

At this point I've got no clue how much time has passed and how many weapons I've created. What time is it now? Where am I? What's the situation outside?

Currently I've forgotten all that, infusing my everything into the work in front of my eyes.

"Hey, get some rest, will you?"

It's Shea and Elemia. Both are sullied by blood, but neither seems hurt.

"Are you two okay?"

"We've forced them back for the moment, but this place is going to turn into hell from now on."

"What happened?"

"The main body of the Shadow Tsunami is coming. We're out of luck. It's taking the route along the river."

And yet Shea sounds awfully calm. She immediately rummages for a usable enchanted weapon.

"Main body..."

"A direct hit by the Undead Dragon. Including a huge amount of undead."

It's a situation that would make anyone despair over their own bad luck. Nevertheless, Shea's mind appears to be composed.

"Of course, we're still going to continue. A direct confrontation with one of the Six Calamities. It's a huge chance for an upstart, you know?" Elemia lifts the corners of her mouth into a smile.

As might be expected, even I can see how that smile looks somewhat cramped.

"It's alright for everyone to decide on their own from here on out. Teo, <Corpse Eater> has run out of curses. I'll take these ones here." Shea picks up the two enchanted kitchen knives placed on my work desk.

"Will you be fine with these?"

"As if. There's no way that I'll be able to finish off an undead dragon with kitchen knives, now is there? Even someone like me would die when attempting something like that." She words it indifferently, and yet decisively.

"Figures. I'll resupply the curses in a hurry."

"While you're at it, I've got a little request, Teo."

"What is it?"

Sheal looks straight into my eyes, "Do you remember that promise? Please remove the seal."

"Not like I could forget it, seeing how it was just a little while ago. But, you told me that you'd ask me for it someday when the time was ripe..."

"That time is now. It's just a bit earlier than expected."

"It's way too early... Are you serious? You understand the risks, right?"

"Of course. But, I cannot afford to run away. Especially not from the Six Calamities. I must defeat them at all costs."

"Why are you going so far?"

"I told you, didn't I? That there's something I swore I'd kill one day."

"And that's..."

Shea violently grabs my shoulder as I hesitate.

"I'll tell you the rest after this is over. Please."

Shea's red eyes are glowing as if on fire. A firm resolve is fiercely burning in her eyes.

If I'm going to remove the seal...the necessary items and work steps immediately surface in my mind.

It's not impossible. But.

—°I'll end up using that.°

°That° which I need for the sake of my family, desiring it even at the cost of my life.

"Shea...you're absolutely certain that now's the time?"

"Yeah, please."

"Elemia, call the remaining people, and have them gather all undead corpses. Except for human ones, of course."

"What are you planning to do with something like that?"

"I'll turn all of them into material. The more bodies you gather, the better it'll be. If possible, I want them all."

"So you're not kidding around...got it! I'll call out to the hunters and have them gather all they can." Elemia quickly leaves the smithy even though her face looks somewhat cramped.

I'm well aware of how strange what I'm saying must sound. No one uses all of an undead's corpse to use as enchantment material.

"No, it won't be enough, no matter how many there are. I can feel it. This is going to get really dangerous."

I can't make any guess just how many curses will be necessary to remove the seal on <Corpse Eater>. However, there's no doubt that it won't be enough with some odd corpses.

"...In that case, I want you to feed him with this one here as well." With those words, Shea tears off the necklace dangling at her chest.

"This is...the fang of Black Dog."

"Once you remove the seal, let the mouth of <Corpse Eater> devour it."

"Gotcha."

"It's going to become a dangerous endeavor. Sorry for making you do this at the very last moment."

"I'm your partner, am I not Shea?"

"Now you're making a good face. I'll leave it to you."

Shea holds out the fang, and I take it from her.

"Shea... Kuh, the recoil of Black Dog is..."

Actually holding it in my hand totally gives me the chills!

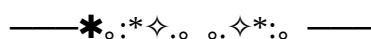
My body is trembling, warning me that I'll be eaten at point-blank range. Even though we have such a nice mood going at long last... My waist is about to give in.

"I-It's alright. I'm confident that I can do it properly."

"I'll buy you some time. Take care of <Corpse Eater> in the meantime, okay?"

Shea formally holds out <Corpse Eater> to me, and adds another please. A blood-smearred big machete, and deep black miasma billowing up from its blade.

Somehow managing to form a smile, I say, "Trust me, I can handle it. It'll become more powerful and sinister."



The corpse of one undead after the other is delivered from the area around the sandbag wall. I think at this point it's already 15 or 16. However, I need a far bigger amount of curse materials.

I'll condense the curses contained in the cerebrospinal fluids of the bodies that weren't allowed to

die.

"Hey, what should I do with these?" A field smith asks me.

He's a middle-aged man with the aura of a real veteran. Wait, that's Mr. Gaston who told me about the magic material stores in the city when I first arrived.

Of course I won't tell him that putting his name on the table didn't help with anything back then.

The upper part of a troll's corpse, only covering the parts above the shoulders, lays at Mr. Gaston's feet. He's nervous as he doesn't know what he should do.

"We'll first boil these."

"Eh...? Boil, you say?"

"Yes, the concentration will increase by boiling them down."

"Uwaah...cursed equipment sure is crazy." Mr. Gaston draws back quite obviously.

However, even if he's averse to doing this, I've got no choice but to have him help me.

First I prepare a big pot, and boil the hot water I received.

"We'll smash it apart and put it into the water."

Even though it's just the part above its shoulders, it's still too big to fit into the pot. While getting Mr. Gaston to help me, I'll cut off the head and the two arms with a saw.

"Ooeeh...the stench is quite nasty."

"It's because the body is decomposed. Could you hold down the head?"

While having Mr. Gaston pin down the head, I decapitate the troll remains at the neck.

"Ugh, is it enough with this?"

"Yes. Next we're going to smash it to make it easier for the brain to spill out."

I smash the severed head by repeatedly striking it with a hammer. The skull caves in as heavy bangs echo throughout the smithy. The eyeballs spill out of the squashed head.

"Guu...you've got strong nerves to stay calm throughout this."

Tears are welling up in the eyes of Mr. Gaston due to the intense rotten stench of decay and the visual impact of the grotesque show. Well, it's only natural.

"I was also affected by it at first, but I guess, how to describe it...yes...after doing this for close to a hundred days, you get used to it...oeeh...oops, that was close..."

"You're not as used to it as you say! You okay?"

Just then, when I beat the head with the hammer, a small, multi-legged insect crawls out through a nostril due to the impact. The instant I witness that, puke wells up from my stomach in no time.

"No, it's just that I got used to the nausea attacks, or rather...don't worry about me. Anyway, after smashing the bones, we'll boil the pulp. Let's keep steadily going at it."

Having Mr. Gaston help out, we cut up and smash the undead, and gradually fill the pot.

"...The hell's this. It's bloody gruesome."

"Mr. Teo said that he's going to use these."

"Not sure what's going on here, but help him."

Without me noticing, hunters and villagers have gathered around me. All of them assist me in my work even while groaning and vomiting.

"The cerebrospinal fluid of the undead will become the fuel to power <Corpse Eater>. Please bring everything you find! I'll condense all of it, and have the sword absorb it."

The undead parts are boiling together while burbling. It truly looks like a picture out of hell. However, the concentrated meat broth of hell is going to become fodder for <Corpse Eater>. Usually, this would be the part where the resupplying of curses for <Corpse Eater> would finish.

However, this time I don't plan to merely resupply it with curses. I must release <Corpse Eater>, and moreover turn it into a weapon Shea can handle. The fang of Black Dog is going to become the central part for that. I'll use Curse-based Tempered Joint Smithing to combine the A-Rank material, Black Dog's Fang, with <Corpse Eater>. The curses, which will serve as a power source for that, must be extremely pure, so I'll condense them to the limit by cooking the undead until the very last moment.

"Hey, it came! It's here!" Someone screams.

At long last, the second wave of the tsunami, the main body, has arrived.

"Everyone, get out and protect the wall!"

A bell is being rung like mad. Angry roars by the men. Metallic clanking as armors and weapons clutter. The area outside the smithy is teeming with tension and urgency.

—Not yet. The condensation of the curses is still too weak.

I mustn't allow myself to get influenced by what's going on outside.

"We need more people here! The wall is going to break!"

"Mr. Teo, we're heading out as well. We leave the rest in your hands."

The hunters, who've been helping me so far, disappear towards the sandbag wall one after the other. Loud yelling thunders over from the battlefield. But before long, the angry roars transform into screams.

The male villagers disappear as well. Only Mr. Gaston, the field smith, and I are left. I scrutinize the pot while suppressing my impatience. The liquid within the pot has finally dwindled down to roughly a tenth.

"Alright, it's about time for the next step. Please give me the strainer."

I filter the solution, and add all the low-quality elixir I have on hand. Elixir fuses with curses, creating a jelly-like solid mixture. I transfer that jelly into a bucket used for tempering.

"...Without hurrying, carefully." I instruct myself rather than talking to Mr. Gaston.

Next I need to prepare the furnace. I add air to the fire with a wind stone, bringing up the heat.

Finally...

"Hey, don't tell me...no way, this is..." Mr. Gaston notices the specialness of the plate I'm holding.

"Yes, it's mithril."

"Eeehhh! If I remember correctly, you were looking for this, weren't you? Did you find it at Mt. Gravel?"

"..."

As if. He's got no clue how difficult — how life-threatening it was to obtain this.

"Are you going to use this? You sure?"

"—Yes. No matter the material, it's pearls thrown before swine if you don't use it. You've got to use it without hesitation when the time has come to do so."

I resolutely throw the crucible with the mithril ingot into the furnace. I knew from the very start that this work would require mithril. I kept it a secret though since Shea would have stopped me otherwise...

"Now...there's no way back anymore."

Honestly I thought I'd writhe shamefully, but instead I'm rather excited. Very likely I won't have many opportunities in my life to work on materials up to this point.

I pour a part of the silver-colored, gooey mithril liquid into a circular form, and add the pulverized Black Dog's Fang to it. The fang melts into the mithril, vanishing alongside a sizzling steam.

Nice, that's how it should be. No problems up to this point. Focus, me...

Suddenly the door is slammed open.

"Sir Teo, the wall has fallen!" Elemia rushes into the smithy.

Her face is stained with blood spurts and black soot from all the arrows she fired. Next, Nao shows up as well.

"The undead are going to flow into the village very soon. It's going to be a street fight ~nya. Teo, watch out for yourself."

Elemia and Nao leave the smithy again after telling me just that.

"It sounds like things have become dicey..." Mr. Gaston tries to somehow put a wry smile on his face, but in vain as his face looks like he's about to bawl.

"Having said that, I won't be much of a combat asset."

Even if they're telling me to be careful, my combat power is zero. I'll be helpless if I get attacked. Therefore, I can only continue with my work, careful or not.

Next is finally <Corpse Eater's> turn. I remove the hilt from the blade, exposing its unique tang. There's a hole in the middle of the thick tang, and a metal belt coiling around it like a snake. And the core of the problem: the seal carved onto the metallic belt.

"I'm going to undo the seal."

"Hey, you can read this...?"

"I'm a cortege blacksmith, so yeah."

"As if that's the point here. This uses a spelling that's lost, or in other words, no one capable of reading this is still alive. This thing uses jamming, doesn't it?"

"Correct, that's why I'll be very careful."

I pick up a chisel, read the seal with its jamming, and carve the negating rune Niido Osel Teyir into the appropriate location.

—Remove Seal.

The rune faintly glows in blue, and the metallic band comes off.

"How the hell...you...! And yet you didn't even know about Mt. Gravel!" Mr. Gaston cries out in surprise.

A gaping, elliptical hole with tapered ends becomes visible on the tang. The surrounding of the hole is densely crowded with small blades.

This must be the mouth of the original <Corpse Eater>. The strong curse aura released by <Corpse Eater> has gained in intensity. Moreover, it's still increasing after the seal has been removed. At this point, it's already become hard to even look at the black aura rising from it.

"Get away! Just being close to it is going to be dangerous from now on!"

"G-Got it. I-I'm sorry, but this is the limit for me. Honestly, it doesn't look like I'll be able to help you any longer."

Mr. Gaston is already in the process of slowly retreating towards the door. He's gotten cold feet from feeling the aura, even though he can't even see it.

"I understand. Thank you very much for your assistance!"

"Now that it has come to this, I feel like I'm going to be safer outside. I'll pray for your safety. See you." Mr. Gaston darts away.

I return my eyes to <Corpse Eater>. The billowing black aura is becoming increasingly more powerful. It's about time.

I cover my mouth and nose with a mask I've prepared, and put on thick leather gloves. Of course, these curses aren't so weak that they'd be blocked by something like this, but I've resolved myself to suffer a certain extent of damage to my body.

First I check the alloy of Black Dog's Fang and mithril I created earlier. Thanks to the strong magic-element-absorption-power of mithril, they have completely fused, becoming one metal. Now it's a black disk with a glossy luster. As soon as I insert this into the mouth—

Relying on the sensation at my fingertips, I adjust the disk's size by grinding it, but... Shit! The earth is shaking too much!

Every once in a while the ground trembles violently, and in response to that, the smithy creaks as well.

"What a nuisance... It makes precision work super difficult. And it's not like I can return the mithril into an ingot anymore either." Even as mutter curses under my breath, I continue grinding with a file.

"It's not at the level of a nuisance anymore! Sir Teo, you have to leave this place!"

Suddenly, there's a reply to my monolog.

"Elemia..."

The only word that could describe her is: tattered. Her clothes are torn at many places, and her beautiful blond hair is stained with blood and dirt.

"I've used up all the Napalm Arrows you made for me."

A big injury yawns on her right shoulder. The blood flowing down from there wanders along her arm, just to trickle down from her fingers.

"You have to stop the bleeding."

"No, thanks! I'm sure it's just going to get worse if I stop the bleeding at a place like this."

Elemia glances at <Corpse Eater> and grimaces. The smithy is pregnant with putrid stench and miasma, so she does have a point in what she's saying.

"So, what's the situation?"

"What's there to say? The Undead Dragon devours every living being it can lay its hand on. That's all. There isn't even any room for anything else to happen."

"I guess it's not much of a fight anymore then...what about Shea?"

"I've lost sight of her and can't find her either."

"I see. Elemia, go ahead and retreat."

"And you?"

"I must deliver this to Shea. Then I'll escape as well."

"Hey, whether Lady Shea is still safe...maybe, she's already..." Elemia shakes her head lightly

The battle situation must be quite grave for Elemia, who adores Shea, to consider something like that. And yet, for some strange reason, I have no doubts.

"Okay. Even so, I'm going to finish this. It looks like I'll be able to create something good."

"Something good...this?"

"Haha...should I have called it something evil?"

"...Certainly, it makes me want to pin my hopes on it. If Lady Shea gets her hands on this, she might... But, sorry, Sir Teo. I can only rise in the world while still alive..."

"I know. Please tell Nao to not try the impossible and fall back as well!"

"That girl has already run away a good while ago!" With these words, Elemia disappears.

Once again, I'm all alone in the smithy. The earthquakes continue intermittently. Pebbles and dirt rill down from the ceiling because of the vibrations. Cries of death agony are faintly audible through the window. And there's the remains of the boiled undead within the smithy. Outside and inside are no more than two different sides of hell. Either looks like it's the end of this world.

However, this scenery is fitting for the rebirth of <Corpse Eater>.

"Wait a moment. I'll feed you right away."

Resolving myself, I plant my feet in front of <Corpse Eater>, thrust the black disk into its mouth, and twine a mithril band around the tang that devoured the fang. Then I apply a new seal to the unleashed <Corpse Eater>. Not one to just seal its power, but a new seal to restrain its new power at the bare limit necessary. It's an original seal I've come up with after referencing the multi-branch rune carved into the Rapier of the Ivy's Flower. A Teo Korpi-styled Seven-Character Curse Seal (Maleficus Hepta Grammaton).

- Combine
- Pollute
- Rage
- Howl

A seal of ancient characters demanding a fusion with Black Dog without restraining the curses of <Corpse Eater>. I continue precisely carving those into the new mithril band of <Corpse Eater>.

- Murder
- Massacre
- Devour its corpse!

The instant I've driven all seven characters of the multi-branch rune, my body is blown away by a curse wave, spreading out as if bursting open.

<Corpse Eater> and Black Dog, the curses of both encroach each other, deny each other, and devour each other. The seal makes all of that cycle, accelerating in speed. The blade of <Corpse Eater> bends, and heaves drastically. The multiplying curses rotate while locked up within. The grown power changes the shape of <Corpse Eater> itself. It winds in a vortex and twists as if writhing from its own poison.

And then <Corpse Eater> changes its form into a shape desired by the curses surging within. It looks like its consciousness has been sent flying due to the excessively powerful curses.

It's settled that I'm going to piss blood tomorrow.

"With this...it'll be all done."

I hammer in the last seal in order to turn this hazardous thing into a proper weapon. A cross in a circle, representing God. A 'blessed seal' (Holy Enchantment) that shows the true worth of a cortege blacksmith.

This is going to barely suppress the curses from going berserk... Having said that, this weapon is nothing that can be handled by an ordinary person anymore. It's going to cause serious damage to the mind and body of its holder. Very likely, they'd start bleeding profusely from their nose and eyes by just carrying it for a few hours. Moreover, it's going to throw their mental state out of balance, and in the end it might lead to death.

It's an extreme curse weapon that cannot be equipped. And there's probably just one person in this margraviate who can handle such a weapon—

"You made something nice there, didn't you?"