

Hunter 211

Chapter 211: Matriarchs

A massive crash sounded out throughout the forest as a tree nearly 300 meters tall toppled over. The wooden behemoth that would ordinarily be borderline impossible to take down looked old and worn, its bark with many black rotten spots throughout, especially in the section that had been broken as a massive tail smashed into it.

Dust and soil flew up everywhere before being cleared by an explosion caused by a blast of force and an arcane arrow colliding. Blood was sizzling on the ground many places in the area, mixed in with non-toxic blood and flesh left by the over a dozen dead monkeys scattered everywhere.

Jake rolled and kicked up a bit of this blood-covered ground as he dodged the fly-by of a sluggish-looking Dervish. As it flew by, the long cuts on both his arms spewed out blood drops that hit it while it was also diving through the ever-present poisonous mist from his wings.

He smirked as he saw it collide with a tree nearby, its senses severely weakened due to its many injuries and constant exposure to his toxins.

It was nearly three hours ago that Jake first engaged the Matriarch.

One slightly annoying thing he had noticed was that the damn Matriarch was actually more of a mix between a Crusher and a healer than just a pure support-beast. It had managed to heal its own wounds and even counteract some of the poison he had spread, making the fight even more prolonged than he would have hoped.

To his advantage, though, he did discover that the Matriarch had quite the lacking mana pool. Or maybe it was just because it used all its magic too liberally, not hesitating to try and cure the poison Jake inflicted on its children, even healing many of their wounds.

This had lead to Jake shifting to a hemotoxin-based fighting style. To simply poison and bleed them out while always staying a step ahead.

Because he was a well-rounded fighter with high stats across the board, he could constantly adapt. He was durable enough to tank a blow when necessary, his resource-pools large enough so that he would not run out of magic or physical strength, his vitality high enough so that he could keep his body healthy, and his offensive power powerful, be it magic or physical blows that he chose to use.

The Suppressors required one to swiftly strike them down as they had weak defenses but could debilitate even Jake if he allowed them to stack up their weight-increasing magic for too long. Those were the ones he focused on first, killing them with potent poison and Arcane Powershots, not allowing the Matriarch to save them.

Crushers were relatively tanky and dealt significant damage, but they were the slowest of the bunch, not counting the Matriarch herself. For the most part, he could ignore them and just slowly poison and bleed them out. With the Suppressors gone, they simply had no way to ever catch him. At that point, they just became walking mana-drainers for the Matriarch.

Dervishes were overall the most annoying to handle. While they indeed were weak defensively, they were incredibly fast and hit insanely hard, making them ideal strikers. With seven of them on his tail, Jake was forced to fight them directly at times as kiting them was simply out of the question. The only good thing was that they couldn't fly and were so fast that they could pretty much only attack in a straight line when they leaped for him.

He had already gone over the Matriarch, the one he was saving for absolutely last. She was incredibly tanky, could heal herself and others, and hit even harder than the Crushers – the fallen tree evidence of that – and could even do a bit of supportive magic. The downside was that.. holy damn was she slow. Coupled with a few monkeys, always staying close to defend her made it far easier to kite them.

If Jake was honest, then the group of monkeys would be more dangerous if they just abandoned the Matriarch and all went straight for him. Sadly for them, they hadn't done that but allowed him to poison them all over several hours.

The fight was now in its final stages, with only a single Crusher, two Dervishes, and the Matriarch left standing. All incredibly injured.

Jake himself wasn't all fine and dandy either, his clothes cut up and with several long cuts all over his body, including one several centimeters deep, streaking across his entire chest – the result of a Dervish getting him real good.

His health was already below half, and that was after drinking a health potion just ten minutes ago. He had also consumed two mana potions throughout the fight to keep up his constant bombardment of arcane arrows, poison mist, and even the occasional blood-covered Arcane Bolt for good measure.

He smiled as he blocked a tail from a Dervish with his Venomfang while swinging the Scimitar of Cursed Hunger with the other. He cut the one remaining Crusher by extending the blade with an arcane edge, tearing open its stomach.

As he did the damage, a flow of energy was absorbed from the beast and delivered into him, restoring a bit of his health as some minor wounds on his body healed. The blade had proven very valuable in these kinds of prolonged battles.

The Crusher fell back from the blow, the Matriach trying to push out a bit more mana to heal it. At the same time, Jake took a step forward but teleported back with One Step Mile, avoiding the blow of yet another Dervish that came flying in.

It was a desperate battle for the side of the monkeys. Jake had outlasted all of them, and none could put up even half of their total power by now. Their insides were more mush than flesh, and blood was flowing from all their orifices. Yet none retreated.

That was a tendency Jake had noticed many beasts had when heavily poisoned. They didn't flee but instead just tried to kill him even more desperately. He had theorized before it was because they believed the poison would stop if he died, and he was only getting more and more sure of that. It was actually a good indicator that these monkeys were incredibly dumb – if them deciding to chase a poison-spreading human for hours wasn't proof enough of that.

The monkeys had also given up their last-ditch suicide tactic where they amplified their auras. Jake had found a way to break that already and just One Step Mile away, leading to a Crusher and two Dervishes effectively just killing themselves with their own auras. A bit funny, actually, depending on how black your humor is.

Dodging yet another whirling blow of tails from a Dervish, Jake managed to cut off one of them before the monkey could reinforce it with energy, and as it was distracted by the pain he grabbed hold of it with his other hand, holding it down to the ground. Touch of the Malefic Viper activated as the poison spread in the beast, and with a good squeeze, he heard a crack as the Dervish's neck broke. Now the only two foes left were a heavily injured Matriarch and one kind-of-already-dead Crusher.

Jake didn't even need to cut the Crusher anymore directly but finished it off merely using Gaze of the Apex Hunter. Finally, only two living beings remained, staring down each other - One a heavily injured but spirited human and the other a Tri-Lighttail Monkey Matriarch that looked utterly unable to decide what to do.

Its indecision quickly turned to despair as it began screeching in anger, but instead of attacking, it started sprinting away, back towards the old temple grounds.

It didn't get far, as an Arcane Powershot hit from behind, blowing off one of its legs. It began trying to crawl before Jake leaped from above and smashed his scimitar down through its skull, ending its life for good.

You have slain [Tri-Lighttail Monkey Matriarch – lvl 146] – Bonus experience earned for killing an enemy above your level

'DING!' Class: [Avaricious Arcane Hunter] has reached level 106 - Stat points allocated, +10 free points

'DING!' Race: [Human (D)] has reached level 104 - Stat points allocated, +15 free points

'DING!' Class: [Avaricious Arcane Hunter] has reached level 107 - Stat points allocated, +10 free points

Jake looked down on the Matriarch and the hellscape he had left behind and couldn't help but chuckle a bit to himself. Note to self, do not have big battles inside or too close to Haven, or we will require some serious landscaping afterward.

He left the area in a very nice and dead state, relocating in case more monkeys came to investigate, found a good tree, and sat down to recuperate while doing a bit of alchemy. He wanted to create better Hemotoxin poison now that he had reached D-grade and discovered how good it was against the Matriarchs. As well as a single batch of health, mana and stamina potion.

And if all went well, he would be able to wipe out those shitty monkeys before it was World Congress time.

In a rather large house in an even larger city, two women and a baby sat around a table, talking as the older one of them rocked the sleeping child back and forth.

"I still find it quite weird, if not a little unsettling," the older woman said as she held the child. "Babies aren't supposed to be this quiet and relaxed when this young."

Another woman sat to the side, observing the grandmother hold her grandson, and smiled as she tried explaining what her husband had said. "Caleb says it has something to do with no longer having the same needs... you know, no longer as hungry anymore. Many of the other ailments usually affecting kids also aren't really a worry either... gosh, did I waste a lot of time reading books on parenting that are now irrelevant."

"I won't say they were wasted; I am sure a lot of what was in them is still very relevant for a new parent," Debra said as she played with her grandson. "How is Caleb doing these days? I feel like he is less and less home."

"He and Robert are busy preparing for the upcoming World Congress with all of the other administrators. With nearly all the influential forces brought together in one room, they want to be ready for any scenario and are making way more plans than they could ever need."

“Well, I guess it must be hard being both the leader of some assassination guild fashioning themselves a court and a father at the same time,” Debra said, clearly not approving of the entire situation.

“Caleb is doing the best he can,” Maja said, shaking her head. “Things are a lot more complicated now than before, and I also find it hard to adapt. I am just thankful that at least we are all safe and together. For the most part, at least.”

Caleb Thayne, the current Judge of the Court of Shadows placed on Earth, had not held back from using his authority to help his family at all. He understood that not being selfish to some extent was viewed more as a sign of weakness than strength. It was also just an advantage that the Judge was not burdened by worries outside the Court.

He had used this influence to not just help gather his entire family, but even Maja’s parents, who had lived not that far away before the integration. They had gotten a similar experience to Jake and Caleb’s parents by suddenly having a squad of shadow-wielding assassins appear before, explain the situation, and offer to escort them to the city claimed by the Court.

Jake and Caleb’s parents had it worse. A notorious figure in their tutorial had one day appeared before them, being all nice and sweet, saying he had been given the job to make sure they safely made it through the tutorial by some shadow god.

Maja had been in a very different tutorial than any of the others. Hers had only consisted of children, pregnant women, and people who worked with children or in the medical profession before the system. Barely any fighting had been going on in hers, and she was escorted to the city after the tutorial by Caleb himself, who had split off with a few others to get her.

He had talked about how apparently that had earned him even more respect by the second-in-command of the Court, Matteo, as he now viewed Caleb as a man who “valued family above all else” and that the former assassin turned magic assassin approved of that.

“Yeah... nearly everyone. Has Caleb said more about Jake? How come he isn’t having some of his men help him get here?” Debra asked, still not quite understanding why Caleb just kept insisting that Jake was fine and that there was no reason to go get him.

“Jake doesn’t need our help from what Caleb said... he is doing just fine on his own. He even has his own thing going on with another settlement,” Maja explained, trying not to give too many details. It would be easier just for Jake to explain himself, and honestly, even Maja found it hard to really understand.

Caleb shared everything he knew with his wife, but that only made Maja understand how different this world really was. Her parents and her mother and father-in-law were all just regular people in this new world. They weren’t standout performers, and their only outstanding quality was their relation to outstanding people in the eyes of the higher powers.

That Jake was doing well wasn’t that surprising to Maja, though. He had always been able to do well for himself when he put his mind to it, but she and Debra did share one fear...

“Do you think he is being dragged into something he shouldn’t? You know how he is,” Debra said, sighing. “He always just goes with the flow and gets dragged into things... hangs around with crowds he really shouldn’t... wouldn’t it be better if he just came here already? He hasn’t even seen his nephew yet. Does he even know he has become an uncle?”

“He’ll be fine,” a new voice said as Caleb landed in the small garden outside of the house, having heard what they said towards the end through the open window.

Debra looked unamused out of the window and unto her son as she admonished him. “You keep saying that, but are you really sure he hasn’t been influenced by some bad people? And also, how come you are back already? Where is Robert?”

“Dad is busy trying to figure out how to design that new high-rise he is working on and told me to just go back by myself first. We don’t really have much more planning to do, at least nothing I want to be involved in, so I’ll have to head out for a bit more training before the Congress,” Caleb said before finally addressing the first question that Debra had asked.

“And while I can’t really say anything about if Jake is being influenced by bad people, we will find out soon. I am 99% he will be part of the World Congress.”

“Really?” Debra said, a bit more relieved. She knew she couldn’t come to the World Congress itself, but at least Caleb should be able to check-in with him.

After that, they relaxed a bit together, Caleb playing with his son and giving his wife a kiss before taking flight once more as he headed outside the city to the closest suitable hunting ground.

Because no matter what faction one was from, power was still the most important factor, which is also why Caleb and Maja, weren’t that concerned about Jake.