

Hunter 199

Chapter 199: Avaricious Arcane Hunter

Jake momentarily basked in the feeling of his new class, even if it was only a few stats gained. But as with the last class upgrade, it came with a bit more than a few stats and a fancy new notification for every new level.

It came with skills. Well, the first of which wasn't really a skill but an upgrade to an existing one.

[Big Game Hunter (Rare)] – A true hunter seeks not the easy prey but a true challenge. Having hunted bigger and stronger prey than most, the Ambitious Hunter has become more accustomed to facing higher-level enemies. Increases the user's resistance to auras and gives a small increase to Strength and Agility while facing enemies above your highest level class or race. The bonus is based on the disparity between the level of your prey and you. Limit of 1.25x your level or 50 levels, whichever is highest. May your hunt be fruitful and your ambitions reached.

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[Big Game Arcane Hunter (Epic)] – A true hunter seeks not the easy prey but a true challenge. Your hunt has taken you further than ever before as your methods improve, and you have embraced the Arcane. The Avaricious Arcane Hunter has, through his many hunts, become more accustomed to facing higher-level enemies. Increases the user's resistance to auras and gives a small increase to Strength, Agility, Intelligence and Willpower while facing enemies above your class or race level. The bonus is based on the disparity between the level of your prey and you. Limit of 1.25x your level or 50 levels, whichever is highest. May your hunt be fruitful and your Avarice sated.

Big Game Hunter was one of those oft-forgotten skills that just did awesome things behind the scenes. It was a noticeable buff that he experienced nearly constantly, making him faster and stronger when fighting enemies of a higher level, aka always.

He hadn't really ever noticed the resistance to auras part of the skill. Still, any increase in stats was always welcome, and now that increase had been extended to also include his intelligence and willpower. In summary: it's free stats. Free stats rule.

With the gained skill first at epic-rarity, he was already quite pleased with himself, and it only got better when he saw that the second skill was epic-rarity too.

[Arcane Hunter's Arrows (Epic)] - A mage and a hunter both, you combine your talents as you conjure your tools of destruction. Allows the Avaricious Arcane Hunter to conjure arrows made of highly-condensed arcane mana, focusing on either destruction or stability. A stable arrow will be sharp and durable, while a destructive arrow will explode upon impact. Conjuring arrows consume mana, and the conjuration is instant. Adds a bonus to the effectiveness of Intelligence and Wisdom when using destructive Arcane Hunter's Arrows. Adds a bonus to the effectiveness of Wisdom and Perception when using stable Arcane Hunter's Arrows.

If Jake had to mention one big weakness he had currently, it would without a doubt be his shitty equipment. Sure, compared to the rest of humanity, he was doing quite well for himself, but as a D-grade powerhouse Progenitor, he was a poor sap.

His new scimitar did help a bit, but the rest of his equipment was still far behind. He was even afraid that his bow would soon become lackluster, and he would become unable to make full use of his Arcane Powershot.

Most of that gear was even rare-rarity, but some were still uncommon-rarity. The worst offender of them all was, of course, his shitty cloak – because it sucked – but a close second was his quiver. It had served him well for a long time, but all his arrows had broken on impact for a long-ass time, and he could already imagine how fragile they would feel in D-grade.

Arcane Hunter's Arrows was pretty much just a new quiver boiled into a skill, except it now scaled with him way more. He was incredibly excited to see the ability to make two different kinds of arrows. Explosive ones would surely be great at handling crowds of enemies or larger foes, while the stable ones would just be great overall.

The stable arrows even scaled with his perception, a stat he could never get enough of. His intelligence for the destructive arrows was a bit low, but it wasn't terrible, and with his new stat-gains from the class, it would surely only improve.

Jake couldn't help but hold out his hand as a pink-purple crystal-like arrow instantly appeared in it. There was barely any visual aspect at all to the skill; the arrow just appeared in his hand almost instantly, just like the description promised.

This arrow was of the stable variety, and it looked and felt entirely solid. It had simple fletching on it and a single-edged arrowhead, making it very suitable for cutting and penetrating. Perfect to deliver poisons with, just like Jake's current arrows. The mana within was entirely sealed, too, making it not affect any poison coated on the arrow at all. It was perfect.

Summoning it had consumed a bit of mana, but outside of doing alchemy, Jake had never ever been close to running out, so it wasn't an issue. Well, there was that time he bombarded that Storm Elemental, but that was a bit of an outlier.

He did a few tests and tried to break the arrow but found it incredibly resilient. To prove his point further, he took out one of the arrows from his quiver, and with only a bit of pressure, easily snapped it in half.

Next, he summoned an arrow of the destructive variety, and instantly he both felt and saw the difference. The arrow itself looked much the same, except for small purple light-bolts crackling within the crystal, and the mana it gave off was also quite a bit more than the stable version. It had also consumed more mana to summon, but it was only about fifty percent more.

He nearly wanted to go out and hunt something then and there, but he decided to be a bit patient. Mainly because he had just seen Mystie and Hawkie entering the valley from above - 200 meters above - due to the insane increase in the range of his Sphere of Perception.

Jake dismissed the arrow and closed his system menus. The class had only given two new skills, which were the same as his Ambitious Hunter one, so it wasn't exactly disappointing. Besides, he had many other skills to upgrade now that he had gained a new class and plenty of D-grade levels to get it done with.

Exiting the lodge with Sylphie, he saw the two parent-hawks landing in a tree beside his lodge and observe him closely. This was the first time they saw him after his evolution, after all, and both were very curious. Jake, in turn, observed them back and used Identify.

[Stormsong Hawk – lvl 102]

Hawkie was level 102, which made sense as he had evolved not long ago. The fact that he had even gained two levels was respectable considering his lack of proper opponents in the area and how much he stayed back at the lodge to be with Sylphie.

Jake reckoned it had had something to do with his journeys to the big tree on the cloud continent above. The hawk liked spending time up there, absorbing the incredibly potent mana the tree gave off.

[Mystsong Hawk – lvl 111]

Mystie was quite a few levels higher, but she had also been D-grade for quite a bit longer. She also clearly gained experience from just practicing her magic, and even when she was just back at the lodge, she kept making magical circles and improving.

Both of them also looked at him, and both seemed partly confused and partly relieved.

“What’s up?” he asked them and got some wing-flapping, pointing and screeching, and even a few colored flashes of mana back in return, perfectly explaining what their concerns were.

“Oh yeah, we humans don’t change much in appearance when evolving. It’s what’s inside that matters, you know?” Jake said a bit jokingly. “But if you have any concerns about the effects... how about a quick test? I would love to stretch a bit and get a feel for my body after the evolution.”

Jake rolled his shoulders as he felt the power in his every move. He really wanted to go practice a bit, and he had two true-blue D-grades right in front of him to have a quick bout with.

Hawkie and Mystie looked at each other for a minute before agreeing. They were also curious about Jake’s evolution.

“Ree!” Sylphie screeched out as she puffed herself up. The three D-grades looked at the level 27 bird and shook their heads, Jake deciding to be the one to break the unfortunate news.

“Sorry, Sylphie, adults only. When you grow up, I am sure you will be a force to be reckoned with, but it isn’t your time yet,” Jake said, watching the small hawk deflate a bit with every word as she looked up at him with her big eyes.

He couldn’t help but pet her head a bit, and even if that made her a bit happy, it clearly didn’t dispel her disappointment. The two hawks jumped over and also made some encouraging yet stern bird noises, making Sylphie both deflate but also look more determined than before.

She screeched at all three of them as she jumped back, summoned some wind magic around herself, and began practicing right there and then. While Jake surely appreciated the sentiment, he wasn’t so sure about seeing the ground and a few trees be cut up by green-tinged blades of wind.

The lodge is protected, so it should be fine, he thought as he shook his head. He threw a glance at the two D-grade hawks who both took to the air with him as they flew towards the cloud continent.

Jake’s evolution was immediately obvious as he flew faster than ever before. He was outpacing Mystie, who was even using magic to make herself fly faster, with Hawkie still a bit faster than Jake, but that was expected considering speed was the male hawk’s greatest strength.

It didn’t take them long before they landed on the massive cloud continent – a human and two hawks. All the birds in the area scurried away when they saw them, not daring to get near. One D-grade was enough to scare them off, with three being enough to make them consider just leaving the island outright.

Jake stared at the two hawks that had landed opposite him as he dispelled his wings and smiled. “Aight, ready when you are.”

The two hawks gave each other a quick look before they attacked with what was clearly a practiced move. Jake smiled a bit, seeing how the two hawks were clearly used to fighting together. Mystie being a grade ahead had hampered their ability to fight as a party, but now that they were both D-grade, they could do it again. It also answered some of his questions about what they had been doing when away.

Myst formed around Jake as he felt the energy press down on him to limit his movements, and a giant blade of wind crackling with lightning headed straight towards his head. Jake smiled, happy to see the two birds not taking him lightly, but it was far from enough – he could have easily handled this in E-grade, much less now.

Jake pushed away the myst-pressure with a bit of his own mana as he took a step forward, instantly teleporting back more than 100 meters. While his Sphere of Perception had given him quite the headache – literally – now that he had adapted to it far more, he could in no way discount its value.

With Jake easily having dodged the attack, he took out his bow and fired an arrow. He was actually a bit taken aback as he did it because he hadn't really thought but just moved. As he reached for the string, an arrow had just appeared between his fingers and had been nocked before swiftly released.

The arrow flew through the air towards Mystie, but it encountered a barrier of magic. If it had been Jake's old arrows, it would have broken on impact... but these weren't his normal arrows. The crystalline arrow pierced into the barrier, and after only a bit of resistance, shattered it.

Ultimately, it missed as it had been redirected slightly from the small form of the hawk, but it was enough to make her open her eyes with fright as she became aware of their power. Jake had already nocked another arrow at his point and fired it towards Mystie before moving to block another wind of blade from Hawkie.

A scimitar appeared in his hand as he cut apart the blade, parting the clouds below. Simultaneously, the second arrow arrived at Mystie, who swiftly dodged it, but the moment it was right beside her, Jake smirked as he triggered it.

BOOM!

The arrow exploded, sending Mystie tumbling through the air before she quickly stabilized herself, her eyes even wider than before. Hawkie tried to come to her assistance as he summoned a tornado of wind and lightning, tearing up the entire cloud continent in a radius of over 30 meters around Jake.

He was out of it with a single step, but the tornado quickly followed after him, Hawkie attacking with wind blades and exploding thunderbolts meanwhile. Mystie had now managed to stabilize herself, and a giant magic circle was condensing above her as she charged up a magical attack.

Jake smiled as he turned his attention fully to Hawkie, allowing Mystie to do as she pleased – already looking forward to facing her attack. He charged towards Hawkie with Jake's blade practically screaming at him to be fed. Sadly for it, today was not one where he planned to sate it.

He used One Step Mile to travel across the cloud, being even faster than Hawkie at his maximum speed, if far less maneuverable. Predicting where Hawkie would move, Jake appeared right below the hawk, quickly jumping into the air as he landed his eyes on his feathery friend.

Hawkie froze up from Gaze of the Apex Hunter as he fell through the air, and just as he was about to be able to move, an all-too-familiar net of mana strings wrapped around him. The hawk was ready, however, and released a blast of storm-mana to blow it apart, an-

The strings remained as Hawkie saw Jake throw him a cheeky smile. That is when Hawkie noticed the string binding him weren't the normal transparent ones but made up of the same mana Jake's arrows consisted of.

Jake flung Hawkie down into the air cloud continent as he kicked upwards unto a hastily constructed barrier of mana, sending him down towards the hawk. Hawkie tried to dodge but failed as a blade penetrated down into the cloud continent right beside the hawk's small head.

"My win," Jake said as he turned his attention back to the giant magic circle coalescing in the air. He smiled as he took a step away from Hawkie, appearing nearly 200 meters away as he took out his bow again.

Briefly, his gaze met with Mystie, but he chose not to freeze her. He wanted to face her attack as Jake himself began charging his Arcane Powershot. Hawkie stayed put, even if he wasn't really injured. While he wouldn't have died even with a blade through his skull, it would have put him out of commission long enough for Jake to kill him easily, so he had already accepted his loss.

All the Cloud Island inhabitants watched on in fright from a safe distance as the two D-grades released insane amounts of energy. The entire scene seemed to pause for five or so seconds as both just charged their attacks.

BOOM! BOOM!

Two giant explosions sounded out simultaneously as a massive beam of highly-condensed myst-mana was fired down towards the lone human standing on the cloud continent – a human that returned a single crystalline arrow in response, arcane mana swirling around it, leaving pink-purple light in its wake.

A third explosion – even larger than the two prior – rang out as the two attacks met, making the air and the cloud island below have a huge part of it blown apart. The beam managed to hold back the arrow for a bit but was soon overpowered as the arrow continued towards Mystie. At the final moment, she managed to summon a shield of myst.

The arrow shattered the moment it hit the barrier, already weakened from the beam earlier.

Mystie was relieved until she saw Jake below – arcane mana already swirling around him as his second Arcane Powershot was ready to go.

“My win?” he asked cheekily, the Mystsong Hawk deflating not unlike her daughter had done less than half an hour earlier.

The birds and elementals gathered around the area where the three D-grades had battled, a huge crater in the cloud continent just below where the two mighty attacks had clashed. A Cloud Elemental noticed a small pink-purple spark still floating in the air from where the human D-grade had attacked, and feeling the energy within, moved to touch it.

“OOO!”

It made a screaming noise as a large part of its arm was instantly annihilated from the faint wisp of arcane mana, burning into its body before the remnant arcane mana ran out of energy.

Some attentive birds saw this and quickly designated the entire area off-limits for now, swiftly retreating to the cloud island's outer edges, all of them thinking the same thing:

Humans are scary.