

# HORIZON FORBIDDEN WEST

## COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO THE ARENA

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**PLEASE NOTE:** For many players, the Arena is frustrating rather than fun. If you are playing on a difficulty below Ultra Hard, there's no shame in setting the difficulty level to Story and completing the Arena that way. If you would like to complete the Arena at higher difficulties—and especially on Ultra Hard—hopefully this guide will be of some use.

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## 1. GENERAL ARENA ADVICE

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The playstyle that you prefer when hunting machines in the wild may not translate into the Arena. Instead, you should approach these as specialized scenarios. You can change your loadout and strategy for every level, and you don't have to worry about conserving resources.

- **Save early and often.** When you are ready to begin an Arena challenge, first go to the campfire outside the Maw of the Arena and **create a manual save file**. Entering the Arena costs shards; by reloading this save file, you can perform as many attempts as you want without running out of money.
- **Get comfortable with dying.** The Arena rewards recklessness. Losing shards is annoying, but they are replaceable. And as long as you create a manual save between each level, you can always reload to get your shards back. Be willing to take risks, die, repeat.
- **Bring a plan.** After the first time you play a level, exit the Arena and reevaluate your loadout. Come up a strategy for attacking the specific machines you're facing—don't just use whatever you're used to. It helps to mark all the weak spots with your Focus before dropping into the Arena.
  - If you need to destroy multiple machines in this challenge, which enemy do you want to kill first? What weapons will you use to kill them? Do you need to tie down another machine with the ropecaster first?
  - Do you have the right coils on your weapons?
  - How effective is your outfit against this enemy type? Do your elemental defenses match up well with their elemental attacks?
  - Are you taking advantage of the machines' elemental weaknesses?
- **Use your whole arsenal.** Traps and smoke bombs and potions and food are all usable in the Arena, and they are replaced for free after the battle. People often forget to use all the tools at their disposal because those items are expensive or annoying to replace during regular gameplay. Thankfully that's not an issue in the Arena.

- **Prepare on the platform.** 1) Set up your [quick-swap](#) if you know you want to use two different weapons during the fight. For example, equip the spike thrower, then equip the ropecaster. Now you can simply tap L1 to swap back and forth between them. 2) Check your hunter kit before jumping in. Usually you want to cycle it back to the smoke bombs. This is easy to forget if you are retrying after a failed attempt. There's nothing worse than trying to use a smoke bomb and seeing Aloy begin to set a trap instead. 3) There's a time-wasting animation when Aloy lands in the Arena. Prevent it by opening/closing the shieldwing, performing a light attack, or aiming a weapon in midair.
- **If all else fails, use smoke bombs and traps.** One of the easiest ways to beat a majority of the open loadout challenges is to simply drop into the Arena, use a smoke bomb, and set as many traps as you can. Once the enemies set off those traps, use another smoke bomb and repeat the process. It's not the sexiest approach, but it's very effective.
- **Remember these are just guidelines.** The advice presented here is designed to help players of all skill levels complete the Arena. These are not optimal strategies to complete levels quickly, nor are they the only strategies you can use to beat the challenges. If you have different weapons you prefer using, do so! For example, shredders and boltblasters can be extremely powerful, but many players are less comfortable using them, so they are not a major focus of this guide.
- **Don't get too frustrated.** Finally, the Arena is designed to be a challenge. Just because it's possible to beat it on the harder difficulties doesn't mean that it will be fun for you to do so. It's OK to lower the difficulty in order to skip past harder levels. It's OK to leave and do something else for a while and come back later when you have better equipment. It's OK to play the whole thing on Story difficulty so that you can get all the legendary weapons, and then come back with a full set of maxed-out gear and crush all the enemies to dust. Play in the way that works for you.

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## 2. PREPARING FOR THE ARENA

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On Normal difficulty and above, the Arena is designed to be a challenge for players with access to strong weapons and outfits. While you can unlock it at a relatively early level, it's not recommended that you attempt to complete the full Arena before level 35, because the additional health that Aloy gains from leveling up is very important in order to survive some of the more difficult enemies—especially on the fixed loadout levels.

Additionally, most of the very rare (purple) equipment that you may want to acquire in order to defeat the Arena can be found in Thornmarsh. You may consider holding off on the Arena until you've reached that settlement. ***This guide doesn't highlight any legendary weapons or armor; those items will of course be stronger than the alternatives listed here.***

To unlock the Arena, you need to first complete the main story quest "The Kulrut." This will provide access to the Maw of the Arena, where you can acquire the quest "Opening the Arena."

### Weapons & Coils

The Arena relies on dealing lots of damage quickly in order to complete levels within the time limit. That means that weapons that deal high damage are vital. Sharpshot bows, blast slings, and spike throwers perform better than hunting bows, for example. It's also important to take advantage of elemental weaknesses to increase your damage output.

- ***Elite Ropercaster*** – The ropercaster is often overlooked in Forbidden West. It is one of the best ways to keep Arena fights under control. The difference between the Elite Ropercaster (purple) and all the other ropercasters is dramatic; it's highly recommended that you invest in the Elite Ropercaster early. You can find it—you guessed it—in Thornmarsh.
- ***Spike Thrower*** – There are three purple spike throwers available, all of which have access to advanced explosive spikes. One is sold in Thornmarsh, one can be purchased from the Arena Prize Master using Hunting Ground medals, and one is earned by completing all the

quests given by the Salvage Contractor in the Raintrace. If you don't have access to the purple weapons, the drill spikes on the Spinthorn Spike Thrower are also highly effective; that weapon is earned by completing the sidequest "Signal Spike."

- **Sharpshot Bow** – The damage that Braced Shot does is based on the rarity of your bow rather than the damage values of the arrows, so it's very helpful to have a purple sharpshot bow. The Glowblast and Delta Sharpshot Bows are both good options that can be purchased from the hunter in Thornmarsh. If you have completed enough Hunting Ground challenges, the Warden Sharpshot Bow is available from the Arena Prize Master.
- **Elemental Hunter Bow** – Freezing enemies is one of the best ways to increase your speed and damage output. If you don't already have access to the Sun Scourge, the Seeker Hunter Bow is your best option. You can purchase it from the hunter in Fall's Edge and should upgrade it until at least level 3 in order to unlock Advanced Frost Hunter Arrows.
- **Coils** – The best coils provide 25% increase to damage, but only under certain conditions. The 25% Long Range Damage coil can be very effective on the sharpshot bow, for example, but only if you are able to maintain your distance. The Maw of the Arena hunter sells 12% Explosive Damage and 25% Multiple Enemy Damage coils, which work well on the spike thrower. You can get 15% Frost Damage coils from the hunter in Scalding Spear; these are excellent on the Seeker Hunter Bow. The 15% Agility Damage coil that you can get at the Bulwark is also great on the Seeker if you are comfortable firing while sliding or jumping. The hunter in Arrowhand sells 15% Critical Hit Chance coils, which can help maximize the damage from the Precision Arrows on your sharpshot bow. Finally, the Reload Speed and Draw Speed coils that you can find in Hidden Ember, Thornmarsh, and the Digsite are great on every weapon (note that you need to purchase coils at the Digsite before entering Thebes). When in doubt, Impact Damage coils are also effective on most weapons. Here's a [full list of coils](#) and where to find them created by Arktix and his community.

If you have other high-level weapons that you're experienced with, feel free to use them! In particular, a good boltblaster can help out on some of the later levels. But these four items are sufficient to beat every challenge in the Arena.

## Outfits & Weaves

The most important aspects of outfits are the bonuses they provide to your passive abilities. In particular, it's helpful to have increased weapon stamina and concentration, since those will allow you to perform additional weapon techniques and to aim more carefully so that you don't miss shots. Finally, don't forget to upgrade your outfits. It's easy to get focused on leveling up your weapons. However, during the course of gameplay, it's common to change weapons frequently—but you rarely change your outfit. From that perspective, your outfit is actually one of the best things to invest in.

- **Nora Valiant** – This is the best all-around, non-legendary hunter outfit. You can get it from the hunter in Lowland Path. Just be careful about its weaknesses to plasma and frost, which can be relevant during certain levels.
- **Carja Behemoth Trapper** – If you are more interested in stealth gameplay, you might prefer to have this outfit at your disposal. It is sold by the stitcher in Thornmarsh. The Quick Trapper weave is exceptionally useful in the Arena, given the power of elite traps. Even if you aren't wearing this outfit, it's worth upgrading to level 3 to gain access to this weave.
- **Sobeck's Raiment** – If you have progressed far enough in the main quest to receive this outfit, you may actually want to invest in it. The stats and abilities are pretty comparable to the Nora Valiant, and you get it for free.
- **Weaves** – There are several helpful weaves; none should be thought of as “required.” Some favorites include Weapon Stamina+, Quick Trapper, Stamina Regen, Evader, and Valor Surge Master. Again, [this spreadsheet](#) from Arktix shows what outfits you need to upgrade to acquire these weaves. Melee defense and ranged defense weaves tend to underperform. Against certain enemies, 15% elemental weaves can be useful (for example, plasma defense is strong against the Sunwings in level 14).

## Skills & Abilities

The only skills that are truly required to complete the Arena are weapon techniques. However, there are several additional abilities that are relevant—for example, it may be helpful to invest skill points into Potent Medicine or Low Health Defense to increase your survivability, or to upgrade Weapon Stamina+ so that you can perform weapon techniques more rapidly.

- **Weapon Techniques** – You will absolutely want to get access to the Spike Trap technique on the spike thrower. This can turn any spike into a high-damage explosive at the cost of relatively little stamina. If possible, try to hit enemies with the Spike Trap directly rather than placing it on the ground and waiting for them to walk over it. The Propelled Spike weapon technique is also extremely strong, but it uses much more stamina. Even though it was nerfed during a recent patch, Braced Shot is still one of the best all-purpose damage-dealing techniques. It can also explode sacs and destroy components, which is extremely helpful against many enemies. While this guide is written for people playing without a boltblaster, it is one of the best weapons for dealing high damage quickly. If you have one, you should definitely acquire the Sustained Burst weapon technique.
- **Valor Surges** – Note that your valor is reset to zero when you start each Arena challenge. That means valor surges are only useful in longer battles. Ranged Master is likely to be the surge you rely on most throughout the Forbidden West. It is great in the Arena, as well. If you have access to an upgraded Radial Blast, that can serve you well on levels with several small-to-midsize machines. Critical Boost and Powershots are also effective at increasing your damage output.
- **Passive Abilities** – The passive abilities in the Hunter, Trapper, and Survivor skill trees will be useful in the Arena. Unfortunately, melee combat is not very effective against machines, so the Warrior skills are less helpful here. Similarly, it's basically impossible to maintain stealth and overriding is not allowed in the Arena, so the Infiltrator and Machine Master abilities are unlikely to provide too much help. Abilities worth highlighting: Quick Trapper, Weapon Stamina+, Stamina Regen, Potion Proficiency.

## Resources

***Any and all resources that you use during an Arena challenge will be refunded at the end.***

That means you can feel free to use high-value items like potions, traps, and elite ammunition with impunity.

- **Traps** – Using tons of traps is one of the best ways to increase your Arena times. Traps are also vital to completing the locked loadout challenges. Once you have purchased or looted a trap, you gain access to the recipe for crafting it. The hunter in Thornmarsh sells every type of elite trap; buying a trap from them is the best way to get access to elite recipes. You will need access to at least the Elite Acid Trap and Elite Vertical Shock Trap recipes. However, ***you should bring as many traps as you can to every challenge.***
- **Smoke Bombs** – Smoke bombs are a great way to extricate yourself from a sticky situation so that you can heal, craft ammo, regain stamina, or set traps. Bring a full set to each fight, and don't forget to use them if you need to!
- **Potions** – Health potions can be useful, but they don't deal any damage. Instead of loading up on health potions, bring multiple stamina potions—these allow you to use additional Braced Shots and Spike Traps to kill enemies quickly. You can also bring an overdraw potion if that aligns with your playstyle (you should only need one).
- **Food** – Don't forget that food exists! Food doesn't take up any of the spaces in your potion pouch, which makes it more useful than health potions. You can also use food to boost relevant skills—for example, increasing your trap limit or weapon stamina. The third tab of [this spreadsheet](#) made by Woo-Dio contains a full list of available foods, the skills they increase, and where to find them.

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### 3. LEVEL WALKTHROUGHS

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#### About the Open Loadout Levels

For each open loadout level, this guide includes a sample video completed on Ultra Hard difficulty. **Note that Aloy does more damage on this difficulty setting, meaning it may actually be easier than Very Hard in some instances.** However, players on Ultra Hard can't change their difficulty setting, so this guide is designed with them in mind.

At the end of each video, you can see the exact loadout used. It is the following:

- **Level 1 Nora Valiant Outfit** with a +1 Concentration+ weave (acquired from upgrading the Nora Anointed outfit; this is the default outfit that you begin the game with)
- **Level 1 Glowblast Spike Thrower** (purchased from the Prize Master at the Maw of the Arena for 54 hunting medals; [see this playlist](#) for help with hunting grounds) equipped with a 12% Explosive Damage coil (purchased from the hunter in the Maw of the Arena)
- **Level 1 Elite Ropecaster** (purchased from the hunter in Thornmarsh) equipped with a 15% Draw Speed coil (looted from the Rollerback during the quest "Opening the Arena")
- **Level 3 Seeker Hunter Bow** (purchased from the hunter in Fall's Edge) equipped with two 15% Frost Damage coils (purchased from the hunter in Scalding Spear)
- **Level 1 Delta Sharpshot Bow** (purchased from the hunter in Thornmarsh) equipped with a 10% Concentration coil (looted from the Tremortusk during "The Broken Sky")
- **Level 3 Ranged Master** valor surge

The difficulty ratings are subjective based on several attempts at completing these levels on Ultra Hard using exactly this loadout.

## About the Fixed Loadout Levels

For many people, the fixed loadout levels are the toughest challenges in the game. Because you don't have access to any of your equipment, none of the items mentioned above will be of any use to you—with one vital exception. ***You can craft traps during the fixed loadout challenges.***

Every one of these levels is made simpler by crafting elite traps before dropping into the Arena. While you are standing on the platform, hold down on the D-Pad to customize your Hunter's Kit. Then press square to swap the selected item with an elite trap recipe. If you have access to the Sunwing, you will generally want to replace the Sunwing Override in your kit. Otherwise, health potions or cleanse potions are usually the safest things to replace. Note that you will only have limited crafting resources within the challenge; see the specific instructions for each level to learn more about the optimal traps to craft.

### **REMEMBER:**

These are not the only strategies. These are not the only weapons.

*If you would prefer to simply watch the full playlist of videos, [you can find it here](#).*

## Level 1: Pack Hunters

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Machines: 3x Scrapper  
2x Clawstrider  
Time: 2:30  
Cost: 100 Shards  
Reward: 3 Arena Medals  
Difficulty: ★☆☆☆☆



*The video shows two attempts back-to-back with some slight variations.*

This is a great opportunity to deploy Elite Vertical Shock Traps. The basic approach is to land in the Arena and immediately throw Spike Traps toward the right-hand side. As the machines come over the rise, they will set off the explosions, which should damage multiple enemies at once. Other explosive weapons work well, too (e.g., a blast sling, if you've got one).

When you are out of stamina—or when the machines have begun to close in on you—use a smoke bomb. Then place Elite Vertical Shock Traps between you and the enemies. Throw a couple more Spike Traps (assuming your stamina has returned), wait for them to run into the shock traps, then repeat the process by using another smoke bomb. This strategy is relatively risk-free. The only danger is the plasma beams from the Scrapers—every other attack is melee, so you should have plenty of warning to either dodge or deploy additional smoke bombs.

*Tip: The sides of the play area are narrow enough that you can block off the entire route with traps, ensuring machines can't reach you without running through them.*

## Level 2: Machine Reinforcements

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Machines: 1x Ravager  
1x Longleg  
3x *Canister Burrowers* (if summoned)

Time: 3:30

Cost: 150 Shards

Reward: 5 Arena Medals

Difficulty: ★★☆☆☆

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*The first Spike Trap is intentionally thrown over the Ravager to disable the Longleg's antenna.*

Both the Longleg and Ravager have antennas that allow them to summon reinforcements. Try to hit the Longleg with a Spike Trap ASAP before it calls in the Burrowers—this should destroy the antenna on its head. Bring the Elite Ropecaster to tie down the Ravager, then focus on the bird. Once the Longleg is dead, surround the Ravager with Elite Acid Traps. Rather than wait for the Ravager to break free from the ropes, you can just shoot the traps to explode them. If the machine is still alive, you can use a smoke bomb and set more traps.

If they do call reinforcements, use a smoke bomb to get your bearings. Burrowers are weak enough to be killed with Silent Strike on lower difficulties. On higher difficulties, you can litter the Arena with Spike Traps or use some of your Elite Acid Traps to help clear them out. You can rope down the Longleg in addition to the Ravager so that you can focus on the Burrowers.

*Tip: You can shoot the log trap on the back wall while you're dropping into the Arena; this can help deal some initial damage to both machines if they are placed properly.*

## Level 3: Boost Battle

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Machines: 1x Rollerback  
3x Spikesnout  
Time: 3:00  
Cost: 150 Shards  
Reward: 6 Arena Medals  
Difficulty: ★★☆☆☆



*Preventing the Spikesnouts from using their enrage ability on the Rollerback would have simplified things.*

The easiest strategy is to rope down the Rollerback, but it's very possible to win by just using smoke bombs and traps. Spike Traps and Braced Shots are extremely effective at popping the many sacs on the Spikesnouts and the large adhesive canister on the back of the Rollerback, which causes additional explosive damage.

If you can, enter the Arena when the enemies are clustered to one side of the ring. You can then use a smoke bomb to freeze them in place while you set your traps. Elite Acid Traps are likely to be your best bet to deal high damage to the Rollerback, but Elite Purgewater Traps are also effective at shutting down several of the annoying Spikesnout abilities.

*Tip: Cleanse potions can help counter the Spikesnouts' noxious fumes.*

## Level 4: Rematch (FIXED LOADOUT)

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Machines: 1x Slitherfang

Time: 5:00

Cost: 250 Shards

Reward: 10 Arena Medals

Difficulty: ★★☆☆☆



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*Not a very clean run, but you can see how effective the strategy is.*

This level tends to throw off players who are less experienced with using shredder gauntlets. Unfortunately, the best way to finish within the time limit is to throw and catch the shredder consecutively until it explodes as many times as possible. For tips about making the best use of shredders, check out the [Shredder Master Class video](#) from Arktix.

Before dropping into the Arena, craft three Elite Purgewater Traps. When you drop in, run toward the Slitherfang and then use a smoke bomb to escape its detection. Immediately place all three traps and then run away from the machine. Throw Piercing Shredders at the Slitherfang targeting the point where it touches the ground—don't worry about aiming for the head. This enables you to build up knockdown damage, which will eventually cause it to fall over immobile.

Once it walks into the traps and becomes drenched, swap to your Light Frost Arrows. If you have accumulated sufficient valor, this is a good time to use your Elemental Fury valor surge. After freezing the Slitherfang, swap back to your Piercing Shredder ammo—you should now be able to deal significant damage by targeting the body of the Slitherfang. Again, aim at the part that's on the ground—both because it's easier to hit and to help build up to the knockdown threshold.

You have another smoke bomb if at any point you need a breather. You should be able to knock the snake down a couple more times over the course of the fight by targeting its body with your shredder; when it falls over, aim for the purgewater/acid sac on its neck to cause additional damage and inflict elemental status. If you are able to drench it a second time by exploding the purgewater sac, you can use frost arrows again (also, this is another good opportunity to use the valor surge if you have it available).

It's a good idea to use the Triple Shredder weapon technique as your first throw in each cycle. However, after you have caught a shredder, make sure to complete the rest of the throws normally. Using Triple Shredder always resets your throw streak, which will prevent you from reaching the high damage that you get from the third and fourth throws. The only other outlet for stamina is to use the weapon technique on your warrior bow; this should help you freeze the snake slightly faster.

As long as you are able to stay alive and consistently throw and catch your shredders without too many misses, you should have no problem completing the level within the time limit.

*Tip: On lower difficulties, you can take advantage of the Slitherfang's weakness to plasma. Use the plasma bolts on the boltblaster and the Propelled Spike technique on the provided spike thrower to create massive plasma explosions.*

## Level 5: Fight the Elements

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Machines: 1x Acid Clawstrider

1x Fire Clawstrider

Time: 1:00

Cost: 100 Shards

Reward: 6 Arena Medals

Difficulty: ★☆☆☆☆



*Again, pretty poor aim. But you can see how the Clawstriders tend to put themselves into vulnerable positions by closing in and grouping together.*

If you want to simplify things, you can rope down one of the Clawstriders. They are challenging to hit with the Spike Trap because they tend to move rapidly. However, they like to get up close to attack, which makes them great candidates for elite traps. Shock or purgewater work well.

It's also very possible to freeze them or shock them to increase your damage output, but it's not a necessary step. The biggest enemy here is time—the level is very straightforward.

*Tip: Check your armor's elemental resistances to see which Clawstrider is more dangerous against you.*

## Level 6: Cage Fight

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Machines: 2x Grimhorn

Time: 1:30

Cost: 150 Shards

Reward: 8 Arena Medals

Difficulty: ★☆☆☆☆



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*Grimhorns have elemental sacs that cause big AoE explosions. Make sure you don't explode the one you're attacking too near to the one you tied down.*

Use your Elite Ropecaster to tie down one of the Grimhorns. Use Spike Traps on the other one until it explodes. Place traps next to the tied-down Grimhorn.

You can use frost arrows to freeze one of them to speed things up. It's also nice to use a smoke bomb so that you can drink a stamina potion.

These guys may have a lot of HP, but they are slow and they are large, which means they are very good targets for all the damage-dealing techniques you've been using so far. Note that they always seem to exit out the right side of the ring, so you'll want to start by heading in that direction. Remember to use smoke bombs if you need a breather or if you want to set some traps for the one that's not already detained.

*Tip: The Grimhorns have weapons that can be detached and used against them if you want to try something a little different.*

## Level 7: Canister Chaos

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Machines: 2x Widemaw  
2x Acid Canister Burrower  
2x Purgewater Canister Burrower

Time: 2:30

Cost: 150 Shards

Reward: 10 Arena Medals

Difficulty: ★★☆☆☆



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*If you can get lucky and hit the enemies with the environmental traps, they can actually be helpful here—these enemies are pretty squishy.*

Chaos is right. There are lots of smaller machines in this fight, which can quickly become overwhelming. If you have it, spec into Radial Blast to help with clean-up, and be prepared to use lots of smoke bombs to create space. The bombs will put the machines into “yellow” awareness, during which time you can pick off the Burrowers using Silent Strike (depending on your level). Elite Purgewater Traps are extremely strong against the Widemaws. Spike Traps have a large explosive radius, which means they can often hit multiple enemies at once.

*Tip: You have plenty of time to deal the requisite amount of damage, which means you can play a little more defensively in this challenge.*

## Level 8: From the Deep (FIXED LOADOUT)

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Machines: 1x Tideripper

2x Snapmaw

Time: 3:30

Cost: 250 Shards

Reward: 24 Arena Medals

Difficulty: ★★☆☆☆



*The first shock trap was misplaced and only hit the Snapmaw. If it was a bit closer, the Tideripper could have been killed with just the traps.*

The optimal strategy for completing this level is deeply unsatisfying. Essentially—with enough luck—you can kill all three enemies with just five Elite Vertical Shock Traps.

Before dropping into the Arena, open your hunter kit and craft five Elite Vertical Shock Traps. Then wait until the Tideripper and at least one of the Snapmaws are positioned close to one another. When you enter the Arena, use a smoke bomb to buy some time, then place the Elite Vertical Shock Traps in between the Tideripper and Snapmaw. The idea is to get one trap to hit multiple enemies.

A single Elite Vertical Shock Trap is enough to paralyze the Tideripper, which should give you the time you need to place additional traps around it. Remember that you can also use your other smoke bombs to re-enter cover.

The full set of five Elite Vertical Shock Traps should be enough to kill the Tideripper even on Ultra Hard difficulty. If you're lucky, you'll be able to get them to also kill at least one of the Snapmaws, too. Depending on the difficulty you're playing on, you may need to reset if both

Snapmaws survive the traps, since it can be extremely challenging to take them both down with just the weapons you're provided.

To clean up the last Snapmaw, use your Explosive Spikes to target the frost sacs near its head. It's helpful if you tag these with your focus before dropping into the Arena. Spike Trap can help deal area damage that will explode the sacs even if you don't hit them directly. If you're able to freeze the machine, the Light Arrows on your Warrior Bow are the best tool for dealing high damage-per-second. Finally, don't forget that you have a Radial Blast you can use if you've accumulated enough valor.

The higher level you are, the more you will be able to survive attacks from these enemies. This is hugely useful, because it's hard to dodge ranged attacks from three machines at once.

*Tip: It's possible to place shock traps in contact with an enemy. They take about a second to "prime" before the trap is triggered. That means you need to wait a beat after setting the trap before dodging in order to ensure you are invincible at the time the trap explodes.*

## Level 9: Grim Prospects

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Machines: 1x Grimhorn

2x Ravager

Time: 2:30

Cost: 100 Shards

Reward: 9 Arena Medals

Difficulty: ★★★★★☆



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*Dodging and sliding can make you invulnerable to your own traps exploding.*

Spike Traps continue to be very powerful against the Grimhorn, but the Ravagers are much quicker and therefore harder to hit. The environmental log traps in the Arena can be helpful, but they don't deal nearly enough damage on higher levels. On the hardest difficulties, you're probably going to need to rely on smoke bombs + Elite Acid Traps, with the caveat that you'll need to get lucky. If you made it through From the Deep, you should have some experience with placing traps strategically so that they hit multiple enemies at once.

If you want to try a different strategy, you can attempt to remove a Ravager Cannon using your Seeker Hunter Bow. To do this effectively, you likely need to tie down the other enemies first. This approach is probably too slow for the hardest difficulties.

*Tip: Use a smoke bomb before picking up any heavy weapons so that you can be sure to get a few clean shots off.*

## Level 10: Ring of Fire

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Machines: 2x Scorcher

Time: 1:20

Cost: 150 Shards

Reward: 12 Arena Medals

Difficulty: ★★☆☆☆



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*Extra smoke bomb for style. (JK, it was supposed to be a stamina potion.)*

Scorchers are very aggressive; use that against them by luring them into traps. They are also weak to frost, so the Seeker Hunter Bow can help by putting them into a brittle state where you can deal extra damage.

It's recommended that you tie one of them down right off the bat so that you can keep the chaos to a minimum. Elite Vertical Shock Traps also work great at locking them down and dealing damage. When the Scorcher is shocked, you can target the mine launcher on its back to get a damage multiplier and remove that attack ability.

*Tip: Scorchers have a set of scary—but predictable—attacks. It helps to tie one down so that you only have to keep your eye on one at a time. Swapping to an armor that has good fire resistance can help you survive if you have trouble dodging.*

## Level 11: Bellow Brawl

---

Machines: 1x Shellsnapper  
1x Acid Bellowback  
1x Fire Bellowback  
Time: 2:30  
Cost: 150 Shards  
Reward: 15 Arena Medals  
Difficulty: ★★★★★☆



---

*This took about 50 attempts. It's not recommended that you try it on Ultra Hard with this loadout—but it is technically possible.*

This is one of the hardest levels to cheese because the Shellsnapper is beefy as all heck. If you can explode the frost sacs on its belly, it makes things a lot easier. As with all these levels, Spike Trap is excellent. You should be able to explode the acid sac on the dead Bellowback in the center of the Arena and hit the Shellsnapper at the same time with a well-placed Spike Trap.

When you enter the Arena, try to shoot the supports to knock down the raised platforms with the explosive barrels. Be aware, however, that this will cause the Shellsnapper to leave the center area—you need to start peppering it with spikes ASAP before it can escape where all the explosives are.

Hitting the Shellsnapper directly with Spike Traps is highly recommended. The armor on its shell can be destroyed, which deals additional damage on top of the explosive damage from your spikes. Those explosions should also ignite the other environmental traps in a sort of beautiful, fiery chain reaction. Furthermore, destroying components awards you valor, which is really helpful. This is one of the first levels where you absolutely need the extra damage from the

valor surge because, taken together, the enemies in this challenge have ton of hit points:  
11,200 (Shellsnapper) + 4,480\*2 (Bellowbacks) = 20,160 HP on Ultra Hard difficulty.

Then you can use a smoke bomb and start placing Elite Acid Traps all around (ideally next to the Shellsnapper). Killing the Shellsnapper provides a really good valor burst, so that's a good time to use your surge. Ranged Master or Powershots are your best bets, if you have them.

Depending on your level, you may also look into roping down the Bellowbacks early in the fight. Their ranged elemental attacks are hugely annoying and have a tendency to knock Aloy down. However, if you are high enough level or well-armored enough, you may be able to tank the majority of their attacks, in which case you can skip this step.

*Tip: If you use a smoke bomb on top of the Shellsnapper while it is underground, it will instantly resurface.*

## Level 12: Tremortusk Tussle (FIXED LOADOUT)

---

Machines: 1x Tremortusk  
2x Acid Clawstriders  
3x *Apex Canister Burrowers*  
(if summoned)

Time: 5:00

Cost: 250 Shards

Reward: 16 Arena Medals

Difficulty: ★★☆☆☆



*The environment of the Arena can help to provide cover while you're trying to tie down the Tremortusk.*

Rematch tested your ability to throw and catch shredder discs. Tremortusk Tussle is all about how well you can maneuver with a boltblaster.

The strategy here is simple: Tie down the Tremortusk. Use the shock ammo on the boltblaster to kill the Clawstriders. Set Elite Purgewater Traps next to the Tremortusk. Use frost ammo and Sustained Burst to first explode the traps and then freeze the Tremortusk. Finish it off with Drill Spikes.

Getting the Tremortusk roped down in the first place is by far the hardest part of this strategy. You may need to rely on a smoke bomb to help keep the Clawstriders off your back. Also, be sure to keep an eye on the Tremortusk cannons.

The Clawstriders are weak to shock, so the electric bolts should get the job done relatively quickly. However, you can also use a smoke bomb if you need to get them to stand still or want to reload your weapon.

When you start attacking the Tremortusk, it's important to explode the purgewater traps with your bolts rather than waiting for the Tremortusk to walk into them because you want to leave it in the brittle state, not the drenched state. By continuing to stagger it with the Drill Spikes, you should be able to prevent the Tremortusk from calling in backup.

While that's all you need on Ultra Hard, it may take a bit more finesse on Very Hard because your weapons do less damage. On a Very Hard run, bring a full set of five Elite Purgewater Traps, and use a smoke bomb to set additional traps right after the Sustained Burst finishes. Then you can activate the Powershots valor surge and finish it with Drill Spikes.

*Tip: If you're not confident about your ability to take the Tremortusk down quickly enough, you can remove the antenna from its back while it's tied down—that will prevent it from calling out for help.*

## Level 13: Apex Drifters

---

Machines: 1x Apex Rollerback

2x Apex Skydrifter

Time: 2:00

Cost: 100 Shards

Reward: 15 Arena Medals

Difficulty: ★★☆☆☆



*Weirdly, you want to tie down the Skydrifters in this fight—it's too annoying trying to kill them within the time limit when they are flying all over the place.*

Wait until the Skydrifters land before dropping into the Arena. Then use your Elite Ropecaster to tie them down—it should only take one rope each. Equip the Advanced Frost Arrows on your hunter bow and freeze the Rollerback. While it's briefly stunned, run up to it, use a smoke bomb, and set as many Elite Blast Traps as you have time for. Then swap in the tried-and-true spike thrower and use Spike Traps to explode both the Rollerback and the traps you just set.

You can repeat this process to kill the Rollerback. Then it's time to kill the Skydrifters. Place any elite traps of your choosing next to them while they are tied down (one at a time, if they aren't next to one another), and use Spike Traps to explode both them and the traps. If they are still alive after the explosion, you can use frost ammo to lock them in place for a follow-up shot.

*Tip: Be careful about the Rollerback's gravity generator—when it explodes, it can damage the Skydrifters, which will cause them to come free of their ropes earlier than expected.*

## Level 14: Death From Above

---

Machines: 3x Sunwing

Time: 1:30

Cost: 150 Shards

Reward: 20 Arena Medals

Difficulty: ★★☆☆☆



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*Using explosives can cause parts of the Sunwing to themselves explode — dealing plasma damage to you if you're not careful.*

Sunwings are surprisingly resilient, they like to spam attacks, and it's tedious to lock them down with ropes. The best strategy is to take them out one-by-one by first freezing them to knock them to the ground and then exploding them with spikes and/or Braced Shots. The Seeker Hunter Bow can freeze them in just two shots—and you can make your first one while you're falling into the Arena.

After you kill the first Sunwing, use a smoke bomb so that you can drink a stamina potion, heal (as needed), and reset for the next. You can also set Elite Vertical Shock Traps around the Arena to help knock them out of the sky.

*Tip: You can “dodge” the damage from a plasma explosion by sliding or dodging at the precise moment—about 1.5 seconds after the plasma status indicator expires.*

## Level 15: Stormy Weather

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Machines: 1x Apex Stormbird

Time: 2:30

Cost: 150 Shards

Reward: 25 Arena Medals

Difficulty: ★★☆☆☆



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*This is far from an ideal run, but it demonstrates the general strategy: Knock it out of the sky, then deal damage while it's grounded.*

The Seeker Hunter Bow can make the Stormbird brittle, temporarily putting it on the ground. . Advanced Explosive Spikes are great at inflicting knockdown damage; note that you will probably have to throw your spikes rather than using Spike Trap given the difficulty of hitting a flying target with the latter. You can also use instant elemental coils (if you have them) to help cause status effects that bring the Stormbird to the ground.

Once the Stormbird is down, use Spike Traps (or even Elite Acid Traps) to deal high damage. You should use a valor surge to help increase your damage output in order to finish in time.

*Tip: This level can be dramatically improved by using an additional weapon—the boltblaster. If you have access to Sustained Burst, use it directly after freezing the Stormbird.*

## Level 16: Dreaded Encounter (FIXED LOADOUT)

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Machines: 1x Apex Dreadwing  
2x Apex Spikesnout  
2x Apex Fire Canister Burrower  
(if summoned)

Time: 3:00

Cost: 250 Shards

Reward: 40 Arena Medals

Difficulty: ★★☆☆☆



*You can tag one of the Spikesnouts to help keep track of which you are targeting with your Power Shredders.*

Before dropping into the Arena, craft a full set of Elite Vertical Shock Traps and top off your smoke bombs. Then set up your quick swap to go back and forth between your Advanced Shredders and Advanced Explosive Bombs. Tag the Dreadwing and especially make note of the antenna on its back—you are going to need to target that later.

When you enter the Arena, immediately fire off three Power Shredder weapon techniques at one of the Spikesnouts; if you are able to hit the same one with all three, it will be enough to kill it outright. Swap to your Advanced Explosive Bombs and use them to explode the various elemental sacs on the other Spikesnout and take it down. It's recommended that you dodge right after firing explosives at these enemies, as the explosions from their elementals sacs can damage you and inflict status effects. While you're doing this, be sure that you don't lose track of the Dreadwing—it can very easily snipe you with mines or acid spit while you are distracted.

Once you kill both Spikesnouts, you can use any remaining stamina to throw Power Shredders at the Dreadwing; feel free to toss a couple bombs at it as well, if it is in a vulnerable position.

Don't delay too long, however—you want to get the antenna off before you damage it to the point that it calls for reinforcements.

Use a smoke bomb so that you can set traps without being bothered. The Dreadwing likes to fly overhead to drop mines. Set two or three Elite Vertical Shock Traps near the center of the Arena where it is likely to fly by (two is enough to shock it). Note: Make sure that the Dreadwing is not actually above you when you are setting them or they will go off immediately and may kill you.

This is a good time to use an overdraw potion and craft some more shredder ammo. Swap back to your Power Shredders to aggro the Dreadwing and entice it to fly into the traps. The traps will shock it and knock it to the ground; be careful—it tends to fall in wildly unpredictable ways. You need to run to the back of the Dreadwing while it is grounded and use your shredders to remove the antenna.

Once the antenna is off, it's just a question of dealing damage. You should target the metalbite sac near the neck to cause a large acid explosion; this can be with either shredders or bombs, but you should continue to devote your stamina to Power Shredders. It's also a good idea to use a smoke bomb and set up another set of Elite Vertical Shock Traps to ensure that the Dreadwing can't fly into you without first getting shocked.

You have two other smoke bombs to fall back on. Keep moving, make sure you don't let the Dreadwing stunlock you with its Pulse Stomps, and the fight shouldn't last much longer.

*Tip: You can target the stealth generator while the Dreadwing is shocked so that it loses its ability to hide from you.*

## Level 17: Shimmering Menace

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Machines: 4x Apex Stalker

Time: 1:30

Cost: 100 Shards

Reward: 32 Arena Medals

Difficulty: ★☆☆☆☆



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*Pretty anticlimactic, tbh.*

Stalkers like to drop mines behind them. The mines deal a lot of damage to the Stalkers when you explode them. When you have a lot of Stalkers, you get a lot of mines—and a lot of potential to cause a chain reaction that kills them all. Unfortunately, this fight can easily just come down to RNG.

The Stalkers like to congregate to the left of the platform. Drop in and head to the right. Then use Spike Traps or a blast sling to target the group of Stalkers and explode any mines around them. You may not get all four of them at once; you can freeze and use Spike Traps to clean up any stragglers. Just keep an ear out for the sound of their cannons and you should be fine.

*Tip: An early smoke bomb can help you get clear of the enemies; running up on the raised platform along the back of the Arena will give you a good vantage point to find them.*

## Level 18: Ancient Corruption

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Machines: 3x Corruptor

Time: 2:00

Cost: 150 Shards

Reward: 48 Arena Medals

Difficulty: ★★☆☆☆



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*They are surprisingly hard to hit with ropes. This may take some practice.*

Corruptors are very aggressive, and their attacks leave behind pools of fire that cause ongoing damage over time that saps your stamina. Tie two of them down so that you can even the playing field. You can use smoke bombs to stop them from aggroing while you're deploying ropes if needed.

Once two of them are detained, use frost arrows to freeze the final Corruptor and prime it for Spike Traps. It will be very susceptible while brittle, which should allow you to make quick work of it. Then set Elite Blast Traps instead of one of the tied-down Corruptors, freeze it with your frost bow, and use a Spike Trap to explode it and the traps together. Rinse and repeat for the final enemy.

*Tip: Fire defense weaves can help you tank more of their attacks and survive the environmental fires they spread on the ground.*

## Level 19: The Frozen Wilds

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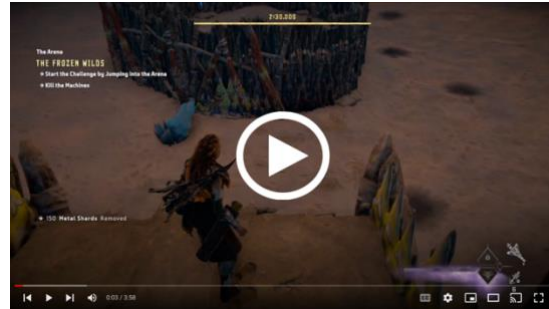
Machines: 2x Apex Frostclaw

Time: 2:30

Cost: 150 Shards

Reward: 64 Arena Medals

Difficulty: ★★☆☆☆



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*Careful: The outfits recommended in this guide are not strong against frost.*

It helps if you can wait until the two machines are standing on opposite sides of the ring. When you enter, use a smoke bomb to throw them off your trail so that the farther enemy doesn't snipe you with a snowball (or the annoying frost geyser).

Approach the nearer Frostclaw and tie it down. Swap to your Spike Thrower and use Spike Traps to attack the other one. The explosive damage should cause the frost sacs to explode before long, which will put the machine into a brittle state. You can then use a smoke bomb and place some elite traps at its feet (Elite Blast Traps will do extra damage if its brittle). Continue to use Spike Traps and Braced Shots to whittle away its health.

Once the first enemy is dead, return to the Frostclaw that you've tied down. Ideally, it will still be incapacitated—this will give you time to place as many elite traps next to it as you can. Explode it (and the traps) with a Spike Trap. If you have a damage-dealing valor surge, use it now. Then it's back to the Spike Trap/Braced Shot approach until the Frostclaw croaks.

*Tip: Like Stormy Weather, this level can be simplified by using the Sustained Burst weapon technique on the boltblaster. After the frost sacs explode, swap to the boltblaster and open fire.*

## Level 20: Apex Predators

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Machines: 1x Apex Thunderjaw

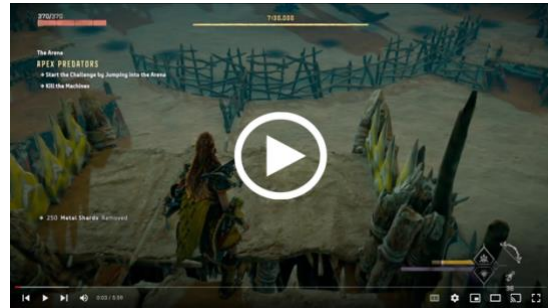
1x Apex Scorcher

Time: 7:30

Cost: 250 Shards

Reward: 131 Arena Medals

Difficulty: ★★★★★



*N.B.: This fight is actually harder on Very Hard difficulty than on Ultra Hard because of Aloy's reduced damage output.*

This level is extremely difficult. With good planning and the right approach, it's possible to take down the Scorcher and deal a large amount of damage to the Thunderjaw using Elite Traps. However, after the Scorcher is down, completing the fight relies on several minutes of 1-on-1 combat with an Apex Thunderjaw while equipped with some relatively squishy armor. It's a good idea to wait until you're at a very high level before attempting this fight since a single hit from the Thunderjaw can be fatal—especially on high difficulties and at low levels.

Before you enter the Arena, craft five Elite Acid Traps and seven Advanced Purgewater Traps. If you have access to the Sunwing, they can take the place of the Sunwing Override and cleanse potions in your kit. If you don't, then you should still replace the cleanse potion; the other trap can take the place of either your health potions or your overdraw potion depending on the difficulty you're playing on. For Very Hard and Ultra Hard, when you really need to output as much damage as quickly as possible, you may need to sacrifice the health potions with the understanding that you just can't let yourself get hit too many times.

Then switch the weapon technique on the Glowblast Sharpshot Bow to Braced Shot. Tag the weak parts of the enemies, and especially note when the blaze and metalbite canisters are on the Thunderjaw. This will be useful later. Then set up your quick swap so that you're going back and forth between the ropecaster and the Advanced Explosive Bombs.

Familiarize yourself with the various weapons and ammunition types in your menu:

- Advanced Explosive Bombs are the bread and butter of this run, but you only have access to 10 of them (we used all the Volatile Sludge to make traps). When you run out, switch to regular Explosive Bombs.
- Whenever you have stamina available, swap to the Plasma Precision Arrows on the Glowblast Sharpshot Bow and use Braced Shot (use the plasma arrows for this because they are otherwise useless and ammo type doesn't affect Braced Shot shot).
- You will also want to use the Light Fire Arrows on the warrior bow to ignite the blaze canisters on the underside of the Thunderjaw, the Light Acid Arrows to target the metalbite canisters on its back, and the Tear Precision Arrows on the sharpshot bow to remove the disk launchers and expose the elemental components.
- Finally, if you're out of everything else and not sure what to do, it's OK to spam the Advanced Hunter Arrows on the Death Seeker's Shadow

Now you're ready to enter. When you jump in, you can shoot an Advanced Explosive Bomb from the air to sneak in a little extra damage. Then switch to the Elite Ropecaster. Four Penetrating Rope weapon techniques will be sufficient to tie the Thunderjaw down; unfortunately, you only have enough stamina for three. It can be really helpful to use one of your smoke bombs while you're in the process of tying him down—both to prevent yourself from getting eaten and to buy time to use a stamina potion.

Once the Thunderjaw is detained, you just have to deal with the Scorcher. Hitting it with Advanced Explosive Bombs helps to build up to a knockdown. You can also use Braced Shot or the Knockdown Arrow weapon technique on your hunter bow. When you get him down, place

four Advanced Purgewater Traps directly next to him. Then swap back to the blast sling so that you can explode the traps before the Scorcher has a chance to get up and run away. The Scorcher should be almost dead by now. Braced Shots and additional bombs ought to get the job done.

That leaves the big boy. Assuming he's still tied up, place a full set of four Elite Acid Traps directly in front of him. Consume your overdraw potion (and any other potions you might need). Then swap to Tear Precision Arrows and remove a disc launcher. Removing the launcher should cause the ropes to break. Depending on where the launcher falls, you may be able to go pick it up right away. If not, try to remember where it ends up. The Thunderjaw likes to charge you, so it should be easy to get it to run into the traps you set.

Now swap back Advanced Explosive Bombs (or just the regular Explosive Bombs if you're out) to build up knockdown damage. You want to get the Thunderjaw to fall over so that you can target the blaze canisters on its belly. Note: If the acid traps didn't corrode the armor plate that typically covers these canisters, you may need to use a Tear Precision Arrow to expose them.

Once you've got it down and the canisters exposed, swap to Light Fire Arrows on your warrior bow and shoot as many canisters as you can. These will cause high-damage elemental explosions that light the Thunderjaw on fire.

Now it's time to take the other disc launcher off using your Tear Precision Arrows. If you're nervous about your dodging, you can use your valor surge to gain a big boost to your defense for this part. As stamina becomes available, don't forget to swap back to the plasma arrows to use your Braced Shots.

When both the disc launchers are down, it's time to use the other smoke bomb and any remaining traps. You should have one more Elite Acid Trap and a number of Advanced Explosive Traps. But before you use the smoke bomb, make note of where the disc launchers have fallen.

Daze the Thunderjaw with the smoke bomb, set the traps, and then sprint to pick up the disc launcher. Ideally, you will be able to reach it before the Thunderjaw starts any attacks—and hitting it with a disc should stagger it and enable you to unload the entire clip without taking any damage. Determining when to pick up the second one will require a bit more finesse, but you should try to look for any possible opening to do so.

If the Thunderjaw is still alive, you have one last resource to exploit: The metalbite canisters on its back. Again, swap to the blast sling or the Knockdown Arrow technique and work on building up knockdown damage. When you get another knockdown, run to the back/top of the Thunderjaw and remove the covering over the metalbite canisters, then quickly equip your Light Acid Arrows on the warrior bow and fire away. Those elemental explosions should be sufficient to end this nightmare.

*That's all the tips you get for this one. Good luck!*

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## 4. CONCLUSION

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Congratulations on working your way through the Arena! This is undoubtedly the most difficult content that Horizon Forbidden West has to offer. I hope this guide provided some amount of help, encouragement, or inspiration as you fought through these challenges.

Please share any feedback you have about the guide—including recommendations for additions or edits—via email to [killer1414@gmail.com](mailto:killer1414@gmail.com). Until next time, happy hunting!

### Additional Resources

#### *Info*

Arktix's guide to [machine health statistics](#)

Plusle's guide to [machine elemental thresholds](#)

#### *Farming*

Italicman's guide to [all upgrade resources](#)

Elkjaer's guide to [Story Difficulty shard farming](#)

#### *Weapons and outfits*

Arktix's guide to [coils and weaves](#)

Woo-Dio's guide to [coils, weaves, and food](#)

Shadow Fall's guide to the [best NG+ coil farm](#)

Hxwxd and sstoneb's guide to [max level equipment statistics](#)

#### *Mini Games*

Huntks's guide to [Machine Strike](#)

My video series showcasing the [Hunting Grounds](#)

My video series showcasing the [Melee Pits](#)

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