

Hunter 273

Chapter 273: Birds of Prey

Jake hummed as he finished up another batch of elixirs. It had been a few days since he got the new skill and the Pride upgrade, and he had spent this time practicing that skill and doing alchemy. He hadn't used that teaching skill at all. Mainly because he hadn't spoken or interacted with anyone.

His practice with Pride of the Malefic Viper has been pretty simple. Infusing his presence with mana came naturally to him due to the instinctive knowledge from the skill, and the effect was quite prominent. He felt like everything around him became more familiar to him when he did it, and summoning magic around him became far more effortless. Shit, he could make more Arcane Bolts than ever while having the presence active.

There was one minor issue, though. It drained Jake's mana pool at crazy speeds. It was like a turbo-charged version of Limit Break but for mana. Well, maybe it was nearly exactly like Limit Break? Limit Break improved him internally and infusing his presence increased his control over the external world around him.

He hadn't had time to test the mental attack yet, but only practiced with magic. He would need to find an opportunity before the Treasure Hunt to not go in blind, but he had a feeling it would be effective. He especially wanted to see if he could make it more effective if he coupled it with Gaze of the Apex Hunter.

Jake had also spoken a bit with Villy about the teaching skill when the god got curious, and Villy had just told him that teaching someone could be a good move. This surprised Jake as he thought the overly-selfish god didn't really care much about other humans on Earth. That is until Villy pointed out how teaching others could be good for personal improvement and how he himself had learned a lot by going back over some of the basics while training someone else. Apparently, Villy had had quite a number of students through the times, even if Duskleaf was the only one Jake knew about.

Anyway, besides that, Jake had made another nice pile of elixirs and even gotten another level under his belt in just three days. He had nearly entered another trance again but avoided it due to diversifying things with some Pride training and the chat with Villy.

Jake began another brewing as he took out a Fungalmancer core to make another vitality elixir. He wanted to try and make a Rare-rarity one of those soon before he moved on to improving his perception version. By now, he had realized he likely wouldn't have time to make a Rare-rarity version of the perception elixir, but at least he could move up to Uncommon.

Just as he got done melting the core... he stopped.

Something felt wrong. Very wrong. Jake's gut was telling him things were off... it took him a second to realize the source. Sylphie...

Jake stopped the brewing, tossed his cauldron with the unfinished sludge in his inventory, and took to the air.

His presence was infused, directed ahead of him. The mana gave way as his will manifested, and a small platform of arcane mana appeared in the distance. Summoned using his Sphere of Perception and his presence working together.

He used One Step Mile in mid-air and appeared on the platform ahead of him. Another platform was summoned within not even a quarter of a second ahead of him again. This one he also stepped onto, teleporting yet again.

The upgrade to Pride had allowed this. Jake didn't even know it did before this very moment; he just had to find the fastest way to move forward. Because it was easier to manifest his mana inside his presence, it was fast enough. Did it consume a lot of mana? Yes, but right now, his primary priority was speed.

Jake had effectively just unlocked full-on air-walk-teleporting as he used One Step Mile forward into the horizon. He didn't know where it was; he just had a gut feeling about the direction. Jake wasn't even aware of what he was moving towards; he just knew one thing: Sylphie, Hawkie, and Mystie were in trouble.

A good while after he left the lodge, one of the enchantments around the time tree shattered with a bang - one of those laid down by Mystie.

Hawkie dodged the scorching white ray with a feather's breadth but was still sent tumbling through the air. He managed to stabilize himself and accidentally made eye contact with the uncaring gaze of the alpha before him.

[Goldsun Eagle Prima – lvl 144]

It was a nearly ten-meter-long golden eagle. Its radiant feathers gave off a constant glow as it bathed in sunlight, with its entire body practically humming with power and powerful energy similar to the sun above.

He knew. Their opponent barely cared about them. It knew it was above them by not just a little and didn't wish to waste any of its more prominent attacks. It was arrogant, with power to back up that arrogance. The only one it regarded as anything worth mentioning was his daughter despite her low grade.

Which was exactly why they had told her to flee. Flee as they would try and hold back the monstrous eagle before them.

A blast of mystical mana hit the eagle from the side, but it failed to damage the radiant barrier around the beast. It was a hastily constructed attack that was unable to damage their opponent, but if anyone could allow them a chance, it was his mate.

Hawkie engaged again, attacking with a whirlwind to kick up the dust from far below. He surrounded the eagle in a tornado in sand and dust, obscuring its vision. Its mate began another ritual to summon a blast to hopefully damage the eagle enough to make it not chase their daughter.

The summoned beasts had been slain swiftly. They didn't even stand a chance and were only mild annoyances to the Eagle Prima. A mild annoyance just like the whirlwind of sand.

A golden explosion of light pushed back Hawkie as his feathers were scorched, and his mate had to summon a barrier to defend herself. A second later, she was forced to stop her attack as a searing ray came for her. Yet again, the eagle didn't press the attack but just observed them before it tossed out a few orbs of light towards Hawkie again.

Was it playing with them? Didn't it want to kill them? Why was it waiting like this? Hopefully, at least time would be on their side, though hope was slim.

His mate had already dispelled some of the enchantments back at the lodge around the time-related natural treasure, hoping the human would discover it. She had done this the moment they were discovered by the eagle. They didn't know if it could do anything, but he hoped the human who had given him his name could do something.

Either way... at least his daughter had to escape.

“REE!” Hawkie suddenly heard from off in the distance. A sound that made his heart drop.

He looked around and saw the green shape of his daughter be pushed back by another figure. It was a large eagle, much like the one he and his mate were fighting, but a bit smaller and far weaker. Still stronger than his daughter, who had yet to evolve, though.

[Goldsun Eagle – lvl 131]

It was the Eagle Prima’s mate... Hawkie became clear on that because of the other new arrival.

Behind the new eagle, another small form flew, looking a lot like the two others.

[Juvenile Goldsun Eagle – lvl 92]

That is when Hawkie realized... just as they had gone there to help train their daughter and get her experience and teach her things, so had these eagles decided to use his family to train their spawn on.

His mate – named Mystie by the human - had the same look of despair as he did. The Eagle Prima was just weakening them with the purpose of making its spawn finish them off. They had done the same for their daughter so many times.

Their mutual look of despair quickly changed to one of determination. The situation was bad, but that didn't mean they had nothing left. The two of them had been together since before the system. They were mates for life. That didn't only come with trust but also some amount of power. The two of them both had chosen two parts of a greater skill, one they could only use when together.

One they had practiced not to face this kind of opponent but if the human ever turned into an enemy.

The Eagle Prima hadn't noticed their look, or it didn't care. It welcomed its mate with a screech, who responded together with its spawn. Sylphie, as the human had named her, was pushed back towards Hawkie.

A final look was exchanged as they began.

Hawkie began glowing in a green light that soon turned deep blue and began crackling with lightning. Mystie began emitting purple myst. They didn't need to screech or communicate – their gazes had said it all. The purpose was not to defeat the Eagle Prima. That would be foolish. The aim was to make a way out for Sylphie.

Mystie dodged a wave of light, searing her one wing. Hawkie was blasted by a small orb. Sylphie took a nasty scratch with a talon.

They were all forced together as the Eagle Prima spread its wings. Magic in the air moved as a bubble of light was erected around them so big that it would take Hawkie nearly fifteen seconds to fly across. It was to seal them all in and damage them as the temperature within began increasing. The accursed spawn of the eagles sat outside the bubble, cheerily watching the show.

It wouldn't for much longer.

Two energies convened.

Storm and Myst came together as they mixed. A cloud of purple lightning was born as a thunderclap sounded out, and for the first time since this entire battle began, the Eagle Prima looked surprised. Mystie and Hawkie flew towards each other as Mystie turned entirely to Myst and began swirling around Hawkie.

Hawkie turned in mid-air, all his wounds now no longer mattering. He pushed his body to its utmost as he flew towards the mate of the Prima. Their young spawn was behind the second Goldsun Eagle, and it chose to defend. Foolishly believing it could.

The Prima also moved. It tried to block their path but was too slow. Hawkie fused with Mystie turned into a nearly fifteen-meter-long bird resembling a purple hawk-shaped thundercloud as they crashed into the Goldsun Eagle.

Myststorm Union

A mighty explosion sounded out as purple thunder exploded out from the impact. The fused birds didn't even stop in their track as they consumed the Goldsun Eagle and headed for the spawn behind the

barrier – a dark figure with broken glowing purple lines pulsing on its body the only thing in their wake. It would be dead within minutes without assistance.

They crashed through the barrier and destroyed it, but they didn't get farther than that.

The Goldsun Eagle Prima appeared before them, more radiant than ever. Its rage was apparent as it had just seen its mate practically slain, and it opened its beak and fired out a massive breath of solar light.

The Myststorm Union was still only a new skill. It took an incredible toll on both of them and could only be used for a single attack. Most of their energy was already expended on the Goldsun Eagle and the barrier, meaning they ran on fumes when the solar beam hit them.

Myst was burned through, lightning was dispersed, and the union was broken. Two figures were sent tumbling through the air, both far more injured than before.

Hawkie had been the one infused... he should have been the one taking the brunt force of it... but at the very end, Mystie had concentrated her essence to defend. He saw her fall through the air, already unconscious and scorched black from the beam.

The only good thing was that at least they had bought time for Sylphie to-

A green form crashed into the side of the Eagle Prima, glowing green talons at the ready aiming for the beast's eyes. It waved its wing, smashing Sylphie down towards the ground.

She hit it hard, and she didn't get back up.

Hawkie saw red and charged the eagle again, hoping to do... something. He thought of maybe taking its spawn hostage but saw it was already encapsulated in a bubble of energy to defend it. He burned every shred of energy he had left and fired off a massive crackling blade of wind and lightning.

All it did was make the eagle block, and the opening Hawkie hoped would come wasn't there as a talon kicked him back – a large hole now open in his chest. It was a hopeless battle. His mate was already bleeding out somewhere in the canyon, and there was nothing left. His vision began darkening, and he heard the cries of Sylphie below as she was no doubt trying to get up and keep fighting. She was proud and brave like that.

He wasn't disappointed she hadn't chosen to flee. He was sad, but he couldn't be angry... only proud. There were many regrets as he felt himself slowly fade away, but he had done a lot. He had managed to foster a wonderful daughter and found the perfect mate. It was only too bad the journey would end here. He was reluctant to go, and he could only hate himself for failing his family.

The eagle moved in to finish him off for good. Not leaving a single chance of survival. It opened its beak to fire out a beam as Hawkie's vision gave out, and he felt as the energy that would be his certain death began to collect before it... stopped.

Everything just seemed to stop.

Then... something came. Hawkie felt it. Another being... a presence... one more powerful than the Prima by far. He didn't have time to recognize it before it arrived, but deep down, he knew. Hawkie couldn't see anymore, but he heard the arrival.

One moment, the beam was about to be fired; the next, massive explosions sounded out – two of them.

Hawkie felt his fall stop as he felt the familiar presence. A warm liquid entered his beak... one he also recognized. He felt the warmth spread in his body as he was swiftly moved through the air. He heard the cries of Sylphie as she seemed almost... panicked? There was no reason to do that. Didn't she understand?

A true apex predator had arrived.

Jake had teleported through the air. Every step faster than the one before. Limit break active at 20% as every fiber of his being was focused. Mana condensed, he stepped, and he teleported - his momentum increasing as he ran.

His speed was faster than anything he had ever done before. Every step was over 200 meters, with now more than ten steps taken a second.

He saw the eagle in the distance. He froze it. He stepped dozens of more times until the final step wasn't on mana but the back of the beast.

Every shred of momentum built up for far over a thousand kilometers was released with that one footfall. Jake felt his leg hurt as the veins on it burst while the frozen eagle was sent smashed straight down – a crack sounding out as its weak bones also gave out.

His focus wasn't on the beast, however. He felt anxious as he teleported again and summoned his wings. He caught Hawkie and quickly fed him a healing potion. A quick flight, and he reached Sylphie and gave her one too. She looked confused and afraid at his presence, screeching with warnings. Sylphie tried to make him leave. Jake just smiled as he picked her up and flew over to where he felt Mystie. She also got a potion as Jake laid down Hawkie and Sylphie beside her.

"Please, just stay here," he said with a soothing tone as he patted Sylphie. He also gave Hawkie a nod as he saw him weakly open one eye. "You did well, mate. Now let me handle the rest."

Jake turned around, his smile gone as he looked down the canyon to the Goldsun Eagle Prima below – his eyes burning with rage – his presence blanketing that entire section of the canyon.

He wasn't in a good mood.