

## Hunter 106

### Chapter 106: Horde Leader

Jake looked directly into the eyes of the Horde Leader. They both paused for a moment as they considered each other. On one side, a small human down on one knee with a bow in his hand, and on the other, a boar the size of a huge truck.

Yet the boar was the one to avert its gaze first. Jake felt the weakness in its eyes. Exhaustion in its look. He quickly noticed that its wounds weren't healing as he would have expected them to begin to. The poison in its body was also barely being suppressed. It was clearly far more injured than he first thought.

The reason quickly struck him - the contaminated Soilwater. While the Horde Leader had purged it all from its system, it had clearly been done at a cost.

Outwardly it didn't appear to have any injuries, but its vital energies were severely diminished. It also explained why all the other boars had gone down so quickly and why it had tried to keep itself hidden in its dome. It was still recuperating all its lost health points when Jake attacked. A process Jake knew to be slow without the use of potions or other means to speed it up.

But the boar didn't have any potions. It could only rely on its own body to heal. And now, in the middle of its recovery, it had a damn pillar of rocks collapse on it, and several arrows were delivering devastating blows and even more powerful poison.

Despite it all, however, it didn't want to back down. It had averted its gaze, recognizing its inferior position. But down for the count? Far from it.

Mana churned once more as a vortex of stone and soil surrounded the beast.

Jake knew it was preparing for something, but he was more than happy to take the slight reprieve offered and downed a health potion. The second the liquid entered him, he felt the warm energy spread throughout his body, and his injured lower body swiftly heal.

While the amount of health restored by the potion wasn't much, he had to drink it. His movement would be hindered with his legs and feet injured, and standing still didn't strike him as the smartest of tactics. Especially not when he saw what the boar was doing.

The vortex it had conjured was to gather one giant boulder above it. As if a black hole had appeared, more and more stones were sucked into it, adding to the massive mass. The earth compressed to a ridiculous degree.

What the sphere of highly condensed rock was to be used for Jake didn't know, and he had no interest in finding out.

He once more resumed his assault of arrows as he fired upon the boss. For the first time in the fight, he used Splitting Arrow as he didn't need accuracy, but just pure damage.

And damage it did. The boar seemed completely unfazed as it only lowered its head and let the arrows hit it. Those hitting its skull simply left a small red mark as they fell to the side, while those hitting softer areas managed to penetrate a few centimeters only.

But a few centimeters was all he needed for the poison to be administered.

After firing his sixth shot, the vortex's sphere stopped as the boar's preparation appeared to be complete. A huge, completely round orb hung above them. A ball of highly condensed earth nearly 30 meters in diameter hung there, like a small meteor waiting to descend.

Jake peeked at it as he fired another arrow. What was the damn thing planning? To throw a super-boulder at him or what? Its action appeared utterly nonsensical. The boars were stupid for sure, but the Horde Leader had shown at least a modicum of intelligence. There had to be more to it. Even with the sphere's huge size, he could easily evade it with a good Shadow Vault.

Another arrow fired later he got his answer. The entire sphere seemed to be crunched together with little warning as it shrunk to a mere 5 meters across. The whole ball turned crystalline, and then the attack came. A small shard fired out from the sphere, heading straight for Jake. Its speed faster than any attack he had ever faced before.

He managed to barely lean to the side as he saw the shard penetrate the earth in his Sphere of Perception. And penetrate it did. It went nearly 8 meters down into the earth before it was stopped. Meaning that if the shard hit him, it would pierce straight through his flesh and bones.

That one shard was only the beginning. Soon it fired another, and then another. Each one was no larger than a finger. Each one was avoidable as long as Jake was careful. That is, in the beginning.

He dodged to the side as the fifth shard came, tried to take out his bow, but was interrupted as the next came faster than the last. A pattern that only got more intense.

The sphere hanging above was not a meteor. It was a goddamn machinegun. And not the slower, perhaps manageable ones. It was a freaking minigun.

Sprinting, he was fired upon by the barrage of shards from a sphere that didn't appear to shrink in the least from the constant attacks. He dodged and weaved and tried to hide behind the terrain, but everything was just riddled apart in moments.

This can't continue, he thought, as he barely managed to avoid getting his head blown off, leaving a long gash on his chin. Without his Sphere of Perception and danger sense, he would already be dead.

If it went to all hell, he still had his Moment of the Primal Hunter to rely on. But he wanted to avoid using it if at all possible. It was his emergency skill, his last resort.

Limit Break had been active at a 20% boost for the entire fight. A fight that had in actuality only lasted less than two minutes from his first attack to now. He wasn't feeling any of the strain yet, but that didn't mean he wanted to make the fight longer than necessary.

He brainstormed internally as he failed to dodge a single shard that managed to hit him in the arm. It pierced straight through his forearm, cutting through the bone like it was nothing. The pain was immense, but all it did was to make him focus more.

Out of the corner of his eye, he saw the Horde Leader with the sphere floating above it. And an idea in his mind appeared. He needed to take cover behind something. Or maybe... beneath something.

Swiftly changing direction, he charged towards the huge boar. He was in the direct line of fire from the shards, but he had expected it.

Using Shadow Vault, he phased straight through the barrage. His health, mana, and stamina all draining for every shard that pierced through his shadowy form, but it was well worth it.

He became tangible right on the side of the boar. He didn't hesitate a moment to take out his Venomfang as he plunged it into the side of the beast, more accurately, into the already existing wound he had made with his second Infused Powershot earlier.

With him so close to the boar, it could not continue its attack without accidentally hitting itself. A fact that clearly enraged the beast.

Two of its legs were severely damaged, making it hard for the Horde Leader to move appropriately. That didn't mean it was incapable of moving, however.

Twisting around, Jake saw the single shining tusk heading towards him. His danger sense screamed at him as he ducked down just as it swiped above him - a decision that proved to be very wise.

Out of the tusk came a wave of yellowish energy that cut through the air and impacted the valley's side off in the distance, creating a vast scar on the mountainside. It was a strike that would have, without a doubt, bisected the small human.

The considerable motion of the boar didn't bode well for its already weakened legs, however. It tripped as it tried to support itself, it falling down onto its stomach.

With the opening, Jake stabbed the boar in the side several times, every hit delivering the natural toxins from his Venomfang, thus further damaging the boss's already weak vital energy. He hadn't hesitated to pour some of his own blood from his damaged forearm on the beast either.

It tried to struggle once more and even managed to shoot out a few shards from the sphere above, but all of them missed. It was clearly on its last legs, as it tried time and time again to land a blow. It manipulated the earth to try and pin him down, a futile effort he easily avoided.

The sphere above still hung like a dark omen preparing to riddle his frail human body if he ever moved out of melee range.

And that sphere would be the death of at least one of them.

By now, the boar had realized that it had lost. Even if it miraculously managed to kill Jake, it would still succumb to its wounds and poison. It was dead either way. And in a last act of defiance, it decided that if it had to die, it wouldn't die alone.

With a final sad squeal, the sphere above started shining with energy before it exploded.

Jake felt it happen even before it did. And he was prepared. Instead of running, he used Badger Jump to jump to the side as the explosion came, his purpose being to be hit by as few shards as possible.

Once more, he used Shadow Vault as he was hit, and he felt his resources all being drained at a dangerous rate. But luckily, the attack came all at once, as the explosion was far from targeted towards anything. It expunged the shards in all directions, even straight up into the air.

And, of course, straight down as the shards pierced into the body of their own caster. In the end, the Horde Leader fell to its own attack.

\*You have slain [Horde Leader – lvl 99] – Bonus experience earned for killing an enemy above your level.  
158000 TP earned\*

\*'DING!' Class: [Ambitious Hunter] has reached level 73 - Stat points allocated, +4 free points\*

\*'DING!' Race: [Human (E)] has reached level 64 - Stat points allocated, +5 free points\*

\*'DING!' Class: [Ambitious Hunter] has reached level 74 - Stat points allocated, +4 free points\*

Jake barely noticed the notifications as he became tangible and collapsed on the ground. That final attack had been scary as hell. He had lost nearly 2000 health and as much mana and stamina just from the drain associated with phasing through the shards.

Not that it mattered much anymore. The now hole-riddled terrain around Jake and the enormous bloody corpse in front was all that mattered. He had won.

Looking at the next dungeon panel, however, he was first a bit surprised.

Objective: Defeat the Horde Leader (Completed)

Bonus reward for clearing the dungeon solo.

Dungeon shutting down in: 07:59:41

Eight entire hours were given before the shutdown. Jake was used to one hour in these dungeons, but now it had suddenly given him eight. Why it was so... he had no idea.

What he did know was that he needed to get his damn loot.

Winding down from his Limit Break, a strong sense of weakness overtook his body in only a few moments.

It was far from as bad as it had been outside the dungeon when he manually expelled the excess stamina. Back then, he couldn't even move. Now, however, he just felt like his stats had been reduced instead. If he had to make an estimation, he would say he was down to about 60% of his usual strength.

Walking towards the dead Horde Leader was his first course of action, as he observed its battered corpse.



The first thing he had taken notice of was the tusk of the boar. It was still shining with energy even now. Approaching the corpse, he tried identifying it but came up with nothing. However, when he touched it, it rapidly shrunk into a small tusk that fit in his hands, no longer than a meter. And this one he could identify.

[Tusk of the Horde Leader (Epic)] – The one remaining tusk of the once-mighty Horde Leader. Having lost one of its tusks against the King of the Forest, it was banished to the dungeon with its horde. It poured all of its might and potential into its remaining tusk, leaving powerful magic upon it. With the power and pure hatred of the Horde Leader infused within, it has been crafted with one purpose. To strike down the King of the Forest.

Like with the Bead of the Nest Watcher, this Horde Leader had also prepared a tool to strike back at the King of the Forest.

It was quite apparent that the King wasn't the most popular character. Jake also highly suspected that whatever fuckery the Great White Stag was up to, it likely had something to do with counterattacking against the oppressor that had put it there.

Of course, Jake had ruined that and even ruined the item it was making, he was pretty sure. Not that he couldn't still use the now corrupted Mooncore Shard if necessary. It was quite the volatile item, and he could only imagine the destruction it could deploy if he messed up the thing's internal balance.

Putting the tusk into his inventory, he looked at the corpse of the beast a bit more to see if it had any other items of note. Finding nothing with both his sphere and eyes, he decided to just head towards the exit where he expected the rest of the rewards to be.

But before doing so, he needed to get back in top condition, which meant a quick round of meditation while popping potions every hour.

It took him only a bit over three hours to have both his health, stamina, and mana all filled up. The sense of weakness from Limit Break had also gone away only half an hour or so into meditation, showing that the backlash of the 20% wasn't actually that bad. Going above the 20%, though... yeah, that would likely not go over as smoothly.

Being back in business, he began his sprint towards the exit of the dungeon. He still had more than four hours to go but saw no reason to waste more time than necessary. He had potions, his gear was fully repaired from the nearly universal Self-Repair enchant, and his body was ready.

Soon he found himself at the entrance to the dungeon. And on the small platform were two, very, VERY welcome things: two lockboxes, one small and one big. Giddy as always, he made his way towards the sweet loot.

He hoped for something good, as this would likely be his last upgrade to his equipment before the final battle. Also, he kind of just liked nice new things.