

## Hunter 189

### Chapter 189: Press F for Fungus

Absolute mayhem. That is the only phrase Jake could use to accurately describe the chaos happening inside the biodome.

Vines were flying everywhere, random bolts of mana fired at anything moving, and all the poor insects that were just crawling around the biodome minding their own business were ripped to pieces. The fungus didn't even look like it tried to absorb them; it just killed them and evaporated their bodies.

Jake just sat there, patiently monitoring the poison.

[Indigo Fungus Mycorrhiza – lvl ???]

While he was there, he also tried to focus on improving his Sense of the Malefic Viper. To better sense how his poison interacted with the body of the fungi. He felt how it spread and invaded every part of it, how it polluted its resource-pools and devoured its health points.

He felt like he was improving his ability to sense the energy, once more also finding parallels between it and his mana control. Learning how the fungicide worked to kill the fungus would help him out in the future when he needed to create better mana techniques, so he took it all in.

As long as he could, that is.

Finally, the mushroom noticed him.

It fired a few small blasts of mana his way in what Jake could barely even recognize as an attack. Clearly, it didn't focus on him or even recognize him from their last encounter. Indeed he was right when he surmised the fungus was stupid. Unsurprising, considering it was a goddamn overgrown blue mushroom.

Jake got up and went into action after dodging the mana blasts thrown his way. He knew he would now catch its attention, but he was prepared. He summoned orbs of mana above him that he charged up to hold quite a quantity.

He then sent them floating into the biodome, where he instantly saw a few vines fly over and try to destroy them. Jake smiled as once more his theory was confirmed: it indeed did rely on some kind of mana vision.

It went well with how it also sucked at detecting that it was infected by something. All in all, its perception just sucked outright. It didn't need to see things when it could just kill them by way of its sheer size and overwhelming power. It was a monster designed to be the king within its own hunting grounds.

A king that Jake was about to dethrone by poisoning the land the king reigned over.

Two wings appeared behind him as they began pumping out a mist of poison. Yet Jake didn't blow it into the dome but kept it around himself in a cloud of thick smoke. He obscured the entrance to the biodome, far from enough for Jake not to be able to see through it, but enough for the fungus to only see a giant blob of mana in its vision.

At the same time, he summoned mana bolts - weak versions of his regular bolts that looked more like transparent floating crystals than anything meant to attack with. He waved his hand, and bottle after bottle appeared, each containing mushroom-killing juices.

It was all the common-rarity fungicide he had concocted over the last weeks. Far from as effective as the uncommon-rarity soul-invading poison, but more than effective nevertheless.

He swayed a bit to avoid a blast of mana fired his way as strings of mana sprung out of his hands and began tying the bottles to his bolts. He fused the bottles inside each bolt and fired them into the dome, aiming for the larger mushrooms or plants within.

When the bolts hit, they exploded in a rather unimpressive explosion. It didn't even harm the plants, but it was more than enough to make the bottles shatter and send the fungicide flying everywhere.

This continued as Jake dodged all attacks coming his way, noticing that the fungus' aim was totally off. It tried to make up for it with quantity, but the poison mist made the area it had to bombard too large, especially considering it had to shoot all its bolts through the relatively small entrance to the biodome.

He kept up his barrage of fungicide and weak bolts. The reason why he used bolts to deliver his attacks was quite simple - the fungus reacted to them. Several of the bolts were intercepted by vines that either stabbed into the bolt or just slapped it, making the bolt explode and spraying the fungicide all over it.

Minutes passed with the damage building up. Finally, it was forced to show its actual body.

Blue vines flew up as the entire biodome shook. The moment Jake saw the first blue vine, he marked it and jumped back around the corner of the cave, away from the fungi. He had learned that he could only mark its true body... but that wasn't the only thing.

His last fight with the fungus, coupled with his extensive research on how to slay it, had led him to have a sufficient understanding of the monster. Sufficient enough so that when he held out his hand and focused on the monster in his mind, the skill responded.

#### Arrow of the Ambitious Hunter

With his eyes closed, he focused his mind. Every fiber of the creature was clear to him as his Sense of the Malefic Viper fed him constant information of the toxins in its body. And as the toxins had invaded every part of its body, Jake could feel its entire being.

He sought deeper as he sunk his consciousness into understanding the fungus - every single part of not only its body but its soul. Jake didn't even notice that the fungus was ripping itself out of the ground as a massive figure rose within the biodome.

The massive monster that had made the biodome its home ever since the integration was now attempting to flee. Jake just kept his focus honed on making an arrow to finish off the fungus.

The arrow that emerged from his hand looked like nothing he had ever made prior. It seemed almost ethereal as it appeared to flicker in and out of existence. It was in an odd state of both existing and being immaterial.

Jake opened his eyes and looked at it. Looks-wise its shape was not much different from a normal arrow... but Jake felt a headache coming on by just looking at it. When he saw what resources it had consumed, he was also confused. It drained equally from his health, mana, and stamina pools during its creation.

But the confusion lasted only for a moment as he understood. This arrow would not strike at the body of the fungus but its soul.

He reached out to grab the arrow and found it extremely peculiar when he did so. His hand phased partway through the arrow, but he soon noticed it was just his gloves. It ignored anything that was not his physical body, caring not for his clothes at all.

Jake feared he wouldn't be able to nock it but was happy to see that wasn't an issue. Likely because the bow was infused with ample amounts of his mana.

He took a single One Step Mile and now stood right in front of the biodome entrance again and could once more see inside... and if the situation earlier was absolute mayhem, then now it was a cataclysm.

What he saw shocked him for a moment because it looked absolutely surreal.

It looked like a giant indigo spiderweb of roots was slowly crawling across the ground, with a dozen or so thick root-like tendrils doing most of the work. Jake instantly knew it was the creature's actual body and that it was trying to relocate.

Jake had contaminated the shit out of its home. It had absorbed energy from the earth and been heavily poisoned by the fungicide. Afterward, fungicide was spread all over its area, and Jake had even pushed in some poison mist to make even the air toxic.

In summary... it was a really shitty place to live for any fungus. It was going to try and flee the biodome to escape the environment that would end up killing it, and even if it somehow survived, the biodome would no longer be a good hunting ground.

Sadly for the Indigo Fungus Mycorrhiza, it would never find a new home. An arrow that flickered in and out of existence flew through the air with unprecedented speed. It contained incredible amounts of mana, not just due to the arrow itself but because it was shot with a fully charged Infused Powershot.

Four of the robust vines began moving up to try and block, and Jake allowed it to because he knew that no physical movement could possibly stop an arrow heading directly for one's soul.

The arrow hit the creature in its vine and simply sank into its body, disappearing from sight.

For a moment, nothing seemed to happen as the entire Indigo Fungus just froze up. Suddenly, It made a spasm-like movement as one of its vines flew out and slammed into one of the biodome walls. Followed by another chaotic move.

It began thrashing as Jake kept his distance. He knew... something had broken inside it. It was already so weak, to begin with... its soul eroded and tortured for so long by the uncommon-rarity poison. Jake didn't let up, however, as he attacked.

Not with another Arrow of the Ambitious Hunter, but just normal ones. He fired Infused Powershot after Infused Powershot, ripping the true form of the Indigo Fungus apart little by little.

Two times prior, he had come down to this biodome. Two times he had been forced to flee. The last time it even got dangerously close.

Yet at his third return... it was just a slaughter. In some ways, one could say that Jake had been fighting the fungus for over a month. The battle had been won not in a direct confrontation with his enemy but through careful preparation and planning to take down his foe.

Had his plan been perfect? No, far from it. But it had been adequate.

\*You have slain [Indigo Fungus Mycorrhiza – lvl 105] – Bonus experience earned for killing an enemy above your level\*

The humongous Indigo Fungus collapsed to the ground, looking like a giant pile of overcooked spaghetti – a fitting mental image of the accursed fungus.

“Fuck yeah!” Jake cheered goofily out loud as he got the notification but soon frowned as he looked at the aforementioned system message.

Wait, what? Jake asked himself, a bit confused as he double-checked the notification. How could it only be 105? What?

He was a bit stumped about how that was possible. It was barely D-grade, and it had grown even stronger between his visits... did that mean it had just reached D-grade the day he went to the biodome the first time? If not... how damn slow did it level?

Also, holy shit, it was strong for its level. Jake had killed many creatures of higher level already, but none had proven to be big challenges. The Minotaur Mindlord has been quite a lot higher than anything else, and yet he couldn't see the mushroom lo-

Actually, Jake was pretty damn sure the Minotaur Mindlord could have killed the Indigo Fungus with some mental magic bullshit – pun intended – as the overgrown mushroom had a weak soul.

Was it just the match-up? Or was it particularly strong for its level?

In pure stats alone, it had to trump anything Jake had ever faced before. Just the absolutely ridiculous amount of energy it had was more than all the other D-grades he had ever met put together. Well, besides the King of the Forest, but that freak didn't count.

His next notifications weren't unexpected but were still something relatively new.

\*'DING!' Race: [Human (E)] has reached level 97 - Stat points allocated, +5 free points\*

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He had gained two race levels because he was capped in his class. Quite frankly, it didn't mean much, as all it meant was that his next few levels in his professions wouldn't also net him race levels. Well, it would matter if he decided to level his race to 100 and evolve... but that wasn't the plan.

No, right now, the plan was to get some of that sweet loot. Because if there were one thing mushrooms were suitable for, it was alchemy!

Jake walked up to the massive creature and took out his blade. He quickly began dissecting it, already knowing what he wanted.

He started with fourteen large Lifevines of the creature. While he was dissecting it, he discovered that the monster was supposed to have fifteen, as it hadn't yet been able to regenerate the one it blew off itself last time Jake was there.

[Indigo Fungus Mycorrhiza Lifevine (Rare)] – The Lifevine of an Indigo Fungus Mycorrhiza. The Lifevine is a part of the main body of the fungus. Contains intense amounts of vital energy and is incredibly resilient. Can be used in a myriad of alchemical creations.

All of them went into his spatial storage to be used later. Next, he went deeper into the body of the creature, searching for something within that was giving off a strong response from his Sense of the Malefic Viper. It wasn't a toxin but something that felt incredibly pure and powerful.

Cutting away the disgusting fungus parts, he carved a small cave into the massive putrid corpse. The corpse was a nearly ten meters across big mass of condensed fungus. It was all the small veins it had spread across the whole biodome balled up into one big... well, ball.

Luckily the corpse was easily cut through after it had died, allowing him to quickly make it to his desired item. He could already see it within his sphere and used Identify on it before he even reached it.

[Indigo Fungus Mycorrhiza Lifecore (Epic)] – The Lifecore of an Indigo Fungus Mycorrhiza. Contains a massive amount of life-affinity mana and vital energy. Can be used in a myriad of alchemical creations. Will grant a permanent increase to the Vitality stat if consumed.

Damn, epic-rarity, Jake thought. That was pretty damn good. Reading the item itself, it got even better. A permanent increase in vitality? Nice.

He picked up his speed and cut his way to the Lifecore, where he visually inspected it. It looked like a small, rugged stone or maybe a large seed? Either way, it wasn't any larger than the palm of his hand, which was tiny compared to the massive monster it had been in. He would save the core for crafting after reaching D-grade to make full use of it. Just eating it would be a waste.

As Jake was preparing to make his way out of the disgusting corpse, he noticed something else. Despite the fungus leaving the biodome, it had still kept one connection established with its many roots. They sought deep into the ground through a hole it had completely filled with parts of its main body.

Jake frowned as he wondered what was down there for the fungus not to want to abandon it despite its horrible situation. Was there something good down there? A natural treasure, perhaps?

He could inspect it... but first, he would have to get rid of the massive body blocking the hole.

Summoning his alchemical flame, he got to work. He had taken anything that gave off a response from his Sense of the Malefic Viper already, and the rest of the body was just a big gooey pile at this point. One he gladly set on fire.

The entire creature was swiftly reduced to ashes and left behind far less than he would expect. The ashes themselves weren't anything valuable, but he hoped whatever was within the large hole now square in the middle of the biodome would be.

Actually, calling it a biodome was a bit fallacious... because Jake was now the only living thing within. As all the plants had been part of the Indigo Fungus' body, they had all withered when it retracted itself from them to try and flee.

Jake walked up the hole and looked down. Forty or so meters down, he saw a green glow. As he didn't feel anything from his danger sense, he decided to slowly begin floating down after coating his feet in mana.

His confusion only amplified the closer he got to the bottom as his sphere began picking up what was down there.

It was a room or cavern of sorts. The spot he was floating down towards was the exact center of the small cavern, from the looks of things. The center was occupied by what Jake could only describe as a large, completely blank green glowing metal disc of sorts.

The disc emanated a constant flow of potent life-affinity mana, which was doubtlessly why the fungus wanted it... and possibly what had allowed it to evolve.

Jake wondered what the disc was as he landed on top of it. A system message instantly answered his question.

You have discovered the dungeon: Undergrowth of the Deepdwellers

Requirements to enter: D-grade

Requirements to enter not met

**WARNING:** Only 5 challengers are allowed per party attempting the dungeon.