

Hunter 182

Chapter 182: Just Getting a Few Samples

Jake walked through the cave again, the first time in quite a while. He was heading for the biodome with the Indigo Fungus, ignoring anything on the way. He was just there for a few samples... but he wanted to test a few things if he was there anyway.

He wanted to test how effective the poison mist from his Wings of the Malefic Viper was and to try and fight the mushroom a bit. He had already made a dozen bottles of common-rarity fungicide, and he wanted to test the effect of those too.

Heck... maybe he could even kill it without the need to create an uncommon-rarity poison. In that case, he could switch to making a better necrotic poison or something like that. He sure as hell wouldn't complain about one less massive blue mushroom in the world.

When the entrance to the biodome was within sight, he already began scouting inside. He didn't see any movement, so maybe he had come just after feeding time. Assuming the mushroom was still doing its lure-and-kill strategy.

He had felt the mana-lure for a while now, so he was pretty sure it was.

Jake walked into the biodome, and everything was as idyllic as last time he came here. Even more so as there weren't murder-mantises running around the place.

Moving in a bit further, he did spot some signs of life in the form of a large centipede crawling on one of the larger mushrooms, munching on it. It was only level 40, so not really worth noting, but it did show that at least he hadn't come just after the mushroom had eaten everything.

It only became more apparent as he got closer to the mana-lure. More centipedes appeared, fighting some beetle-like creatures. All of them the size of horses, none of them below level 50. It was quite the brawl, but Jake didn't have any intentions of getting involved.

He wasn't there for them.

They didn't get in his way either but kept just fighting each other.

Jake needed to wake up the monster lurking below to hopefully get a good sample. The needle-like tendrils had to be connected to the rest of the fungus to deliver nutrients, so he wanted a few of those.

He prepared himself by summoning his wings and jumping up, flying towards the ceiling.

There were only around 130 meters from ceiling to floor, but it was enough to get a bit of a vantage point. Jake found a small pockets in the wall, just slightly large enough for him to stand on. He closed his eyes as he tried to focus on his foe and summon his Arrow of the Ambitious Hunter.

...Wait, what is that damn Blue Mushroom even? It was called a Mycorrhiza, which according to the books, is a type of fungus creating a symbiotic relationship between itself and plants... what kind of arrow can be used against that?

This was when Jake discovered a weakness of his Arrow of the Ambitious Hunter that he hadn't even considered. He could only summon an arrow specially made to slay a particular enemy if he had a good enough idea of what was needed to kill the aforementioned enemy.

Sure, Jake could imagine an arrow that would impact the ground and spread deadly energy throughout the entire area... but he couldn't focus on it and summon the arrow with confidence. He knew what kind of attack worked well against the Cloud Elementals and pretty much anything made of flesh and blood... but against this damn mushroom, he just held too many doubts. The most significant doubt being if arrows were even of any use.

In summary, he just didn't know enough about the enemy to summon his Arrow of the Ambitious Hunter. So learning more about the damn mushroom was another item added to his to-do list.

Mushrooms are truly my bane... he thought disgruntledly but soon picked himself up again when he imagined making an uncommon-rarity poison that would slowly make the entire fungi-nightmare wither.

His vain hope of maybe slaying the damn thing had waned by now, however. Let's just get some samples and get a feel for the thing before getting the hell out of here.

So Jake took out a regular arrow, nocked it, and aimed down for the mana-lure. He was pretty sure breaking it would piss off the big bad boss, so naturally, he began charging a Powershot to ensure breaking it.

At the same time, he opened his wings as the blood within began boiling. A faint mist began being emanated as he channeled the Infused Powershot for a full ten seconds.

Wakey-wakey little mushroom.

BOOM!

Stone and soil flew everywhere as he released the arrow. It flew straight down towards the crystal that functioned as a mana-lure, shattering it completely. To double-up on the pain, he flapped his wings to send a cloud of poison gas down into the biodome as he pushed even more mana into the wings to increase the output.

OoOOoOOOOooO

Shattering the lure and blanketing the biodome in poison did wonders to wake up the sleeping mushroom, and Identify once more worked as he used it on one of the giant mushrooms.

[Indigo Fungus Mycorrhiza – lvl ???]

Jake also finally felt its aura and could tell that it was slightly stronger than the last time he came. It had likely grown a few levels since then from eating all the insects coming there. Or maybe it just grew naturally like beasts? Quite frankly, he didn't know and didn't care.

The many insects scattered around the biodome panicked but had little time to react as nature itself came alive to devour them. Like last time, the fungus didn't respond by attacking him directly, but just

by killing everything within its domain. Or maybe it hadn't detected him yet... it actually wouldn't be surprising if it lacked perception.

It allowed Jake to get an excellent aerial view as tendrils shot up all over the place, and some of the mushrooms released paralyzing gas. Hundreds of insects died in seconds, sucked dry of all nutrients. Ten or so seconds after awakening, the fungus finally found the one that was attacking it.

At least Jake assumed it had, as beams of mana headed towards him, forcing him to dodge. Tendrils also began worming their way up the dome from all sides, coming towards him. It was quite a lot easier to deal with than last time, his progress showing.

He saw the poison mist dig its way into the many plants on the dome below, but the effects were minimal. The plants had some inherent resistance to poison, while the mushrooms clearly didn't care that much about the poison whatsoever. It did a bit of damage still, but it wasn't very reassuring.

That is until something else was mixed in. A drop of liquid hit one of the mushrooms and sank into it unnoticed as Jake kept dodging the many attacks from the giant fungus-monster. However, he barely focused on it as he instead zoned in on sensing the movement of his poison.

He did shoot off a few needle-tendrils with his bow, and with a quick fly-by, threw them into his spatial storage. Jake felt like the mushroom was barely trying; as soon a minute had passed, the fungicide was slowly making its way into the creature.

With dozens of samples already in his storage, he didn't need anything more as he also just began cutting off parts of the other plants and threw them in his storage. Soon, he would be the only living thing in the biodome besides the fungus, and he was considering to spread some more fungicide to see if he could maybe actually kill the damn thing before it dete-

SWOOSH

Jake barely managed to react as a whip-like tendril came up from below, and without his danger-sense, he would have now been one arm lighter. But he still had a several-centimeter deep cut in his shoulder. What?

One thing was clear... it now knew about the fungicide... and it wasn't happy.

The tendril that attacked him before was... different. It was teal and even thinner than any prior. Moreover... it was stronger.

A lot stronger.

Jake scrambled, able to focus on nothing but the two tendrils that now attacked him. Both of them were like whips as they cut through the entire biodome, carving deep gashes into the walls. Time to get the fuck out of here.

He activated Limit Break to 20% as he flew towards the exit of the biodome, attempting to avoid the two tendr-

A third one flew out of one of the walls, and even if he tried to dodge, it was too late. His right wing was cut off, and one of the original two tendrils returned and severed the left one.

“Fuck,” Jake muttered under his breath as he air-stepped to avoid getting his legs cut off. With difficulty, he leaned to the side, allowing himself to fall once more as he accelerated himself downwards with two blasts of mana from his gloves.

He barely got a bit of leeway from that move, but soon two thin beams of mana flew towards him, fired from one of the teal tendrils. Jake quickly summoned his scales, dodging one of them, but the other scratched his side.

His entire body was consumed in a blue explosion, sending him flying. He had enough foresight to make sure he flew towards the exit of the cavern, but he had made a colossal miscalculation when it came to the power of the beam.

Scales and blood flew everywhere as his entire right side became a bloody mess. Without the scales, the strike would have done far worse, and Jake could barely make heads or tails of what the fuck was happening.

All he knew was that he had to get the fuck out of there now.

For every passing second, it mobilized more and more tendrils to kill him, and soon a fourth one joined the assault.

Luckily, Jake was finally on the ground, allowing him to move far more elusively. With a step forward, he teleported back fifty meters, and with another, he stood right in front of the exit of the cavern – two tendrils sticking out behind him from where he had just taken two steps.

The entrance was blocked off by a mass of tendrils, with even one of the blue ones reinforcing it. Jake ran straight for it and tried to use Shadow Vault to phase through, which resulted in it feeling like he had just run headfirst into a wall.

He smashed into the barrier of vines that simply contained too much mana for him to phase through. They also counted as living things, which he wasn't even sure he could phase through, to begin with... he could sometimes barely get through a tree, but the vines were just too much. No, he would have to break it instead, but that was far from easy.

Jake couldn't find any opportunity to use Infused Powershot, so he tried to cut a hole with Descending Dark Fang. He managed to cut through a part of it before a tendril came up from below him, forcing him to interrupt his attack.

He leaped back a bit, but his thigh was still pierced by a thin tendril, sending even more blood and scales flying. Stumbling, he couldn't avoid in time as two thin needles came straight for his head. The wounded hunter Stared directly at them, his eyes shining yellow as the tendrils stopped mid-air.

Gaze of the Apex Hunter

Jake made his way to the wall of tendrils again with a One Step Mile and threw a dozen bottles on it while also spraying some of his own poisoned blood over it. It wasn't to break it but to just weaken it a little.

The tendrils had stopped longer than expected, proving his Gaze of the Apex Hunter was very effective. It had bought him quite a lot of time, even allowing him to summon three mana bolts that he fired towards a tendril charging up another magic attack. He would have used his bow, but he needed his hands to throw bottles and spray blood.

When he fired them, he observed something interesting. A tendril flew for each of them, making them explode, but the way they moved was as if they attacked him. Mana-based vision? Jake barely managed to think before the next tendrils came for him.

This was when he saw movement. Not from the tendrils, but below him. He saw a whole net of roots coming up towards him. Far more than he could possibly handle. Jake turned to hack away at the barrier closing off the exit, cleaving off vine after vine.

But it was just too thick, and when he had to continually avoid getting impaled or have limbs sliced off, it went far too slow. The roots from below got closer and closer before they soon finally emerged.

A single very small blue tendril came first, followed by a dozen more moments later. They weren't whipping at Jake or trying to damage him directly... instead, they just grew. It was like hundreds of small thin stalks of fungi grew around him.

They all swayed slightly towards him as the first one hit his arm. Jake wanted to move away but found it stuck to his arm as it slowly began wrapping itself around him. He ripped some of it off, but the damn things were even adhesive. More and more wrapped him up as he found it harder and harder to move.

With them touching him, he couldn't use his One Step Mile. Shadow Vault didn't help either, as he looked up and saw more than ten of the indigo tendrils forming a pattern together in mid-air with a huge ball of mana forming.

He could barely move at this point, as he used Touch of the Malefic Viper to try and grab some of the small tendrils to wither them. Jake looked towards the tendrils channeling the spell and used Gaze of the Apex Hunter on them, freezing them and the stalks growing on him.

But... the spell wasn't interrupted. Just paused. As if the fungus knew Jake would do something like this.

Jake saw only one final solution as he managed to get himself to stand right in front of the exit to the biodome. At the same time, he began condensing a giant mana bolt above himself.

After barely getting there, the blast was released as the entire biodome was enveloped in intense blue light. His danger sense screamed at him to dodge, and Jake tried to, but couldn't move... he desperately cut and ripped the small tendrils to get himself free, but it was too late.

The massive beam of mana was heading straight for him... and Jake knew it wasn't something he could tank. His scales were already summoned, and he pushed mana all around him to form a barrier. The mass of mana was already forming above his head, looking vaguely like a mana bolt but far too big.

The beam tore through the air, but when it was just five or so meters from its target... it slowed.

Moment of the Primal Hunter

Every spore floating in the air looked frozen mid-air, the now thousands of evergrowing stalks motionless. The only thing that moved was the mass of mana floating above Jake and the hunter himself. Moment of the Primal Hunter was Jake's final gambit as he sent the mass of mana above himself straight down.

It exploded as all the tiny tendrils were broken, and Jake could finally move. He managed to sway to the side, and his foot was mid-air preparing to use One Step Mile when time resumed... and the beam arrived.

The barrier blocking off the entrance was sheared away as the massive beam continued into the tunnel he had entered from, killing any weak creature within, only stopping when it hit a wall. Jake's foot landed a millisecond after the barrier was impacted, and he teleported.

Parts of him.

Jake noticed that his peripheral vision wasn't what it should be and that his balance was absolutely off. But he couldn't think straight and diagnose the problem. Yet even when his mind couldn't process what exactly had just happened, his body still moved.

A single wing sprung from his back as he flapped to get out through the hole formed by the massive beam in a single mighty flap. He flapped once more, allowing his foot to touch down, taking him forty meters forward, before another flap took him around a corner.

The move had been haphazardous as he fell to the ground.

He took out a potion with his left hand and tried to drink it, but half the liquid didn't enter his body but just fell to the ground below. The effect still worked, but he only now truly noticed what was wrong.

The entire right side of his body was gone; even large parts of his head were no longer there.

Jake couldn't think straight, his body just laying there as flesh was already wriggling as his massive vitality, boosted further by the potion, got to work.

Back in the biodome, the hundreds of small indigo tendrils slowly receded back to the ground as everything began being restored. New plants and mushrooms grew, and all traces of the massive fight were gone in less than half an hour.

A small crystal appeared in the middle of the biodome once more... and an hour later, a small group of unsuspecting beetles crawled into the biodome, lured by the mana to continue the feeding-cycle of the Indigo Fungus Mycorrhiza.