

Spiritual Tool

Ryun ordered the smiths to leave the forge, give him and Selia privacy as they worked. He knew that they were probably going to be losing on their work, but he would grant them compensation. It was necessary, they needed peace and quiet in order to focus. And just having them anywhere near the forge strained his sense, drew attention away from his task. He had asked them if anyone knew anything about Spiritual Tools hoping to get more help—it took Selia mentioning it for him to realize that he could've had help all along—but sadly, none had heard of them. That was... strange to him. The smith had clearly spread his knowledge to his apprentices, so it was one of two things:

With the smith's death and probably that of his apprentices, the knowledge was lost.

Or, people just didn't see any real need for them, and the knowledge fizzled out or is sitting forgotten somewhere in some book locked inside a vault.

Though, it could be that people just guard that knowledge fiercely. It wasn't like anyone would be able to tell that an item was a Spiritual Tool at a glance, at least Ryun thought so. And he knew that people in the Infinite Realm had the tendency to keep power for themselves.

He raised Bright Star then brought it down on a piece of metal sheeted in a layer of Air Essence manipulated by Selia. They were attempting to work together, her providing the intent and spiritual piece required, while Ryun focused solely on forging. They had been trying for the past two five days, without rest, without stopping. He could see that Selia was getting tired. Her body was still flesh and blood, and while she could probably go for a long time without sleep, she had told him that she hadn't slept since she used the fruit. Erdania had come to visit a day ago, and had left when watching them work got too boring for her.

With each strike of his hammer against the Anvil of Stars the dagger took shape. Bright Star covered a lot of Ryun's lack of knowledge, it knew how to forge, it had devoured countless items, understood their composition. Each strike did more than just pound Essence on Essence, it shaped beyond the impact point. With every strike, there was a... force, the will of Bright Star, that gently influenced and shaped the dagger. It

made the process faster, and far better than what Ryun could probably achieve on his own.

One last strike, and the dagger was finished. A wave expelled out of the anvil, rapidly cooling the metal in a perfect manner. Doing this had its perks, he didn't need the fire of the forge and all the other things common in smithing, but it also drained his stamina. With the dagger finished, he pulled out a simple handle from his storage—he had commissioned the other smiths apprentices to make him simple handles and other tools that were needed to finish anything from armor to weapons.

Once he placed the handle and finished the weapon, he took a look at then took a step back from the anvil, his head raised and eyes closed.

“Well?” Selia asked.

Ryun turned to look at her. “Another failure.”

“*The intent is still not settling in the Essence as it is supposed to,*” Bright Star added. They knew that, what they couldn't figure out was the cause. What they were doing was enough to create a rarity holding item, but it was obviously not enough for a Spiritual Tool. It lacked something beyond just intent, the spiritual part.

She visibly deflated, disappointed, just as much as he was. It has become a point of pride for both of them, he could tell that she was already prepared to go again. Ryun walked over to a bench nearby and sat down. She followed and sat next to him, their knees and shoulders touching.

They sat there in quiet, just resting for a bit, or trying to at least.

“Maybe,” Selia started after a while. “We are going about this all wrong.”

Ryun tilted his head and glanced at her. “In what way?”

“We are obviously not able to impart our creation with something beyond intent, this spiritual part,” Selia said, her words slow, as if she was choosing them carefully. He could feel her excitement through the link though. “You said that in the memories, the smith poured all of himself into his work.”

“Yes,” Ryun said. “That's what we've been trying to do.”

Selia nodded. “But have we, really?”

Ryun frowned.

“Think about it,” Selia said. “We are not really smiths. You are learning to be one, but what you are doing now is following the memories of someone else, and all the things we tried to make were based on already known blueprints. Things that have been designed, invented by someone else. They were not truly ours, were they?”

Ryun saw what she was trying to say. “You think that we can’t impart our... spirituality, into something that is not ours.”

“I think that it matters,” Selia said. “Every smith loves his work, his creations, the great ones do at least. The one whose memories you experienced, was he like that?”

“Yes,” Ryun answered. “His work consumed him. It was his life.”

“What is your life?” Selia asked.

“Cultivation,” Ryun answered easily. “What is yours?”

She didn’t answer immediately. “Once, I thought the same, and then... life happened. Loss and time. But through it all, there was one thing that I loved doing. Between all my responsibilities, I would often steal moments, time to hide away and just... tinker. I wonder if I can...”

She closed her eyes, and he felt power flare from her core. Then, it expanded, washing over him and everything around them, and then they were somewhere else as she brought her domain into existence.

It was a strange effect for him, his eyes saw her Qi shape it around them, by influencing other Essence, transferring... intent? His sense lost the connection to the real world, and his other senses started playing tricks on him. Another world was all around them, a small room, looking like a workshop. He could almost taste her Qi on the Essence, but it all appeared as if was real.

She opened her eyes and then looked away. “Sorry,” she said. “It’s small, I’ve only just advanced my second Path, this is the third time I managed to bring it out.”

A manifestation of her domain, he wondered what it did. Tali’s simply granted her the sky, no matter where she was, a piece of it was inside of her. All her powers that required her to be in the sky could be activated just by using her domain.

Selia’s seemed a lot different.

“This is where I tinker with the designs for my constructs,” she said. With a wave of hand a spear appeared in front of them, made out of Qi.

Now that he had a chance to actually look at it, he could tell that it was simpler than just creating a spear out of Qi. There were different densities of Qi throughout the spear, and if he had to guess, he would say that the intent would be different too for different parts of the spear.

She waved her hand again and a suit of armor appeared, the same one he had seen her wear before.

“Did you know that you could... nudge Class perks a bit, not what they do, of course. They are more rigid than Cultivation. But the way that they manifest,” a second suit of armor appeared, a lot bulkier and cumbersome. “That one, was the armor that my **Projection Armor** first manifested. Later I learned how to make it take the forms of my constructs. It had to fit within the bounds of the perk, but,” more armor suits appeared, some lighter others heavier, some looked like variations on each other, and Ryun realized that she had been doing that for a while, iterating on her designs.

“That’s... impressive,” Ryun said.

“You think so?” Selia asked.

“Of course,” he answered. “I’m... not nearly as creative.”

He looked at the intricate design of some of her things and almost winced. The most that he had done with his techniques was create... boxes, walls, and sharp spikes. He realized, even though it had been in front of him for a while, but Cultivators were... artists. The spears that she used in her techniques, they were artfully made with elaborate decals, even though their use was to be thrown and explode. With each technique, she created beauty, even though it was fleeting.

“I can help with that,” Selia said. “Maybe we could start from scratch, build up a design in here and craft it after.”

“Pour everything we have into it,” he caught on to what she meant.

“Exactly,” Selia said.

“Yes,” Ryun nodded. “I think that we should try that.”

“So, what do you want to create?” Selia asked. Then, before he could answer she raised her hand. “Don’t think of something simple, we want this to be... something you, or we I should say, are passionate about.”

Ryun reached up to scratch at his chin. His beard was short, trimmed, it didn’t grow anymore. His soul’s meaning saw him as having a short

beard and chin sized hair, so that was how he looked. He had wondered if he could change that, but had never really tried.

He turned his thoughts to what kind of an item he wanted to craft. What was it that he needed? Weapons, he had enough, same as with armor, Zenker's hoard had given him nearly everything that he needed. Creating a Spiritual Tool that could grow with him might be better, if he could have an item that could transcend Eternal items eventually, well, that was more than desirable. But he had to be realistic. At most, if this worked, they would replicate what the smith had already done, not achieve the man's lifelong dream.

With his skills, they could hope for something that was at the level of an epic rarity item. So, not something for him or her.

He got an idea then, and quickly thought back to the memories of the smith's successes. Spiritual Tools that they created were adaptable in many ways, even though they had restrictions. They could be bonded, but they couldn't be stored in the soul. Ryun didn't think that was true for every Spiritual Tool though, the smith just probably never found a way to incorporate that. He also knew that if they succeeded, they wouldn't be able to attempt it again in a while. The smith had always been worn out after making a Spiritual Tool. Because the memories jumped around, Ryun didn't know just how much time passed in between creations.

His idea though... it was ambitious. And it would be more than any Spiritual Tool that the smith had created. Actually no, perhaps not in scope. The smith had created Spiritual Tools on the same level as Eternal items. Ryun would probably not be able to reach that, but... Maybe.

If they were going to try, then he was going to go all out, put everything that he had and could imagine into it.

"I am going to need a few things," Ryun said, and Selia tilted her head.

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A few days later, they had managed to scour the sect for most of the things he wanted. Random items were spread out in front of them on the table inside the forge. He had several items that had effects related to Life Essence, Death Essence, Cold Essence, and Soul Essence. The Soul one had been the hardest to find, but one of Selia's—his people now, Ryun

supposed—had a dagger that hurt the soul. He had to buy it from the man, but that was no issue for him. Some he had to go to Anrosh to take from the vault, which led to her berating her about not helping her with the war preparations. But he could tell that she didn't mean it, she was just stressed and needed to vent.

They spent the last few days studying the items, trying to get a feel for the Essences inside of them, how they were layered into the items. Ryun's eyes provided him a unique insight, which, along with his sense, let him see a lot more than anyone else would just from looking. Selia studied the formations that a few of them had, she knew how to inscribe them, so they would try to blend both styles. His Essence forging and her inscription.

"I think that we are as ready as we could be for an attempt," Selia said.

Ryun nodded; it was only a shame that a single attempt was this costly. He touched each of the items and had Bright Star consume them, understand them fully. Bright Star's help would be invaluable in their work.

He straightened and then the two of them walked out of the forge and walked across the plateau high in the mountains to the shrine that was placed at the edge of the cliff.

They entered it and walked over to the center, where the Essence of the Absolute Cold was the strongest.

"Here," Ryun said.

Selia nodded. And then he pulled out the Anvil of Stars and they started their own little great work.