

Hunter 191

Chapter 191: Cloudy with A Chance of Powershots

Jake felt like he had to make a confession after hearing the Viper explain all that stuff about arcane-mana and arcane-affinity.

He... didn't really get it. Not really. More so, he didn't really get how he had somehow created this arcane-affinity. Was it just because he wanted his pure mana to be better without compromising on purity? That he kept condensing his mana bolts instead of mixing in other affinities?

Jake voiced his confusion, with the Viper trying to explain how it all worked a bit more in detail, but Jake just got more confused. He summoned some more of the pink-purple mana and played a bit with it, finding out that it was pretty much just like his pure mana, just more potent and more condensed.

The Viper said that was because Jake's version of arcane mana was based on his intent of creating mana with "stable destruction," or something like that. Jake got that part as he had tried to make his pure mana better at destroying and breaking down things while at the same time making it less likely to blow up in his face, but he wasn't sure how that constituted a mana affinity.

Jake kept talking a bit with the Viper until he made it clear that he was running out of "divine message juice" and finished with a real nugget of wisdom:

"Jake arcane mana better pure mana. Mana bolt go bigger boom boom, but not boom boom in Jake face."

An absolutely condescending explanation that Jake could only nod at as it finally made at least some sense to him. Sure, the entire concept appeared simple enough... but that is why it was so confusing. Why would the system recognize something so "simple" as so extraordinary?

Anyway, with that settled, Jake returned to the critical matter of calming down the sulking Sylphie that was sad he had locked himself away for three days. She kept angrily pecking his hand whenever he tried petting her but got equally angry when he stopped trying.

“Still a bit too young to go through your teenage phase, aren’t you?” he joked, as she had finally forgiven him and was nesting on his lap as he petted her. She was a real lap-bird. He couldn’t help but identify her and see that she was actually just about to exit her teenage levels.

[Sylphian Eyas – lvl 19]

All jokes aside, he wasn’t actually sure how levels related to growth. Sylphie still couldn’t even fly yet, despite having a relatively high level. Her physical specs were up there, though, with her pecks able to easily break rock and her wind magic quite impressive.

The thought of her killing the big level 10 Irontusk Boar back in the tutorial with a few pecks and by blowing a bit of wind was both absolutely hilarious and plausible. The little bird looked harmless, but he could see her even kill a level 25 human if he or she wasn’t careful.

But at least she was aware of it. While Jake wasn’t sure she could break his skin with her pecks, she clearly didn’t try to either. It was all playful, like how a cat didn’t try to actually inflict any injury when it just nipped at someone.

“Ree!” the small bird yelled, making a noise that Jake wasn’t entirely sure fit with being a hawk. She was just annoyed that Jake didn’t give her as much attention as she thought she deserved. He was still too stuck in his head as he couldn’t help but think of ways to possibly apply this whole new arcane mana business to Touch of the Malefic Viper.

The Viper had called it “controlled destruction” or something like that, but Jake was focusing on the “controlled” part. His current issue with trying to transmute objects with Touch of the Malefic Viper wasn’t in the power department, but actually making his Touch not destroy the item.

Jake basically used mana in two ways: either as incredibly stable states: to strengthen items or create almost tangible objects such as his strings, or he used his pure mana to cause pure destruction and damage. He didn’t really have anything in between that.

At least, that is what he used his pure mana control for. He hadn’t tried to make mental magic, summon things that mimic the living, or any of that advanced magic circle stuff. He either just threw his mana as condensed bolts of destruction or made things tougher.

Infused Powershot was a perfect example of this. Thinking back... wasn’t that the first skill he truly upgraded on his own? Not counting the basic weapon skill upgrade for knowing how to use a bow, that is. He had done so by combining power and stability... making the bow more stable and able to contain the power his body would impose upon it. He made the two energies work in concert after that, mixing and creating a powerful strike. Like most of his other skills, it was straightforward yet powerful.

“Sylphie, I am sorry, but you’ll have to spend the rest of the day with your parents; I am going to have to go practice a bit on my own,” he told the small hawk nestled up next to him as he stroked her still-growing feathers that was slowly replacing all the down. He reckoned she would be able to fly soon.

After a few more protests, he brought her out and gave her to Mystie, who was just chilling outside with a small magic-circle-looking thing. Yeah, he had kinda given up on learning advanced magic like that. Why make mana complicated? Just make it go big boom or make yourself not be hurt by the big boom.

Summoning his wings, he took flight and headed up to the clouds above.

Passing the many small clouds on the way, he finally spotted the giant cloud island above. He even saw the small island where he and Hawkie used to relax after their battles. It still floated there untouched.

Jake shook his head before he found another island to land on. He was going to do a bit of practice... and the last time he practiced archery, he ended up destroying quite a few cloud islands along with his long-range takedown of the Storm Elemental.

He summoned his Windsoar Bow and looked down at it a bit. He felt the mana within it, the majority of it inherent to the weapon, but a portion was his own. It was the connection that one created with any bound weapon.

This connection bound the weapon to the person using it, but it also helped strengthen the item. Much like how a living being's body would weaken significantly after dying, so would a weapon be less durable when not bound. Not to the same degree, but to at least to some extent.

When he used Infused Powershot, he didn't just push mana into the weapon but also flooded the bow's surroundings and the arrow he was about to fire. Mana and stamina would swirl around his entire body as he channeled, making him fire his most powerful attack.

Jake hadn't ever really tried to improve the skill besides just pushing more energy into it. He was afraid of breaking the equilibrium that the skill required. Now, he was actively looking to break that equilibrium and allow the skill to evolve.

He didn't have any way of making his stamina more potent or suddenly make his body more durable, but he felt like he had a way to make the mana stronger through his newly discovered arcane-affinity.

When he began making a few simple experiments, he quickly noticed that he was, in some ways, already halfway through this practice. His many days spent refining his mana and trying to create arrows infused with mana were very close to what he attempted right now.

Jake stood up on the cloud platform and took out an arrow. In a slow movement, he nocked it and focused on every action as he began using Infused Powershot. But he kept the energy output to a minimum, not caring about charging time or power - just the process.

He let go of the arrow a bit later before nocking another and starting over. Each arrow released was weak, but what was important was that he felt himself progress incredibly fast as something... clicked.

Slowly his surroundings began to change. Faint wisps of pink-purple energy began being mixed into the otherwise colorless mana, and he instantly felt like something shifted. It was like the axis determining the equilibrium moved as his stamina was immediately overwhelmed, and his body began taking the brunt force of the skill.

His skin began to sizzle as his own mana began destroying the stamina coming out of his pores and burning into his flesh. Jake instantly focused as he pushed the energy away from his skin and towards the bow and arrow. A bit reminiscent of when he used mana to walk on air or water, he tried to create a thin layer of mana over the stamina-vapors coming out of his skin, making it flow in the direction towards his weapon and lessening the damage to his body.

The Windsoar Bow began being flooded with energy, and the arrow began to turn a purple color as it too experienced a faint influx of mana. It wasn't even because the arrow was directly infused, it was only affected by the remnant energies, but even that was enough to nearly make it break.

As for the bow, it began to show strain but managed to contain the energy. It was practically glowing with mana as Jake was forced to let go of the string.

The usual explosion of mana and stamina from Infused Powershot sounded out but was far more powerful than ever before. It wasn't colorless either but had a faint pink-purple hue as the poor small cloud island beneath him was utterly destroyed by the arcane-mana in a single shot.

With a notification appearing at the same time.

[Infused Powershot (Rare)] – Stamina as fuel - mana as a guide. Unlike a normal Powershot, the Infused Powershot does not require a long charging time but can be charged in a brief moment. The higher the magnitude of the charge, the greater the stamina and mana expenditure. Charging Infused Powershot may empower the skill further. Adds a small bonus to the effectiveness of Agility, Strength, and Intelligence when using Infused Powershot.

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[Arcane Powershot (Epic)] – Stamina the fuel – Mana the guide – Arcane the power. Evolved from Infused Powershot, it now uses a higher concept of mana to amplify itself. The higher the magnitude of the charge, the greater the stamina and mana expenditure. Arcane Powershot's power is dependent on the charging duration, but due to your Arcane Mana's inherent power, the base power without any

charging is significantly higher than Infused Powershot. Adds a small bonus to the effectiveness of Agility and Strength as well as a medium bonus to the effectiveness of Intelligence when using Arcane Powershot.

Jake smiled for a moment as he skimmed the notification before the pain hit. He only now noticed that while he thought he had avoided most of the damage caused by the arcane mana... he hadn't succeeded - far from it.

His arms had purple veins running through them, looking like he had been struck by lightning. It was only now he noticed several bleeding wounds on his chest, and especially his shoulders had been hit hard. There were places where the arcane mana had gathered for a fraction of a second too long before being led to the bow or at least away from his skin, causing these injuries that still sizzled with mana.

Yet through all that pain, he kept smiling because, goddamn, was the arrow he had just sent flying into the horizon powerful.

He took out a health potion and chugged it before finding a new small cloud island to sit on. He wanted to consider what he had just gone through a bit before heading back. Many ideas bounced around in his head as he considered how this new affinity could be used to make him stronger... and without really thinking much, he had already begun condensing an Arcane Bolt in the air.

"BLOCK IT!" the warrior yelled as the large beast was just about to cleave his friend's head off. He swiftly came to the rescue and released the Powershot he had been charging into the side of the beast. It snarled in response, but the arrow barely managed to penetrate its thick hide.

The archer looked desperately around and saw that their healer was already struggling to keep their other warrior from bleeding out. The mage had managed to sear the long hairs of the overpowered beast in front of him, but nothing more.

Truly... they had fucked up by invading the small clearing this beast and its kin occupied. He Identified the absolute monster before them – one much more potent than its level would generally indicate.

[Alpha Venomfang Badger – lvl 67]

“RETREAT!” he yelled as he fired another arrow aiming for the eye of the badger. He just wanted it to leave the warrior alone and give him time to get back. The attack earlier had broken the warrior’s arm as the skill he was using to block had stopped working - the man likely out of stamina.

The archer got its attention as he threw a quick glance at their healer, his look clearly telling her to take the others and run... he would try to buy time. He was the leader of their group... today was his fuck-up, and he would be the one taking responsibility.

She nodded with grave understanding as she yelled for the mage to help her move the other warrior with the broken arm. They began running as the archer barely managed to dodge the swipe from the badger with his evasion skill. He knew it was only a matter of time... but that was fine; he just needed to buy a bit more.

The archer kept battling for the next half a minute until he made a minor slip-up and found himself taking a nasty wound from a flying log the badger threw after him. Another of his fuck-ups was that the beast was far more intelligent than it at first let on.

He smashed into a tree, coughing up blood as his vision turned black for a moment. When his vision fully returned, the beast was closing in, mischievously looking at him as it decided to stop playing with its

prey. The archer just smirked as he closed his eyes, accepting the inevitable... they should have made it aw-

BOOOM!

The entire forest shook as he promptly opened his eyes... and saw a large red crater where the Alpha Venomfang Badger had been moments earlier. A few pink-purple wisps of energy floating in the air, disappearing just seconds later. The archer sat there for a few seconds before asking a very valid question:

“What the fuck?”

You have slain [Alpha Venomfang Badger – lvl 67] - Experience earned

Oops? Jake saw the notification appear a few minutes after firing the shot... as he reconsidered how smart it was to practice shooting very lethal attacks into who-knows-where.

In my defense, it isn't like I have any proper archery ranges anywhere, he thought, 100% justifying his actions.

He kept up his training for a bit as he summoned more and more Arcane Bolts through the night and long into the next day, meditating in between - only returning for the city when it was time for his weekly meeting with Miranda.