

## CHAPTER 147: OVERDUE LOOT

“It’s about time I accept my Dark Vault reward,” Raiko said, crossing her arms.

“Dang, you never got that? Why not?” Komachi asked with a snicker.

“I thought about it every day.” Raiko sounded miserable. “But there was never any time, and then I wondered... would it be any different if I was Copper Rank?”

Komachi squinted at her suspiciously.

Sam shook his head. “I can’t believe it, and yet I’m not surprised either. Having better gear would increase any ability for you to level.”

“I’ve no good excuse,” Raiko admitted. “I certainly haven’t been 100% for... huh, never? Yeah, never.”

“Sounds like me in school.”

“That’s a traumatizing thing to do to a child.”

“Yep.”

“I’ve gone from soul affliction to soul aeder separation. Hasn’t been fun.” Raiko hurried over to the Sacred Tree where she knelt, placing down that otter doll.

Reaching out her hands, a treasure chest materialized.

Sam braced himself, expecting another mimic. Not that he thought she would do it, but after the unexpected gift that was Chester Chompers the Third, it was hard not to think fondly of mimics.

Raiko opened it, bathing the area in a golden glow. She lifted up a delicate and filmy length of scarf that she held reverently.

“Anything good?” Sam asked.

“Yes,” Raiko whispered softly. “Very much so. It’s a scarf that has the Immaterial property.”

“What’s that mean?”

“It cannot be damaged in standard ways.” Raiko slowly wrapped it around her neck in a complicated pattern, so it hung down her back. It immediately *shifted*, with a faint fuzzing around the edges until it turned blue and looked, to Sam’s eyes, like a river turned into a scarf. It flowed and shimmered.

“Plus,” she said, turning to smirk at him. “It can automatically take up my Chaos mana, aligning to the element my Chaos chooses at any one time, and in doing so banks that mana for later use should my Chaos mana switch to a less than useful element.”

Sam lifted his hands out from under the water and gave her a little golf clap. “Perhaps your patience—by which I mean your indecision—has paid off.”

There was a soft, muted thunderclap, and her scarf shifted once more. It was now a living thunderbolt, crackling gently and shivering in an unseen wind.

Komachi darted around, leaping after the living scarf like a cat after a laser. She was having a good time, acting just like the happy cat she used to be back on Earth.

Sam smiled and watched her for a while. Every so often, the scarf changed elements, always personifying the element itself instead of simply changing color.

“Strangely, it is E-Class, yet Common rarity.” Raiko gingerly touched the elemental scarf, unharmed by the mana. “Its

enhancements are far better than any other item I own. An additional 20% MP, 34 Awareness and 34 Insight.”

“So E-Class is vastly superior to F-Class, even with the same rarity name?” Sam asked slowly, his brain catching up to just how much better her scarf was than his cloak. His [Hidden God’s Manatuned Cloak] was F-Class, Limited rarity, giving half that amount of MP and around a third of those stats. “Huh, I guess your theory was right.”

She nodded slowly, just as shocked as him.

After a while, he had a thought. “Komachi, do you have any [Steel Rel Pieces]?”

The cat paused and looked at him. She was significantly fatter and fluffier than he remembered when he first woke up. He wasn’t sure how that was possible, but it seemed to have something to do with becoming a soul aeder. All four black paws were up in the air still.

“Wuh? I think I got a few.”

“I’d like to use them some time, if you don’t mind,” Sam said. “Just out of curiosity to see if I can [Smelt] them down into workable ingots. I don’t know how else we’ll get any materials for my Blacksmith Profession other than salvaging old equipment, which I don’t think we have that much of.”

Most of the demonic tools were stone or something decidedly not metallic. Sam had seen some caves in the [Barren Tile], but hadn’t explored them. Their description alluded to the possibility of having ore within, but how could he tell what was useful and what was just rock?

“You got your rewards from the Academy, so some of that might replace your Thanas armor,” Komachi pointed out.

“Oh! That’s right.” Sam nearly smacked his head with the palm of his hand. “I don’t know how I could have forgotten.”

He did, but there was no reason to bring attention to the fact that he was so overwhelmed with his new Profession and all the possibilities therein that he had forgotten about the rewards bestowed upon him.

Since he hadn't been able to accept the quest's physical rewards, they were still there in the quest notification to be claimed. One by one, the coffers *thumped* to the ground, and he twisted about, dragging them close so he could open and inspect their contents.

The first up was the [Dungeon Accessory Coffers (Copper Grade)]. As he opened it, just like with Raiko's chest, Sam's coffers lit up his face in a golden glow while the contents within materialized.

Sam always wondered how that worked. Did the items get randomized or something? Were the chests just empty until somebody opened them and then it did some weird calculations to determine what to give the person?

*Maybe that's what my [Treasure Hunter] trait is affecting,* Sam thought.

This chest—coffer, whatever—explicitly said it was “Copper Grade” so did that mean that it didn't base itself off of the person opening?

So many questions and no answers whatsoever. Sam made a mental note to ask Volquist if he ever saw the Hidden One again. He assumed he would. There was a niggling feeling that their fates—for better or worse—were linked.

He had to admit, it felt good getting loot.

Once the light settled down, Sam had to search for the item in question. It was nestled in the very middle of the velvet-lined chest, but was hard to see because it was so unremarkable.

**[Protean Ring -1]**

(Relic) (F-Class)

(☆ Primitive)

Enhancements

+1% MP | +1% MP Recovery

+1% Healing Received

*A simple, unadorned ring of unknown metal. Its properties have been blunted and weathered by countless ages, but you can still sense a spark of greatness within.*

Sam stared at the ring, then with a shrug put it on. “A little healing improvement is better than none,” he said aloud. But even as he spoke, he could feel the latent power of the ring slumbering within.

Komachi lost her mind, breathing heavily. “Moar healing?”

Distracted, Sam looked over at her. The black metal band around his finger gleamed dully. “It’s only 1%, Komachi. But yes, it gives me an extra 1% healing if somebody else casts it on me.”

Komachi went bug-eyed at that. “Moar. Healing!” she cried victoriously.

Sam couldn’t help but feel that he could help to bring out that spark, to stoke it somehow, but how? He wasn’t precisely sure, and that rankled something fierce.

“Sometime later,” Raiko began. “When you’re feeling better, I’d like to show you how to offer tribute to celestials. It’s one of the limited ways to communicate with them.”

“You mean, give away an item to Volquist?” Sam asked begrudgingly. He didn’t like the sound of that *at all*.

“Something you don’t particularly need and might have value to him. Doesn’t necessarily need to be an item. As I said though, later, if you wish.”

He nodded, unsure how he felt about it, going back to his items.

The next coffer was one he had an immense interest in, but after seeing the [Protean Ring], he was somewhat skeptical. “Have either of you opened your rewards for the Aker Academy?” Sam asked.

Both his cat and Raiko shook their heads, looking surprisingly linked in that moment.

“I got this odd ring from the accessory coffer,” he explained. “There’s something off about it, like I *should* know what to do with it, but can’t put my finger on it.”

“Probably because your finger is *in it*,” Komachi said with a scholarly air.

“Yes, I suppose I do,” Sam said, petting her head. His cat pushed up needily into his palm, and like usual, a quick pet turned into a several minute-long petting session, complete with fluffy purring and cuddling.

When Komachi had been sated—for now—on Sam’s love, he turned his attention to the next chest and popped open the [Dungeon Weapon Coffers (Copper Grade)].

**[Vulcan Blade]**

**(Colossal Greatsword) (F-Class)**

**(★★ Unusual II)**

**Enhancements**

**Slashing Damage VIII | Swing Speed II**

**Magma Damage III | Momentum Damage III**

## Imbuements

Magma Mana V

Metal Mana IV

*Once belonging to a Lesser Fiend of Fire, this blade was procured by one of the Aker Academy's archchancellors and displayed proudly as a trophy in his office. It has since cooled greatly and its power summarily reduced, but it is merely biding its time. Never meant for mortal hands, this weapon is not usable by most.*

Requires: [Heavy Weapon Handling]

250 Strength

250 Vigor

Fire Mana Affinity

Metal Mana Affinity

Sam stared at the enhancements on the giant weapon. Though he was still just a level 0 Blacksmith, from all his new skills, he understood a bit more about the correlation between enhancements and rarity.

The greater the rarity, the stronger those enhancements were. Pretty simple stuff. Classifications were at the top, providing the most potency. They were like ranks, but for items. An E-Class Primitive rarity trumped almost anything an F-Class item could possess. But in very rare cases, an F-Class item could have a superior enhancement to an E-Class. Though that would require insane requirements.

So on top of the [Vulcan Blade] being Unusual rarity, a single rarity level higher than his [Dullahan Greatsword], all of its enhancements were of a higher tier too.

The [Vulcan Blade] was a definite and sizable upgrade.

While Sam particularly enjoyed what he could do with Impact mana that was imbued into the [Dullahan Greatsword], he was drawn into the possibilities that Magma mana offered, along with the Momentum enhancement.

He wanted to try it out right away, but he had to hold off. There were more rewards to go through.

“Wow.” Raiko leaned over, inspecting his new weapon. “Are you going to make things explode when you hit them now?”

Thinking about that made Sam instantly curious, as if it took Fire mana and Metal mana combined together in order to create Magma mana. His new Smithing Profession didn't impart any extra information about that, though.

Maybe if he got a higher level, or increased some of his skills.

It was a good thing Sam had gotten all those stats recently, or he didn't know if he'd have enough to wield the damn thing.

It was absolutely the largest greatsword he'd ever seen. It made even the [Dullahan Greatsword] seem almost normal by comparison.

Standing up in his cotton shorts, Sam pulled out the [Dullahan Greatsword] from the [Biting Sheath] set near the pool with the rest of his armor.

He held it in one hand, then reached down and picked up the [Vulcan Blade]. It was, without a doubt, both heavier and larger than the [Dullahan Greatsword].



It felt utterly different. Even though he was fast on the mend, he wasn't quite fit enough to try out the new weapon, no matter how much he wanted to.

Still, Sam couldn't help but hold both colossal greatswords up at the same time, one in each hand. In his present state, it was about all he could do, but he grinned all the same, imagining what it would be like—and what it would look like to an opponent—if he could dual wield both weapons.

### **Achievement Earned: Bigger is Better**

*Unsatisfied with the damage a greatsword could output, you modified your claymore into a charred variant. Then you climbed to even heavier heights with a dullahan's colossal greatsword. But even that was not enough for you, Impact mana and all.*

*No, you needed two colossal greatswords at once. You might not be able to Dual Wield, but that doesn't stop you from trying. You gain the following:*

**+15 Agility**

**+15 Dexterity**

*I'll take it,* Sam thought with a smirk. He would have liked more Strength, but he would never say no to free stats. Especially if they rewarded him for doing stuff he was already happy to do.