

Passing through the left and right body halves of the orc, she jumps while firing a sharp thrust at a new chest. She activates Gale, turning her attack into a wind thrust. The Gale keeps going, drilling a hole into the chest of an orc standing behind the first target.

—Eight charges left.

If those charges are used up, the enchantment will stop working, turning the short sword into an ordinary weapon. Once that happens, Shea won't be able to fight on. Isn't there some other weapon...?

I search the corpse of Mr. Favore.

"Oh, found it!"

I pick up the knife which Mr. Favore's corpse still held in its hand. The one he used to cut his jerky. It has a thick, sturdy-looking blade, and is way too long to be used for cutting food.

Having said that, it's nothing that can be used for fighting as it is. I'll fix this up with magic blacksmithing — right now and here! I mean, I've got no choice but to do it. First I need a crucible.

I rush to the place where I had tossed down my bag. Fortunately this is a business trip, and thus I've brought portable smithing tools with me.

After taking out a small crucible, I begin to dig up the ground with a random stone. My first task is to set up the crucible and properly fixate it. The mountain road, which has been tramped down in many years of use, is quite hard. Coupled with my habitual lack of exercise and the nervousness of being on a battlefield, my whole body gets drenched in sweat in no time.

"U-Umm, w-what...should we do?"

Without me noticing, Mrs. Minera is next to me. She looks all shook up, unable to even run away.

"Sorry, could you help me? A new weapon is necessary."

"O-Okay."

"Please dig a hole, place the crucible in it, and fixate it properly by securing it with earth."

Mrs. Minera picks up a hand-sized stone, and starts to dig. Following her example, her son Lune also digs full of eagerness.

Once again, the dry sound of a Gale. Seven more left—!

I have to hurry.

While Mrs. Minera and her son are digging, I remove the coiled leather strap at the knife's grip, exposing the naked blade. I'll use this as the foundation for my smithing.

"Umm, we've affixed it. What's next?" Mrs. Minera intently stares at my face.

Her expression looks a lot calmer than a little while ago.

"I'll enchant it as fast as possible with Vacuum Immersion."

"Vacuum Immersion...you say?"

Vacuum Immersion is one of the techniques of magic blacksmithing. Its goal is to make magic elements permeate uniformly and deeply into the surface of a weapon. Above all, it has the neat feature of needing little time for finishing the enchantment.

"Moreover..."

I rush over to the thickets at the roadside, and swiftly pluck some buds of chimera thistles. These thistles are in full bloom around here because it's early summer.

"Embryonic curses are contained in the ovaries of chimera thistles. We'll ground those in a stone mortar."

Running while remaining bent over, I return to the road.

"And this is what's needed next."

In front of me lies the headless orc corpse. Blood is still steadily gushing out of its neck.

"T-This?" Mrs. Minera looks confused.

"Yes, I'll use the liver of an orc. Can I have you hold its feet?"

I grab the orc's hands while asking for Mrs. Minera's help. Because its big head was chopped off earlier, both of us are somehow able to transport the corpse by dragging it across the ground. We move the corpse all the way behind the coach while leaving a bloody trail in our wake.

"Thank you."

"Don't mind it. If I can be of help, I'll do any-...ugh..." Mrs. Minera lightly throws up.

She has been assisting me bravely, but as might be expected, she must have felt repulsion towards carrying a corpse that's still warm as it died a little time ago. And to be honest, I'm at my limit as well.

"It's a bit...disgusting, I suppose. But, it'll definitely help." I provide an explanation while opening up the orc's abdomen with a knife. "Orcs are omnivores with an intense appetite. They'll even eat living animals and humans raw. Thus their livers are stuffed with an abundance of 'curse elements' (Hate). Curse elements generally belong to the category of dark elements....uueeehhh!"

"Are you okay?"

"Yes, the stench is a bit... It's tough to describe as it originates from the intestines... Anyway, the

curses which are concentrated in an orc's intestines are...uuuuueeeehh!"

"Mr. Tea!"

"Haa, haa, sorry. Usually I make weapons with the Light attribute as cortege blacksmith...that's why...such a darkness...uuueeeehhh! No, I'm fine. Still... Ugh, it stinks! What a rotten stench! Uuuuuueeeehhh! Oh, oh, haah...uuueeeehhh!"

My nausea doesn't cease because of the intense stench. By now my stomach is empty. And even though there shouldn't be anything to vomit, I'm continuously assailed by a fierce urge to barf. As a magic blacksmith, I fully comprehend the necessity of this work which also wipes away all my feelings of guilt. But, whatever I might do, it doesn't change the fact that I'm physiologically bad with the rotten stench of intestines. Even though I understand as much, my weeping doesn't stop.

"Pheew, excuse me. Haa...it's really gross...but, I must do it. The swordswoman..."

Another Gale sound, and two in succession at that. Shea has five, no, four more charges left, I think. Even a skilled swordfighter shouldn't last long without an enchanted weapon.

"Are you really alright?"

"I am. Mrs. Minera, please pulverize the thistle buds in the mortar."

"O-Okay." Mrs. Minera begins to mash the buds with practiced hand movements.

It's obvious that she knows how to cook.

In the meanwhile, I tear the liver out of the orc corpse, and carefully strip the veins attached to it. Each time I strip a vein, the liver jiggles like jelly.

"Here, I'm adding the liver to the thistle pulp. Please continue grinding...ueeh. Yes, that's right. I'm adding water to it, so mix it together thoroughly...ugh. And with this...do you have a piece of cloth on you?"

"Ugh, uehh...if this handkerchief works...uoeehhh!" Mrs. Minera is on the verge of vomiting, too.

"Thanks, uuuh...ooeh." I soak the handkerchief in the finished, darkish goo.

After allowing the liquid to fully soak into the cloth, I thoroughly wipe the knife with it - slowly and evenly as if to allow the liquid to permeate into the metallic surface, and yet, quickly.

"Alright...not bad."

The knife glitters as its coated with slimy goo. The rate how evenly and thinly the element coating has been applied plays a major role for Vacuum Immersion. It's the part where one's skills show. Naturally, my concentration deepens. Without me realizing, the nausea has also disappeared at some point.

"Okay, I'm going to use the crucible. Take some distance!"

First I place the element-coated knife into the crucible, then I also add a Shadow 'Wind Spirit Stone' (Sylph Stone). A Wind Spirit Stone is a crystal with many micro-holes containing a considerable amount of wind elements. It has two types: shadow and light. A Shadow Wind Spirit Stone absorbs the surrounding air after reacting to heat.

In other words, if I keep it airtight on top of adding this small jar of will-o'-wisps...

I'm the type who forgets everything around him, once I start smithing. I completely immerse myself into the work at hand, even in the middle of an orc attack or even if there's danger to my life.

Removing the drawstring of the will-o'-wisp jar, I toss it into the crucible, close the lid right away, and turn it into an airtight container by stuffing the gaps with clay.

3, 2, 1.....

—Vacuum Immersion

The will-o'-wisps activate. The pressure inside the crucible rises steeply while the temperature drops drastically. The curse elements permeating the blade are affixed in one go. The ground vibrates alongside a snapping sound.

Nice, that's a good omen.

That dry sound is proof of the enchantment having succeeded. The curse should have completely attached itself to the knife.

I rush over to the crucible, rip off the clay, and open the lid.

"Alright..."

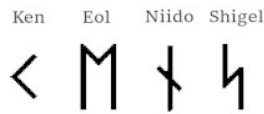
The knife, now having gained a new power, lies inside the crucible. A murky haze rises from its blade, now black. It's dangerous to touch this with bare hands.

After putting on my gloves, I pick up the knife.

Just as expected, the curse got stuck nicely. I'm going to affix it with a seal.

Using a graver, a tool similar to a chisel for metals, I carve 'Holy Characters' (Runes) onto the back part of the knife. For a magic blacksmith, seals are similar to spells. The wording of the seal, the attention to detail, the location of its carving - all of those have a big influence on the power of the Enchanted Weapon.

Oh distant God, exorcise the ground, purify the sky, and cure the people.



It's one of the hidden 'Four-Character Seals' (Tetragrammaton) handed down within the Korpi family. The Seal of Kalpa Evil— [efn_note]Kalpa is a Buddhistic term referring to Eon/Aeon aka a very long time[/efn_note]

But this time I have mirrored it! A negation of the blessed rune, wishing for the pollution of the sky, and the tainting of the earth by evil. In short, a cursed seal.

It's an impure technique unworthy of a Holy cortege blacksmith. But, thanks to this seal, the curse's power has been increased. And for this knife...

"Excuse me, I'm going to borrow this."

I lend the cane of Mr. Franz and tightly bind the knife at the end of the cane with the leather strap.

"It's done..."

I shall name it, Impromptu Cursed Spear 『Spear of Extortion』. Its cutting ability as a knife has been boosted by the curse. In addition, it should have the effects 「Dull Pain」 and 「Weak Poison」. Or to put it into simple terms, it's a spear that hurts damn a lot if stabbed by it while slowing down any healing.

It's said that orcs have a weaker sensitivity to pain when compared to humes. That's why they have such a firm, tenacious fighting spirit. However, the pain caused by this spear should dampen their fighting spirit.

"Way to go!"

Considering that it's been created with what was on hand in a short period of time, it's rather well-made. I'm a cortege blacksmith who forges Holy arms. I have trained crafting techniques to create weapons with the Light element. I have some knowledge about cursed weapons, but I never actually experienced making one...Hence, I must say, this deep black blade is pretty good for a first attempt.



Going by intuition, it's a very sinister blade...