

Hunter 158

Chapter 158: Why?

Jake sat on the cloud in meditation as he regenerated his stamina and mana. Arrow of the Ambitious Hunter was as draining as it was powerful, and quite frankly, he wasn't even sure it would speed up his hunting speed if he used it on more 'regular' enemies. Though, of course, Jake's definition of a regular enemy was one many levels above him.

It had been a few days since he got Arrow of the Ambitious Hunter. Since then, he had gained a single level in his hunter class, but the largest gain was how familiar he now was with his new skill. He liked it a lot, but he felt like there was one more test needed...

[Thunder Roc - ???]

As always, the hawk sat with him. He knew it would leave soon as it had been a while since it last did so. And that would be his time to strike.

"Hawkie, I am gonna take this one alone. This is my fight, alright?" he confirmed, looking up at the hawk.

It gave him a glance with doubt, unsure if the human could really handle the giant Roc.

The sentiment that D-grades were far above E-grades was heavily ingrained for everyone, beasts and humans alike. No creature or elemental on the cloud continent, not even those at level 99, dared get close to the D-grades.

But Jake wasn't just any random creature. He was someone who had stacked titles upon titles, gotten an excellent profession and above-average class designed to fight stronger foes. He had powerful skills beyond someone at his level and grade.

He had felt like he could maybe fight it even the first time he saw the Roc... but now he would try. He wouldn't earn any more class skills before 100, which was the evolution, and while he could grind up his profession... he shouldn't need it.

The level of the Thunder Roc had to be below 110 based on how it felt. Weaker than the Indigo Mushroom by a fair bit, but with far more effective attacking methods for sure. It also appeared to be agility and intelligence-focused, making it a good matchup for him.

His scales were good against magic, and with it being not as robust, he believed he could weaken it substantially before the battle even began, especially with a well-placed Arrow of the Ambitious Hunter.

A few minutes later, Jake was in top condition as he flew towards another small cloud island and began summoning the arrow. He had believed Hawkie would leave, but it appeared to want to stay and watch from their old island. That was fine too. Maybe Hawkie could help protect the platform, as Jake had moved away, hoping to leave it intact.

Focusing on his target, he held out his hand, and the arrow slowly began emerging. It was his most expensive arrow so far, draining nearly 3000 stamina and around 2000 mana. More than a third of his stamina pool was instantly gone, but it was fine.

With conviction, he prepared the rest of his equipment for the hunt. Poisoned all of his arrows and even took out his best hemotoxin for the first initial arrow. The ones in the quiver would be Necrotic for maximum damage.

When he was ready, he threw Hawkie one last glance as he turned towards the giant Roc in the distance. A huge grin on his face. He was bubbling with excitement as he felt Big Game Hunter come into effect already, boosting him even further. He used everything as they made up the elements that in concert made this hunt possible to even attempt.

Big Game Hunter

Limit Break

Mark of the Ambitious Hunter

Infused Powershot

Arrow of the Ambitious Hunter

Together, they synergized as he charged up the shot - his tough body allowing him to channel the Powershot for longer, his high magical stats making both the Arrow of the Ambitious Hunter and Infused Powershot stronger.

The distance between Jake and the Thunder Roc was around 14-15 kilometers, but Jake had a clear view of everything.

Breathing in, he felt his body tense up as he reached his limit. Without further ado, he released the giant arrow towards the airplane-sized D-grade beast.

It flew ahead, its speed surpassing the speed of sound more than ten times over. In three seconds, it reached the Roc that sensed it shortly before it arrived. It felt the threat the arrow posed and prepared a response when it suddenly froze.

The eyes of a supreme predator were upon it. It failed to respond as the arrow pierced into its stomach and left a huge wound as the arrow dispersed shortly after impact. It didn't manage to pierce through, but it had drilled more than five meters into the giant beast, doing incredible damage.

This also confirmed Jake's theory that the beast was agility and intelligence-focused over being durable. Good.

SCREEECH!

The beast screeched in pain as it released a shockwave of sound that hit Jake more than ten kilometers away, making his clothes flap. But he didn't react as he had already nocked the fourth arrow.

Two were already in mid-air, heading towards the giant Roc.

The first hit, but the second was avoided as it also swiftly dodged the third, but was once more hit with a fourth. Each arrow little more than a needle on its large body, but the damage from each was not to be discounted.

Poison seeped into its body as it prepared its counterattack - one that came quicker than Jake expected.

BOOM

A bolt of lightning struck the cloud island where he had just stood, blowing it up entirely. Jake had already jumped to avoid it, but the blast still sent him tumbling. He quickly stabilized with his wings as he returned fire.

His arrows flew true as they split into dozens mid-air. More small needle-sized attacks to the giant Roc hit it, making it shriek out in even more anger.

It had begun flying towards him now, sending out torso-wide bolts of lightning aiming to roast him whole. Sadly, his near pre-cognition from his instincts allowed him to dodge each one as he fired back arrow after arrow.

The poison had been poured into the bottom of his quiver, making each newly conjured arrow instantly be coated with liquid death.

By now, the entire Cloud Continent appeared to be in an uproar. One of the two titans that dominated it was under attack and had even taken a heavy injury from the opening attack. Yet none of them dared to approach the fight, but all ran away in fear. Even the stupid Cloud Elementals had something instinctive that made them back off.

Come on, this ain't all you have to offer, he thought as he saw the massive wingbeats take the gigantic beast closer to him. It was injured... but far from enough to bring it down. Even now, he could feel the poison within its body be eliminated at a fast pace.

When it was only a few kilometers away, its entire body was enveloped by thunder as it sped up.

Here it comes

The entire cloud continent appeared to darken for a moment as the Roc attacked. It sped up and appeared in front of Jake with speed surpassing his arrows by quite the margin. It stopped right before him as it, for the first time, laid its eyes upon its attacker.

It saw the small human as it attacked with the most predictable kind of attack. It pecked down as electricity revolved around its beak, indicating that it clearly used some skill.

Jake flew back and dodged as he saw a beam of lightning be released from the beak, blowing up a huge part of the cloud continent below them.

Feisty one, aren't ya?

With a chuckle, he avoided its follow-up attack, but instead of retreating, he closed in. A giant body isn't always an advantage.

When he got close, lighting fired off its body into Jake, but it appeared to just cover the outside of the scales that now covered his entire body. His dagger was already in his right hand and his sword in the left. He stabbed the sword into the bird while his Venomfang got coated by dark mana as he stabbed the beast.

He had poured far more mana into the Descending Dark Fang than usual, and it was showing. The stab exploded with dark mana as the mana was directed straight out of the tip of the dagger, effectively extending it.

Instead of his dagger only sinking in the length of its blade, it left a 2-meter deep stab-wound on the Roc, making it screech out nearly as loudly as it had from the first Infused Powershot. Did I hit something important?

Jake felt his danger-sense spike as he quickly retreated from the Roc that released even more lightning than before, trying to get him off. It was enough to make him disengage, but the attack failed to harm him.

Come on...

The beast was now thoroughly enraged as it screeched towards the sky. Thunder from a clear sky above descended as the entire beast began humming with power. It looked towards him as it opened its beak, Jake already fully aware of what was to come.

Moment? No... it isn't necessary.

A thought he nearly came to regret as the beast clearly wasn't done. Several feathers had been dropped by the bird and were now floating gently through the air all around him. All of them suddenly quivered as electricity covered them, and they began flying towards Jake from all sides.

Each feather was as large as a two-handed sword as they flew to penetrate the human. Simultaneously the beast was about to release its massive lightning breath. Jake looked up at the beast as he felt the pressure mounting.

Not enough.

He moved as he gazed upon the giant Roc the moment it was about to release its attack. It froze for a moment, ruining the timing as Jake dodged and weaved away from every single giant feather coming for him. They had been aimed to keep him contained... but the follow-up attack being delayed ruined it.

Jake flew up as he used a part of the Wings of the Malefic Viper skill that he hadn't much before. Green veins on both wings appeared and began glowing as a mist-like substance began being emitted.

With a beat of his wings, he retreated from the blast while blowing a cloud of poison mist into the face of the bird.

Just as he did this, the Roc unfroze and released its attack. It had only been stopped for a few milliseconds, but in a fight like this, that was more than enough to change the momentum entirely.

Not that the Thunder Roc had ever truly held the momentum. Jake had been dominant from start to end.

Why?

He retreated a bit more as he released another Splitting Arrow, causing a few more minor wounds. It fired more blasts of thunder, but he avoided them one by one. The feathers kept flying around in the air, reminding him a bit of the flying daggers of that stupid metal mage back in the tutorial.

And like then, he easily dodged them as he showed off his prowess in air-combat. Hawkie was still far faster and more agile than him, but the bird would already be long dead if they switched places. It didn't have Jake's danger sense, his high perception, and the incredible defenses that allowed him to take a stray-hit once in a while.

Jake knew he had grown a lot stronger than his time in the tutorial - than his last time truly facing off against a D-grade. Yet...

Why is it so...

He dodged another attack as he channeled a large bolt of dark mana. He shot a quick Infused Powershot with it hanging overhead, making the Roc try and avoid but failing due to its large body. When it did so, he also released his bolt of dark mana into the face of the Roc, causing a large explosion of dark mana to obscure its vision.

Why is it so weak?

The first time Jake had laid his eyes upon the Thunder Roc, he had a feeling he could take it... but at the same time, he didn't wanna be too arrogant. He didn't want to get himself stupidly killed by facing a superior opponent. He knew he fucked up with the King of the Forest... and didn't want to repeat that.

He repeatedly played the fight with the King in his head, comparing his current strength to the King... and finding himself coming up short every time. He was too weak, too slow, his body too feeble, and his mind and soul too fragile. He saw his defeat every time.

Jake had an idea about D-grades formed in his head about them being nearly unapproachable enemies. The Indigo Mushroom didn't quite count as he hadn't truly faced it... and it hadn't truly fought him either. In fact, it had only strengthened his perception of exactly how powerful D-grades were.

A massive net of mushrooms where an entire biodome was its body... its whole being drilling who knows how far into the ground. It was just enormous, and what little attacks it had made had put him in quite the bind.

But...

It's just a damn bird shooting lightning.

As he saw its movements become slower, he began to realize it truly didn't have anything more to show him.

The first attack had done tremendous damage to it, weakened it before the fight even began. The poison had kept piling up, and by now, it was truly showing its worth as its body was covered with black spots that had decayed.

Feathers fell out, not because the Roc used them to attack, but because the flesh keeping them in place rotted away. The control of its attacks lessened as Jake found it more comfortable and easier to counterattack.

Is... this it?

Would there be no mask dropping from its face to reveal an incomprehensible attack? No Golden Claw that appeared to rip the world in two, forcing his Moment of the Primal Hunter to activate, him wanting it to or not? Would there be no hidden card that would force him into a corner?

From a logical standpoint, Jake understood.

The Thunder Roc was far stronger than the Flare Crows and the Cloud Elementals. It was clearly a powerful beast that rightfully sat at the peak of this entire cloud continent. It didn't need anything else but what it already had to be a true-blue D-grade.

Jake's body was burnt, and he had many wounds covering his body... but he hadn't felt that.

The feeling of walking on the line between life and death – to flirt with death and come out superior. It was a superior foe... but not superior enough.

Jake shook his head internally as he dodged another giant feather by just swaying his body slightly. In many ways, dodging in the air was easier than the ground. Sure, attacks could come from all angles, but Jake could see attacks from any angle.

When the Thunder Roc began retreating, Jake understood it truly didn't have anything more to offer. It was nearly dead, and even if it escaped, it was questionable if it had enough vital energy to purge the poison in its system.

Jake just sighed as he charged another Infused Powershot for nearly a full ten seconds. The Roc had managed to get a good 5 kilometers away, but it was far from enough distance to escape him.

Firing the arrow, he aimed for its left wing that was already severely damaged. It tried to sway but found itself frozen by Gaze of the Apex Hunter once again, and the arrow hit it right in its joint.

The giant beast fell to the cloud continent below, like a crashing airliner, sliding across the clouds for hundreds of meters before stopping.

Jake flew after it as he saw it try and get up.

The Cloud Elementals and other beasts in the area still just looked on, none daring to approach.

He landed on the massive beast, getting shocked by its electricity, but his scales neutralized most of the damage.

With One Step Mile, he stepped on its torso as he appeared right below its neck, and with a Descending Dark Fang, he plunged his Venomfang into it. With the Dark Mana extending the blade as he had before, he swiped it to the side, cutting a 1-meter deep gash in its neck, sending down a waterfall of blood.

It was the final strike to end the D-grade beast's suffering – a mighty lord of the massive cloud continent, slain by an E-grade human in a one-sided battle.