

## Preparation

Bright Star fell on the material and Essence pulsed with the impact as stars flashed across the anvil and the hammer in his hand. The metal buckled as he hammered the piece of chitin into it, the heat spread but Ryun kept his aura focused on his surrounding, not letting it spread too far. The stars and nebulae around him seemed to pulse in rhythm with his hammering, it was almost hypnotic, letting him lose himself in the work.

He was fully focused, his **|Smithing Mastery|** skill guided his movements, while with his active **|Manipulate Essence|** he made careful adjustments to the material on the anvil. The skill was powerful, and it did help him outside of smithing too, though not to the extent he had hoped when he took it. It required a lot of willpower, and it couldn't manipulate Essence that was guided by foreign intent, which limited it to only Essence that was unbound or directly under his own intent.

With one last hit of the hammer, the carved piece of bone slid into place and Ryun manipulated the metal over it, covering it fully. Then he picked up the blade, turned and submerged it into the oil bath. It sizzled and the concoction in the bath quenched the blade, formations activated and the blade was imbued.

He pulled it out and walked over to the work bench nearby, placing the blade into the socket. Formations on the surface activated immediately, cleaning and drying out the blade. Using the control dashboard in front of him, he issued commands. Six thin arms moved above the table, and as he picked what he wanted they positioned over the surface of the blade and then the tips started to glow as they gently moved down and touched the blade.

Then they started to engrave a formation in the surface of the blade. Ryun sat and watched the work carefully. It was delicate and slow, but it was worth it. Ryun himself didn't know formation work, nor did he really

have the time to properly devote to learning. Eratemus's forge had fixed the problem for him.

He had built him three things. A forge that could reach incredible temperatures, a bath with formations that could imbue properties into whatever was being quenched. And a formation workbench that could engrave hundreds of formations. Eratemus had added his own formations to it, probably not his best but some very powerful ones at least. But Ryun could also add formations to the storage, the station had a section beneath the worktable where he could store formations for it to use.

Once the formation was done, on both sides of the blade, he reached over to the shelf nearby where he had stored an already finished hilt. Carefully, he assembled it and secured it in place.

When it was all done, he took a long look at the blade in his hand. He made it in the style of a scimitar, the metal was dark green with a dark wooden hilt. The core of the blade was a bone harvested from one of Render Queen's Generals, the Dome that the Exalted Empire had defeated. Ryun had purchased materials from all the currently defeated domes, or traded for them. The Herald bastard had gouged Ryun for what he had sold him, but ultimately Ryun was willing to pay the price. He needed more such materials to train on how to work such materials into weapons.

The Blighted Queen and her followers had focused on powers that weakened their opponents with every touch, or just by being in their presence. It was why the Exalted Empire had been sent against them, they were extremely long range focused, the Dome monster probably didn't even get a chance to bring their power against the army that faced them.

The piece of bone that Ryun had used transferred those properties to the blade, and the with the formations Eratemus had given Ryun he could bring even more of it out. He removed his filters and then focused on the

blade, bringing up its window to study. The prompt to name it appeared and he dismissed it, it was not his to name.

<p><b>(Unnamed Scimitar)</b></p>	<p>+1500 to Strength +1500 to Dexterity</p> <p>This weapon deals blighted damage, each instance of damage weakens the target, lowering their stats by 5% and lowering endurance and all resistances by an extra 5% per instance. The damage stacks, though each instance counts the current max stats and resistance as 100% and lowers that instead of stacking. Every instance of damage with this weapon also increases the penetrative power of your attacks by 20%. Killing a being with this weapon causes their death to cause a <b>Rending Eruption</b> that decreases the resistances of all enemies around them by 50% for 5 seconds.</p> <p>Durability, repair, equip.</p>
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**“It is a fine weapon,”** Bright Star commented, his voice seemingly coming from everywhere around Ryun as they were in his forge.

“That it is,” Ryun agreed. “It will serve Lesamitrius well.”

Ryun had spent the last month focusing on smithing, learning all the new materials he had acquired and how to work with them, aside from the occasional break where he trained with Nayra. Ender's death had hit the Sect hard, they had lost an asset, but also someone who had started to feel very integral to the Sect. Ryun... he didn't know how he felt. Angry, for certain, but also... guilty? He wasn't certain, but no matter what he said to others, he did blame himself for not being there when the yeti attacked.

He had to admit to himself that he hadn't really understood the threat, things that Zach had told him hadn't really registered. He had done as Zach had asked and spread word about the yeti, but he knew that others didn't understand the danger either. Now, he had felt it firsthand, even if he hadn't actually experienced it.

Anrosh had though, and Ryun had heard her retelling of the fight. He just didn't know how to approach this at all. They had to find him, but he didn't even know how to begin to do that. How did you find someone in an Infinite World that could teleport around at will?

So, instead he had focused on doing what he could. Training and arming his people. He should've done more, he knew that he couldn't always be there to help, so he had to give his people the tools to protect themselves. As much as they could. He knew that it might not be enough, but he had to try.

He had plans for gear to gift to most of those who were close to him. Some would get things like the scimitar that would go to Lesamitrius. It would synergies well with his Aspect. It would lower resistances and stats, making his Acid Aspect more effective. It was a perfect addition to Lesa's kit. Others would get different things, some items like Lesa, some spiritual tools. Whatever Ryun managed to create.

He dismissed the window and put the sword away. He turned and walked toward the edge of the platform, where the curtain of stars and nebulae surrounded him, and then he stepped through it.

It was a weird sensation as he stepped out into another world, though again not the real one. Above him a single orb cast its light on the surrounding land. It was all mostly grass, with hills and a small forest in a corner. He turned around and saw the black sphere that represented the borders of Bright Star's realm. They were inside of his territory, of course. He had figured out how to pull that realm into the territory, both were after all inside of his soul.

The territory didn't have much else in it, a small barn was next to the forge where he had some supplies scattered around, but it was a simple wooden construction that he had built himself, crude in many ways.

He looked around the territory and realized that he shouldn't delay much longer. Lesamitrius's sword was the last item he could create on his own, for the rest he would need Erdania and Selia's help. And to do that he would need to make it so that they could enter his inner territory. That meant advancing his second Path until it upgraded the perk. He knew that he should do it, but he had also promised Zach that he would speak with him. He hadn't had much time since he returned, dealing with Ender's death and focusing on smithing had taken all of his time.

He knew that he probably should've made more time for Zach, but he... Ender's death had affected him, there was no denying it. He felt like he had failed, jumping into a project and keeping busy had kept him from doing something rash.

He didn't know how much time he still had before the meeting with Zach, he couldn't tell time inside his territory, so stepped out of it. He emerged in his quarters in Consequence. Erdania was sleeping in the bed, and he could sense Selia in the office. It was still night, he hadn't spent that much time in the territory it seemed. His meeting was at dawn.

From the amount of Moonlight in the air he could see through the window, he still had a few hours. Perhaps enough time to advance. Making a decision, he took a seat in the living room and focused. It was time to upgrade his second Path.