

## Hunter 247

### Chapter 247: Gravity Is Your Friend

Against pretty much any other foe, using a blunt weapon wouldn't be even close to as good. It didn't work even with any of Jake's skills. Additionally, it was a bit unwieldy to use for anything except wild swings, and it was far slower to swing. Finally, against most foes, it would deal roughly equal damage anyway. Though he doubted he could even hit most foes.

But the Altmar Census Golem was not most foes.

\*DONG!\* \*BOOM!\*

He swung again, hitting it in the side, sending it flying away in a glorious explosion of unstable arcane mana. The Pillar of Encumbrance crackled with energy as Jake infused it with his arcane mana – primarily the destructive variant.

The Pillar's metal was so damn durable Jake couldn't even leave a scratch on it, and the constant weight-shifting made it extremely powerful as a weapon even if the system didn't truly recognize it as such.

Jake's control of the Pillar was far better than the inexperienced Minotaur Mindchief that used to own it. This didn't mean Jake hit harder with the staff, far from it. The Minotaur Mindchief honestly had a really fucked up unbalanced build with an insane focus on its mental magic and pure strength. Jake made up for his lacking strength with his mana control and speed.

During the fight earlier, Jake had noticed one thing: the golem didn't actively avoid many attacks but preferred just to tank them. Unless it would take minimal effort to avoid, it chose to take the trade every time, aiming to land a blow in exchange for getting hit itself.

It avoided his arcane arrows due to the low effort required, but dodging the big metal pole was far harder and took way more movement. Jake swung it rather wildly, but every hit was near-perfectly timed as he tried to keep the golem at bay.

He equipped his bow as it was sent flying back and quickly fired a Splitting Arrow that turned into five explosive payloads, blasting the golem back even further. He tried firing a second arrow but had to dodge an eyebeam. Before he could shoot yet again, he was forced to block with his staff. He jumped right before he was hit, made the Pillar weightless, and let himself be blasted into the distance.

In mid-air, he summoned his wings to try and get some more height and distance. Once more, he summoned an arrow to repeatedly do damage to the mana shield of the golem.

He had theorized many ways to get rid of the mana shield, and so far, none seemed to work. At least not in the long term. If he corroded through it and made physical contact, it could not reform the shield where he touched. Jake also considered if a disruptive mana wave could temporarily dispel the shield for him to do damage, but to fire off such a blast would require him to hit it in very close melee range. Far closer than he felt comfortable being for a prolonged period. He had only ever used disruptive mana waves to dispel harmful effects on himself, never offensively, so he was a bit doubtful in its effectiveness. But, theoretically, it should work.

The next thing he considered was some kind of acid. He didn't really have to consider it much, though, as his blood was essentially an acid. The problem there was that the golem had now adapted. Whenever blood hit it, it would shimmer and move its mana shield to make it fall off. Because the mana shield wasn't entirely physical, nothing could really stick on it... nothing besides his arcane mana.

Jake's destructive arcane mana sought to destroy, and whenever it made contact with the golem, the arcane mana burned into its barrier until it ran out of energy and was dispelled. This turned out to be a very Jake-favored exchange, which is why he kept infused the Pillar with destructive arcane mana – also because it was possibly his only piece of equipment that could handle it – and why he kept using explosive arcane arrows.

He had to admit, the fight didn't look good from an outside perspective. The only wounds on the golem were its one hand that looked slightly damaged and two small chips in its otherwise pristine surface.

Meanwhile, Jake was a bloody mess. He had bloodstains running from his eyes from overusing Gaze, blood from his mouth from clenching his teeth too hard, and generally wounds all over. The black veins of burned flesh from the electrocution didn't make him look healthy either.

The health potion had done a lot, but he had taken too much damage for a single one to regenerate his health pool fully. That damn grappling hook had done far too much harm, showing how just a single fuck-up could prove lethal. Yet, it had also demonstrated that he was far from fragile. In fact, he was barely affected by what had happened to him but moved just as fluidly as before.

Actually, if one looked at the battle as a whole... Jake was pulling ahead.

This could naturally all change on a dime, so he had to press his advantage. There was still the looming threat of the currently unusable hand repairing enough to become useful again or for it to pull out some other unexpected trick.

In the meantime, Jake began plotting to take down the primary weapon of the golem – the axeblade.

Due to the purpose of the appendage, it was the only part of the entire golem not covered in the mana shield. Jake assumed it was because it would make the weapon far worse at cutting, making it necessary not to cover it. But this did mean the axblade was a weakness to exploit.

Well, to call it a weakness was maybe overdoing it. The metal of the golem was still insanely tough, and even after the axblade smashed into the far tougher Pillar, there was no mark on it whatsoever. But Jake did have one method of damaging the metal significantly: Touch of the Malefic Viper. He had already taken out one of its hands... it was time to go for the other.

"Extreme reaction times, high level of agility, medium strength, high magic capabilities, high durability, phantasmal skills to summon wings and defensive scales, use of at least three different kinds of weapons. An exceptionally balanced build that seems to have its roots in either magic or archery," the Dungeon Monitor said.

"Has used two kinds of unknown affinities. One of poison and the other some kind of destructive energy reminiscent of pure mana. An oddity for sure. Perhaps both these affinities are new as neither have reliable records, which would be an exceptional find? However, it is also possible they are related to gods with no records stored in this particular facility. Potential arcane-affinity cannot be ruled out either, but it is implausible. Further investigation is necessary nonetheless."

The Dungeon Monitor was there only to monitor and record, yet it still had its own thoughts. It had these to make it better at its job and allow it to voice its own subjective understandings and assessments of the one taking the trial.

"Most notable traits observed so far are the extreme lack of hesitation and instant adaptation to changes, as well as divination-level avoidance skills. Seems to possess a skill for spherical perception as well. Note, no observations of the concept of time, fate, or karma, or other such expected readings have been observed. Perception-based build? It is possible based on the ability to pierce the Soulguard of the Census Golem.

"The fight is progressing with the challenger making an extremely admirable attempt. Overall... I believe we have a category 8,1 to 8,3 on our hands. Skilled in air combat also. The golem will soon be able to use its other arm again, which should turn the tide again. Oh? Despite the Mana Disruptive Pulse, the challenger has futilely attempted to... huh?"

The Dungeon Monitor was momentarily confused at what he saw play out on the many screens.

"May need to upgrade the category."

Jake flew upwards, firing arrows down at the golem following him or giving it a good smash to send it flying back down whenever it got too close. The golem did have some ability to adapt. He based this on how it knew when to stop using certain attacks, and Jake made use of that.

Right now, he was instilling the belief that he didn't want it to ever come close to him. This seemed to work wonders as it followed him ruthlessly while he flew further and further up into the air.

As Jake had noted earlier, then they were in a massive cube. This meant it had as much height to it as it had width and breadth... so he would make use of that.

He flew many kilometers up as he kept making use of the airspace. His mind was busy with four things: shooting arrows, smashing tin can golem, flying upwards while avoiding attacks, and finally, preparing his next trick.

On his back, something was being woven that would be used when the time was right.

This continued as Jake got higher and higher. 100 kilometers, 200 kilometers, 300 kilometers. On the way, he had a few close shaves and even had one of his wings cut off at one point, but he swiftly re-stabilized and summoned a new one to keep going up. He had to take the hit to defend what was on his back, as that was his big gamble.

400 kilometers, 500 kilometers.

Jake was nearing the ceiling when he reached 600 kilometers, showing how absolutely massive the cube was. As he neared the top, he prepared himself to make his move.

He did something he rarely did: created a purposeful opening. Jake wasn't big on feints, but sometimes he needed to. He left his right wing entirely open, and he knew the golem wouldn't be able to resist slicing it off. It seemed not to have enjoyed the constant cloud of poison it had to fly through on their way up.

Jake allowed it to strike.

The axeblade cut his side, cleaving into his back and cutting off his wing, but at the same time, Jake also counterattacked.

On his back was an endless spin of thick arcane mana threads. They all sprung to life and bound up the entire lower body and left arm of the golem – the arm that didn't have the axeblade. The other end of the strings wrung themselves around the Pillar of Encumbrance as Jake infused mana into it with a string connected to himself, massively increasing the weight every second.

As the Pillar got heavier, gravity took over.

In a natural response, the golem tried to cut off the strings with the axeblade, but Jake was one moment too fast. While the strings could hold the golem quite well, he didn't believe they could handle being cut.

Jake intercepted the falling axeblade as he allowed it to cleave into parts of his shoulder but stopping the swing. He froze the golem with Gaze, spun around the arm, and pointed the edge of the axeblade away from himself. Finally, he held the arm in a vertical armbar grip.

He had never stopped infusing mana into the Pillar, meaning it just got heavier and heavier. They began being dragged downwards. The golem couldn't move any parts of its body as Jake and his strings had entirely restricted its movements, and their fall only accelerated with every passing second.

With a good grip around the arm, Jake began doing exactly what he came to do: rip out the axeblade. His hands began glowing green as he held onto the back of the axeblade. Touch of the Malefic Viper began burning into the unprotected metal of the weapon, and this time it would have no way of detaching the arm to stop the Touch from spreading further into its body.

Naturally, the golem had a counter to being bound up by mana strings and held in such a crude armbar. It was a tactic much like the one Jake used whenever magical constructs bound him up: its disruptive mana wave.

The golem exploded in a massive wave of disruptive deep-blue mana, making Jake dispel his one remaining wing from the pain, and he even felt his Touch reduce in energy for a moment. What didn't happen was the strings getting dispelled.

Bitch please, I've been making strings since I joined this fucking multiverse. All they got is their stability. You think your stupid mana wave can break them?

Making mana strings was the first thing Jake had ever really done with mana. It had been the cornerstone of much of his mana practice... so to say that his arcane mana strings were incredibly potent for his level was an understatement.

That the disruptive mana wave failed didn't mean that the golem was defenseless. The jets of mana fired up around its body as it began slowly burning away at the strings, and it even opened up those on the arm that Jake held. They tried to burn his skin but were entirely stopped by the scales. In the end, those jets weren't made to attack with, but to give temporary speed boosts.

If its left arm was still functional, it could have done something, but it wasn't. What was functional was its legs. Both began transforming, making Jake panic a bit, until he saw what they transformed into. Both of them transformed into giant laser blasters.

Was this thing designed to attack like a damn Ion Cannon from above if I couldn't fly?

The leg-blasters began firing out massive laser beams down towards the Pillar, likely trying to destroy the strings on it to let itself get free. It was a good tactic, except...

Jake pulled with his legs and his mind as he began tightening the strings – bringing the Pillar closer to the body of the golem. This made the initial blasts miss by a tiny margin, and Jake sped up the pulling in of the strings.



Pulling the Pillar all the way in would make it hard for him to keep his armbar hold. Shit, he couldn't pull it all the way either without letting go... so it was sure lucky he could now let go.

\*CRACK!\*

The entire axeblade cracked, black growth going down the arm of the golem. Jake did one final pull, ripping the entire lower parts of the golem's arm off like it was old and rusted.

He let go, summoned his wings, and tried to stop his own fall as he held onto the strings.

Jake pulled with all his might as he tightened the mana strings, making the entire Pillar now be pressed up against the body of the golem. Once he couldn't tighten it anymore, Jake let go and spread his wings to slow down his fall.

The updraft hurt his wings as he only now truly noticed how fast they had been going. Due to the constant acceleration, they had been falling over 3 kilometers a second. It hadn't even been half a minute since he bound up the golem, but they had still fallen nearly 100 kilometers.

Which meant there was still around 500 kilometers to the ground. The Pillar would stop accelerating as the constant influx of mana was gone, and his strings would also begin weakening, but they should still hold up. Jake estimated the Pillar would keep the same falling speed till the golem reached the ground. Heck, he even saw that the golem had stopped trying to break free after he let go. Perhaps it was just focusing on repairing itself and not waste mana by constantly having its jets activated? The fall itself wouldn't really harm it, so that made sense...

This gave him around two and a half minutes. He couldn't bombard the golem for obvious reasons as it would destroy his own arcane strings – his own destructive arcane mana was incredibly good at destroying his own stable arcane mana – so he had to spend the time more constructively.

So, he began constructing an arrow.

Arrow of the Ambitious Hunter