

"So their legs turned into this, eh...? Creating something so potent, nothing less of you."

After staring at the spearheads fixedly, she energetically scoops up one of them, brings the spearhead, which is filled with powerful curses, close to her eyes, and scrutinizes it from all sides.

"Barehanded! And moreover bringing it so closely to your eyes...!"

It's going to damage her eyes!

"Hmm? What's wrong?"

"Don't be so carefree! You're directly touching a cursed weapon, and are even bringing it close to your eyes!"

"This much is nothing special. Anyway, these look usable." While tightly grasping the spearhead in her right hand, Shea picks up another with her left hand.

She brings both close to her eyes, and checks them with her left and right eye in alternation. I think she's comparing the curse permeation, but...

"You're in danger of losing eyesight in both eyes!" I'm shuddering violently, but Shea is as calm as ever.

"I'm a yughul. We're used to handling curse-based weaponry."

Shea brings one of the spearheads close enough that it looks as if it's going to stab her red eye any moment. It gives me shivers that it could enter her eye by some off-chance, but Shea herself is completely indifferent about it, clasping it with her bare hands... An ordinary person would have received a terrible inflammation on their hands thanks to the curses by now.

Elemia has also drawn back a bit because of Shea's actions.

"Lady Shea, are all yughul like that?"

"Yeah, we get acclimatized to the nature of curses starting early in our childhood. Girls get their "Curse Initiation" at an age of three, and boys at five years old."

"What's up with that custom! That's totally scary!" Elemia completely draws back.

"A girl will process a poisonous snake called Deep Blue Snake with her mother's cursed knife on her third birthday."

"You're saying you also processed that blue snake at an age of three, Lady Shea?"

"The snake isn't blue. It's just called that because people bitten by it turn ultramarine."

"Come on, the more I hear about this, the scarier it gets! In the first place, that mask of yours is also friggin' frightening. Aren't people keeping their distance from you at the guild because you're wearing that thing?"

<Corpse Eater> which is clad in an ominous aura, and the Breaking Bone Mask. Both are definitely odd when it comes to their curses, but the same can be said about their designs. They're clearly nothing I'd want to use on a daily basis.

"It's frightening? I do like it though. It gives me a strong vibe of being a memento of the yughul."

"Memento?" Elemia asks with a puzzled expression.

"Very likely I'm the last survivor."

"I didn't know..." Elemia mumbles while looking awkward.

Come to think of it, the margrave also called her the "Last Yughul." So he wasn't just using a metaphor or such, but meant it at face value.

"The yughul are convenient, and thus everyone died after being put to use on battlefields. But, rather than rehashing such old stories, it's time for food. We were going to put the yacuzunorabbits into the soup, right?" Shea mentions with a tone that she didn't care about deepening this topic.

She briskly walks to the tent set up in a place slightly away from my workplace. My work has been forced into a break for dinner. I resign myself and walk over as well.

In front of the tent stands a simple stove built by piling up stones. A simmering can be heard from the pot as it's situated above flickering fire. Next to the stove lies rabbit meat with the skin peeled off and the head horn being cut apart.

"Lady Shea, you'll prepare the yacuzunorabbits, I'll take care of the veggies. It's going to be a yughul-elf-joint yacuzuno stew."

"What about me?"

"You rest, Teo." While saying this, Shea is skillfully chopping the yacuzunorabbits into chunks at the joints.

Her knife handling is truly remarkable. Without any hesitation at all, she cuts the rabbits into bite-sized chunks of meat at a good pace. On the other hand, Elemia is fairly remarkable as well. She retrieves sweet potatoes, broccoli, and carrots from her food bag, skilfully chops them into smaller pieces, and tosses the result into the pot.

It looks like making yacuzuno stew is truly a normal skill to have for hunters.

"Sir Teo, were you taught blacksmithing techniques from early in your childhood?" Elemia asks while continuing with the cooking preparations.

"Somewhat, yeah. Just the basics. I think it also started for me when I was three years old. At first it was day after day of Outer Attachment."

"Outer Attachment? Is that a magic blacksmith term?" Shea stops her work for a moment, appearing

interested in magic blacksmith techniques.

The topic naturally shifts to enchantment techniques.

"Enchantments are split into the two categories Outer Attachment and True Attachment. Outer Attachment refers to enchanting weapons and armors after they were created, True Attachment is about creating weapons and armors out of materials which already got enchanted."

"Hoh, I see."

"Outer Attachment is cheap and relatively simple on the technical side, but the enchantments won't last long, and they also damage the items. In reality, you'd use it on disposable items. Magic blacksmiths, who are called enchanter or field smiths in your circle, mostly use this style of enchanting."

"Hmm..."

"And I'm a cortege blacksmith, so I follow the idea of using True Attachment. It requires high-level magic materials, time, and it's technically quite challenging, but it lasts long, and possesses a huge margin in being a lot more powerful. Personally I'd always recommend True Attachment weapons."

"I have <Corpse Eater>."

"Well...that one's also a kind of True Attachment weapon. The kind that would get messed up if you fiddle with it, though. Anyway...I'm slightly baffled, seeing how most of the items in the borderlands had their enchantments attached after production."

"Isn't that because weapons and armors with a True Attachment are expensive to begin with? Hunting demonic beasts is kinda pointless if you go in the red all the time."

Elemia throws the rabbit meat she received from Shea into the pot.

Sure... As a craftsman I'm weak when it comes to economic matters.

"Hmm, Outer Attachment has limits in the enchantment power it can put out. Besides, if you consider it long-term, even economically..."

"In the end it's just for people who can spend time and money on it, right? The number of people, who'd be able to stay safe long enough to come to appreciate it, is low as well." Elemia retorts bluntly. "By the way, Sir Teo, is it possible to use anything for an enchantment with Outer Attachment?"

"Basically you can use it to enchant anything. But, you need to watch out for affinities such as endurance level."

"Even a simple wood stick?"

"If I feel like it."

If it comes to the question of whether it's possible to enchant the branches of the trees around here, the answer would be yes, but there's not much point in doing it since the material wouldn't endure the offensive ability after the enchantment, and break apart after a single use.

"It'd work with this as well?" Shea smiles impishly, and passes me a certain object.

That, which looks like a small green tree, is one whole broccoli stump. It has an impressive size of being almost as big as Elemia's face. Its delicious-looking, green tuft spreads out, and the stalk feels solid and unexpectedly easy to grab.

It's not like I ever enchanted a broccoli, but it should be possible.

"Outer enchantment coats the weapon's surface with the magic material, and affixes it with a seal..."

I thoroughly mix Napta oil and the phosphorus powder of Morphos with a finger in the wood bowl used for salad, and soak the broccoli in the solution. Given that the bowl's shallow, I turn the broccoli around in the solution, making it properly permeate into the broccoli's tuft. Next I'm going to embed a prayer seal through runes into the broccoli, now plentifully soaked with fire elements, and enchant it.

The placement of the seal wording and its precision is where I can show my skill. The standard prayer of Fire Spirit Praise and Encouragement is a four-character seal extolling the fire spirit (Salamander) and a command to manifest the power sleeping within. Even with this standard enchantment, the skill of the person applying it largely influences the power it can later exhibit.

—Enchant Fire

The seal driven into the broccoli's stalk demonstrates its effect with the broccoli releasing a faint, red gleam.

"Here, Shea. It's done as far as it goes."

"Hoh, this is!" Shea hoists the broccoli she received from me above her head, and swings it down.

A belt of fire is created as if tracing the broccoli's trajectory.



"A broccoli with the fire attribute, huh? Fufufu." Shea squeals in joy while brandishing the broccoli many times over.

Her laughter goes so far that I can confidently say that it's the first time for me to see her like this. The part about it being an enchanted broccoli seems to play the main part here for Shea.

"Haah!" Shea jumps up high into the air while holding the broccoli up. She rotates once in the air, and swings the broccoli down at a fallen tree. The instant the broccoli comes in contact with the tree, explosive flames blow up, and the tree gets engulfed in a blaze.

"Fufufu, not bad, broccoli! Your destructive power is quite a force to reckon with."

I'll name it Vitamic Mace. For me it's also the first time to apply an outer enchantment to a broccoli, but the efficiency of its enchantment is much higher than anticipated. Maybe the moisture contained in the broccoli had some influence on it.

In that case...

I pick up another broccoli stump, applying the same process to it up to a certain point. Then I add a water enchantment to the fire enchantment. First the broccoli's moisture will be changed into steam by the fire enchantment, and then I'll have this steam scattered in one go by borrowing the power of Undine, the water spirit.

It's a version change from the Vitamic Mace. Now it's a greenish-yellow throwing weapon, Vitamic Grenade.

"Hahaha, this is fun!"

Shea throws the broccoli with the new enchantment. The broccoli flies through the air, drawing a parabola, and hits a big, cow-like rock.

At that moment—

The water enchantment explosively scatters the broccoli steam which got reinforced by the fire enchantment. The composite effect of water and fire enchantments causes a 'rampaging vaporization' (Flarechistic Explosion). The broccoli bursts open while being well-done.

Alongside an aroma whetting one's appetite, a huge crack is visible on the rock.

"Look Elemia, it's become a proper weapon! Magic blacksmiths create interesting things!"

"Sure, it's a wonderful enchantment technique, but..." Anger gradually colors Elemia's face. "The broccoli that was supposed to go into the soup is all gone now! Broccoli is a must-have in any elven soup!"

Over here we've got an explosion as well - Elemia bursting into rage with a bright red face.

".....You can still eat it." Shea picks up the scattered broccoli pieces and tries to put them into the pot.

"Of course you can't!" Elemia slaps the back of Shea's hand away.

"Really? You can eat it, can't you?"

For some reason Shea looks my way, asking for approval.

To be honest, it's the first time that I've experienced enchanting broccoli, so I naturally don't know whether it's edible. Even my knowledge as a magic blacksmith doesn't hold an answer to that question.

"I don't have a clue, but wouldn't it be better to stop?" I have no other choice but to answer like that.

"Anyway, no elf would make a soup without broccoli. From here on out, you'll be in charge of cooking, Lady Shea."

Elemia has become completely mopey. She jerks her face in the other direction, and stops all cooking preparations. In any case, it looks like this is a red line for elves.

"Don't be such a pain over just some broccoli."

Taking over, Shea somehow manages to finish the soup while showing her usual skillfulness.

"Huh? It appears to be unexpectedly well done."

"What's with the unexpected. Yughul women are good at cooking. Immune against curses, and a good wife and mother - that's a yughul girl for you." Shea pouts at Elemia's comment.

"I-I see..."

"Also, I'll properly wash my hands, so you do the same."

No one has actually doubted that part, though. On the other hand, she touched the spearhead with bare hands earlier, so I'd be delighted if she could wash her hands.

After making sure that all of us had washed their hands properly, we ate the yacuzuno stew to sate our hunger. It easily turns into solid proof for Shea being truly good at cooking. It has a slightly salty taste, and a strange aroma. For me as someone who lived in the capital it's an unfamiliar taste, but it has a deliciousness that triggers the desire in you to eat more of it. I'm pretty sure the mixture of spices and herbs must be perfect.

"How is it, Teo? Do you like it?"

"Yep, it's great."

"I'm glad to hear that. I thought that it might not suit the taste of a city dweller, but I guess it worked out one way or another."

Shea loosens her mouth after sighing in relief, apparently having a load taken off her mind. It looks

like she's been surprisingly worried about the taste of the soup, showing a cuteness that doesn't quite fit her image as Black Dog Huntress.

"Well, I can reassure you that it's delicious without any flattery. It has a unique bitterness, but this might become addictive."

"Elves have tongues that are more sensitive than those of humes, so they are particular about taste, but...I think this could also become popular among elves."

Somehow it's an evaluation with a slightly condescending attitude, but Elemia seems to like it quite a bit. While dipping the bread in the soup, she spoons it with quite a verve.

Seeing her state, I also keep going with my soup.

"Leaving aside the soup, Teo, how's life going for you over here? How painful is it for you? So much that you want to die?"

Seemingly having relaxed a bit, Shea brings up this topic, apparently being worried about my well-being. ...But then again, she assumes that it's painful for me as an underlying principle.

"No, it's surprisingly okay."

"You don't need to act tough, you know?"

"She's right, Sir Teo. After all, this here is the worst workplace on the continent." Elemia nods repeatedly.

She's saying it as though it's already at the level of common sense, but...

"No, I'm telling you the truth. If I had to choose, I'd rather say that it's fun."

"Haah!? You serious?" Elemia looks as if she's going to drop her spoon any moment.

"Yesterday we were happily thanked by the village people after exterminating the spiders... Even the matter with the wyverns should have decreased the number of kidnapped children. Being able to save others with the things I created feels nice."

From an early age, I had implementation techniques for enchanted weapons as a cortege blacksmith driven into me. However, it all had the aim for me to offer my creations to the royal family. Just like the name cortege suggests, it was completely unrelated to practical use. Thus I'm definitely happy for my weapons to be used to help others.

Besides...

"In the end, it feels awesome for my weapons to overwhelm demonic beasts."

Those are my true feelings without any pretense. I'm someone creating arms, after all. Whenever I look at the power exhibited by the items I created myself, I feel a joy as if a shiver runs down my spine.

"It's good to be honest." Shea looks like she understands my confession.

"So, what about you, Shea? Why are you doing work like this?"

"To ask something like that of Lady Shea..."

Judging from Elemia's reaction, Shea is a super famous hunter. It might be weird for me to ask her for her reasons to do this work at this point in time.

"Yughul use cursed tools, fight, and die. That's what is expected of us."

"Even if that applies to the yughul as a whole, I think it should be possible for you to live normally."

There are many ways to lead your life without doing such a dangerous job. All the more if she's become the last yughul as a result of such a lifestyle.

"Don't misunderstand. It's not like I'm doing this while hating it. I like this way of life quite a bit. I'm also together with you, Teo. Besides..." Shea fixedly stares at her own bowl. She seems to ponder whether she should speak any further than this. She scoops up a spoonful of soup, and after eating that, she continues her words with a calm, dignified voice that makes you feel the strong will behind it, "Besides.....I made a vow to subjugate a certain beast."

Elemia latches on those words. She leans forward, and asks with fierily gleaming eyes, "A prey you've always been targeting...it makes me super curious! So, what's the target? I'd like to go with you."

"I can't tell you. Yughul will never tell anyone but their family about their vows to kill." She completely shuts out Elemia whose eyes are sparkling in keen curiosity.

"Eehhh! You meanie!"

"It's got nothing to do with being mean. If you loosely talk about your feelings, they'll lose weight. And if your feelings become light, your desires won't come true. That's why talking about it is limited to only those dear to you. Oaths of certain death are marriage tools, is being said among yughul."

"Marriage tools? I totally don't get it. Yughul are scary!"

"It's okay for you to be scared. In short, I won't tell anyone, and I won't allow anyone to follow me."

"I'll definitely come along! Western elves are famous for their tenaciousness."

"『Forcing negotiations with a yughul endangers your health on the next day』 Don't you know this proverb?"

"As if I'd know anything like that! In reverse, Lady Shea, do you know the proverb: 『The longer the ears of western elves, the worse their hearing ability』?"

"Never heard of it."

"That's because I created it just now! But, anyway, it's wrong to be so coldhearted to an elf who's so devoted to you. I'm telling you, I'll definitely tag along!"

Even afterwards, the exchange between taking along or not continued. While watching those two arguing vehemently, I strongly felt that such a daily life wasn't bad at all.

