

Hunter 208

Chapter 208: Dervish

Sometimes in life, one must take the good with the bad, and disappointment was an unavoidable element of existence. To be honest, Jake shouldn't really have been disappointed, though, as it was a bit unrealistic to expect it to work...

But damn it, Jake wanted his Splitting Arrow to also duplicate the poison. Was that really too much to ask?

Shortly after upgrading the skill, Jake had with much excitement tried putting his blood on the arrow – the type of poison most aligned with himself and his mana – and tried duplicating it with Enhanced Splitting Arrow. It did exactly the same as the normal Splitting Arrow, with only the “real” one retaining the poison.

No big deal, Jake had thought. He was already on a roll and had just upgraded the skill in rarity, so couldn't he just keep working on it and upgrade it again? Allow it to also duplicate poison on it?

Jake wasn't even going to be greedy... it was fine if it only worked with his blood. That shouldn't be so hard, right?

Wrong.

It was damn impossible. No matter what Jake tried, nothing worked. The poison simply wasn't at all considered as any part of the “arrow”, so it didn't duplicate. It wasn't an issue of resources or methods...

the skill just wasn't compatible at all with what he wanted it to do. It was like trying to use his Brew Potion to make a shotgun...

Well, there was one consolation to it all, at least. A lot of dead monkeys. A lot. Even a good bunch of D-grades, allowing Jake to net his first real level in his class after reaching D-grade.

'DING!' Class: [Avaricious Arcane Hunter] has reached level 101 - Stat points allocated, +10 free points

Jake checked the quest to see how much time he had before the World Congress and noticed that he had a bit over four days left still. It would take him a few hours to get back to the city with how far he had traveled, but that still meant he had plenty of time to explore the rest of the monkey-infested area of the forest he found himself in.

Where he was now, he nearly only saw D-grades, and almost all enemies were monkeys. The vast majority were the normal Tri-Lighttail Monkeys, but there were also plenty of Crushers and even another one called a Suppressor. Yeah... their names weren't exactly subtle. To the surprise of no one, the Suppressors specialized in suppressing things with their weight magic.

Besides those two, there was also another variant. One Jake was looking at right at that moment.

[Tri-Lighttail Dervish – lvl 123]

It was tall and slender with three tails like all the other monkeys, but its tails themselves were different. While the Crusher had far bulkier ones, the Dervish had tails that looked almost flat. Jake had wondered why they looked like that, but he soon learned the reason.

When Jake came across the group of monkeys, they were in the middle of a battle against another beast. A large bulky bear that was almost ten meters long and had to weigh many tons. Sadly for the bear, its large size became a detriment to it.

[Brownhide Ursine – lvl 131]

The beast was pelted by literal shit by the D-grade monkeys and was slowed down as its weight was forcibly increased. Its hide grew harder as it tried to shield itself, but all it did was limit its own mobility further as it got covered in feces.

It tried roaring, sending a wave of force out, but the monkeys hid away up in the trees and just jeered and laughed at it. Jake didn't like their way of fighting, but he still chose not to interfere. He didn't like interfering in the fights of others even more, and besides, the Dervish looked like it was about to make its move.

Jake saw it leap off the tree it was on, and instantly it accelerated manyfold as it quickly fell the nearly 150 meters down towards the bear.

During its descent, it spun around itself, and its three tails were rotating at a tremendous speed as it landed right in front of the bear. The three tails tore into the bear, acting like three whip-like blades, sending blood flying everywhere and making the bear roar in pain and anger.

The suppressed beast instantly began burning with energy as it entered some kind of enraged state, and for a brief moment, it managed to shrug off the weight-increasing effect and move. It attacked the

Dervish before it, and when Jake saw its paw land, he thought the monkey would be done for... but instead, it was just sent flying.

Like if the bear had punched a feather, the Dervish harmlessly flew away and landed on the ground. It had a few bloody marks left by the claws, but the impact itself seemed to have barely affected it. At least it decided to counterattack immediately.

It rushed towards the bear with frightening speed, and using a weird spinning technique, it quickly cut into the far larger beast.

Definitely an agility-focused beast, Jake thought as he saw the bear slowly be finished off. The Dervish inflicted many wounds in quick succession, but it wasn't exactly a fast killer. In the end, two Crushers joined in when the bear became too weak to put up any resistance at all, quickly finishing the fight.

Just as the monkeys stood triumphantly and cheered, something descended from above.

BOOM!

An arcane arrow fell from atop one of the tallest trees, right through the skull of the one Suppressor that had been the primary force to suppress the bear. It didn't even have time to react before its life was ended, and with its demise, panic quickly spread among the monkeys.

A second arrow arrived a few moments later, hitting one of the regular D-grades right in its noggin, blowing its head off and ending yet another life. The remnant energy of the Arcane Powershot evident as the air itself seemed to vibrate.

Sadly for Jake, that was the last easy kill as all the monkeys had now managed to take cover, and he didn't have time to charge another Powershot for a one-shot. He had wanted to fly above the forest before to more easily bombard them from above but found that the crowns of the trees made it impossible. It wasn't just a question of his sight being physically obstructed either, as clearly the crowns formed some kind of barrier sealing off the forest. Like a giant naturally formed array or magic circle, the entire forest protected itself from attacks from above. Which, in retrospect, probably made a lot of sense with powerful flying beasts everywhere. Or, you know, winged humans with bows.

The trees themselves were also damn tough, especially the largest ones. Jake couldn't even destroy them if he wanted to... it was like being back in the tutorial during the first days, where just penetrating the bark with a dagger was a damn struggle.

It likely had something to do with the mana intensity being different here. Everything was just tougher, and D-grades were aplenty. Just how he wanted it.

With his wings out, he flew around the trunks of the trees and loosed arrow after arrow towards the monkeys below, every single one of them exploding whenever they hit a monkey or a tree. A few monkeys were even taken by surprise when the exploding arrow suddenly duplicated, and instead of one nearly-lethal explosion, it became three very-much lethal explosions.

To Jake, the regular D-grade monkeys just weren't worth much. They were too slow and too weak to pose any real threat, and the entire Lighttail species hadn't shown themselves very robust yet. They were a race that focused on not getting hit to begin with, while Jake was quite good at hitting stuff.

He had to deal with a total of 11 normal Tri-Lighttail Monkeys, 1 Crusher, and 1 Dervish. That is after killing one of the Crushers and a few of the normal ones, of course.

Jake had already decided to save the Dervish for last... if it allowed him to.

A single figure stood on the ground below, 500 meters down. Bending its legs, it jumped.

Wha? Jake barely managed to think as he had to do a flap of his wings to dodge to the side as two blade-like tails flew by.

The Dervish tore through the air, and just as it hit the top of the forest, it turned and landed on only a few leaves of the long branches as if it was solid ground. With another mighty jump, it once more flew like a meteor towards Jake, but this time the hunter was ready.

Jake looked up at it and used Gaze of the Apex Predator as the Scimitar of Cursed Hunger appeared in his hand. It froze up just as Jake swung the blade and smashed it into the side of the beast. He felt his blade cut a bit into his target, but after barely managing to leave a wound, he felt all resistance disappear as if he was striking something without any mass – or in this case – weight.

The Dervish was sent flying away, and just as Jake was about to take out his bow, he saw it purposefully bounce off a tree and behind another, clearly fearing his arrows that had killed several of its brethren earlier.

You don't like magical attacks, eh? Jake thought, understanding their weakness. Blunt force or even cuts did little to the Dervish, but an exploding arcane arrow was a whole other story. Well, not like the other monkeys fared that much better. Very few things weren't susceptible to being blown up.

Jake just switched to another monkey with his target lost as he began killing off the regular D-grade Lighttails below, patiently waiting for the Dervish to make its next move. He could feel its attention on him as it looked for a chance to strike.

To make it a bit harder for the quick monkey, Jake made sure to fly around the different trees to never give it a straight line of attack while he whittled down the monkeys that were quickly rushing up towards him. He had to dodge quite a few blasts of force and shrug off quite a few waves of weight-increasing mana, but he managed to get quite a few kills in return.

However, soon the monkeys had managed to climb up the trees and reach him, and he had to contend with several of them leaping between the trees and trying to hit him. A single one was easy enough, but when five came at once, shit got difficult.

Luckily, he had quite a few tricks up his sleeve to handle it.

The wings on his back began glowing a dark green color as they began emanating a dark toxic gas. Jake had mixed a bit of dark-affinity mana into the poison, and soon large parts of the treetops were covered in a layer of dark smoke.

This made it significantly harder for the monkeys to strike back, while Jake honestly barely noticed the dark cloud. He had learned quite a while ago that his perception alone made him able to peer through many magical obstructions of sight, and even if it didn't, he was quite accustomed to dark mana anyway.

Moreover, when the monkeys passed through the cloud, they were ever-so-slowly infected by the poison. The poison didn't actually do much damage, and even the effects of the dark-affinity weren't noticeable to them... no, the real value lay in Jake being able to detect them far more easily.

Sense of the Malefic Viper allowed him to effortlessly sense poison he had inflicted, and the poison fumes from his wings naturally counted. It was technically just his burned blood, after all.

Jake used everything in his arsenal as he slaughtered the entire group of D-grades. Bolts of arcane mana flew around, exploding arrows, and the occasional Powershot tore up the entire section of the forest he was in. None of them posed any threat besides the Dervish.

Well, the Crusher would hurt like hell if it managed to strike him, but Jake was never in any real danger of that happening. It was slower than even the regular monkeys and didn't have much chance of pinning him down. They kept trying to ground him by sending their weight-increasing waves of mana, but Jake countered that by constantly releasing disruptive waves of mana around himself. Was this damn draining on his mana pool? Yes, it sure was, but Jake was a bit of a cheat when it came to that.

A single mana potion restored more than 10000 mana with the bonus from Palate included, allowing his entire mana pool to effectively be above 40000. His mask increasing his mana recovery to a large amount sure also helped.

Even though Jake countered the beasts quite hard and that they were all weak for D-grades, it still took a while to put them all down. D-grades were still D-grades, and unless he landed a lethal blow with Arcane Powershot, they took quite a bit to put down for good.

The Crusher was the second-to-last to fall as only a single enemy remained. In its final moments, the Crusher had managed to make Jake dodge a direction he would prefer not to, and it put him right in the crosshairs of the Dervish.

SWOOSH!

A figure zoomed by him, and Jake failed to fully dodge the blow as the two tails seemed to extend just as it was about to hit him, leaving him a nasty cut on his stomach and chest when the beast passed by. He barely had time to stabilize himself in the air before it struck again, this time finding itself countered like the first time it tried this tactic.

Jake looked over at it and made it freeze with Gaze of the Apex Hunter. Yet the beast had learned a little as it was already spinning at high speed, effectively making itself a sawblade soaring through the air towards him.

The hunter dodged to the side as he extended both his hands out beside him, a net of mana strings woven between them. The spinning tails cut through many of them, but a few remained as the monkey was stopped mid-air.

With a slight smile, Jake infused a bit more arcane mana into the strings as stability was broken and turned to destruction.

BOOM!

The entire net exploded, searing the Dervish as it screamed in pain. Jake himself wasn't unscathed as he was also hit by the large explosion, but the scales covering his body took most of the blow. Besides, it was his own arcane mana, and he had plenty of experience being hurt by that already.

Without any momentum and hurt pretty badly, the Dervish was forced to descend to the ground as it accelerated itself downward to try and get away. Jake quickly followed as he flew only a few meters to the side and onto a tree.

Standing horizontally, he took a step as he traveled down the length of the tree, appearing on the ground just below where the monkey would land as it accelerated down towards him.

He didn't have time to fire an arrow, but he did have time to take out his sword as he met the descending beast. It had managed to notice him, too, as it spun around itself and attacked.

Cling *cling* *cling* *cling* *cling*

With his scimitar, he blocked the spinning blade-like tails, finding himself forced back a bit. Taking another step back, he exchanged several blows with the tails as the monkey hissed, and Jake felt the weight of each blade rapidly increase. At the same time, he felt his own blade become heavier with every block.

Jake took a step forward as he once more used Gaze of the Apex Hunter, a few droplets of blood flowing from his eyes at this point from overusing the skill within a short amount of time. However, it was fine as he was about to finish the fight.

He moved in between two spinning tails, the monkey unable to move them as it stood frozen for a moment longer. With both hands on his blade, he raised it high as he stabbed down towards the skull of the monkey, swirling dark mana around the edge.

Descending Dark Fang

Not unlike a giant spike of dark mana, his blade penetrated through its skull and out the other side at the base of the Dervish's neck.

The still-spinning blades managed to land a few more cuts on him, and it managed to scratch his scales a bit in an instinctive reaction, but the monkey was unable to do anything more as its life ended.

You have slain [Tri-Lighttail Dervish – lvl 123] – Bonus experience earned for killing an enemy above your level

Jake pulled out the blade as he stumbled back, sitting down on the ground as he breathed out heavily, a smile on his face. Individually these monkeys weren't that hard dealing with, but damn, was there a lot of them.

Still smiling, he checked his notifications.

'DING!' Class: [Avaricious Arcane Hunter] has reached level 102 - Stat points allocated, +10 free points

'DING!' Race: [Human (D)] has reached level 102 - Stat points allocated, +15 free points

Another level. D-grade was quite a bit slower, but Jake knew what he was doing was exactly what he was meant to. He was hunting higher-leveled enemies, using Mark of the Ambitious Hunter on every enemy, and even killing foes more than twenty levels above himself.

Standing up once more, he did a few stretches as he leaped up one of the trees and begun his journey further into the domain of the Lighttails. With so many of them... something good was bound to be in the innermost area.