

## Hunter 193

### Chapter 193: A Cursed Touch

Four more levels in his profession remained until he would finally be capped in both that and his class. Those four levels could be relatively swiftly gained by just grinding out poisons, but he still needed to improve Touch of the Malefic Viper before that.

It was the thing that had filled his head before this entire arcane-affinity thing came out of nowhere. He had even sat days in meditation to delve into the Sagacity skill to study transmutation and how to do that properly.

This allowed him to realize that many parts of Touch of the Malefic Viper were comparable to traditional transmutation, and he became more and more confident in his theory of using Touch to transmute weapons working.

He was determined that this time he wouldn't get distracted.

After Jake had returned from the cloud island and had his meeting with Miranda, he had meditated and done a bit of mana practice before his weapons delivery arrived in the morning. He went straight into it with great gusto and began breaking the smiths' hard work by infusing corruption into them.

The delivery was a cart-full of more than a hundred inferior-rarity steel shortswords with a variety of enchantments on them - all of them the most straightforward kind, such as making the blade sharper or harder or able to conduct mana more easily. All in all, they were kind of bad, but that at least helped Jake not feel that terrible about breaking them all as he began experimenting.

Instantly he felt how it had become easier than before. His discovering and subsequent practice with arcane mana had helped him immensely in learning to better control his energy, especially in the stability department.

This didn't mean that he instantly succeeded, however. All it meant was that the items could last slightly longer than before without breaking apart. They were also not so brittle that just swinging them through the air could make them shatter either.

If before today he was taking baby steps, he was now taking above-average, adult-male steps. Jake looked over his newest creation, one quite a lot better than what he was used to creating prior.

[Unstable Fungicide Steel Shortsword (Common)] – A blade made of steel that has been soaked in mana and crafted by a still-growing smith, infused with a powerful fungicide. The fungicide has increased the blade's rarity and power but made it unstable and fragile. Will break apart within 3 hours and 43 minutes. Enchantments: Fungicide Strike

Requirements: lvl 55+ in any humanoid race

Compared to before, it would now last quite a bit longer, and it was no longer incredibly fragile. It was still damn weak and not suited for combat, but it showed some promise. It was also about this time that Jake began genuinely taking notice of one of the significant issues he kept encountering: Lack of quality.

While the smiths had surely done their best, their creations were lacking. The structural integrity of the weapons was fine; the issue lay in the enchantments. Pretty much all the weapons had either Hardening or Sharpened or something like that affixed to it.

At its core, Jake's Touch of the Malefic Viper was about corrupting something, and what he corrupted was in large part this enchantment. It did so by Jake infusing a part of his own energy into the blade with the properties he wanted, and afterward, this energy consumed and took the place of the original enchantment.

If the original enchantment sucked, there simply wasn't enough to corrupt, so it would have to consume of the blade's other qualities instead – such as its durability. The enchantment also needed to at least be partly compatible with the corrupting effect Jake infused into it. He found that the Hardening enchantment worked well with nearly every type of transmutation, but not as well as those truly compatible. An enchantment making all cuts bleed more infused with Hemotoxin was just a slam-dunk, and in the same vein, he had an enchantment that made wounds harder to heal, and that worked damn well with his Necrotic Poison.

Not good enough for the weapons not to still break, but he saw the potential. However, at this point, Jake felt like he had gone as far as he could without making some drastic changes to his approach, so he began attempting something... more.

Before, he just infused the effects of a toxin, but his Touch of the Malefic Viper could do more than just mimic the effects of a toxin; it could mimic the effects of an affinity. And what affinity was more opportune to test out than his new arcane-affinity? Heck, he even had a title that helped easier manipulate it, so it seemed like the obvious choice.

Jake began his next phase of testing that afternoon.

It went as expected when the first blade blew up into countless fragments as he tried to infuse it with Necrotic Poison combined with his arcane-affinity at the same time. He tried it again with a few different blades but ended up with the same result every time. He was glad that he did it outside at least, or his house would look like Swiss cheese by now...

Anyway, he reached the conclusion that the toxin he was trying to infuse into it was simply too strong, so he tried lowering it by using the weakest poison he had, aka his own blood. Well, it wasn't really his weakest poison, but he could make it the weakest as the toxicity was very much dependent on how much mana he used when making his blood toxic.

His blood was an amalgamation of all his own Records and had insane compatibility with all kinds of energies or affinities. This was also why it was such an excellent ingredient while concocting poisons, as it could fit into pretty much everything. It was what he always used when usually just going for maximum corruption or if unsure what poison be best to infuse.

It also had the benefit of his arcane-affinity, easily integrating with it and absorbing it entirely. It only took him a few hours and a handful of swords before he had his first success. And not a "this blade will break apart in a few hours"-success, but an actual creation. It even came with a new notification he had never seen before.

\*You have successfully transmuted [Steel Shortsword of Minor Arcane-Conductivity (Inferior)] – A new kind of creation has been made. Bonus experience earned\*

\*'DING!' Profession: [Prodigious Alchemist of the Malefic Viper] has reached level 96 - Stat points allocated, +5 free points\*

Jake was a bit surprised at the notification and couldn't help but make a big smile. This was the first time the system recognized anything he had done as an actual transmutation. He felt damn proud of that. The level was also super nice to get, if a bit unexpected. Then again... he knew crafting something for the first time gave extra experience, so maybe it gave double-extra experience when he made something with an entirely new crafting method for the first time?

He checked his new "creation" and was quite pleased with the result if a bit puzzled at a few things.

[Steel Shortsword of Minor Arcane-Conductivity (Inferior)] – A blade made of steel that has been soaked in mana and crafted by a still-growing smith, infused with potent arcane-mana. The mana has changed the blade's basic properties, making it able to absorb and release its creator's arcane-mana far more easily. Enchantments: Arcane-Conductivity

Requirements: lvl 25+ in any humanoid race. Quasi-Soulbound

There were a few things to go over. Before Jake's transmutation, the sword had an enchant that just enhanced mana-conductivity, one of the simplest enchants Jake knew of. He had managed to change that enchant to now instead better function with his arcane-affinity mana at the cost of it no longer working with regular mana.

This had led to some unexpected results. The first of which was the somewhat confusing requirement of now being Quasi-Soulbound. He wasn't sure how it differed from the normal Soulbound, but he did kind of understand why it existed.

In the process of transmuting items, he found that it was way easier to do after binding them to him. Without doing that, he couldn't get a proper feel for the movements of the energy he infused, and as his way of transmuting was pretty much just pumping mana into the item, it was hard for him not to bind it first.

So for his transmutation-method to deepen the bond between him and the item made sense. He also wasn't sure if the lack of rarity-increase was to be expected or not. To him, it was now just a better weapon, but then again, to anyone else, it was unusable trash as they didn't have Jake's arcane-affinity. By nature of it being an arcane-affinity, no one else could have it.

I guess it didn't really increase in rarity or quality based on that... it just became more specialized, Jake thought as he admired the blade. Well, the base weapon was still so bad that he had no use of it, the lvl 25+ requirement telling him that it was indeed a low-level weapon. Besides, the only benefits of channeling arcane-mana through the blade were to make it slightly more robust and maybe a bit sharper.

Shaking his head, Jake kept experimenting. He kept using the combination of mimicking his blood and using his arcane-affinity to create sword after sword. Some of them could better conduct arcane-affinity mana, but he managed to change the enchant quite a lot for some weapons.

One example was a sword where he managed to change a sharpening enchant to allowing the blade to extend nearly half a meter outwards, forming an edge of arcane-affinity mana. Due to the weapon's durability, it could only keep the edge active for a single strike, but it was progress nevertheless.

This kept on for days as Jake went through the entire stack of swords. His collection of arcane weapons became more and more impressive, and his skills increased by the hour. He didn't get any more levels, but he didn't expect to either. He was just building up his momentum and capabilities for the last big push.

The last push would come through a far more difficult transmutation than any before, on a weapon several grades above anything he had touched before - a weapon that he also happened to not give a shit about breaking, so it was perfect for experimenting on.

[Scimitar of Debauchery (Epic)] – A cursed blade made by the wicked, for the wicked. Crafted from steel that has soaked in the blood of the innocent has left a powerful curse of resentment on the blade. A curse that can be further strengthened by adding more souls of innocents. Wield with caution, for the curse does not only affect those it strikes. Enchantments: Curse of Debauchery

Requirements: Humanoid race

Jake was certain that the weapon was durable. Its former wielder had blocked Jake's arrows with it along with his Venomfang, and the blade hadn't taken any damage. He had even taken it out and tried to do some damage to it over the last few weeks and found himself unable to. And that was before he bound it to himself, which would strengthen the scimitar significantly.

He had a bit of worry about binding it to him due to the rather ominous warning and curse, but he believed he could handle it now that he had Pride of the Malefic Viper. Even then, he took extra precautions and had Mystie and Hawkie leave with Sylphie to do some early flight training and give Miranda a message on their way out about not visiting in the short term. This left the valley empty for him to experiment and be cursed as much as he wanted to.

Jake placed his hand on it and slowly injected in a bit of mana to bind it. At first, it felt just like binding any other weapon, but soon he felt something else. While he was pouring mana into the blade, the blade used that same connection to send some energy back.

Instantly he felt something invade his mind. It felt like countless cries of anger cursing him at once, and he knew the highly condensed sense of resentment was trying to pull him in and join them in their wrath. But more than rage was another far more prominent emotion: lust.

Yet, just as the emotions began trying to truly influence him, another deadly sin reared its head and crushed them both. His Pride didn't allow the curse to affect him whatsoever, and without hesitation, he squashed all the voices from within the blade and dispelled all other untoward emotions.

The blade died down, but he still felt the power of the curse buried within. Even if it didn't affect him, the blade still desired to be fed. It wanted the blood of those it deemed innocent – whatever that

meant. It desired their suffering. It demanded their death to absorb their lives and make a fragment of their Records its own.

Jake studied the weapon for a bit as he considered his approach. It wasn't the first time he had thought about what to do... but it was only now he had truly decided.

The scimitar had a relatively simple design. The blade was very thin for a scimitar, and it only curved a little. It was slightly thicker towards its end, and it looked perfect for slicing. It didn't look like a cursed weapon at first glance whatsoever. It was only because of Donald's skills that it appeared to be blood-red.

Placing his hands on the blade, he closed his eyes and delved his consciousness into it.

Once more, he experienced the curse, and he allowed it to influence him even more than before. He felt the raging emotions but found them... lacking. Compared to the rage he felt from his bloodline when he believed Miranda had betrayed him, this was nothing. A large part of it was, without a doubt, due to that occasion being his own anger, while this was just a curse trying to drag him into it and influence him.

The lust-part should have been a bit harder to deal with, but Jake found it even easier to handle. Sure, while he did find quite a few women in his surroundings attractive – especially after the tutorial made pretty much everyone into models by standards of the old world. Miranda was nice, and- okay, fuck off curse. He wasn't some hormone-filled teenager that couldn't control himself. In fact, he found the influence of the curse in that department utterly pathetic, even if he understood the underlying desire.

Heck, his own teenage years had been way worse, and he had managed to not act like an utter moron back then. Wait, did the bloodline also influence me back then? he asked himself for a brief moment before dispelling the thought. Not because he didn't believe it to be true, he just knew it wasn't



something he could easily answer, and right now, understanding the blade was more important than his own teenage years.

Delving into the blade, he came to understand what the curse truly desired, and he would corrupt that desire and understanding and bend it to his own interpretation. To an emotion, he understood and indulged in far more than lust and wrath. At first, he had considered greed, but that just led him to consider what it was greedy for, so he decided to take the most simple thing one would want, so he went with that.

It was another of the deadly sins: gluttony. In the end, the curse came down to the blade wanting to feed. The souls wanted revenge on those that had slain it by consuming their souls as retaliation, and the curse on the blade itself made it want sacrifices to grow.

Jake began changing the energies in the blade as he infused it with Touch of the Malefic Viper. It was far more energy than ever before, and yet the sword just kept consuming it. He would allow the scimitar both to fulfill its lust and desire for revenge, but he would change it. Like with his arcane-affinity, he would simplify it down to its simplest element and amplify it. Make it pure and straightforward, removing all complications. He would corrupt their desire down to their most primal need. Because in the end... the blade just hungered.

\*You have successfully transmuted [Scimitar of Cursed Hunger (Epic)] – A new kind of creation has been made. Bonus experience earned\*

\*‘DING!’ Profession: [Prodigious Alchemist of the Malefic Viper] has reached level 97 - Stat points allocated, +5 free points\*

It had been far easier than Jake believed... but he also felt like he understood the weapon far more than he found comfortable. Ultimately, he had just imposed his own will upon the blade and made it what he

wanted it to be, crushing any opposition in the way – including all the souls. He Identified the scimitar as he couldn't hold back a small smile.

[Scimitar of Cursed Hunger (Epic)] – A cursed blade made by the wicked, corrupted by the Viper's Chosen. Crafted from steel that has soaked in the blood of the innocent had left a powerful curse of resentment on the blade. The curse has been corrupted, and the souls destroyed, leaving only their hunger behind. The blade craves blood and will feed on any vitality-based lifeform to nurture both itself and its wielder. The Scimitar of Cursed Hunger will wane in power if not fed regularly. Enchantments: Cursed Hunger

Requirements: Humanoid Race. Quasi-Soulbound

It was still quite ominous, but it was far more muted when he felt the curse within. For now, it was sated and didn't need any feeding, and yet he felt like it always wanted more. Jake had essentially just created a sword that could drain the health of anyone he cut with it... and he was totally fine with that.

What made it even more pleasing was that besides getting a new weapon, he also got another few notifications.

[Touch of the Malefic Viper (Epic)] – – With a single touch, the Malefic Viper has slain countless foes. Attempt to inject poison into a being through physical contact. The nature of the poison is determined by the user. The alchemist can only use toxic effects he has concocted or created prior. Can be used with all compatible types of mana affinities, further altering the effects. Some toxins cannot be used. Adds a small increase to the effectiveness of Touch of the Malefic Viper based on Intelligence and Wisdom.

-->

[Touch of the Malefic Viper (Ancient)] – – With a single touch, the Malefic Viper has slain countless foes. Attempt to inject poison into a being through physical contact. The nature of the poison is determined by the user. The alchemist can only use toxic effects he has concocted or created prior. Can be used with all compatible types of mana affinities, further altering the effects. This effect is especially effective using your arcane-affinity. Vastly increases the potency of transmutations made using Touch of the Malefic Viper at the cost of partly binding them to your soul. Some effects cannot be replicated. Adds an increase to the effectiveness of Touch of the Malefic Viper based on Intelligence and Wisdom. Passively provides 1 Intelligence per level in Prodigious Alchemist of the Malefic Viper. May your touch be the catalyst of corruption as you bend the world to your will.

\*'DING!' Profession: [Prodigious Alchemist of the Malefic Viper] has reached level 98 - Stat points allocated, +5 free points\*

Jake read it over as his smile only grew, still enjoying both the feeling of the stats increasing and the fact that he was nearly done... all his preparations were over. Now, there were only two things left to do... only one more level in his profession and then...

...then he would get that D-grade.