

Hunter 149

Chapter 149: Anger

Jake felt his vision practically turn red as he flew down. He was still accelerating as he pushed mana into his wings to fly even faster and at his top speed approaching what was once the sound barrier. Hundreds of meters passed every second.

The last time he felt this amount of anger was when he met William the second time in the tutorial when he had felt the same surging bloodlust beckoning Jake to kill him.

He didn't think as he soared through the sky. It would only take him a few more minutes to get there. He was flying to be directly above the Pylon to make his landing more easily. To avoid the trees.

As he got directly above it, he stopped momentarily and stared down. The valley was a natural clearing with few trees covering it, ... so from several kilometers up, nothing was hidden from his gaze.

He saw a transparent barrier surrounding a house. More than a hundred people were attacking it. Miranda sat on the porch of the lodge that hadn't been there before. A man and young woman standing right in front of said barrier.

Too many things were happening for him to wrap his head around it. His anger too high to even bother trying.

So he turned in the air as he began his descent once more. Not bothering to hide... no, willingly throwing out his bloodlust downward. His aura was nearly tangible as he let it wash into the valley below. He wanted them to know he was coming.

Everyone looked confused. Only a single person able to locate the source instantly. The woman was standing in front of the barrier with Miranda. The only one of any consequence from a cursory glance.

Seconds later, he reached the valley.

BOOOOOM!

Without stopping in the slightest, he smashed into the ground - soil, and dust thrown everywhere. His high toughness made the impact not harm him in the slightest despite the small crater where he landed.

“MIRANDA!” he yelled. “EXPLANATION. NOW!”

Even in his rage, he could recognize that the situation wasn’t simple. But he wasn’t relaxed enough to think straight either. He barely had enough control to not smash into the barrier separating them.

Miranda, on the other hand, felt the bloodlust wash over her as she shivered. She knew this was not the time to mince words.

“We came under attack, and I triggered the process as a last resort. I don’t want to claim it or challenge you!” she yelled back.

Jake just looked at her for a second, not getting the feeling that she was lying. His rage died down ever so slightly but was fast reignited when he saw several people walk out of the lodge - four of them newcomers with relatively high levels.

“And they are?” he asked coldly. Was this really just some elaborate trap? He felt the gazes of all the people around him upon him. It reminded him of the time Caroline betrayed him in his meeting with Jacob... which didn’t help his anger management situation.

It was the same... surrounded, lured in by people he naively thought he could trust. No... this was different. He was different. He wasn’t going to be naïve like then and nearly lose his life. Even if surrounded, he was confident in his ability to at least escape.

And not just escape... but make sure not a single fucking one of them was going to make it away.

“Don’t misunderstand; they are just hiding here as we did!” Miranda tried to explain. His level of anger far higher than she expected. “It is them who have come to kill us!”

She didn’t hesitate to point out the man with the bloody scimitar and the young woman in an obnoxious robe, who were standing there, likely also trying to grasp the situation. A masked human with wings had suddenly crashed down and started yelling at the woman, throwing them a bit of a curveball.

His yellow eyes finally shifted to them - especially the woman who had the highest level besides him, sitting at 59. By far the most potent human he had ever encountered so far. “Your turn. Explain.”

“Hey, I get the whole mysterious masked man persona you’re going for, but I am not particularly fond of that shtick,” the woman said, having gotten her bearings. She had to recognize that the man in front of her was strong... but he was surrounded. And the others were too weak to pose a real threat too. While he was an unknown element, she didn’t for a second believe he wasn’t one she couldn’t handle.

This is why what happened next came as a surprise. With a step forward, Jake disappeared, only to appear right in front of her. While Jake wasn’t overly tall, she was on the small side herself. Meaning she suddenly found herself staring up at a figure one and a half heads taller than herself.

“Explain.”

Jake had to hold himself back from just shoving his dagger into her throat. The minor slight of not taking him seriously was enough for him to want to murder her. He barely managed to remain rational. A small voice in the back of his head keeping him back from doing something he may come to regret.

However, his action of teleporting into her personal space spooking her far too much to even hear his question, as she quickly blasted herself backward and proceeded to teleport in mid-air and land a good fifteen meters away, her eyes wide.

For the first time, she appeared to begin to believe that perhaps antagonizing him further wasn’t necessarily the best course of action.

“Look, we don’t care much for that woman Miranda or her friends; we just want that guy in the white and gold robe and his companions. The moment we get him, we will be on our merry way, and hopefully, we will never meet again,” she said after calming herself down.

Jake looked at her and back to the man standing with Miranda. Bloodstains were clearly showing that he had recently bled from his eyes, nose, and mouth - the results of a fight they had just before he got here by his estimate. Upon further inspection of his surroundings, he saw even more signs of a fight having taken place.

It was also at this point that Jake truly realized that something was seriously wrong. Not with the situation, it actually seemed pretty damn straightforward, but with his own head.

He had been forced to actually think when he began talking to them. His rational mind was starting to do some work to analyze the situation. Why had he been so mad, to the point of nearly going entirely out of control?

His initial anger and surprise were justified when he saw the quest pop up. But a few seconds of thinking should have led him to several possible reasons that didn't include a grand betrayal of his trust. Thinking on it... this really wasn't the first time either.

It really was like with William. Back then, he had completely lost control of himself. He had felt like he wasn't in control of his body at all. In his mind, he had easily written it up as just being a heat-of-the-moment-thing, a one-time occurrence. But now, it had nearly repeated itself.

He feared what he could have done if a barrier didn't separate him and Miranda... he may have even just killed her outright before getting any understanding of the situation. I will have to figure out what the fuck is wrong with me, he thought. But first, I need to figure out this mess...

The others around him also noticed his silence as they all felt the bloodlust in the air disappear like it was never there, to begin with, and his entire demeanor calmed down as he made a big sigh and let out a big breath.

“Alright... from the beginning. Miranda, if you will,” he said, trying to sound as calm as he could. At the same time, he dismissed his two wings to appear more... human. Also, they were a bit distracting, and if a fight truly broke out, he predicted they would create more problems than advantages.

Miranda was naturally surprised at everything that was happening. His seemingly sudden shift in personality from last she saw him. Back then, he appeared relatively calm and collected, and now he had barged in like a beast out for blood... and then back to his quiet self not long after.

After she also calmed herself, she began explaining about Abby and Donald. Abby didn't bother to interrupt either, as she was actually quite interested in why Neil and his party had chosen to stay in the valley and not just keep running as they usually did.

Jake nodded along and noted how she didn't mention anything about a city or the Pylon at all. And from the looks of it, the Neil guy didn't look like he thought anything was off about her explanation. However, he did look confused and a bit listless. Though that may just be the tears of blood.

Abby didn't bother interrupting at all, though she was a bit taken aback when Miranda mentioned her being after a legendary orb that Neil had and that it was the root of their conflict.

“So, as I understand it, Neil and Abby are cousins and got into a fight over an orb, and now they marched into my place and made a mess of it?” he summarized rather coarsely.

“In essence... yes,” Miranda nodded. Not entirely agreeing with the overly-simplified summary.

“You got anything to add?” he asked Abby, who just stood there nonchalantly. Her father at her side, showing full confidence in his daughter to handle the situation.

“Not really,” she shrugged. “It is bullshit Neil got the orb to begin with. Nothing wrong with reclaiming what is rightfully mine.”

Having also heard a bit about the circumstances of Neil, Jake understood what had gone down. And he... didn’t really care much. But there was one part of the entire thing he didn’t really agree with.

“Nothing wrong with trying to snatch it,” he commented. Getting an admonishing glance from both Hank and Miranda and a surprised one from both Neil and Abby. “But I don’t really get why it was rightfully yours. You lost; he won. End of story.”

“How the fuck is it not unfair that he gets lucky as fuck and gets a test practically tailor-made for him?” she scoffed.

“Didn’t you just lose because you were too weak?” he asked. Not even trying to be condescending. These were his genuine thoughts. “Why didn’t you just beat the test alone?”

He would have. That, or he would have lost and have no one to blame but his own incompetence.

“I...” Abby began. Not having a quippy answer quite at the ready. Her brief moment of embarrassment only serving to make her angry. “Who the fuck do you think you are anyway?”

“Me?” Jake asked rhetorically. “Just a guy who is annoyed that a bunch of idiots made a mess of his newly commissioned house while he was away. I have a lot of better things to do than deal with your stupidity.”

“Then just get me the damn orb already,” she hissed.

“Now why would I do that?”

“Because I fucking said so?” Abby practically roared. “Or do you honestly think I wouldn’t kill you with the rest of them? That I couldn’t? Or are you such an arrogant ass that you think you can beat everyone here alone?”

Jake briefly glanced around him and quickly assessed the situation before confidently turning back to her. “Yes.”

“Abby, my dear, let’s just get rid of this lunatic and finish up here once the barrier is down,” Donald said to his daughter. He, too, was getting rather tired of this whole charade.

“Before that,” Jake said before raising his voice, making sure everyone around the valley could hear him. “Listen up! Attack me, and I will kill you. Stand down, and if Miranda over there agrees, I can offer you a safe place to stay.”

Quickly followed up by Abby also yelling. “If you fuckers don’t do your job, I will personally displace every single limb away from your body after this shit is over. Your head last.”

“Pretty sure the head can’t be considered a limb,” Jake very accurately interjected. A correction that she evidently didn’t find endearing or welcome in the slightest.

“Last chance... leave now,” Abby warned a final time. No matter how much she was grandstanding, she truly wanted to avoid a fight if she could. But more so than avoiding a conflict, she wanted the orb.

While the barrier was up – more precisely, the space-barrier made by Neil - nobody would be able to enter or leave. And she wanted to be rid of the new element, aka Jake, before that happened to avoid having to face him and Neil together.

“The next move is yours,” Jake just said. “Attack, leave or negotiate.”

“Fine, if you really wan-“ she began, but her next action was not words spoken but a slightly raised hand that caused movement in the mana around him. His danger sense having already warned him just before he felt it.

She made her choice, he thought as he stepped forward, teleporting once more. The place where he stood moments earlier exploded behind him.

His step didn’t take him all the way to her, as she was already flying backward the same second she attacked. Likely predicting that her sneak attack wouldn’t succeed in ending the fight. But she was surprised that the near-instantaneous attack failed to even touch him.

Behind the barrier, all of them were highly invested in the fight. Partly because they wanted to see what the mysterious masked owner was capable of, but primarily because him losing would mean them all dying.

Neil was shocked when he saw Jake move. He hadn't adequately felt it the first time, but after seeing One Step Mile for the second time, he began to suspect that it was space magic. But at a level far higher than anything both he and Abby were capable of. It was far from as complicated as what they did... but the quality...

Jake thought for a moment as he saw the woman retreat. The bearded man called Donald, charging towards him with a red glowing scimitar. A type of energy emanating from it he didn't immediately recognize.

Taking out his dagger and shortsword, he blocked the man quite easily. However, he didn't have time to counterattack as space around him constricted once more - this time not to hurt but suppress him.

With a scoff, he opened his eyes wide as he released a ridiculous amount of mana that blew away all the space mana surrounding him, effectively canceling out her space magic. It was similar to when he was ambushed by Caroline and forced to release a large blast of mana to survive. The difference this time being his skill in doing so being far higher, and his body far stronger, thus capable of handling the blast.

Able to move again, he didn't hesitate as he swept his sword forwards. Donald managed to block it but stumbled back from the casual blow. Realizing how utterly outmatched he was in pure stats, he tried to retreat, but nearly just fell on his ass. Leaving him utterly open as Jake plunged Venomfang into his stomach.

"NO!" Abby yelled as she released a massive wave of space magic, sending Jake flying backward.

Less than two seconds had passed since the battle begun. None of the many people in Abby's army had been able to do anything, yet one of their two leaders was already heavily injured.