

117 – Gleeful Hoarder

The Greed Demon struggled weakly against Saoirse’s dark bonds, while I pulled out my Guild Card to look at it and the change that she had noticed.

<i>‘TEMARU RYUUTA’</i>			
ROLE: <i>Exorcist</i>		RANK: <i>Eminent</i>	
GENDER: <i>Male</i>		AGE: <i>18</i>	
ACUMEN: <i>B</i>	DEXTERITY: <i>E</i>	INTELLIGENCE: <i>B</i>	LUCK: <i>F</i>
PACT: <i>A</i>	SOUL: <i>S</i>	STRENGTH: <i>E</i>	VITALITY: <i>F</i>
<p align="center">ABILITIES</p> <p align="center"><i>‘Omniglot’</i></p> <p align="center"><i>‘Exorcist III’</i></p> <p align="center"><i>‘Curse of the Excruciating Bond’</i></p> <p align="center"><i>‘Gravelight Ring Wielder’</i></p> <p align="center"><i>‘Death’s Hand Wielder’</i></p> <p align="center"><i>‘Soul-Pact (Mythic Companion)’</i></p> <p align="center"><i>‘Pact (????)’</i></p> <p align="center"><i>‘Pact (Observer)’</i></p> <p align="center"><i>‘Pact (Lifeward)’</i></p>			

I clicked on the Exorcist skill set which had reached Rank three:

ABILITIES	
<i>‘Omniglot’</i>	
<i>‘Exorcist III’:</i>	
<i>Banish I -</i>	<i>- Possessed Weapon Wielder III</i>
<i>Contain Spirit III -</i>	<i>- Reforge Spirit I</i>
<i>Drain Spirit III -</i>	<i>- Repel III</i>
<i>Focus Wielder I -</i>	<i>- Sanctify II</i>
<i>Hymnal I -</i>	<i>- Soul Barrier II</i>

<i>Infuse Spirit I -</i>	<i>- Spirit Sight IV</i>
<i>Investigation III -</i>	<i>- Staff Wielder III</i>
<i>Invoke Ritual III -</i>	<i>- Summon III</i>
<i>Meditation III -</i>	<i>- Unleash III</i>
<i>Offering I -</i>	<i>- Ward Crafter II</i>
<i>Pact of the Familiar III -</i>	<i>- Worship I</i>

“Infuse Spirit... Reforge Spirit,” I read out loud, seeing the two new entries. “Do you know what they do?” I asked Saoirse.

I had assumed that she wanted me to utilise the Contain Spirit on the Demon, but now I wondered, based on the names, if she wasn’t in fact referring to either of these two new abilities.

“I have never heard of them before, but I have a vague sense of how they function. Do you not feel this too when you search your soul?”

“You mean, like an instinctual knowledge?”

“Call it what you will, but you should be able to harness this to understand your abilities.”

I shook my head, “I’ve always relied on experimentation and the knowledge of others.”

She gave me an unimpressed look. “Since that is the case, you will figure out what Infuse does on your own, but I will show you how to utilise Reforge.”

The Dullahan clad in black plate armour jumped down from the tied-up Demon she’d been sitting atop of, then spun around and raised both her hands so they pointed palm-first at the creature. I saw through my Spirit Glasses how her aura was evening out and becoming focused, then she began a kind of poetic litany I’d never heard before:

“Thou art of Demons spawn, a child of Avarice and glee.”

“Thy abode a shining hoard and sinisterly golden.”

“Thou hath a bottomless vice, I command gift it to me.”

“Thy True Name to me is known and in mine hand beholden.”

“Reforged by mine touch, become what I desire.”

“Subservient to me, until thy soul expire.”

The air trembled, as a silver-coloured energy leaked from Saoirse’s hands, inducing an instant transformation in the Demon as it connected with its golden-brown fur. Armen and Emily watched on in equal parts fascination, awe, surprise, and apprehension, and as did I, for the powerful beast

began to contract into itself, as though squeezed by enormous invisible hands. Its body was moulded and compressed, every beat of the tremors in the air preceding another reduction.

Thrum, thrum, thrum.

And then, left in its wake, was but a single golden-brown fur pouch and nothing else.

“If I believe I understand what I just witnessed, it is a tremendously dangerous power you have acquired, Ryūta.”

I was still processing everything that’d just happened, so it took me a moment to reach the same realisation as Armen. Before I could put forth my thoughts, Emily said, “Did Saoirse use your ability to turn the monster into a pouch?”

Saoirse grinned. “Did you think I was making a joke. I truly wanted to make a purse of this greedy Thief.”

“Is this a way to circumvent Contain Spirit’s limitations?” I wondered.

“They seem to serve different functions,” Armen commented. **“At least, I believe so.”**

The Dullahan stooped to pick up the pouch, then pulled open the top, which was ridiculously stretchy, before using it to somehow Hoover up a vast portion of the treasure mountain we were standing upon. Easily one fourth of its mass had instantly been sucked into the pouch, and we were forced to run down towards the exit tunnel, as the whole heap collapsed, while Saoirse laughed to her heart’s content.

“I still can’t believe it,” muttered one of the guards in disbelief, looking at the empty cave chamber that had, until ten minutes prior, contained a fortune in stolen wealth and property.

Saoirse had said that, as recompense for her aid, she would keep the pouch and the treasure, though for what purpose, I had no clue.

“It all vanished when I exorcised the Demon,” I lied, feeling a headache blossoming to life directly behind my right eye. It was technically true, but quite misleading.

Armen had his arms crossed and, despite his armour, looked very grumpy about the whole affair. But he was my friend and snitching was not his way.

“Ser Clarke will not be pleased to hear about this. His favourite wand was amongst the stolen hoard. As were Ser Marcellius’ heirloom armour.”

Can you at least just return a few things? I asked Saoirse.

...Fine, but I’m keeping the bathtub.

I was sitting near the kitchen with Emily and Saoirse, while Armen was off talking to the officers on our behalf. As I was writing in the Encyclopaedia about the entity we’d faced, I kept glancing to the simple-yet-spot-on drawing that Emily had added for me.

In the entry, I wrote:

The Gleeful Hoarder is driven by a greed of metal and precious stones. It is not aggressive unless its lair is found, at which point it will fight to the death to protect its hoard. Using puddles of pyrite, also known as ‘Thief’s Gold’, the Gleeful Hoarder creates waypoints that it can quickly travel between, utilising a unique ability that allows it to move through the reflections on metallic surfaces. I believe this entity falls between a Lesser Demon, like a Greedling, and a True Demon, as it exhibits powers far beyond those of a Lesser, but possesses the intellect of a beast with, seemingly, no ability to speak.

Type: Demon of Avarice.

Exorcism: like any Demon, it is weak to Holy Magic and Blessed Weapons and Tools. However, it is a master at utilising its power of translocation to evade lethal attacks, requiring some form of restraint. It can be Contained or Reforged, though, as it is a Demon, this is inadvisable unless you know what you’re doing.

I’d decided to leave a mention of my new skill, even if it was one that hadn’t been mentioned in any of the tomes thus far nor that even Armen knew of. I could foresee a potential future where someone might acquire the same ability like me, and thus figured it would be worth it.

“Why have you called it ‘Gleeful Hoarder’?” Emily asked, looking at the entry.

“I thought that it was an apt description,” I told her. “After all, it seemed to laugh whenever it looked upon metal and such, as though unable to contain its excitement.”

“**I would have called it ‘Greed Bear’,**” Armen commented, joining us by our table.

“How’d it go?” I asked him.

“**Unsurprisingly, the officers were glad to have their personal belongings returned, but upset about the missing gear for all their men.**”

I cast a sidelong glance at Saoirse, who replied with a smug grin. The pouch made from the Gleeful Hoarder hung around her neck on a string with black pearls.

“And the reward?”

“It will be sent to the Evergreen Guild Hall, once the Exorcism has been confirmed.”

“...I see.”

“There is something else,” Armen said, then produced a flier. It was crinkled and frayed, as though several years old. **“They would like to ask if you could aid with an old headache that lies at the far end of the Mossbloom Woods.”**

I took the Quest flier from him, immediately noticing, despite its faded text, that it was high-ranked and marked as Perilous.

<i>‘The Forlorn Redoubt’</i>		
EXORCISM QUEST	TYPE: <i>Perilous</i>	RANK: <i>Savant</i>
<p><i>Once known as Mossbloom Redoubt, this vast fortress and depot has lain abandoned for decades. Though the truth of how it happened is lost to time, it is clear that a Haunting is at work.</i></p> <p><i>To date, three separate Exorcists of Seeker rank, and one Eminent, have perished in their attempts to exorcise this entity, with the only person to survive it, a Savant-ranked Spirit Caller, proclaiming that it was impossible.</i></p> <p><i>Though all attempts to scout out the Redoubt have been costly, it is evident that the entity is not leaving the fortress, as though permanently tied to it in some way. Due to the gruesome manner in which its victims are killed, it has been given the title of ‘Nail Maiden’.</i></p> <p><i>What is known:</i></p> <p><i>The Haunter is not a Demon</i></p> <p><i>It has Necromantic powers</i></p> <p><i>It is fiercely cunning</i></p> <p><i>It has not been encountered by any Exorcists in living memory</i></p>		
<p>REWARD: <i>125 Gold Crowns for a completed Exorcism & a reward from the Royal Family</i></p>		

“Armen, this is Savant-ranked. There’s no way I’m doing this.”

“The officers just wanted you to have a look at it.”

“It’s definitely a bad idea.”

“Let’s do it,” Saoirse said, excitedly.