quite opposite, as understanding Jake's personality wasn't very complex.

It nearly felt a bit mean to say, but from time she'd spent with him, she learned that Jake was a very simple person. Not stupid, mind you, he just overcomplicated nothing and always preferred simplest solution to any problem. Yet, despite this simplistic approach, his ability to comprehend complexity was quite frankly frightening.

Alchemy was not an easy profession and was notorious for its complexity. Formations were also stupidly difficult and usually required long years of studying, and that was for mages who already specialized in creating ir own magic, giving m an advantage.

Yet, she'd seen that seemingly simple man combine two incredibly complex formations into one within less than two years. He wasn't entirely done yet, but it was getting close. When he'd first mentioned his plan of doing so, Artemis had expected it to take at least a few decades, but instead, he'd started work on actual formation only three months later.

From that alone, Artemis couldn't even begin to imagine what kind of mage he could become if that had been the path he'd walked... actually, she could imagine just going by his skills as an alchemist, which were already at the apex of his generation.

Artemis truly believed Jake had a good chance of making it to godhood, and he had all traits required. She also genuinely hoped he would for her own selfish reasons.

People spoke a lot about getting fortuitous encounters that allowed one to break through, and Artemis could only call meeting Jake one such encounter, if not the most serendipitous of her life so far.

Now, she did feel bad about not being around as much in the last couple of years, but Jake's impact on her life had simply been too big for her to delay matters. She also knew that Jake understood that at crucial times like this, one had to take full advantage or lose opportunity.

For so many years, Artemis never experienced proper change. Even when she tried not to, her mindset remained stuck in routine mode, and she'd been unable to break her habits.

Jake had entered her life by kicking down the door and throwing everything into disarray, all while coming in carrying a massive basket of Records in one hand and a treasure from Malefic Viper in the other. He had not only broken her out of the state of stagnation she'd found herself in but given her the tools to not merely start moving forward but start sprinting toward her next breakthrough. Read full story at [novel-fire-net](#)

It was almost funny to consider that any kind of relationship between the two would be one-sided and only benefit Jake, because right now, Artemis felt it was quite the opposite, and that was without even factoring in the gift given by Malefic Viper.

He had given her the momentum she'd lost and brought about the change she'd needed, and on that particular day, roughly two years after Jake began working on the ritual for Warpsnatcher, she felt it was time.

Sitting within her Divine Realm, she had already recalled all avatars to focus every shred of her attention on what was to come. Artemis had thought she would find herself nervous in such a crucial moment, but instead, she was surprisingly calm and confident.

Admittedly, her confidence was helped along by the item she summoned next.

A small bottle appeared in her hand, filled with a liquid Artemis could not see through. It was an item that surpassed confines of regular rarities. A genuine Transcendent rarity item. Artemis had never even imagined holding an item of such power before meeting Jake, much less being given one specifically made for her.

Without any furr hesitation, Artemis opened it and consumed liquid within. It had no taste, but as it entered her body, she felt it merge directly with her soul. Her entire Divine Realm began shaking next as Artemis was flooded with power and an odd sense of absolute calmness.

There was no doubt left as Artemis fully intended to grant Panon of Life and Godqueen that day.

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Chapter 1163 - Royal Decree

"I can't outright tell you how to mend it, but I can say that you have all materials required to make it happen. Now you just need method. Parts of skill's Records were lost or locked away when it broke, but you have a direct connection that'll allow you to replace m. Of course, system won't be as helpful as normal when you work on a skill, so you can definitely fuck yourself up even more if you don't go about doing it right first time around," Malefic Viper said in his usual casual tone.

"Hey, it's just a courtesy to at least reach out if I'm planning on stealing Records from you," Jake shrugged with a smile as he felt in a good mood, partly because it had been a bit since he last had a good talk with Villy.

Both of them had been busy with Viper talking about exploring some hellhole of a World Wonder filled with mushrooms, and besides that, Villy still had things to do regarding his Order as he'd adopted a more hands-on approach after his return.

Even so, that day he had reached out after reading in tome from First Sage, as he had some thoughts he wanted to get out. It was evident that in order to fix his Palate of Malefic Viper, he would have to draw on his connection as a Heretic-Chosen to fix broken skill.

In some ways, it was a bit like repairing a game. He would need to get working Records to confirm that his approach to fixing skill worked, and it sadly wasn't as simple as just finding out what Jake was missing and replacing those parts. Perhaps someone as skilled as Villy could do that, but Jake certainly wasn't able to.

So he would instead try to claim a copy of Records and try to replicate that to fix his own skill. However, even that would prove incredibly difficult, and he'd definitely need at least a little assistance from skill to make things happen. In that sense, Jake was lucky that system always strived towards stabilizing skills.

only reason he could fuck it up in first place was because he used his Bloodline to do so. That also meant he would need to use his Bloodline to fix it again... if it wasn't for Villy, that is. He'd used a Transcendant skill to temporarily "fix" skill, but what he'd actually done was just put it in a state of stasis with part of its functionality locked away.

When Jake finally made his attempt to fix it, stasis would be released and remains of his Primeval Origin Energy would be consumed to allow Jake limited control he'd need during reconstruction process – all once more made possible by Viper's Transcendent skill.

Granted, besides just being courteous, Jake had one more reason he'd decided to reach out that day.

"Is it really considered stealing when you have permission to break into someone's house?" Villy asked in an amused voice. "Besides, I'm not gonna act like this isn't a fun and novel experience for me. While I have certainly seen people break and fix ir own skills before, never have I seen it with my own Legacy skill. Usually, people only break skills belonging solely to mselves, and fix usually ends up resulting in a rarity downgrade."

"I aim to impress with my unique flavor of absurdity," Jake joked.

"word you're looking for is stupidity. n again, absurdity isn't entirely inaccurate eir, as you can be absurdly stupid at times," Jake's divine Patron bullied him.

"Now you're just being mean. Not saying you're wrong, just mean," Jake muttered. "Anyhow, back to Palate... I did consider a solution that included downgrading skill, but if I did that, upgrading it again would be a whole lot harder, right? To level of being downright impossible?"

"I wouldn't call it impossible, or even improbable, in your case. You are ultimately still my Chosen, and while you wouldn't be able to use same upgrade Path as before, you certainly would still be able to find a way to upgrade it and n include aspects you lost in downgrade down line," Viper explained. "In fact, I did consider a downgrade to be most likely outcome of you fixing Palate. While it wouldn't be ideal, it would be safest solution and definitely one where system would provide most assistance."

"Yeah, I reached same conclusion," Jake nodded. "process of downgrading will balance all Records and at least fix everything in perfect way that only system can."

"I sense a but coming."

“However,” Jake very deliberately stopped himself from using that word, “I’m a greedy bastard who wouldn’t be happy seeing skill downgraded. I’m also a little scared of what it would do to that Planetary Core full of Desolation I ate. But biggest reason is definitely my greed, which is why I considered an alternative to downgrading skill. One that keeps same benefits a system-assisted downgrade would provide.”

“I want to bring attention to fact that I used past tense when I said I expected it to be most likely outcome that you would end up downgrading skill to fix it,” Villy said, having definitely already realized what Jake was getting at. “That was before you had your encounter with First Sage and received his teachings on matter. Now, I believe most likely approach you’ll use to fix Palate is exact opposite of a downgrade.”

“Great minds truly do think alike,” Jake chuckled.

“No, Jake, you’re just incredibly predictable in matters like this. Plus, I know First Sage and impact his teachings have on people. I would find it an insult to his Legacy if you were satisfied with anything less.”

“Fair enough, I guess,” Jake chuckled, unable to disagree as he truly did feel like it would be a disservice to both himself and First Sage if Jake accepted a downgrade to his skill.

As Villy had already alluded to, Jake no longer accepted downgrading Palate when fixing it, and neither would he merely repair it. Instead, Jake planned to directly upgrade Palate during repair process, intending to ride wave of Records he expected to be born from process of fixing it and upgrading his Meditate skill.

It was definitely far riskier than simply trying to fix skill or accepting a downgrade, but Jake had always been a sucker for taking risks.

“I do wonder, how close do you believe you are to pulling trigger and going for upgrade?” Villy asked.

“Yeah, about that...” Jake said. “You see, I didn’t just reach out to be nice today, but because something happened. When studying today, I finished a chapter of tome... only to discover re’s nothing more for me to read.”

“... what?” Viper asked with genuine exasperation. “Do you mean to tell me you’ve already finished everything Master left to you, because if you do, I don’t believe you could have truly understood even-“

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“No, no, no, I’m not done with tome,” Jake quickly clarified as, for a brief moment, he felt real anger from or side of telepathic connection. “I just can’t read more of it. first

page of next chapter contains a seal of some sort, and I'm fairly confident only way to break it is to fulfill some specific condition. Before you ask, no, no clue what conditions are, but I would guess it's either upgrading my Meditate skill to a high enough rarity or reaching B-grade. Perhaps both."

"That... does sound like something Master would do," Villy instantly calmed down. "Likely to make sure you don't overreach and try to delve into concepts you aren't ready to explore yet. Sometimes, too much information can be as dangerous as too little when you do not yet have tools to properly use your knowledge."

"My thoughts exactly," Jake nodded and smirked. "See, great minds do think alike! Anyhow, that's why I reached out to you. I still need to go over some sections again and form a proper plan for how I wanna go about things, but it won't be that long."

"Just take your time and walk in with full confidence born from being prepared enough," Viper shared his words of wisdom. "Speaking of confidence and being prepared enough... just a little heads-up. About a day ago, gift for Artemis was fully consumed, and knowing how long a breakthrough usually takes, I would get myself ready."

"Ready for what?" Jake asked before realizing there were more important questions. "Wait, she's breaking through? To Godqueen? She did mention how that's hard and how she'd been stuck for a while and was now progressing again, but I didn't expect her to attempt a breakthrough already... knowing time span gods usually work with, I assumed it would be like a million years or something silly like that..."

"In same vein that you can get several levels from winning a single fight, brief events and encounters can also lead to massive progress and benefits for gods. Artemis recently experienced massive growth, in part born from foundation she's been building up over last few eras."

"I see," Jake nodded. "And what did you mean I should get ready for?"

"Well, I see two scenarios," Villy said in a cheeky voice. "Breaking through to Godqueen isn't really that dangerous and rarely goes wrong, so she won't be in danger or anything, but failure is certainly an option. In scenario where she failed, she'll definitely need some comforting, so get ready for that. As for if she succeeded... well, in that event, she'll be in quite a good mood."

"Ah," Jake nodded with a smile. While Villy did mention that there was a chance she failed, Jake got feeling she would succeed. While Jake still wasn't best at measuring how powerful gods were, Artemis did feel powerful even for her level... or Circle... or whatever gods used. Moreover, Villy had handed her a gift to help her along for now, and knowing Viper, his pride wouldn't allow gift to be anything less than extraordinarily overpowered.

"Yeah, we'll definitely need to celebrate when she succeeds."

"Oh, definitely... hey, Jake, do you remember feeling of evolving?" Villy asked in a slightly teasing voice.

"Obviously," he answered, not entirely sure what Viper was getting at.

"It feels damn nice, doesn't it? To feel reborn and far more powerful than mere moments ago."

"Yeah..." Jake muttered, still a little confused.

"Now imagine if you haven't evolved for a very long time. In fact, longer re is between evolutions or huge instantaneous power growths, better y feel," Villy said, definitely smirking on or side of telepathic connection. *"What Artemis may feel will be incomparable to anything you've experienced before, and I can promise you with absolute certainty, in scenario of Artemis succeeding, she'll feel divinely euphoric."* The link to origin of this information rests in *novel♦fire♦net*

Jake... was pretty sure that was a good thing?

Artemis felt as if power, unlike anything she'd ever experienced before, flooded through her veins. Additionally, her Divine Realm had expanded and seemed far more stable than it had been only a single day ago. She glanced around her realm, which looked like a massive, endless mix between a jungle and a forest, before she turned around and left.

Appearing in real world once more, two people were already waiting for her. y were only ones who knew Artemis was attempting her breakthrough here and now, and both were all smiles when y saw her.

"Congratulations are in order," Nature's Attendant spoke as he went over and gave her a pat on shoulder and a proud grandfarly nod.

"Good job," Yggdrasil spoke, her words meaning a lot as Mor Tree gave out compliments or praise very rarely. **"I see breakthrough was a great success."**

"Yes," Artemis said with a big smile as she flared her aura, which had grown significantly in both power and quality. "It went far better than I could have even imagined."

"And gift from Vilas?" Nature's Attendant asked with a raised eyebrow. His curiosity didn't surprise her in slightest. Artemis was fully aware that one of reasons why se two apex gods were so interested was because Malefic One's gift had been involved in process, and y were very curious about its results.

"It, too, was far more than I had imagined... at least I think it was," Artemis said with a sigh while still smiling. "I can't truly remember. All I remember is a feeling of absolute control, confidence, and, I wanna almost say, omniscience. Only thing I can guarantee is that it was far more potent and effective than anything I've ever even heard of."

"Hm," Nature's Attendant hummed. "I think caution is advised regarding disclosing anything related to your breakthrough and effects of this gift."

"I understand," Artemis nodded, not even having to be told why keeping it behind closed doors was a good idea. Items of any kind capable of raising a god's chance for a breakthrough were unbelievably valuable, and one of this level could cause wars. Keeping its existence a secret would only prove beneficial for a myriad of reasons, and should Malefic One wish to publicize his true abilities, he could do so himself. Until now, Panon of Life would gladly take advantage of uniquely possessing this knowledge.

"If I may," Artemis spoke again. "Would it be alright if--"

"Go," Yggdrasil said, having predicted what Artemis was about to ask. **"His role in this matter also isn't to be underestimated."**

"I know," Artemis smiled as she bowed a final time before teleporting away in a hurry.

Nature's Attendant and Yggdrasil were left behind as they gave each other knowing looks.

--

Jake had moved forward with his assumption that Artemis would succeed in her breakthrough and gone to clean up a bit. He'd even considered making a banner or something, but ultimately decided against it, as in an event where she somehow failed, that wouldn't go over well.

Still, no matter what, cleaning himself up and making sure his clothes weren't covered in remnants from alchemy experiments by changing into something more casual was at least he could do to look presentable. He'd even decided to order some good food and drinks for two of them if a celebration was in order.

With everything ready, all that was left was to wait. Jake sat in his living room reading a book about bane poisons when he had a premonition that something was about to happen, primarily caused by him feeling a familiar gaze upon his palace, which tended to be a prelude to teleportation.

He closed his book and stored it away, and less than a second later, a familiar wood elf goddess appeared in his living room. Instantly, Jake knew that something was different. First of all, this wasn't an avatar like many times he'd seen her recently, but definitely her real body. Secondly, she felt stronger than Jake had ever seen her before, instantly making Jake smile.

“Congratulations.”

Artemis looked at him and smiled back. “This may sound hyperbolic, but I couldn’t have done it without you.”

“Hey, don’t sell yourself short,” Jake said as he teasingly bowed. “Such is unbecoming of you, my queen.”

Artemis chuckled and walked over as she put a hand under his chin. “You may raise your gaze.”

Jake did as told while Artemis leaned forward and planted a kiss on his lips, which he naturally reciprocated. Artemis didn’t hold anything back and dragged him into a hug, not letting Jake go as she pushed m to both fall onto couch, Artemis on top of him.

Artemis pulled back and sat up as she looked down at him. Without saying anything, she placed a finger on his chest, making his shirt begin to disintegrate, much to Jake’s surprise, as he looked up at her with a raised eyebrow.

“I thought we were taking things slo-“

“Jake,” Artemis said as her own clos began to disappear. “I don’t believe this queen gave you permission to object.”

He just stared up at goddess as he couldn’t stop smiling. “This lowly one apologizes for his insolence.”

“You’re forgiven,” Artemis said, pressing him down. “Assuming what happens next pleases this queen to her satisfaction.”

“This one shall do his utmost,” Jake answered as he gladly moved to fulfill royal decree.

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Chapter 1164 - Relationship

“Should we call someone to—”

“Absolutely not,” wood elf goddess shut down Jake’s suggestion before he even had time to make it.

“We will need replacements, though,” Jake muttered.

“I’ll handle it, no way we’re letting anyone see this,” Artemis sighed, making Jake chuckle as he ran his fingers through her hair.

Two of them were lying on the remains of what had once been a large couch, the rest of the living room also not in the best state. Artemis had been a lot more passionate than Jake had expected, not that he was complaining in any way.

Now she had luckily calmed down, which was also good, as Jake was already sore enough. Besides, a bit of cuddling had never done anyone harm, and it was a good excuse for Jake to ask some more questions.

“You think King or Jasper noticed anything?”

“That question is almost insulting. What do you take me for?” Artemis said, sitting up and looking down at him over her shoulder. “I reckon all Unique Lifeform sees is you sitting in meditation down in your alchemy lab. Suggestive illusions can be quite varied, so I can’t tell you exactly what he sees.”

“A little scary to imagine one’s sense of perception being messed with like that,” Jake muttered.

“Oh, stop it, not like it would even work on you,” Artemis joked.

“True, but still,” Jake said as he also sat up and wrapped an arm around Artemis, who willingly leaned into him. “If it did, I would be afraid all of this could have just been an illusion of your making.”

“Suggestive illusions are incredibly effective precisely because you’re realistic and born from the mind of the afflicted,” Artemis said with a smile. “In other words, unrealistic and absurd situations like this would never appear in mine.”

“Hey, you don’t know the messed-up things my brain can come up with,” Jake chuckled, looking down at Artemis, who was surprisingly comfortable in her birthday suit. Again, not that he was complaining.

“Oh, I think I have a fairly good idea,” Artemis smiled flirtatiously up at him before turning a bit more serious. “We should clean up, though.”

Waving her hand, Jake was forcefully lifted off the ground as he floated up in the middle of the room, with Artemis floating up alongside him. At the same time, everything in the room began to move as the furniture reassembled itself, as if time had been rewound... probably because it had.

Less than three seconds later, entire room was back in same condition it had been only a day prior, with not a single sign of anything having happened. With everything fixed, two floated down once more and landed on couch.

Jake was a bit disappointed when Artemis instantly clod herself, but he still followed suit and did same as he commented on what had just happened. "Quite use of time magic."

"Just a little trick," Artemis chuckled as she looked at him. "All gods are proficient in both space and time magic, at least enough to do things like this."

"Still, rewinding time like that is neat," Jake shrugged, no matter how basic it was considered.

"I'm pretty sure you could learn to do it in... maybe B-grade? A-grade at latest. As long as objects you're rewinding time for don't contain too much energy, it's quite simple. Granted, if same item is rewound too often, it will be negatively affected as it becomes disconnected from Realtime, but that's rarely a concern," Artemis gladly explained.

"So you're saying we should do it somewhere that isn't living room next time?" Jake joked flirtatiously.

"As I said, doing it to same objects a few times won't affect m negatively," Artemis shot right back. "So, have no concerns regarding that."

"Damn, you're gonna make me feel all lazy for having you do cleanup every time," Jake joked.

"Just view it as one of boons of having a Godqueen girlfriend," Artemis shrugged.

That word instantly stopped Jake in his thoughts. He looked at Artemis inquisitively, who raised an eyebrow in return.

"I think I've been pretty clear on my intent from very beginning, even if things have admittedly moved forward faster than I originally intended—something I take full responsibility for," Artemis said in a serious tone. "I'm not interested in anything casual, but demand some level of commitment. I was never casual type. only way this will be allowed to be considered a mere fling is from my perspective, and only in a scenario where you fail to achieve godhood."

Jake was initially taken aback by Artemis's level of seriousness, but from her words, it was clear she had considered matters a lot more than he had. He was horrible at se kinds of things and wasn't sure what to say... also, when it came to commitment...

"You're not running from this conversation," Artemis said, having seemingly read his thoughts.

“I wasn’t going to,” Jake sighed as he tried to gar his thoughts. “I’m just not sure what to say...”

“Do you disagree with anything?” Artemis raised an eyebrow. “To be clear, if I’ve misread things and you’re not interested, I’m not so patic as to—”

“No, no, no, not like that,” Jake quickly clarified. “It’s just... relationships in past haven’t been best experience from my point of view.”

Artemis looked like she was about to say something as Jake quickly continued, “But I’m definitely on board. I know it’s my problem to deal with.”

“Hmm,” Artemis nodded as she looked at him. “Betrayed by a partner in past, so you’re now only interested in casual relationships. That way, you can’t find yourself in a situation where you’re genuinely hurt again because feelings never get too deep?”

Jake stared at Artemis for a second or two as she chuckled.

“Come on, that’s not unique in slightest,” Artemis said, clearly amused. “Though I would be interested in what happened if you’re willing to share.”

“You’re just gonna make fun of me if I tell you,” Jake sighed.

“Likely, but that doesn’t mean you shouldn’t. I may have a reputation for being prudent, but don’t for a second think you have more relationship experience than I do, especially during my mortal days.”

“Alright, alright,” Jake surrendered as he briefly gave an overview of his unfortunate youth. It was something he didn’t really think about anymore, but when reliving experience, it still sucked to remember.

Artemis patiently listened and nodded along. In end, more Jake talked, more he realized how utterly meaningless those days had been in grand scheme of things. It felt like memories from an entirely different life, and he could barely relate to person he’d been back n.

A sentiment Artemis seemed to somewhat share. “I have a hard time imagining you taking such a passive approach to matter, but I also believe that core of problem wasn’t that she was more interested in someone else. It’s betrayal behind her actions and deceit that went with it. Something piques my curiosity, though. Why hide it? It seemed inevitable that something like that would be found out, so it seems smartest thing to do is just break things off beforehand.”

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“Cowardice, I reckon,” Jake shrugged.

“Wouldn’t it be riskier to keep it hidden?” Artemis wondered aloud. “That amount of bad karma created will be far more substantial that way, not to mention reaction when you find out. I’ve seen people killed for less.”

“Well, murder wasn’t exactly legal in my world before system,” Jake chuckled.

“Not even in cases like that?” Artemis seemed genuinely surprised. “What if you formally proposed a duel? If you all didn’t have levels back n, your level of power should have been relatively equal.”

At this point, Jake couldn’t help but laugh at notion as he imagined Artemis standing in a courtroom arguing why her decision to stab a guy in neck was totally justified. n again, perhaps re was a time and place on Earth where her logic would have been acceptable.

“Your world was odd,” Artemis decided to just laugh along. “More similar to Holy Church than any or faction, from sounds of it.”

“Perhaps,” Jake said, not knowing enough about all factions in multiverse to argue eir point.

“Anyway, what did you end up doing?” Artemis returned to topic at hand. “After initiation, that is. Did you track down that woman and finally get your revenge? How about man?”

“No,” Jake said, thinking about matter a bit. “I never saw point. It had been many years since I’d last seen m, even when system arrived. y’re not characters in my life anymore and haven’t been for a long time. Shit, I don’t even know if y’re still alive or not, and quite frankly, I didn’t care eir.”

“Likely healthiest response,” Artemis said. “Well, if we’re talking exes, I know all of mine are dead for sure. None managed to reach godhood.”

Jake nodded along. “I figured. If y had, I wouldn’t be sitting here right now.”

“Not necessarily,” Artemis shrugged. “It’s far from unusual for gods to get toger, but equally as likely for m to split up again. Eternity is a long time, you know. Many gods do like to have one divine partner, though, and n take mortal lovers whenever y fancy or if y intend to have a child.”

Jake remembered that two gods producing a child was considered borderline impossible, which resulted in all children of gods Jake had ever heard of coming from unions between a god and a mortal. With that in mind, it seemed more out of necessity

that sometimes gods took mortal partners. What she said did make Jake curious about something, though.

“How about you? Ever had any children?” Jake asked. Considering how old Artemis was, it would almost be surprising if she hadn’t.

“No,” Artemis shook her head, surprising Jake a little.

“What?” Artemis commented, shaking her head. “I never felt like time was right, and one has to be careful when selecting a partner, especially when it comes to firstborn.”

“I see,” Jake said.

“On that note, re’s something we should also make clear,” Artemis said in a strict tone. “I naturally know of or partners in your life, namely succubus and Runemaiden. From what I gared, re could be mo—”

“re’s not,” Jake quickly clarified. “And I made it clear with both that—”

“It’s fine,” Artemis waved him off, remaining stern. “I’m not against you having or women in your life. Honestly, I would have been disappointed if you didn’t. In end, y’re both just mortals, and even in event of m making it to godhood, I see nothing negative coming from you, having a positive relationship with a god from anor large faction. Especially not Runemaiden, as having someone like that as an ally can prove quite valuable.”

Jake just listened, as he genuinely had no idea what Artemis was about to say next. All he knew was that her logic regarding relationships definitely wasn’t what he was used to.

“However, I do have some basic demands,” Artemis continued, keeping a serious look on Jake. “I’m not going to accept being considered second. When it comes to anything official, I’m your partner.”

“Alright,” Jake readily agreed.

“Also, don’t go around taking or lovers without at least consulting with me first,” Artemis said, Jake finally feeling like y had some common ground when it came to relationship logic... or not...

“We need to at least make sure y aren’t part of any factions considered antagonistic towards eir Panon of Life or Order of Malefic Viper. It could cause quite political misunderstanding if you’re found sleeping with someone I would view as an enemy. Of course, I will extend same courtesy to you if I ever meet someone I consider worthy of taking in as a lover.”

Jake would be lying if he said he didn't feel quite jealous if Artemis went to him and said some or guy had caught her interest... but at same time, he was already quite a hypocrite himself and had a lot to think about. Ultimately, he just nodded in approval, prompting Artemis to continue.

"Finally, no children," Artemis said, even more stern than before, though her next sentence was definitely a turn-on. "I demand your firstborn."

Logically, Jake knew Artemis was saying it for pragmatic reasons due to how Records worked and whatnot, but it still made him smile goofily. wood elf goddess noticed his facial expression and chuckled.

"Not yet. You're still early on your Path towards godhood, and later, better," Artemis said, looking at him slyly. "Of course, that doesn't mean we can't get plenty of practice in meantime."

Jake was about to make a move as Artemis held a finger up. "Not now, though. I'll have to report this to Mor Tree and Nature's Attendant, as it has implications for relationship between our two factions. I don't believe y plan on making any public announcement, especially not without first discussing matter with you and Malefic One, but I should at least inform m... even if I don't think y'll be surprised."

"Viper is definitely also going to tease me," Jake muttered, already imagining Villy's cackling.

"You know, mere fact that I even enter mind of Malefic One is an honor, so I'm definitely not complaining," Artemis said with a smile.

Her words were casual, but y did bring up something Jake thought was worth mentioning. "This is a relationship as equals, right?"

"Would you accept it any or way?" Artemis joked.

"No... but if we are equals, n you should also accept being more casual around Viper," Jake said. "If two of us are equals, n so are two of you."

"That... is something I'm genuinely not comfortable even considering," Artemis sighed. "Perhaps one day, but not now. Especially not when I feel that I owe Primordial so much."

"I just wanted to mention it," Jake said, knowing when not to push subject.

"I understand," Artemis said with a smile as she looked toward ceiling for a moment. " notion of you considering Malefic Viper your equal was something I found ridiculous. That Malefic One should even share this sentiment was even more of an impossibility. Why would a being like him view a mere mortal as his equal? However... now I kind of

get it. I reckon ors will also view our relationship as equally absurd, though most will definitely assume it isn't actually as we represent it."

"I don't give a damn what ors think of our relationship, and that goes for both one with Viper and you," Jake shrugged. "As long as people involved know truth, opinions of ors are irrelevant."

Artemis chuckled and shook her head. "That simplistic view of things is truly part of your charm."

"Overcomplicating things never leads to anything good," Jake insisted.

"Perhaps not," Artemis sighed. "Alas, I would love to stick around, but I should really be going. Ah, but don't worry; I won't be too long this time around."

After saying this, she walked over to Jake, who easily read what she was going for as she got a nice goodbye smooch on way out.

"Don't let those two bully you," Jake said with a smile.

"Oh, please, y're way more likely to celebrate," Artemis chuckled. "See you later, Jake."

"See you," Jake said right before she teleported away. As she did so, all barriers she had placed around palace also disappeared, allowing King and Jasper to once more be aware of what was happening inside.

Neir of m did anything, though, almost as if y hadn't even noticed something was amiss.

Mental magic really is bloody scary, Jake thought to himself, once more extremely happy he had an overpowered Bloodline that would allow him to shrug off that kind of magic.

Looking around cleaned-up living room, Jake couldn't help but consider last twenty-two hours or so as he went to sit down. He also thought about conversation y had just had and all his past relationships. He thought about Madeline and Andrew and all that had happened back n.

He genuinely hadn't thought about those two, at least not since returning from Tutorial. It really felt like everything with m had been an entirely different life, perhaps because it had been. Back n, Jake had suppressed his own Bloodline and hadn't been himself. He had just been a bored passenger in his own sucky life.

Now, he felt like he was truly alive. As if he were living in a world where he actually belonged, surrounded by people who understood and respected him for who he was, even if y did admit to finding him a bit unusual. But hey, all strongest people were weird, so no shame in that.

People like Andrew or Madeline weren't even worth thinking about. He had heard about neir on Earth, meaning y weren't people strong or influential enough for him to care about, assuming y were even alive. Neir deserved scarce Records of him even acknowledging ir existence, and if y met on street one day, Jake doubted he would even bor recognizing m, though he doubted two would even dare act like y knew him eir.

Having thought about it, Jake felt better. He liked Artemis, even if things had turned serious a lot faster than he'd expected. Jake did feel a bit weird about officially having a girlfriend again, but he was looking forward to what it would all entail.

And honestly... going from a cheating ex-girlfriend studying for an art degree with no job prospects to a wood elf hunter Godqueen was quite upgrade, if he said so himself.

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Chapter 1165 - A Successful Diplomatic Mission

Having taken some time to gar his thoughts, Jake reckoned re were a few things he had to get done. Seeing as Artemis had left to talk with Yggdrasil and Nature's Attendant about things getting official, Jake reckoned he should also inform his Patron of it.

And, no, it had nothing to do with Jake wanting to at least brag a little to his scaled friend.

When Artemis had returned and covered palace in barriers, Villy had also been cut off as he already had a difficult time spying inside territory of Panon of Life, but now he was back to looking again, which also made it easier for Jake to mentally reach out.

It didn't take long before he got a response, eir.

"Well, well, well, what do we have here?" Villy said in an amused tone. "You look a little tired re, buddy. Been a long day, eh?"

"Actually, it turns out that time flies when you're having fun," Jake shot back. "And am I to assume you've just been sitting around waiting for me to reach back out so you can hear all gossip?"

"Saying I'm just sitting around feels a bit hurtful, considering this avatar's primary function is to communicate with you," Villy responded. "But your curtness can be forgiven in exchange for a little gossip abou-"

“Sounds like I’m gonna remain unforgiven, n, as I’m not gonna share any details,” Jake shut notion down.

“Jake, what do you take me for?” Viper began, acting all offended. *“Would I love to hear all juicy details? Yes. Of course I would. Do I expect to? No, definitely not. Rar, I would like to know what happened afterwards, as I know something did happen.”*

“And why are you so certain about that?” Jake asked curiously.

“You’re my Chosen. Our karma is linked. I felt a powerful shift in yours and a slight strengning between my own and Artemis, and just now, also between myself, Yggdrasil, and Nature’s Attendant.”

“We did have a discussion,” Jake confessed. *“A serious one.”*

“So my guess was correct. Things have been made official?” Villy asked, though he clearly already knew answer.

“Yeah,” Jake nodded. *“Though I hope you can respect that I’ll keep details of discussion between me and her.”*

“Fair enough, and totally what I expected,” Primordial said, not even trying to pry. *“I guess congratulations are in order?”*

“Thanks?” Jake responded, a bit unsure.

“Are you happy with it? It’s not a small commitment, but something you have to actually take seriously. It’s also more than simply something between two people, but representative of relationship between two factions. I guess what I’m saying is that you need to be as serious and dedicated to this as I believe Artemis is, or cut things short before it develops into something problematic,” Malefic Viper said, far more serious than Jake expected him to be.

He had thought this talk would be Viper teasing Jake about getting a girlfriend, but fact that even his snake god buddy took this so seriously really made it hit home that this wasn’t a small commitment.

It was good that he had taken a few moments before garing his feelings, allowing Jake to respond with an answer he was confident in.

“I’m serious, too,” Jake said.

“Do you love her?”

“I... think I do? Maybe?” Jake said, having needed a second to answer that one. *“Truthfully, I don’t think I’ve ever been in love before, so I couldn’t tell you*

definitively. I also know that my emotions aren't exactly normal compared to or people, primarily on account of my Bloodline. But I do know for sure that I like her."

"I guess that's good enough for now," Viper said, returning to his usual jolly tone. "In that case, I shall indeed congratulate you on bagging a hot wood elf Godqueen girlfriend! Quite achievement, if I say so myself, especially for a C-grade. Damn proud of ya!"

Jake smiled at Villy being back to his usual self. *"Yeah, I caught a good one."*

"And you won me a bet!"

"... why am I not surprised you had a bet about that?" Jake sighed. *"So, how much did Duskleaf lose?"*

"Duskleaf? I didn't bet with him!" Viper said in a happy tone. *"No, I won one against Aeon this time around, so vastly superior haul as that guy can cough up a way better prize."*

"Did you seriously bet with anor Primordial on wher I would get into a relationship? Also, why hell would he even agree to that bet? How did it even come up?" Jake asked, having many questions indeed.

"bet was wher you or that swordsman would manage to get into anything official with a god first. Not gonna lie, I thought I was going to lose, as your competition is frighteningly competent in that area, but luckily for me, he's been too busy fighting," Viper explained.

"You still didn't tell me why Aeon would agree to a bet in that vein," Jake pointed out, still having a very hard time seeing why a god of time would even bor betting about something like that, especially when person in question only had a Divine Blessing.

"Boredom?" Villy said, as if it wasn't obvious. *"Didn't even take any convincing. He was on board right away, thinking it sounded interesting. Eternity is a long time, mate, something I'm sure any serious conversation with Artemis will have also touched upon."*

"Yeah," Jake nodded as he considered wher he should share next part, but ultimately decided to. *"And she kind of proposed an open relationship... and while I don't have statistics available, I'm pretty sure those tended to end up in disaster in my old world."*

"Can't really give you any advice on that front, besides repeating that eternity is a long time. I'm gonna be honest, I also feel like it's her trying to show some concern towards you. You're still just a C-grade and early on in your journey, and you're bound to experience a lot of things as you grow, but most importantly, you haven't lived for very long."

"Maybe it was her way of showing concern..." Jake wondered out loud.

“You know how it feels like time passed a lot slower when you were a kid compared to now? That level of neural adaptation will only increase, making time feel like it’s truly flying by. To you, any event happening still fills a meaningful part of your life’s story, while Artemis has experienced millions. It’s likely she doesn’t want to take anything away from you and limit your freedom in any way,” Viper said, once more giving some serious advice.

“Say, in multiverse, is it considered common to have open relationships?” Jake asked after thinking a bit.

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“If you put me on spot, I would say yes? Granted, it depends a lot on many factors, including race and culture. Some races don’t even understand relationships, but see it purely as a way to reproduce, while others are strictly monogamous. In other instances, people are brought together for political reasons, and in some situations, it’s very common for both to have lovers on their side.”

Jake listened as Viper continued.

“If you’re talking more specifically about gods, it also differs. Take Valdemar, for instance. He’s been with Gudrun for so many eras and has no one else. Meanwhile, Blightfar has had more partners than anyone would ever care to remember, including who knows how many wives throughout years. However, one thing you see a lot with gods is that they very much separate relationships and reproduction as two vastly different things. To many gods, having children is not about emotions but about spreading their Records and Legacy to multiverse. Due to that, many gods don’t even view an act of sleeping with a mortal as comparable to being with another god. I’ve seen gods get into fights to death over one cheating on or with another god, all while not having giving a shit about both parties producing dozens of children with mortals.”

“That sounds messy as fuck,” Jake muttered.

“Yet logical. Getting emotionally involved with every partner would be a great way for gods to burn themselves out. You can only fully invest yourself in a mortal partner and have them die on you so many times before you either become apathetic to it or learn how to protect yourself by only investing strong emotions in other immortals. Mortals simply die too fast to even enter emotions into equation in most cases, which I strongly suspect is also the case for Artemis. I’d bet that if you told her you were interested in another god, she would object harshly and even get a little jealous. Meanwhile, she genuinely doesn’t give a shit about mortals, as chances are you’re either gonna die soon or you and this other mortal will have grown apart by the time you reach godhood.”

“A bit morbid of a mindset to have, but yeah, I guess I can see the logic from an immortal’s point of view. Still, the casualness of which she spoke of open relationships took me by surprise,” Jake confessed.

“If it’s worth anything, I seriously doubt she has any mortals, much less or gods, in mind eir, nor will she even bor looking for any. I got out of Nature’s Attendant that she hasn’t had anyone else around for several eras, so my guess is she once more just wanted to be nice and not make you feel bad about things being one-sided, while in reality, she has zero interest in exercising that right. Think about it this way, you’re actually kind of perfect partner with both advantages of a mortal and a god at same time! Besides, let’s not act as if you’d like her finding or partners, mortal or orwise.”

Jake continued to listen as he let out a loud sigh after Viper was done. *“Man, relationships really are complicated and re’s a lot of logic I still don’t understand.”*

He still had a lot of things to think about, it seemed, including or more casual relationships in his life. Jake had been born and raised on Earth in a culture where monogamy was only socially acceptable norm, and shedding that norm wouldn’t be easy, assuming it was even something he wanted to do.

Because Viper did have a point... Jake wouldn’t like Artemis coming to him and showing off some S-grade guy she’d taken a fancy to. He just hadn’t said anything because he hoped that wouldn’t happen any time soon, if ever. Objecting to it would also be very hypocritical. Hearing Villy say it had a low chance of happening eased his worries a lot, but if it ever did happen anyway... he’d worry about that bridge when he had to cross it.

“Life’s complicated, and if you are in doubt, just talk to her. Genuinely. From what I know about Artemis, she’s a very curt and honest woman, and if she’s unhappy about something, she’s sure to let you know. You should do same. She’s a god who specializes in Perception for fuck’s sake, I reckon she picks up on most things already, so hiding your true feelings on matters won’t do you any good. Not telling you to pour out every thought and feeling unprompted, but when asked, be honest,” Villy gave some more sage advice.

“Alright,” Jake nodded, thankful for Viper’s input. *“Now, enough about that. I don’t wanna become one of those guys who only talk about ir relationship all day.”*

“Damn, and I was just about to pry for details I know you aren’t going to give me... oh well, guess we’ll move onto next order of business,” Viper said as Jake heard him clear his throat, something that wasn’t a thing with telepathic communication.

“I’ve just received word from Yggdrasil, and a new declaration of friendship between Order of Malefic Viper and Panon of Life has been successfully established and shall be announced publicly shortly. Partly because of your banger job as my Chosen on this diplomatic mission. As your Patron, I acknowledge your contributions to completion of negotiations.”

Jake was about to laugh and joke about how he’d kind of forgotten he was even part of an official diplomatic delegation when a system notification popped up in front of him.

You, a mere mortal, have successfully formed a mutual bond of equals with a Godqueen, staying true to your Path as a Heretic-Chosen. You have done this under direction of your Patron while serving interest of Order of Malefic Viper, and successfully forged a stronger relationship with Panon of Life – A new feat has been accomplished. Bonus experience earned

'DING!' Profession: [Heretic-Chosen Alchemist of Malefic Viper] has reached level 320 - Stat points allocated, +35 Free Points

...

'DING!' Profession: [Heretic-Chosen Alchemist of Malefic Viper] has reached level 323 - Stat points allocated, +35 Free Points

'DING!' Race: [Human (C)] has reached level 320 - Stat points allocated, +45 Free Points

'DING!' Race: [Human (C)] has reached level 321 - Stat points allocated, +45 Free Points

Jake stared at notifications for several seconds before blurting out loud: “What fuck?”

“Huh? Why are you acting all surprised by getting a few levels for being a Chosen, successfully completing a mission personally entrusted to you by your Patron, all while doing it using your unique Path?” Villy said, definitely grinning on or side. This chapter is updated by *novel* ♦ *fire* ♦ *net*

“That’s... *bullshit*,” Jake said, certain that Viper had done some weird shit to exploit system again.

“How so? You’ve done great, and I’m being serious here. Both Yggdrasil and Nature’s Attendant like you and seem to have a lot of belief in your future potential. Enough for it to play a factor in m wanting to make a public declaration of friendship. Moreover, an undeniable bond has now been created between our two factions due to you and Artemis. When factoring in that Panon of Life is recognized as a superior faction to Order of Malefic Viper, this is an impressive accomplishment, and if you had completed it less accidentally, I reckon rewards would have been even better.”

“This still feels like some kind of scam,” Jake insisted, feeling like those were four of his most unearned levels ever.

“Think of it as you may,” Villy didn’t bor arguing. “A joint declaration of friendship will be announced, but don’t worry, it won’t contain anything related to you and Artemis. We’ll keep that under wraps for now, and it’s something you two can share on your own timeline and terms.”

“Probably for best,” Jake sighed. “And thanks. I could see it lead to a lot of annoying situations if everyone knew.”

“Hey, we both know you’re gonna let it slip at inopportune times, leading to hilarity. I wouldn’t rob myself of that experience,” Villy teased him. “Seeing as you’re done with your mission, I would suggest returning to Order of Malefic Viper once you’ve received your new bow and wrapped up all your or projects. Once Palate is fixed, I also have present from Yip waiting for you. Unless you planned on moving to Panon of Life to spend time with your girl and have become kind of person that neglects all his or friends just because he got into a relationship, that is.”

“Eh, a lot of stuff I’m doing. I may as well be doing back at Order,” Jake shrugged. “So, sure, it shouldn’t end up taking that much longer. But as you said, I do have quite a few things I want to get done before leaving.”

“No rush, no rush,” Viper said casually. “You enjoy yourself now. I’ll get back to more important matters.”

“Didn’t you already tell me primary function of that clone is to stalk me?” Jake accurately pointed out.

“Exactly, and when you’re talking to me, you’re not doing anything fun for me to observe,” Villy said, as if his statement made perfect sense. “See ya!”

Before Jake could say anything more, telepathic link was cut off.

Alone once more – if one ignored fact that Villy was still observing him – Jake sat back on couch and let out a loud sigh. His head was spinning with complicated things he hated that he even had to think about. Luckily, he’d just been given something excellent to distract himself and force him to think about something else.

It had come a bit earlier than Jake would have liked, as he’d wanted to make some more progress in his alchemy, but delaying it also didn’t seem like a smart thing. Ultimately, Jake reckoned he had enough Records even without fixing Palate, as he hoped and expected to get something good.

Opening system menu, Jake saw message staring back at him as it was time for final skill selection of C-grade.

Heretic-Chosen Alchemist of Malefic Viper profession skills available

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Chapter 1166 - Level 320 Profession Skill Selection

Jake had seriously considered making this first skill selection he'd purposefully delay for a relatively long time. Delaying a skill selection carried certain risks, but it could also allow one to benefit greatly if one really wanted to develop a particular kind of skill.

Ultimately, Jake had decided not to delay it for a few reasons. First of all, Jake didn't have a specific skill he was looking to acquire from selection. In fact, he nearly felt like he had too many alchemy skills already with all projects he had going on.

Secondly, only skills Jake *had* wanted to upgrade were Malefic Viper Legacy skills, and all of those had now been done. Sure, Palate remained broken, but he could only hope that wouldn't negatively impact selection.

Finally, this was his last skill selection of C-grade and final one for his profession in this grade. As with his class, previous selection usually included a signature skill of some kind for that particular class or profession, which meant that even if Jake ended up being offered some nice skill he himself influenced to appear, chances were he would still select final one on offer.

Granted, one did have to have performed well during grade to get this final signature skill offered in first place, but Jake wouldn't say he'd done badly while in C-grade, so he believed he'd at least fulfilled basic requirements.

Resting on sofa back in his own little palace, Jake didn't delay furr as he pushed all or thoughts regarding Artemis, relationships, factions, and all that jazz all way to back of his mind and got skill selection started.

Jake felt pleased when he saw first skill offered was ancient rarity, though when he read what skill's name was, he couldn't help but chuckle.

[Arcane Alchemist's Supreme Purification (Ancient)] – Through boundless power of your arcane affinity, stabilize all that you desire and destroy unwanted as you refuse for any alchemical ingredient to be less than perfect. Attempt to purify any alchemical ingredient, reducing it to its most basic state while ensuring its stability. Arcane purification can also help destroy unwanted properties from an ingredient, making it purer. Must have suitable ingredients. Purification does not require any additional tools or equipment, but skill's effect can be amplified with use of certain catalysts. Adds a notable increase to effectiveness and chance of success of attempted purifications based on Wisdom and Intelligence.

WARNING: This skill is unlocked by and will serve as an upgrade to your Alchemist's Purification.

This was third time Jake had been offered an upgrade to his Alchemist's Purification skill, and second in C-grade alone. At this point, it was admittedly a little silly that Jake still had an inferior rarity skill, but in his defense, he never needed it.

Even when he read description of this vastly upgraded version, he still didn't really feel like he needed it. Jake tended not to need to purify ingredients much in first place, as he only procured high-quality products due to being a glorified trust-fund baby of a Primordial. However, even in rare cases where he did need to clean up an ingredient, he had or means.

Truthfully, burning away unwanted aspects of ingredients was easy enough, especially without a skill in first place, thanks to Sagacity supporting entire process. Shit, one of primary reasons many alchemists used skill was to purify water for ir alchemy, but Jake used his blood as a replacement for that in majority of cases, and when he made potions and or things where he did need water... well, inferior rarity skill could still purify water wonderfully.

Did he need to get it upgraded someday, or perhaps just merge it with one of his or alchemy skills?

Yes.

Was it going to be today through selection of this skill?

Fuck no.

Would Jake more likely than not forget skill even existed before he was done with skill selection?

Most definitely.

Hence, he quickly moved on, only to see that with second skill, he was already up to legendary rarity, which was definitely a good sign. As for skill on offer, it was definitely a result of Jake's recent diplomatic mission.

[Life Formation ory of Panon of Life (Legendary)] – What alchemist does not desire ir own garden full of life? Now, you have tools to create one that'll earn you envy of or alchemists. Allows alchemist to create formations that foster a domain of life suitable for all living things to thrive within. Perhaps life can even appear naturally inside domain. Relying on powerful concepts gleaned from depths of Panon of Life itself, you find yourself capable of creating domains containing an incredibly high conceptual level that will only increase as you grow more powerful and begin to understand more of what you've seen. se formations are primarily designed to be placed down, but can also be inscribed into items. effectiveness of Life Formation ory of Panon of Life is determined by Vitality,

Wisdom, and Willpower. Embrace wonders of life and be an advocate for all living things.

Jake was genuinely surprised to see a skill like this offered for several reasons. rarity was way higher than he would have expected, especially for a skill he couldn't place at all how hell he'd qualified for.

He barely knew anything about formation ory in first place, and all he did know was related to ritual magic, and without getting into a whole rant about differences and similarities of those two, Jake simply didn't like that he'd earned this one.

When racking his brain a bit, Jake could only guess this one wasn't offered due to anything specific, but was more of an amalgamation of everything. Records for skill came when his visits to Yggdrasil's Divine Realm and what he'd seen re, his interactions with Nature's Attendant, and bow creation, as well as all time he'd spent around Artemis.

However, more than this being a representation of what he'd learned or accomplished while at Panon of Life, it seemed more to reflect people and ir intent. While skill talked about making a garden, this was essentially a skill to create sanctuaries for living things and to help m prosper and thrive.

One interesting thing it did talk about was how he could inscribe formations into items, which made Jake consider if he could use skill to create a personal pocket garden of some kind, but alas, such speculation was kind of useless considering re was no way in hell he was going to select skill.

In end, Jake's only real takeaway from getting this offered was that he'd underestimated Records gained from chilling around gods on a consistent basis and that he should really ask for some books on stuff like this to bring back for Rick gardener troll. That guy would definitely love a skill like this.

Moving on, next skill offered... wasn't a skill offering at all.

[Palate of Malefic Viper (Legendary)] – Malefic Viper has honed its venom by devouring myriad toxins and treasures found throughout multiverse. In same vein, Alchemist of Malefic Viper can consume toxins to learn ir effects and properties. Furr evolved, you can now also learn properties of herbs while at same time enjoying a greater benefit from all potions consumed. Natural treasures can be swallowed and refined at an accelerated pace using your current level of Touch of Malefic Viper (Legendary). If item is not a toxin, item will still be refined but at a slower pace. Allows you to learn properties of any treasure in your stomach as you slowly refine it. Allows Alchemist to fully consume a swallowed item, destroying it in process, if possible. If item cannot be destroyed or result of its destruction is too violent, Alchemist will suffer a backlash, and internal space will be damaged. Grants immunity or resistance to most poisons.

Passively provides 9 Endurance per level in Heretic-Chosen Alchemist of Malefic Viper (C-grade variant). Through endless consumption, may your power grow; through gluttony, may your Records expand as you devour world.

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NOTICE: Selecting this skill will fully restore Palate of Malefic Viper skill to its uncorrupted state.

This was consequence of Jake having skill selection now before fixing Palate, but in his defense, he didn't even know this was a possibility. He'd at least never seen or heard about it before, and he was shocked enough to reach out to Villy despite m having just stopped talking a bit ago.

"Hey, Villy, I know we just hung up, but I'm going through my skill selection right now, and I'm currently looking at something very interesting on offer," Jake said.

"Oh, hey re, long time no see!" Viper said jokingly. *"Yeah, I'm not surprised if final signature skill of your profession is something else, especially not after that Divine Bargain one, so-"*

"I haven't even gotten to that one yet," Jake interrupted snake god. *"I'm talking about anor one, which isn't even a real skill offering. One of five in selection is Palate of Malefic Viper with a notice message from system saying selecting it will fully restore Palate of Malefic Viper to its uncorrupted state."*

"That's... interesting," Viper said, sounding genuinely surprised. *"n again, so is way you broke skill and way I fixed it. I must say, if this had been before your meeting with Master, I would have suggested for you to take it even if it meant giving up on anor potentially awesome skill, no matter how much that would suck. It's definitely a great opportunity, and even now, dependent on your confidence on fixing Palate yourself and or skills on offer, you could seriously consider it... because in event of you failing to fix Palate, you'll fuck yourself over way more than missing one skill selection. So, picking it would definitely be safest option."*

"Yeah, it's definitely safe option," Jake agreed wholeheartedly.

"Which means you're definitely not taking it?" Villy said.

"Of course not," Jake chuckled.

"I would've been disappointed if you did. Hope one of or four is a good one!"

"Thanks," Jake smiled as connection was cut off once more.

So, yeah, Jake quickly moved on, and only thing he got out of getting skill offered was to see description once more, as he currently couldn't summon it merely by focusing on Palate because of its broken nature. Read full story at novel.fire.net

When Jake looked at next skill on offer, he was instantly hyped when he saw rarity – mythical – but had mixed feelings upon reading name.

[Chosen Alchemist's Prayer of Malefic Viper (Mythical)] – Pray, and he shall answer. Allows Chosen of Malefic Viper to offer a prayer to his Patron while performing any alchemical task to summon aspects of Malefic Viper down upon mselves. Embrace your Patron and have his intent and boundless knowledge subtly guide your actions, resulting in a far greater success rate while crafting, and especially when trying to create something new. As aspect of Malefic Viper fills your body, you will remain in full control but be in a constant state of receiving instinctual knowledge provided to you by your Patron. While in this state, chance of Malefic Viper's Poison activating is enormously increased. This skill only works as long as Malefic Viper answers your prayer, and due to sharing achievement of success with your Patron, any successful crafts incur an experience point penalty. Embodying aspect of Malefic Viper rapidly drains all resources, and because of toll it has on your soul, it must be used sparingly. Instinctual knowledge provided is limited by knowledge of Malefic Viper. This skill cannot be used in combat. Through prayer, may your wildest imagination become reality.

Yep, no doubt about it, this skill was extremely overpowered. Jake read through everything carefully, and while it was true that skill seemed to contain a lot of checks and balances, one couldn't get around fact that this skill quite literally allowed Jake to tap directly into Malefic Viper's near-omniscient fount of knowledge and allow m to inspire and guide him directly.

Sure, it was limited to only being an aspect of Malefic Viper, and using it had a bunch of penalties and limitations associated with it, but Jake still saw so many use-cases, especially when working on something new.

While it was true that Jake would suffer an experience point loss if he crafted something new while using skill, it really wasn't that big of a loss. Jake guessed he would still get a lot of experience proportional to effort he'd put into crafting and research process, but what was more important was what came after he'd used skill.

As Jake read it, this would effectively function as a mini-version of Path of Heretic-Chosen. Jake could use skill, craft something with guiding hand of Malefic Viper, and n deactivate skill and use what he'd just experienced as inspiration when on his own.

Also, while skill did require Villy to always "answer his prayer," Jake didn't even see this part as relevant, considering fact that he had Primordial watching a constant livestream of his life with a dedicated avatar.

Admittedly, Jake did get feeling this was a skill he would have to use sparingly and only when really stuck, and "praying" to Villy definitely felt weird, but this wasn't a good reason to write off skill.

Needless to say, out of all ones offered so far, this was best, and Jake wouldn't have been disappointed if he ended up with this one. Just reading description, his head was already full of ideas.

Alas, he had one final skill remaining... one that proved to be slightly familiar yet also different from one he'd just mentally gone over.

[Heretic-Chosen's Invocation of Malefic Viper (Mythical)] – What's his is yours, and yours, his. At least that's how you see things. Allows Heretic-Chosen to invoke an aspect of Malefic Viper to temporarily inhabit your body and soul and empower any Malefic Viper Legacy skill of your choosing. If crafting while under effect of Malefic Viper's aspect, chance of activating Malefic Viper's Poison is enormously increased. Any skill empowered will become temporarily unavailable and only retain a weakened version of its passive effects after use. Upon embodying aspect of Malefic Viper, empowered Legacy skill will grow increasingly unstable, dependent on exertion. Longer a skill is empowered, longer it shall become unavailable afterwards. While using this skill, you gradually absorb Records from Malefic Viper, but in return, you also echo back far more Records than usual to your Patron, equalizing exchange. When invoking an aspect of Malefic Viper, Primordial will know, even if he cannot stop it. Due to strain this skill puts on your soul and body, it cannot be used in concert with any boosting skills. Through invocation of Malefic Viper, allow power surpassing your wildest imagination to enter your grasp.

As mentioned, many parts of this skill were similar to one before, seeing as both dealt with infusing himself with an "aspect of Malefic Viper" as system called it. Jake assumed this was some sort of Record Fragment or Record funnel, but either way, both would allow him to absorb Records and use them, albeit in two very different ways.

Invocation allowed Jake to empower a Legacy skill, which made skill full of potential and with immense future possibilities as Jake received more skill upgrades to his Legacy skills. Not to say Prayer didn't also have insane potential.

This skill also didn't have any restriction of not being able to use it in combat, though it did say he couldn't use it together with a boosting skill, which definitely made it far less effective when fighting. Like Prayer, Jake was fairly confident that Invocation was primarily intended to empower his crafting for a limited period, effectively allowing Jake to overcome barriers when he got stuck.

Double-checking Invocation description, he also saw that this one didn't include any experience penalties, though it did say that Jake would send back more Records to Villy

while skill was active. Sure, he would absorb some, too, but he had no idea if those two canceled each other out or who would benefit. Perhaps y both would.

When it came to obvious downsides, re was part about empowered Legacy skill becoming unavailable for an unknown period after use, though it appeared y would retain some of its passive effects. This seemed to be only backlash he could suffer from skill. Alright, re was also part about Legacy skill becoming unstable if empowered for too long, but Jake didn't really view that as a downside, just what's to be expected.

Needless to say, Jake only saw two mythical skills as valid options for this selection, with both having obvious upsides and downsides while also remaining very familiar. He had many ideas for how both could potentially be exploited or cleverly used, simply from reading m. When it came to helping him become better at crafting, Prayer seemed best option, as it provided him with instinctual knowledge; however, he disliked fact that skill was called Prayer. With Invocation, it seemed a lot more unrestricted and full of possibilities, but he would have to find se possibilities himself.

Both were extremely good, and he wanted m; however, he could only pick one. So, question was... which one?

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Chapter 1167 - Undesired Recognition

Ah, who was he kidding? No bloody way Jake would ever select a skill about praying.

Even if skill did look awesome, praying to get those awesome effects simply didn't fit with Jake's Path at all. He'd never made a single earnest prayer in his entire life, and he sure as hell wasn't going to start now.

Besides, who's to say it would even work if Jake weren't sincere in his prayers? Not to mention that Villy would make fun of him every time he had to pray. Spending a lot of time praying also seemed to lean way too much into Chosen angle and away from Heretic-Chosen one. For original chapters go to *novel•fire•net*

Finally, Invocation was only one of skills with Heretic-Chosen in name, clearly communicating that it was indeed signature skill of his profession. Jake also believed that Invocation skill was better, or at least had more potential, than Prayer one.

re was especially one part of it he was interested in exploring, and not for his own sake. skill said that when he used it, Jake would echo back far more Records to Malefic

Viper, which told Jake that should he do something extraordinary while using skill, Villy would benefit from it. Of course, Jake would also benefit from getting Records of Malefic Viper in return, but that wasn't part that interested Jake most in this case.

He remembered his conversation with Artemis about Primeval Origin Energy ritual he was planning for Jasper, and how she wanted to be part of it. He also recalled that Villy had mentioned benefiting meaningfully from Jake's creation of Vesperia.

With that in mind, what would happen if Jake used Invocation during ritual with Jasper? Wouldn't that result in Jake echoing back far more useful Records than usual to Primordial?

If it did, this would be a way to help pay Villy back, at least a little for all Jake had taken so far. Jake also believed that this aspect of skill was actually quite important, seeing as it was first thing mentioned in description with "What's his is yours, and yours, his" line.

Seeing as Jake really didn't need to spend more time thinking about it and honestly just wanted to get experimenting, Jake picked Heretic-Chosen's Invocation of Malefic Viper.

Upon doing so, Jake felt only a sliver of instinctual knowledge enter his mind, telling him nothing more than how to activate skill. Jake had considered whether there were any hidden requirements or prerequisites for activation, and was happy to see that wasn't the case, which was another reason why it was better than Prayer.

Armed with a new skill he very much wanted to test out, there was only one question left to answer... which skill was he going to try to empower first?

Alright, dumb question, as answer was obvious. It just had to be his sole mythical rarity Legacy skill, Sagacity, right?

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"Once more, I apologize for dragging you away from experiment, but I concluded that it would be best to involve you in this matter, seeing as you're official leader of this diplomatic delegation." Nature's Attendant said to alchemist.

Duskleaf sighed, but nodded. "Aye... this is part of job."

Nature's Attendant just smiled as he continued. "We plan on making Declaration of Friendship public when, at same time, we have our first major success with experiment. That way, we can at least use joint research as an excuse for timing of declaration, while only a chosen few know real reason."

"I still find it silly we need a reason in first place," Duskleaf muttered. "You were far of Mistress, isn't that enough?"

“That... was a long time ago,” or god sighed. “It’s been far too many eras since n. Too many alliances have been established and broken since n. It does help and will serve as anor reason for some people, but this is an entirely different time from back n.”

“If you say so,” Duskleaf said, not entirely satisfied with that answer as he turned toward third god present in room. “Still, you surprised me. I had understanding you planned on taking a slow approach, but this looks like exact opposite.”

Artemis, newly ascended Godqueen, sighed in response. “I did, but I had more time to think about matters, and mixed with a moment of pure impulse caused by my successful breakthrough, things developed this way. Jake and I n had a talk, and now we’re here.”

“No regrets?” Duskleaf wanted to make sure.

“None,” Artemis shook her head. “Not yet, anyway. I still have some lingering doubts and fears, primarily related to his mortality, but those are mine to overcome.”

“I’m sure Jake also still has plenty of things he’s feeling nervous about. And he really should be with a Godqueen partner,” alchemist smiled. “I hope things go well between you two.”

“Thank you,” Artemis nodded, turning to Nature’s Attendant. “And thank you for keeping it private for now.”

“No problem,” second-in-command of Panon of Life chuckled. “It would certainly cause a ruckus if people knew truth. A mortal and a god forming any kind of official pact... speaking of, have you entered any kind of pact with him yet?”

“I have not,” Artemis shook her head. “It’s still too early, and while things have moved fast, re’s no reason to rush that part.”

“Alright, that’s understandable,” Nature’s Attendant nodded approvingly. “If perhaps a little risky.”

“Jake is many things, but I wouldn’t say flaky is one of m,” Duskleaf jumped in to stand up for his Master’s Chosen. “Quite opposite. His emotions tend to swing to extremes. He’s often apatic, but when he does feel strongly about something, those emotions are very hard to change.”

“I trust him,” Artemis also chimed in.

“That’s that, n,” Nature’s Attendant just smiled. “Now, let’s discuss this Declaration of Friendship more closely. Yggdrasil left me to handle all details, and I was also informed that Malefic One has entrusted you with representing him.”

He said last part while looking at Duskleaf, making alchemist sigh loudly. "He's doing this on purpose. Do you think it's because I refused to bet if he'd end up forming anything official with Artemis during this excursion to Panon of Life?"

"You two bet on that," Artemis said in a sharp voice.

"No, I refused to bet on that," Duskleaf insisted. "And please do not be too offended, Master likes to bet frequently and on oddest of things."

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"I can confirm that I've had a few thousand bets with Vilas throughout eras and already concluded three since his return to multiverse," Nature's Attendant added in.

"Doesn't make betting on relationships of ours less offensive," Artemis said, crossing her arms. "Did Jake know about it?"

"What? No, of course not," Duskleaf said, surprised at question. "Why would he? That would ruin fun of bet for Master. He prefers to make bets where he cannot or will not influence outcome, at least not directly. Besides, if he'd told Jake such a bet was ongoing, he would have found a way to somehow get with you in secret just to get one over Master."

"That does sound like something he would do," Artemis chuckled as she smiled and seemed distracted for a moment before looking back up. "Let's proceed with meeting so I can get back."

"Already missing him, are you?" Nature's Attendant teased her as he laughed like an old grandpa.

"Yes," Artemis said without a shred of hesitation as she smiled. "Though I do hope that I can be forgiven for not wanting to give any details about what I want to do with him once I return."

"Please don't," Duskleaf sighed. "And I am in full agreement with Artemis. In wanting to get done here, that is. Not about wanting to go see Jake."

"Speaking of Jake, he told me something about a Primeval Origins ritual?" Nature's Attendant said.

Duskleaf perked up a bit as his eyes moved to Artemis, who subtly nodded.

"In that case, I might be more in agreement with Artemis than initially estimated when it comes to my desire to see Jake. Now let's stop delaying and get this done, as we all clearly have better things we could be doing," Duskleaf said, a bit of impatience in his voice.

--

Casper stared nervously at his own image, looking for any perceived faults with his outfit or on his body. He couldn't spot anything wrong, but that didn't mean he weren't flaws that he simply wasn't able to notice due to his limited-

"You look fine," a ghostly woman said as she appeared and hugged him from behind. "More than fine."

Feeling her touch, Casper couldn't help but smile. "Still, you know I can't help but worry. This is clearly a big deal. At least everyone is telling me that. Especially Teacher."

"I'm not saying this isn't a big deal, just that you shouldn't be worried about how you look," Lyra said in a teasing voice. "Now, how you act is an entirely different matter..."

"Gee, thanks for confidence," Casper chuckled, Lyra's casual demeanor having helped him calm down.

Casper found himself back in heartlands of Risen, having been summoned by his Patron. He had been back now for a few months, during which he'd caught up with his S-grade Archlich teacher he met after his exit from Tutorial. That Archlich had also been summoned to heartlands to take part in what was to come.

"Look, you'll do fine," Lyra said, speaking some comforting words. "It's not like you're expected to pull off some performance. You just have to stand there and smile and wave."

"You say that, but--"

"Just smile and wave," Lyra cut him off as she gave him a good squeeze and a kiss on cheek. Casper smiled and wanted to turn around when both he and Lyra noticed something that made his ghost girlfriend disappear and reenter necklace around his neck.

A second or so later, there was a knock on door.

"Come on in," Casper said, already knowing who had come.

In walked a tall, familiar Risen, carrying a very scary-looking sword. It was a person that Casper had found very intimidating first time he met, but eventually got pretty friendly with. Fifty years in Nevermore would do that.

"You shouldn't sound that meek when addressing ours," his former Nevermore party member sighed.

"Nice to see you too, Azal," Casper said, shaking his head. "How are you feeling?"

“Better,” Risen answered. “My foundation was damaged towards end of Nevermore, but my sacrifice allowed us to beat Holy Church on Nevermore Leaderboards, so I have no regrets.”

“Did you manage to repair damage yet?” Casper continued to inquire.

“For most part,” Azal sighed. “I was allowed to keep my title as Ghost King due to my contribution and effort to fix what was broken afterwards. Due to that, honored Blightfar has spared no resources in assisting me. I will certainly reach B-grade later than you, but by time I do, my foundation shall be flawless once more.”

“Good to hear,” Casper smiled, genuinely happy to hear that. He still felt bad about Azal basically fucking up his Records toward end of Nevermore to get a whole bunch of levels to increase his Nevermore Points.

“You’re being needlessly meek again,” Azal said with a sigh. “Hold your head high and stand proud. Soon, you too will carry title of Ghost King, so act as such.”

“See, I know that, but it only it only makes me more nervous,” Casper shook his head. “Besides, we both know I’m not getting this title because of how strong I am.”

“Doesn’t make it any less earned,” Azal said with certainty in his voice, and from within his pendant, Lyra wholeheartedly agreed.

Casper wasn’t entirely sure, though. He’d learned reason why he was summoned shortly after his return, but even so, he’d yet to fully come to terms with it. However, no matter what, re was no running away as Blightfar himself – Casper’s Patron – had been one to name Casper a Ghost King.

title of Ghost King was something that could only be given out with permission of Blightfar or one of his most trusted aides. To become a Ghost King wasn’t an official rank that came with specific responsibilities, but rar a title of recognition carrying a lot of expectations for recipient.

To be named Ghost King meant that Risen believed you had a high chance of reaching godhood if properly nurtured. One could only be named Ghost King when B-grade or below, and of all currently living Ghost Kings, vast majority were in S-grade, which also showed that those who got title were indeed supreme geniuses.

However, merely being talented wasn’t enough to be given title of Ghost King. One also needed a certain level of merit behind it. Achievements that had helped Risen in a substantial way.

Azal had apparently gained his Ghost King title through battle and tournaments with Holy Church. All way back to E-grade, he’d been fighting enemy faction, eventually granting him title some time before Casper teamed up with him for Nevermore.

"I know you say it's earned, but look at it from my perspective," Casper said, looking at his former party leader. "All I did was not be an asshole, but instead took advantage of personal connections. That's it."

"Alright... now look at it from everyone else's perspective," Azal said in a serious voice. "You led negotiations on most contested planet and galaxy in new universe, managed to establish a permanent presence there, along with access rights for Risen faction to go there. Additionally, you secured us rights that are recognized as equal to those of every other race. At same time, Holy Church was pushed out of entire galaxy. In summary, you accomplished a major diplomatic feat, all while making our greatest enemy look horrible in comparison."

"See, I'm not arguing any of that happened. What I'm saying is I shouldn't be one to get credit for it," Casper insisted.

"Who should I? Who is the reason why we Risen are allowed a presence on your home planet?" Azal asked his very leading question.

"Jake is, obviously," Casper shrugged.

"See, just the fact you can call Chosen of Malefic One by his name is worthy of recognizing you," Azal said with a sigh. "It's quite obvious your connection to Chosen is leading force behind your success, but realize that your success is the success of Risen. Simply on account of being his friend, you will remain on the frontline of diplomacy with him and the entire Order of Malefic Viper. Giving you a title of recognition will only lend legitimacy to any negotiations and agreements you take part in, while it would look incredibly poor to send someone who's seemingly a no-name to be leading diplomat."

Casper didn't even try to argue, as deep down, he knew Azal was right. Risen wanted to present an interpretation of events that Ghost King represented earlier, all to make Risen look better. Jake had garnered so many eyes on him these days, especially after he killed Ell'Hakan and conquered Milky Way Galaxy, so for Risen to integrate himself with such an individual was a huge accomplishment.

"You also shouldn't sell yourself short," Azal continued. "You might still be below usual standards of Ghost Kings when it comes to combat, but when taking your dungeon engineering skills into account, you're certainly qualified."

"I don't feel qualified," Casper joked. "In any case, my standards probably are totally warped considering the people I compare myself against."

"You most certainly are," Azal chuckled. "Now follow me. I've been granted the honor of escorting you to the banquet hall, and we shall not embarrass ourselves by being late."

"Alright," Casper nodded as he took one final look at himself in the mirror. "I look presentable, right?"

“As long as you don’t show up naked, no one cares,” Azal said honestly. “That pendant alone is proof of Blightfar’s grace and all anyone will see.”

“So I shouldn’t change shir-“

Before Casper could even finish, Azal took him by nape of his neck, and to make matters worse, he even felt his pendant push against his body as he was dragged backwards, forced toward his old award ceremony.

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Chapter 1168 - Invocation Experimentation

It almost felt like cheating. In some ways, perhaps it was.

Jake sat in his alchemy lab, staring at bottle of poison in front of him, his evaluation of it clear and unambiguous. *It’s nearly twenty percent more potent than without empowerment...*

Over last day or so, Jake had used his new Invocation skill a number of times to empower different Legacy skills just to see what happened. He’d naturally first started with Sagacity and quickly noticed a few things.

Due to Sagacity being nearly entirely passive, empowering it didn’t drain a lot of energy, but he certainly felt strain it put on his soul, nevertheless. As for what empowering Sagacity did... well, as it said on can, it made all its effects better, with some minor limitations.

Sagacity provided Jake with a wealth of knowledge simply by having skill, but sadly, empowering it didn’t result in Jake suddenly feeling an influx of new knowledge. He also quickly had it clarified that empowering a skill didn’t give him more stats, eir. With that, Jake concluded that some of bonuses from skills simply couldn’t be increased. In fact, it seemed like only “active” or at least “triggered” effects would be improved from his initial testing.

A part of what Sagacity allowed him to do was extract knowledge from drop of blood in his Soulspace, and that part was empowered. It wasn’t very useful, though, as extraction of knowledge tended to take a long time, and by time Invocation would provide any value, he would have to deactivate it to avoid skill becoming too unstable.

At end, Jake concluded that Invocation worked essentially only with middle section of skill:

“Allows Alchemist to make creations he does not have associated crafting skill for (if no associated skill is found, a small bonus to stat effectiveness shall still be provided). You can freely modify and change displayed information of anything you create, fooling most Identify skills. Knowledge furr increases Records infused when crafting.”

Empowering Sagacity using Invocation increased all se effects, with especially last two having proven mselves to be very useful. Jake hadn't experimented a lot with editing displayed information of crafted items, but it was clear that Invocation made this aspect of skill a lot easier and harder to see through. part about infusing Records was also great, as it was just a straight-up increase to effect of anything he crafted.

Anor tidbit of very useful information Jake learned was that he didn't have to activate Invocation throughout crafting process. As long as he used it right before he got done with a craft, it would apply its full effect, meaning he only had to use Invocation for a few seconds.

Now, when it came to downsides of skill, it rapidly became evident that those were very much overstated. reason Jake could conduct a good deal of experimentation in a short time was that Sagacity only ended up being penalized for around twenty minutes after his first attempt, and if he used Invocation for only a couple of seconds, penalty would barely last a few minutes.

Jake also noticed something else after empowering Sagacity a few times. It was very subtle and he could barely detect it, but after every use and recovery period, everything didn't return to being exactly same.

During Invocation, Jake absorbed Records from Malefic Viper, most of which were dispersed through his actions. However, a bit of se Records stayed with Jake afterwards, meaning that with every use, he felt that his understanding of his Legacy skill grew by a minuscule amount. It was so small that it was nearly undetectable, but that it was even a thing was incredible.

Jake had discovered this while recovering after empowering Sagacity. He had just been studying a bit in a book when suddenly he read something and got an odd sense that he already knew it. He also seemed to know more about a particular herb he'd never seen before than what was on page, and after flipping to next section, he confirmed this knowledge was correct. Due to that, Jake believed that while Invocation didn't directly give Jake instinctual knowledge, Records lingering in skill did give him more knowledge... he just had to figure out how to trigger this “remembering.”

He also orized that his Identify should be better if used in conjunction with Invocation-empowered Sagacity, but he hadn't tested that yet.

When it came to Records echoing back to Malefic Viper, he'd yet to notice it happening. It was likely entirely passive and undetectable, and if it did have a negative effect on experience gain or anything similar, he would only know after a long time of garing data. His initial guess was that increase in Records Jake got from Villy roughly cancelled out ones he gave away, as that seemed to track with whole me of m being best-buddy equals.

Also, even if re was a disparity in exchange of Records, that didn't mean eir side would lose out. Records weren't just Records but varied widely in quality and quantity; however, se two distinctions were also oversimplifications.

What would be considered high-quality Records to one person could be trash to anor. In Jake's case, Records obtained from killing a peak C-grade would likely be shit, while to someone else his level who was worse at combat would get extremely high-quality Records from such a feat.

Perhaps an easier example would be if Sword Saint successfully transmuted a legendary rarity sword. Such a feat would be absolutely insane to him, in same vein that Jake painting a legendary rarity painting would give him a huge amount of quality Records. However, switch it around, and it was back to Jake and old man just going about what y regularly did, which was key to why y would be considered high quality in first place.

Diversity was spice of life and a massive source of Records. Accomplishing and trying new things was incredibly important as it helped one diversify Records. Sure, some Records weren't actually that useful if y didn't benefit one's Path, but that didn't mean one wouldn't get m.

point was that same Records affected Jake and Villy differently, which was why an exchange taking place could potentially prove massive. Records Jake got from Villy were certainly entirely useless to Primordial, and even if what Jake got could be considered high quality for both himself and Viper, when it came to quantity, it was akin to Jake drinking with a straw from ocean.

Meanwhile, Records Jake gave back to Viper could also prove surprisingly beneficial for Primordial. Sure, Records from crafting some rare poison didn't mean shit to Villy, but what about if Jake sent back Records related to First Sage? ones from his ritual? Or just ones flavored with Jake's unique signature of Jake-ness that ultimately stemmed from his certifiably overpowered Bloodline?

In that case, perhaps even a being standing at apex of multiverse could find some quality.

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Anyhow, back on topic. After testing Sagacity a bunch, Jake moved on to his or Legacy skills, but a lot of m weren't that interesting. Sure, it would work with skills such as Wings, Fangs, Presence, and Scales of Malefic Viper, but honestly, in what realistic scenario would he use Invocation?

se skills were primarily made for combat, so he nearly only used m when also using Arcane Awakening. sixty percent increase in all stats made se skills even stronger than Invocation could in most cases, and in scenarios where Invocation would be better, it wasn't really an option. Sure, he could use Invocation to make his Wings of Malefic Viper escape or defense features stronger if he found himself in a pickle during a fight, but doing that meant deactivating Arcane Awakening first, resulting in an instant period of weakness. In or words, trying to use Invocation was primarily great for committing suicide if used mid-battle.

With a skill like Sense of Malefic Viper, Jake also found it had few uses. Primarily, he could use it to far better detect alchemical ingredients and energies in his surroundings, despite this being a primarily passive feature. or aspects of skill were eir combat-focused or didn't provide any obvious benefits. All in all, not very useful with his current version of Sense.

To quickly gloss it over, Jake didn't – and couldn't – use Invocation on Palate of Malefic Viper. When it got fixed, Jake had some neat ideas, though.

Blood was an interesting one, too. Ignoring combat-related parts of skill, Jake discovered that he could use Invocation, cut himself, pour some blood to craft, and n deactivate skill again, resulting in blood he used just being better. It was a bit silly, but hey, as he didn't have to activate Invocation for long, he could repeat this every time he needed more blood, turning it into a straight buff. this chapter is updated by
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Now, Touch was probably most obvious of nine Legacy skills to use Invocation with. It was a purely active skill that Jake used as his transmutation skill, and he quickly confirmed that Invocation just made him better at transmuting when using it. re was one slight downside, though.

Due to how actively involved he was during Touch of Malefic Viper, it took a big strain on his body and soul to use Invocation. Transmuting things was also a time-consuming process, and he couldn't really stop halfway through even if he wanted to. If he kept Invocation running for too long, Touch also risked becoming too unstable for Jake to continue, and even if he found that his arcane affinity did help calm things down, he simply had no way to make Invocation last long enough for a full transmutation.

From this, Jake concluded that it was best to delay using Invocation when transmuting. It tended to get harder in latter portions anyway, especially towards very end, so he would still get massive benefits from using it only for parts of transmutation process. Even just using it right at end would massively increase his chances of success.

Overall, Jake was more than satisfied with effects of skill, especially upon discovering it would make upgrading all of m easier based on how much he used Invocation. It definitely worked better with some skills than others, but even in those cases, who's to say what future uses he could find? He was also pretty damn confident he'd missed a lot of interesting ways to use Invocation already, as his experimentation had admittedly been a bit rushed.

Being done with testing nine "of Malefic Viper" skills, Jake calmed down and took a breather as he considered things. Artemis hadn't been back yet either, so to pass time, Jake decided to concoct a few poisons, as he was in mood. He planned on using Sagacity towards the end... however, that's when he had a stroke of inspiration.

One that led him to discover perhaps most overpowered skill to empower when making poisons that he already knew how to concoct. It was a skill that he hadn't even initially thought of when considering his Malefic Viper Legacy skills, as it didn't fit in with the other nine. Even so, it most certainly was one:

Malefic Viper's Poison.

In fact, this was the first Legacy skill Jake had ever gotten, seeing as it had been part of basic alchemy profession from the second he touched that book way back in Challenge Dungeon. It was a great, entirely passive skill that Jake barely even considered, and he only noticed its existence when it rarely activated.

Until today, that is. Because there was one part of skill's description that Jake had suddenly recalled:

"Increases potency of all crafted poisons."

The question was: When did this effect activate? When was it triggered? Jake discovered that it happened right as Jake finished creating any kind of toxin using his alchemy skills. It worked similarly to Sagacity's effect of infusing more Records into a craft and making it stronger, except this effect was far more powerful when empowered.

When using Invocation on Malefic Viper's Poison right at the end of craft, resulting poison turned out to be roughly twenty percent more potent than if he hadn't done this. It was a massive bonus... that he could even use in combination with other Legacy skills.

Invocation didn't have any cooldown. The only limitation was that Jake could only empower one skill at a time. That meant he could use Invocation on Sagacity or Malefic Viper for nearly the entire crafting process, cancel it right at the end, only to then empower Malefic Viper's Poison. Oh, and of course, before he even started crafting, he'd poured in Invocation-empowered blood.

And all of this was discovered by Jake within a single day. Given more time, he was bound to discover even more clever uses of skill and system mechanics for him to exploit.

Combat-wise, Jake still felt that Invocation was mostly useless, but when it came to crafting, it was insane. In fact, the best way Jake could describe it was as a boosting skill for crafting, something that Jake was pretty confident wasn't really a thing. Sure, it didn't directly boost stats or anything, but due to his alchemy relying a lot on Malefic Viper's Legacy a lot, the effect on the outcome turned out similar.

Another similarity Invocation had to a boosting skill was exhaustion it could inflict. While it was true that there was no cooldown on the skill as long as he used it on different Legacy skills, that didn't mean systemic exhaustion wouldn't build up with repeated uses.

After a day of experimentation, Jake was well and truly spent, and he knew that using Invocation much more wouldn't turn out well for him. He also felt like instability kicked in earlier than usual during his last few uses, only further cementing that he needed some rest.

Still, as he stared at the bottle of Heartrot Poison he'd crafted as an experiment, he felt more than satisfied. Empowering Malefic Viper's Poison alone led to a roughly twenty percent increase, and coupled with Blood and Sagacity, Jake was confident in pushing it toward making all of his crafted poisons a third more potent than they had been just a couple of days ago.

To recover and perhaps even do a bit more experimenting before he had to check in on Jasper again, Jake started meditating down in his alchemy lab. While he was done reading some of First Sage for now, he still had a lot of content to review as he properly digested everything and fully formulated his Meditate skill upgrade.

Jake ended up spending about four hours in meditation before he felt a new presence lock in on his location. He couldn't help but smile as he opened his eyes right as a familiar wood elf goddess appeared in front of him.

"You know, some people would find it disturbing when you seemingly always know you're about to arrive," Artemis said in a teasing voice. "I would also be a bit careful showing it off. It's neat for sure, but also something that will raise some eyebrows. A mortal detecting a Godqueen is not normal, especially not when you did it in the middle of meditating."

"I knew it was you who was coming, so I didn't see the need for caution," Jake shrugged as he quickly stood up from the pillow he had been sitting on.

"See, you saying that would also prove disturbing to many," Artemis reiterated.

"I don't really care what this ambiguous group of many thinks about me," Jake smiled as he walked over to Artemis and put his hands around her waist. "And I don't see you acting very disturbed."

"Oh, me?" Artemis said, looking him in the eyes. "Perhaps I'm disturbed one for finding it attractive. Shows you're not the type to get snuck up on. Always the hunter, never the prey and all that."

"Should be careful around someone that dangerous, shouldn't you?" Jake chuckled.

"It's too late, it seems. I've already been caught," Artemis smiled as she leaned in and whispered into his ear. "Now what shall the hunter do with the defenseless prey he holds in his clutches?"

"Well," Jake responded, moving his head closer to hers. "I'm not the type to catch and release."

Jake took the initiative this time around and didn't give her time to answer before he covered her mouth with his, having decided that experimentation could wait a little longer.

Besides, meditation wasn't the only way to heal one's soul.

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Chapter 1169 - An Application That Has To Be Tested

Blunt force and any or forms of physical damage had shown limited effectiveness based on initial testing. When it came to magic-based attacks, it shouldn't come as a surprise that light magic had proven the most effective so far. Light and fire magic, that is.

Unsurprisingly, considering you were dealing with a death affinity plant.

Arnold had already developed plenty of light and fire-based weapons, but he knew none of those were enough. He would have to adapt his current weaponry and create new ones to fully accomplish his goal of destroying Ghostvine Sovereign while simultaneously leaving the moon structurally intact.

If his goal had simply been to kill B-grade without any care for collateral damage, he would have had a lot more means available. However, based on all calculations,

destroying moon would have a negative impact on Earth; more importantly, it would also render impossible construction of a moon base if there were no moon to build on.

“So, you figured out how to blow up moon yet?” Sandy, Cosmic Genesis Worm, asked.

“We are not blowing up moon,” Arnold answered in a monotone voice. “As for eliminating Ghostvine Sovereign, I’m still fine-tuning assault plan.”

“Still need my help, right? I wanna be around when things go boom!” Sandy said excitedly.

“Yes, I will need your expertise,” Arnold confirmed. “In fact, I’ll need you to place many of explosives.”

“Yay!” Sandy cheered.

“And to function as transport for golems that will attack core,” Arnold added.

“Even more yay!” worm wiggled happily. *“Finally gonna get my revenge on that stupid flower! Oh, and I’m gonna eat all stuff it’s gared alongside its core. Gonna be a good time!”*

“As long as moon’s core remains intact,” Arnold said. “Even with all assumed damage it’ll suffer after being separated from being that has integrated itself with it, core remains a vital asset to secure.”

“Yeah, yeah, I’m not gonna try to eat it,” Sandy wiggled dismissively. *“Everyone knows that C-grades eating any form of World Cores is really stupid. Just ask Jake, that dummy. Even Tom knows it’s a stupid thing to do, which honestly shouldn’t be surprising, seeing as Tom is a pretty smart guy.”*

Since start, Arnold had already only half-listened to Sandy and chose to entirely ignore worm’s rambling as he went over current plans for taking down Ghostvine Sovereign.

From his scans of moon and Ghostvine, he’d formed a good understanding of creature. B-grade was an unintelligent life form that functioned primarily on instinct.

In exchange for this, it was a being of immense scope and vitality. Its vines covered nearly entire moon, and it influenced everything on it with its aura and will. greatest example of this was Lunewood creatures living up there.

Arnold had wondered how B-grade grew and quickly concluded it had to do with forest on dark side of moon. creatures there were living in a parasitic relationship with Ghostvine, serving as sources of nutrients for B-grade as it effectively consumed them and energy from forest.

That's why Arnold had concluded that first thing he needed to do was cut off its source of energy. As moon was mostly barren and with no complete World Core to provide it with new energy throughout, it only had one real source of obtaining more energy from outside:

sun.

Thus, Arnold's first objective was to cut moon off from sun. It wasn't an easy endeavor, but he had already begun to send satellites capable of creating a cloud of dark mana, and with enough of m, he should be able to cover entire far side of moon in black smoke, at least for a period.

After a long enough period with B-grade cut off from all new sources of nutrients, it was time to attack.

He'd settled on starting assault with explosive firepower.

A small number of drones would initially make ir way onto moon with express purpose of baiting out vines of B-grade. Once se descended on weaker drones, a barrage of missiles unleashing what could most easily be compared to napalm would enter moon and set Ghostvine on fire while also triggering a second wave of explosions.

Already now, he'd had Sandy and drones place direction-based explosives throughout moon's tunnel network. se explosions would cascade throughout tunnels of moon, building in power as y descended lower and approached core. This would weaken B-grade furr, as based on a few probing attacks by Arnold's drones, Ghostvine always prioritized regenerating its vines.

With majority of m destroyed, B-grade would consume a massive amount of vitality to regenerate m all, and coupled with being cut off from outside sources of nutrients, leave it vulnerable to next stage in operation.

An army of drones would descend upon planet with objective of killing as many Lunewood creatures as possible. This would happen shortly before cascade of explosions went off, and once explosives subsided, drones would descend into moon's vast tunnel network and begin to fight many vines y would no doubt meet.

Several more groups of drones would attack from all over moon's surface and slowly begin to make ir way down while fighting newly regenerated vines of B-grade. However, this was mostly to serve as a distraction.

Because, as Ghostvine found itself busy fighting an army of expendable drones, Sandy would make ir way toward core with true assault squad consistent of golems that Arnold would personally control. Golems that were specifically designed to take down Ghostvine.

Sandy would likely also be involved out of its own desire to play a larger part, but the worm's primary objective was to serve as an armored vehicle that was capable of getting all the way to the core, hence why Arnold didn't want to factor in Sandy's own battle prowess into his plans at all.

If everything went well... Arnold wouldn't even have to leave his base back on Earth. And if it failed, no matter how improbable he saw that outcome, he could simply use newly gained data to try again with an improved plan at a later time.

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"You finally reached out, huh?" Vilastromoz spoke to the seemingly empty room as he sat cross-legged on the bare ground.

"In my defense, I was busy, and just when I was done being busy, Artemis came back... So I kind of got busy again," Jake responded shamelessly.

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"Hey, I'm not gonna say anything to that," Vilas smiled, shaking his head. "Quite opposite. I would question what kind of Chosen I had if you prioritized discussing a new skill with me over spending time with your hot Godqueen girlfriend."

"Thanks? Anyhow, I assume you already knew I got a new skill and that this new skill involves you quite directly, right?" his Chosen asked.

"Seeing as I'm quite attuned to my Path and my Records, yes, I have felt faint shifts you've caused," Vilas nodded, giving Jake time to elaborate on what kind of new interesting skill he'd gained this time around.

Viper did have some idea, though. He'd felt the subtle draw of Records at seemingly random intervals and quickly realized Jake was the source. The feeling of having someone "steal" his Records like that was quite an odd experience, but he also noticed that he got Records in return whenever it happened. Mostly useless Records, sure, but Records nevertheless.

From this, Vilastromoz guessed Jake had gained some skill to use his Patron's Records to either empower himself or grant him inspiration or knowledge. Truthfully, skills like these were quite normal, and Viper had at least a few million followers by now with similar abilities.

There was one big difference, though.

Usually, the amount of Records you could withdraw would be far less. Additionally, Viper would have to give permission every time, or nothing would happen. As for the name of these skills? Usually something related to prayers.

As expected, Jake had found a way to get benefits from praying without actually praying. That, and much more, made Viper quite curious about what sort of skill Jake had managed to get this time around.

fact that Jake could forcibly draw Records from Malefic Viper wasn't surprising in slightest, though. It had been something he had ability to do all along, though he'd rarely used it.

Vilastromoz was naturally thinking of Blessings. Jake could grant someone a Blessing without even asking Malefic Viper first. Sure, Viper could instantly remove those Blessings again, but he would already have lost initial investment. Again, for priests or ors with religious Paths, being able to give out Blessings wasn't odd, but once more, Jake stood out for not even wanting to ask for permission first. This chapter is updated by *novel·fire·net*

“Right, yeah, I got two skills offered this time around after we discussed free repair of Palate,” Jake said. “Oh yeah, that’s also an excuse for why I didn’t contact you earlier. Didn’t want to make it weird by reaching out three times in such a short period. Anyway, I was offered a skill called Chosen’s Prayer and one called Heretic-Chosen’s Invocation, and both seemed to revolve around infusing myself with an aspect of Malefic Viper. Naturally formed from your Records in both cases.”

“And I assume you chose latter? one that didn’t include praying?” Vilas asked semi-rhetorically. “I must say, being able to invoke an aspect of a god is quite impressive, especially considering way you do it evidently isn’t standard application. Tell me a bit about how this Invocation skill of yours works.”

“So, according to skill description, I...”

Vilastromoz listened with interest as Jake outlined what his skill was capable of, nodding along to explanation that also included what Jake himself had learned over his day of experimentation.

Towards end of it, Viper had a far better idea of what kind of skill this was. After Jake had gained Divine Bargain, Primordial had expected Jake to pull out more interesting shenanigans, but this still surpassed expectations. In some ways, it was also very similar to Divine Bargain, once more exemplifying how Jake was different from mere heretics.

A heretic was someone who walked Path of a god without permission. y weren't blessed – even if many had once been – which imposed certain limitations on m. While y could gain Records related to god as if y were blessed, it was a constant balancing game between caution and desire. If y got too greedy, god could notice ir existence and send people to hunt m down, while if y were too passive, y would never properly progress.

Jake didn't hide whenever he took Records from Malefic Viper; in fact, quite opposite. Moreover, just on account of him being Vilas' Chosen, he always gave back Records with all of his actions, while of course also getting plenty from Viper's side, since that was just how any blessed and Patron relationship worked.

To clarify, in this exchange, viper never truly "gave" anything. easiest way to explain it was that whenever a Blessing was given out, it required a high level of initial investment. Following that, based on magnitude of this initial investment, blessed person would receive a specific "budget" of Records to fuel ir Path.

This budget didn't take any Records from Malefic Viper. Someone blessed couldn't "take" more Records from a god after being blessed outside of getting ir Blessing upgraded, something y would have to do in some cases if y wanted to progress ir Path.

In fact, that was part of reason Vilastromoz had upgraded Blessing of former Alabaster Crimstoneye Snake. She had effectively maxed out budget her Blessing allowed her, so in order to let her keep gaining Records from her Blessing, Viper had upgraded it.

However, Jake's skills allowed him to gain Records from Viper while completely ignoring all of this budget talk while giving zero fucks about it being a natural exchange. Instead, y allowed far more direct trades. Rar than it being a Patron giving a bit of power to someone he blessed, it became two exchanging Records on equal terms. Something this skill also exemplified, as trade-off from Jake taking so many Records was that he also gave ones in return.

After listening to Jake's full explanation, Viper also had a few good ideas about how skill could be used, and he could definitely see how it would help with future upgrades. Viper also didn't agree with all of Jake's initial conclusions, but he didn't voice that but just wanted Jake to figure things out himself as usual. He did share some of his thoughts, though.

"I definitely advise you to keep experimenting as I'm sure re's lots to still uncover," Vilas said. "And before you even think about it, let me make it clear that no amount of Records you 'steal' from me will ever matter when you're still just a C-grade. So go wild. I advise you to use it as much as possible, but I do have one selfish request... use it whenever Primeval Origin Energy is involved in equation. I'm genuinely curious to see how that turns out. I already get plenty of Records from your achievements, seeing as you're my Chosen, but I'm more than up for any opportunity to double-dip."

"Now it's my turn to feel insulted that you'd think I didn't already plan on doing that in first place," Jake shot back pretty fairly.

"Hey, never hurts to make sure," Vilas shrugged as he and Jake discussed skill a bit more. It was mainly Jake talking and Vilastromoz listening to Jake's sometimes wild ideas, most of which sounded equally fun and impossible. Towards end of ir talk, Viper

did ultimately abandon his resolution to not give any direct advice, as re was one application Jake hadn't stumbled on that he was simply too curious to test out.

"You know, as a way to pay you back for my lack of belief in my dear Chosen earlier, allow me to give you one amusing idea to test out. Do you remember time you went to sculptor from Primordial Church?" Vilas asked with a sly smile.

"I do..." Jake said, a bit unsure.

"What he did back n was technically called an invocation, and it wouldn't be far off to say he invoked an aspect of his Patron," Viper said in a hinting voice.

"You mean that... surely not?"

"But maybe. If anyone could handle that, it would be you."

"... it would be hilarious if it worked, wouldn't it?" Jake said, definitely on board now.

"Oh, it really would, but I reckon it'll only work with my direct assistance," Vilas said, a big smile on his lips. "So, wanna give it a shot?"

"Do you even have to ask?"

Having just recently broken through to Godqueen, Artemis still had aspects of her Path to fully stabilize and explore. Being at apex of Circles of Divinity meant that this part of her Path had come to an end, and she now had to work on next step, but to do that, everything had to be absolutely perfect, or breaking through to Emyrean Steps was a mere pipedream.

She was currently meditating in palace with Jake down in his alchemy lab, and as a god, she naturally kept her comprehension of outside world, even when in meditation. While busy... she felt something.

Her eyes shot open as Artemis looked toward alchemy lab. A shiver ran down her spine as she quickly stood up upon feeling unsettling presence move. Elsewhere, she saw Jasper already hiding away, with even Unique Lifeform outside having noticed commotion before rapidly floating inside.

Artemis didn't even look at Forest King as he floated inside, but kept her eyes on doorway. For a moment, she had been unsure, but as it got closer, re was no doubt.

When door opened, Artemis was already down on one knee, with Unique Lifeform purposefully floating back a bit.

"I greet Malefic One," Artemis said as familiar aura blanketed room. It was unmistakably aura of Malefic One himself, even if it radiated out from Jake's body.

She didn't raise her gaze as Malefic One possessing body of Jake spoke. "Damn, it really worked, and well enough to fool even a Godqueen."

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Chapter 1170 - "It's a date."

Artemis instantly noticed something was wrong because of familiar voice and tone as she looked up and saw Jake smile goofily back at her, instantly confirming to her that this wasn't Viper.

"What's happening?" she asked, genuinely confused. She knew Jake had just recently gotten a new skill related to his profession, and upon seeing Jake emitting aura of Malefic Viper, she assumed it was one that allowed him to function as a conduit for his Patron.

However, now that assumption seemed very wrong, seeing as Jake chuckled loudly.

"No need to be alarmed. I was just testing something out with Viper," Jake said as he took a deep breath and spread aura even more than before. Artemis felt passive suppression of a superior god, as if Viper had indeed descended upon his Chosen. Despite this not being case logically, she still reacted instinctively.

"Did you uncover anor loophole? If so, this may be your most powerful one yet," Forest King spoke as he entered room properly after realizing it was just Jake cosplaying a Primordial. *"combat applications of being able to embody a god would be tremendous if for nothing else but shock factor."*

"Yeah, about that," Jake chuckled. "I'm walking around at a steady pace for a purpose, you know? Because if not, I'm afraid I may overexert myself."

"Shouldn't you stop?" Artemis asked with concern. "You are embodying an aspect of Malefic Viper and channeling Primordial through yourself right now, right? If so, that can't be good for you."

"I'm doing something like that, yeah," Jake nodded. "And it's taking quite effort to keep it going. At least I'm in no shape to fight while keeping it rolling, that's for sure."

"What I'm worried about isn't your current state, but what happens when you release it," Artemis said, getting more concerned with every passing second Jake kept skill going.

Being able to possess one's blessed as a god wasn't anything unique. As long as y had a skill that allowed m to channel god, y could be used as mouthpieces for limited durations. However, doing this took an extreme toll on mortal's body, and longer it was done, worse backlash would become.

It wasn't at all uncommon for mortals to die after having a god possess m, as ir souls risked crumbling under pressure. strain on mortal also depended on god, both in sense that it got harder stronger god was, but it also depended on wher god had skills or abilities to better channel ir power through mortals.

"I get your concern for sure," Jake nodded. "But I'm good. Genuinely. Besides pressure I'm under, which makes it difficult for me to properly display my power and constant drain on my energy reserves to keep it going, re are no or drawbacks. At least not right now."

Artemis continued to look concerned as Jake kept smiling, clearly happy his silly little experiment—one that Artemis could only begin to imagine future consequences of—succeeded.

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As Jake was having fun playing his prank on household, he was also having a nice conversation with his Patron to evaluate matters.

"I would say it's working quite well. In fact, I'd go as far as to say it's better than expected," Villy shared his thoughts as Jake kept Invocation active.

"Hey, my soul isn't actively being destroyed by your aura, and I'm not even draining myself dry of resources in mere seconds, so it can't be called a total failure," Jake somewhat agreed.

"Come on, neir of those things would have happened! At most, you would have been knocked out cold for a few days or weeks for your soul to recover after experiencing extreme shock," Viper joked. *"Anyway, you reckon you can keep it going for quite a while, eh?"*

"Definitely," Jake confirmed. *"But it does drain a lot more energy than Pride usually does, and limitations of Invocation still apply, making it more unstable with time. I reckon more powerful gods will be able to detect something is amiss if I keep it going for more than five minutes."*

"Keeping it going for more than that would also be extremely suspect, as usually mortals can't channel ir gods for even close to that long. With your Bloodline and powerful soul, it can be excused why you can handle it, but five minutes is already pushing it, so I won't really call it a drawback," Villy said.

“And you’re all good on your end with doing this? No negative consequences for you?” Jake wanted to make sure.

“None. I’m not really doing much different from if I possessed an actual faithful of mine,” Viper said. *“Unlike you, who refuses to yield control to your Patron even when he grants you honor of descending upon your soul.”*

“Hey, I’m pretty sure a certain part of me wouldn’t be very inviting if you actually tried to channel your will through my body,” Jake said.

“True, true. Nearly makes me want to try it, but I’ll be nice and not poke Bloodline,” Villy chuckled. *“Alright, now. When you feel any level of instability begin to occur, deactivate Invocation to see what happens.”*

“Aight,” Jake agreed as he returned more of his attention to real world.

“Hey, Artemis,” Jake said to Godqueen who’d been observing him with a mix of interest and concern. “I’m gonna deactivate skill soonish, and I’m unsure what will happen n. I assume nothing bad, but if I do accidentally knock myself out, can you at least make sure I have a safe landing?”

“I’m nearly inclined to make sure you hit floor face-first,” Artemis said, crossing her arms.

“I could assist by providing a downward force to ensure his face impacts floorboards before rest of his body,” Forest King helpfully offered.

“You two are so nice to me,” Jake smiled, knowing it was definitely his fault for playing a prank on m. “Anyway, let’s wait and see if I’ll need to regrow my teeth.”

With that, y waited as Jake kept channeling Invocation to empower Pride of Malefic Viper.

For clarification, what Viper and Jake had done was for Jake to not only channel Invocation but also use Pride of Malefic Viper to create a domain infused with his energy. During this, Viper would purposefully be involved and use a slightly modified version of his ability to channel himself through his blessed. This resulted in Jake being fed specific Records through ir connection, which caused Jake’s aura to mimic that of Malefic Viper perfectly.

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To an outside observer, y would believe Malefic Viper was currently possessing Jake and channeling his power through him. Meanwhile, Jake would remain in full control, even if everyone else thought he was Malefic Viper.

Now, this wouldn't allow Jake to trick people into thinking he was capable of using power of Malefic Viper. Again, channeling one's divine power through mortals and speaking through m wasn't anything novel, only part where Jake remained in control and didn't have his entire soul and body fried whenever he did it.

However, that didn't make it useless. Quite opposite. Even if Jake couldn't make people think he was capable of unleashing powers of Malefic Viper, he could make m think y were speaking to a Primordial, and if Jake knew one thing about relationship between mortals and gods, it was that mortals got weird when gods were directly involved.

Mortals, much less or gods, would hesitate to attack a Chosen being possessed by his god, as by doing so, y risked angering Malefic Viper himself. Even if y had intentions to attack, y would usually do it after possession ended, as while it was ongoing, y likely couldn't attack even if y wanted to.

suppression a mortal would feel was enough for m to be completely unable to attack in nearly all cases. Anor reason why waiting for possession to end was smarter was due to what came after. Jake's enemies would likely see it as a great opportunity for Viper to first possess Jake, as it was common knowledge that mortal would suffer a period of weakness akin to overusing a boosting skill, even in best of cases.

An expectation Jake soon learned could be anor advantage, as he finally felt Pride begin to turn unstable, making him deactivate it and Invocation simultaneously.

Upon doing so, aura of Malefic Viper slowly dispersed from room, and Jake saw Artemis ready to move in case Jake collapsed, making him smile as he looked at her.

"Knew you wouldn't let me down," he said, giving her a big thumbs-up.

Artemis stared at him as aura completely disappeared, a look of confusion on her face. "You're fine?"

Jake grinned as Arcane Awakening fully activated, flooding his body with power. "More than okay... as I said, no drawbacks or consequences whatsoever."

"Besides not being able to activate Pride of Malefic Viper again for a time," Villy accurately pointed out.

Deactivating Arcane Awakening again, Jake felt more post-use weakness from that brief usage of his boosting skill than he'd felt from Invocation. While it would definitely be a niche use of Invocation, this meant Jake could potentially use it as a way to take an opponent by surprise when y expected him to be weakened.

"Truly nothing?" Artemis asked to make sure, looking a bit doubtful.

"I would advise against questioning Jake's ridiculousness. It leads to nothing but headache and annoyance," Forest King chimed in. Jake was surprised at seeing Unique Lifeform interacting so casually with a Godqueen, but he only saw it as a good thing.

"Perhaps you have a point," Artemis sighed. "I would advise against too many experiments like that, though."

"Why? We just established there were no negative side effects?" Jake asked, perplexed.

"Because Jasper is scared out of his mind in the cellar," Artemis pointed out.

Jake had naturally noticed and just nodded. "That sounds more like an argument to do more experiments. The more we expose Jasper to that kind of thing, the more resilience he'll build up. He can't be a scaredy-cat forever."

"Fairly confident he can be. From what I know of Warpsnatchers, you're all super cautious creatures who always play things safe. I would go as far as to say that being afraid of frightening things is a core part of Jasper's Path and a huge driver of his survival instinct," Artemis explained.

"I still think it's good to learn to overcome one's own instincts and emotions," Jake said.

"I would listen to the hunter on that one," Forest King said. *"I've seen the result of Jake fully giving in to his instincts."*

"What happened?" Artemis asked curiously.

"I died," Unique Lifeform answered nonchalantly. *"Now, let me get back to my training. Preferably without any auras of Primordial's descending to interrupt me."*

"No promises," Jake grinned as he waved Forest King off, leaving just himself and Artemis left in the room. Villy had also disconnected the telepathic connection, as they had nothing more urgent to talk about.

Artemis stood there in thought for a while before she muttered her thoughts out loud. "I still have a hard time seeing Malefic One agreeing to play some silly prank like that. It simply doesn't fit the image I have of Primordials..."

"Totally understandable," Jake said with a loud sigh. "Even I cannot comprehend the profound thoughts of Malefic One. We may refer to it as a simple prank, but in truth, I'm certain it's all part of Primordial's greater plans in a grand game of ninth-dimensional chess concerning the destiny of the entire multiverse."

“I have an even harder time understanding what kind of god could endure having a Chosen like you,” Artemis chuckled. “n again, how silly am I to willingly take you as a partner?”

“Or maybe you two are just some of wisest gods in multiverse who are capable of perceiving my awesomeness,” Jake grinned jokingly. This chapter is updated by **novel♦fire♦net**

“If thinking that makes you feel better, sure,” Artemis said, shaking her head. “Anyway, I should get going soon. Nature’s Attendant requires my presence at your bow formation. Speaking of which, I believe it will be ready soon.”

“Ah, I was wondering. It has been a while since last time he asked me to stop by and infuse energy,” Jake said, pleasantly surprised. Hearing her mention that bow was soon ready, Jake was also reminded that his time at Panon of Life was likely approaching its end.

All he really had left to do re was Jasper’s ritual and fully finishing bow ritual. Everything else he could do elsewhere, especially poison research. While working on his toxins, it would be better to be eir on Earth or Order of Malefic Viper.

As a reminder, due to Pylon of Civilization and Jake being World Leader of Earth, he received a very small bonus to resource regeneration and non-combat experience gained while within sphere of influence of a Pylon of Civilization he controlled.

Meanwhile, at Order, Jake was in territory of Malefic Viper, which had some subtle effects on Records gained and whatnot. It again wasn’t a lot, but every little bit mattered when one spent years upon years doing alchemy. Admittedly, Order also had advantage of being faster to get ingredients when making poisons, as ir supply lines were superior to Panon of Life in that regard.

Seeing as his time at Order was soon coming to an end, Jake considered if re was anything else important he still had to do... which was when he remembered something.

Turning to Artemis, he smiled. “Say, we’re officially a couple, right?”

“Are you sure re aren’t any side effects to that skill before? Because you seem to be suffering from memory loss,” Artemis said sharply.

“Just wanted to confirm,” Jake said cheekily. “Seeing as it’s official, would you mind joining me for a couple’s thing?”

“Now you’ve gotten me curious,” Godqueen said, raising an eyebrow.

“You see, I have a standing dinner invitation from this nice couple of hunters I met in Hunting Grounds,” Jake said with a big smile. “I did m a favor, and y promised me a nice dinner in return. And I made sure to get a plus one.”

Artemis looked at Jake for several seconds before just smiling. “You know what? Sure. So, who are se nice hunters you encountered on your adventures?”

“y’re called Keerla and Solana, and trust me, you’re gonna love m,” Jake said. “In fact, I know you approve of at least one of m, considering you’ve blessed her.”

Jake’s date for upcoming dinner was silent for a moment before shaking her head. “This is incredibly silly, and I feel a little sorry for those two, considering I’m sure y invited you over so casually before realizing you’re Chosen of a Primordial, much less that you would bring me along.”

“Can’t see how that should disqualify me from getting a nice dinner,” Jake shrugged.

“No, no, it doesn’t,” Artemis chuckled. “And if you promised, I guess you did sow a karmic seed. Better to not leave such things untouched, no matter how minor y appear.”

“Yeah, exactly,” Jake nodded along, as if he’d totally considered that.

“Also, I should definitely disguise myself or something...” Artemis sighed as she looked a bit troubled for a moment. “Why am I suddenly feeling nervous about something this stupid?”

“Because it’ll be our first official date?” Jake said.

“I want to say that’s not case, but it probably is,” Artemis sighed. “Eir way, whatever happens, it’ll be a novel experience. So go ahead already and reach out to set up a time for us to come by.”

“It’s a date,” Jake said gleefully and gave her a quick peck on lips before he took out wooden plaque he’d gotten from Keerla way back in Hunting Ground, in case he wanted to reach out.

Artemis just shook her head in amusement before she teleported away to not keep Nature’s Attendant waiting longer than necessary.

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