

Hunter 210

Chapter 210: Rules of Monkey Hunting

There are a few rules one must remember when invading an ancient temple and the surrounding area run by supernatural many-tailed monkeys that can use weird weight magic. Forgetting these rules may lead to being covered in unnaturally heavy feces or just be smashed or cut up by a monkey tail.

The first rule was to stay high and avoid the ground. Being able to move in three dimensions against enemies unable to fly was an incredible advantage and made it far easier to deal with issues arising from breaking the second rule.

Lighttail Monkeys aren't the strongest individually, but fighting a crowd of them is what in the hunting industry is called a very bad time. They buffed each other up while slowing you down, allowing their strikers in the form of Crushers or Dervishes to finish you off. So the second rule was to always only engage small groups at a time, and if possible, isolated prey.

The third rule was to always make sure the Prima wasn't around because the Prima was clearly the big boss. One should always save the big boss for last – this is just basic hunting protocol and best practice. Always remember: kill from weakest to strongest. It was a bit like how you don't eat your dessert before the main dish, no matter how tasty it looks. He would have to make do with all the Beastcores he collected from their corpses after the fight so far.

Then we have the fourth rule, one quite unique to Jake. It was a rule that invalidated the prior three if followed adequately every time, even if it often was a bit difficult to follow. The rule was actually quite straightforward: always kill with a single shot.

A rule Jake was actually doing incredibly well not breaking currently.

An arrow tore through the terrain as it narrowly passed in between trees in its flight. Its target was just relaxing on a branch, keeping an eye out for any potential invaders to swiftly strike down. It was a Dervish, a creature that rarely found worthy challenges this far into their domain. It was too relaxed, too unaware... though it was doubtful if its preparedness would have made a difference.

It noticed too late as it tried to move. Tried because it suddenly felt like it had been thrown into an icy pit with a predator – nay, hunter - staring down at it, penetrating into its soul. The nearly one-meter-long arrow arrived as it penetrated deep into the creature without any issues, releasing intense amounts of destructive energy. If that wasn't enough, the arrow was even coated with incredibly potent poison and fired with the ridiculously powerful Arcane Powershot.

To strike down a beast nearly 30 levels above yourself in a single strike was a rarity, especially in D-grade, where every level mattered even more. But coupled with the low resilience of the agility-focused Dervish and the power of the attack, it was made possible.

You have slain [Tri-Lighttail Dervish – lvl 131] – Bonus experience earned for killing an enemy above your level

The arrow he had used was naturally his Arrow of the Ambitious Hunter, and it had been quite easily summoned the moment he tried. He had hoped the summoning time would reduce after reaching D-grade, but it had stayed the same... but that couldn't be said about the power.

Without noticing, the already overpowered arrow had gotten better. A large element of the arrow was the destructive energy it contained, and through Jake's arcane-affinity, Jake had come to understand that type of energy quite a bit better. While it wasn't exactly the same type of concept, it was close enough so that the arrow simply accepted when he poured in a bit of arcane mana.

Not too much, or it would destabilize the arrow, but just a little - a far cry from ever being enough to upgrade the skill, but more than enough to make it just a little better.

With the Dervish dead, this leads one to consider the fifth and final rule of hunting Lighttail Monkeys, one very important to remember in conjunction with rules four and two. This rule was that after making a kill: fucking run. Because the tribe would be coming.

Jake swiftly flew away as he made sure to hide behind trees and stay high as he could hear the screeching monkeys off in the distance. His way of killing wasn't the most subtle as Arcane Powershot was quite flashy by nature, so he had to quickly get away. There was even a faint trail of mana in the air between where he had fired from, and some of the more acute monkeys detected and followed that trail.

By the time they arrived, Jake was already long gone.

As they kept searching, the monkeys naturally splitting up as they looked for the intruder that had killed one of their brethren, perhaps too dumb or too confident to believe they would meet the same fate. Either way, that belief was clearly not well-founded as less than ten minutes after the first Dervish died, a Crusher found an Arrow of the Ambitious Hunter striking it from behind, killing it instantly.

Another kill kicked up another uproar as even more monkeys joined the search, yet it was all for naught as Jake was already way ahead of them. He flew around up high among the crowns of the trees, constantly hidden behind thick branches and his cloak providing extra camouflage.

The only times he went down the trunks of the trees was to fire a Powershot using the Arrow of the Ambitious Hunter. Before going up the tree, he would place a Mark of the Ambitious Hunter on his next chosen target, using that to summon the arrow, much like how he did with the Indigo Mushroom.

Jake had to be honest that while this method wasn't that fast, it was relatively safe. The Prima spent nearly all its time in the temple itself and didn't appear to care at all what was going on around it, while the Matriarchs spent most of their time trying to hold back the weak monkeys in their care from joining the search.

At times, the monkeys got quite close to Jake, but he had a few more tricks up his sleeve to stay hidden.

Nearly three kilometers from where he was, the top of one of the smaller trees exploded with arcane mana, and the monkey that had come to investigate the source of mana it detected was sent flying. Not long after, another explosion shook the ground even further away, drawing even more attention.

Finally, a third explosion exploded right in the middle of a group of D-grade monkeys, but this one was far larger than the ones prior. The reason for this simple... the ones before were created by conjuring Arcane Bolts and stabbing them into trees, knowing they would explode within a few minutes with their unstable mana, while the last explosion was caused by three exploding Arcane Hunter's Arrows, fired with a Splitting Arrow.

The monkeys were injured but not dead, though that was just a temporary issue for Jake. An issue that was further alleviated as arrows rained down on them from a tree far away, the D-grade Monkey's bodies occasionally freezing when they tried to dodge as they were pierced. All four of them died within less than a dozen seconds, far from long enough for the more powerful monkeys to move for the human firing the shots.

This entire dynamic of Jake striking like a shadow from atop the trees continued for over a day. He consumed a potion every single hour nearly on the second as he tried to keep his resources stable. Jake quickly found that the extra regeneration from his mask was even more effective than back in his city, boosting his combat endurance to a ridiculous level.

It was after this full day of killing that one of the big pillars of the monkey community made a move. The four Matriarchs always had at least a dozen Dervishes, Crushers, and Suppressors around them to ensure their safety, making Jake choose to ignore them for now.

Besides, for every hour that passed, he got stronger. Both by being more familiar with his strength and making even more rapid progress with his archery and mana control, but also just in pure tangible levels. His notification menu easy proof of that.

'DING!' Class: [Avaricious Arcane Hunter] has reached level 104 - Stat points allocated, +10 free points

'DING!' Race: [Human (D)] has reached level 103 - Stat points allocated, +15 free points

'DING!' Class: [Avaricious Arcane Hunter] has reached level 105 - Stat points allocated, +10 free points

After reaching level 105 in his class and putting all the free points he had gained into agility, the stat became his second-highest, naturally still far behind perception. Jake felt like it was worth it for now. He had also begun noticing some other peculiarities of the entire area.

The entire temple and everything around it felt... old. Ancient. It wasn't just that it was likely architecture taken from old Earth either; it was something about the mana in the air. The entire aura of the place just felt off.

But back to the whole Matriarch on the move thing... yeah, one of those massive monkeys had chosen to personally try and hunt down whatever was killing all its children. Jake at least assumed it was so, as,

for some reason, it looked even more pissed than any of the other beasts like it had been holding itself back for far too long.

Followed by its entourage of guards, it made its way into the forest, away from the safety of the main temple and the one foe Jake was truly wary of. Jake did a careful count and saw 7 Dervishes, 4 Crushers, and 3 Suppressors with it at all times.

This was too many enemies for Jake to handle at once, so he would have to do a bit of picking off before engaging the Matriarch herself. He was actually thankful that she had left the small monkeys behind at the temple area, as Jake really didn't feel like killing them. He would have been able to just swiftly remove them with Gaze of the Apex Hunter... but that would just feel wrong.

Jake began carefully preparing himself as the Matriarch moved further and further away from the temple, moving slower than even the bulky Crushers.

His preparations consisted of preparing his arrows after overcoming an issue that he proved itself not really to actually be an issue at all. Jake had summoned all his Arcane Hunter's Arrows while drawing his bow before, which made poisoning them quite tricky for obvious reasons.

He had considered how to fix this, and how before he could just prepare the arrows and put them back in his quiver... which made him wonder why he couldn't just keep doing that. While it didn't work with his explosive arrows as they would explode within a few minutes of summoning no matter what, his stable arrows could stay summoned for a while with no problem.

So all he had to do was just not conjure any arrows in his old Uncommon-rarity quiver but fill it with his pre-poisoned arcane arrows. Shit, he even found that the quiver helped them not leak as much mana as before, allowing them to stay summoned even longer if he stored them in it. There was the one issue of

not being able to keep them in his spatial storage like his old arrows, but that was honestly just such a minor thing.

The upgrade to Malefic Viper's Poison had even made it so his poisoned arrows would now stay nice and toxic even longer than before. When the skill was rare-rarity, the coating would only stay effective for around half an hour, while it would last over an hour now.

This resulted in Jake carrying a quiver with around 50 stable arcane arrows coated with his best Necrotic Poison. His blood was nearly as good, but not quite, so he went with the best he had for maximum killing efficiency.

The reason for all this preparation was because he knew he couldn't pick off all the monkeys around the Matriarch one by one... but he would make it into a long fight to his advantage. He had confidence in his own endurance and even more confidence in his ability to slowly poison his foes and bring them down in a prolonged battle.

Of course, as always, the first shot would be an Arrow of the Ambitious Hunter, though – also nicely coated in his poison. His goal for that arrow was the Matriarch herself. Not to kill her, but because he had noticed how defensive the monkeys were of her... so if he could heavily injure her, he was 100% sure some of them would stay behind and not chase him. Maybe they would even try and jump in to block blows meant for her later on... either way, he thought it was a sound strategy.

With the arrow summoned and everything ready, he did something he hadn't felt a need to do so yet in D-grade. Energy began building up deep inside as the flow of internal energy sped up, and his body began overflowing with strength.

At the same time, all effects of his hiding were gone as he practically projected his presence far and wide around him. Limit Break was only active at the safe and not-so-tiring 10%, but it was a massive boost nevertheless.

With Limit Break active, the monkeys noticed him, but he was still not within their line of sight... he had calculated his timing enough to avoid that. Jake raised his bow as Arcane Powershot began charging, and he released the string only when he felt the bow about to reach the limits of its durability.

The arrow tore through the terrain as it headed towards the group of monkeys, now many kilometers from their home temple. As it was about to arrive, Jake strained himself as he had to freeze not only the Matriarch but also 4 of the 7 Dervishes as they tried to block the attack with their bodies. Jake knew Arrow of the Ambitious Hunter would only work on the Matriarch as she was the target, so hitting it was essential to his plan.

His eyes hurt as he found the Matriarch especially hard to freeze, and she also became able to move again far faster than any of the Dervishes. Sadly, she was too slow and still ended up being hit in the belly with the arrow, screaming out in pain as it tore into her, leaving an extensive, gaping, poisoned wound.

From there, the real fight began. Jake instantly drew the string again and used Arcane Powershot with one of the poisoned arrows from his quiver. He didn't do much charging but just fired and used Gaze on a Dervish, striking it in the chest, sending it flying, and poisoning it.

He repeated this, blood already running down his cheeks from overusing Gaze, but it was necessary.

Once all 7 Dervishes were hit... he ran. His wings spread open behind him, a cloud of poison spreading in his wake. The occasional poisoned arrow or explosive arcane arrow pelting those that chased him. A

blade striking from behind a tree as they thought they had caught up to him. A hand grasping a neck, teleporting next to one sitting tired on a branch.

To the monkeys, this entire area was still their domain - their home where they stood at the apex and the human that had come but another invader to slay. But this foolish assumption would prove fatal... because what had come was not just another invader, but a hunter. And unbeknownst to them, they were nothing more than prey.