

Tool

Ryun watched as Qi flowed from Tali's core into his scepter, disappearing from his senses the moment it entered it. She had an expression of concentration on her face as she gently guided her Qi in, making sure not to overwhelm the formations. The scepter was a powerful item, but Tali was powerful, and it had limits. The cores could hold the high-quality Qi that Ryun had stored inside, but only because they were strengthened by Eratemus.

She sighed as she finished, then offered the scepter back to Ryun. He took it and put it away in his storage.

“Thank you for this,” he said.

“Of course,” she said, her eyes turning to look over the cliff. Consequence stretched before them in the distance.

They were on one of the mountains surrounding the valley, near one of the great gates that lead into the territory, high in the passes. The wall was behind them, the seeds that Ender had planted had grown and were being shaped into that wall by plant users of the Sect. It would take a while, but eventually the entire territory would be surrounded by that living wall. Longer now that Ender was not with them anymore.

“So,” Tali started. “You are going to the Ethereal?”

“I am,” Ryun nodded. “It will be a good opportunity to grow. You should come with us.”

“Ryun,” she just said. “We talked about this. I leave for the core tomorrow.”

“Isn’t that somewhat too soon? You have years yet,” Ryun glanced in her direction.

“Not really. I am going by airship, that will take time, and the preparations are already under way. We will be bringing an army, it isn’t anything like our situation.”

Ryun narrowed his eyes. “I just don’t want to see you go, we lost Ender, there are more important things in the world than revenge. The yeti is a greater danger.”

Tali turned away, her body language angry. “We don’t know where he is, nor can we hunt him down and find him. And it isn’t just about revenge, you know that.”

“What I know is that we plan, we think that we are powerful, and the world conspires against us. We thought Consequence was safe, and yet we were attacked and we lost. All decisions have consequences Tali, I just want you to be certain that you can live with the consequences that come from your decisions.”

“I am certain,” Tali said.

Ryun nodded, there wasn’t anything else that he could do. Tali was his friend, he would not go against her. “Very well then, I wish you luck, in case that I do not return before you march.”

“Thank you,” Tali told him. “Don’t worry, I have learned much from you too. I don’t plan on leaving any room for mistakes.”

Ryun put a hand on her shoulder and squeezed. He hoped that she was right.

* * *

Essence swirled around them, focused on the item on the rack in front of him. The crafting of a spiritual tool was underway, or rather the finishing touches. Ryun was trying to gather and use all the knowledge and experience he had gathered over the last decade. With manipulation of Essence he had shaped it, and put the pieces together into what it was now.

The item was a suit of armor. They had talked a lot, Ryun and Zach, about what it was that he needed. That turned out to be armor, he had been lacking in that regard. So, Ryun and Selia had set out to design a set for him. First as an ordinary item, as a base, and then they pushed into ideas of what they could do to make it a spiritual tool.

The armor was full plate once finished, fashioned out of mostly bone. It looked more like something straight out of science fiction of Earth, or perhaps something that came out of the Exalted Empire, which wasn't a surprise as Ryun had purchased some of their armor and used them for inspiration, except that it was the gray-white color of bone. One of the hands was also slightly different than the other, they had built in a system that allowed it to change from a gauntlet to a hollow tube, to allow Zach to shift his hand into a blade as needed. They had prepared the pieces extensively; the entire Sect had been at work processing the materials and getting them ready for the final touches.

The aketon beneath was woven out of fire-resistant wool, stuffed with hair harvested of ice monsters, to provide resistance to both. Over it came the plate armor, each piece carefully processed and engraved with formations and arrays all working together to build on a theme.

Zach's Class was **Lord of Aspects**, his meaning contained a pursuit of knowledge, a mastery of those Aspects. They tried to imbue that idea into the armor as they worked. It was different compared to what they had done with his scepter. His item was powerful, but ultimately it had limits. A spiritual tool was bonded to its user much in the same way an awakened item was. The tool drew power from that bond, from the soul itself.

The connective links in between the plates were fashioned out of the bones of the Helshou, the Mountain God Dome Leader that was defeated by the Triumphant Hive. Tiny formations to enhance balance and anchor the wearer to the ground were engraved on the inside. Their power enhanced by the connection of the bone to the Aspect related to the Earth. The rest of the plates, the big parts, the greaves, the sabatons, the mail skirt, the breastplate, the vambraces, the gauntlets, and the pauldrons, were all made out of the material harvested from the Dome that Twilight Melody defeated—the Blighted Horde.

The monsters that had been spawning the horde had both chitin and internal skeleton. And after testing they had discovered that they were linked with their offspring in the way that allowed them to experience everything that they experienced. The spawning monsters, the Queens as they had come to call them, were able to take the Essence that killed their offspring and imbue it into the next generation.

It was in a way similar to Anrosh's armor, in that their entire being was able to create immunity to Essence that they had experienced. The bones of course couldn't do the same, that was the task of organs which

they had harvested too. But, the bones were highly receptive to any kind of Essence. In a way, they were almost like sponges.

The idea behind the spiritual tools was that they were supposed to enhance what a person already had. And so, the idea behind Zach's tool was to enable him to study and understand Essence better.

To that effect, Ryun had placed one of his two remaining Cultivator's cores on the inside of the breastplate, attached to formations that allowed it to draw in Essence on its own and then distribute it to the bone armor to allow it to absorb it. There were also a source of Oblivion, one of Ryun's rewards from the Dome which he had attached to two empty gemstones, allowing them to draw in Oblivion from it.

The source could've served the Sect and Ryun well, though he didn't really need it anymore as he had other ways of getting Oblivion Essence. His decision to use it was his way of repaying Zach for protecting his city to the best of his ability. Some would say that the yeti wouldn't have been here if Zach wasn't, but Ryun didn't think that way. The yeti made the decision to come, not Zach.

The Oblivion was necessary, as the bones could take in other Essence, but they weren't that good in letting it go. Oblivion was perfect for cleaning out the armor from the Essence.

Ryun stepped in front of the armor and placed his hand on it. To create a spiritual tool, you needed something more than just meaning and intent, you needed an anchor for it, a piece of the soul.

There were four people in his territory, inside of his forge. Ryun, Selia, Erdania, and Zach. Each of them stood around the rack with the armor on it. They followed Ryun's example and each placed a hand on it as well. Immediately, they started to pull from their Souls, a tiny piece with intent and meaning burning in their minds.

Zach's knowledge of Soul Essence was very advanced, but he wasn't a Cultivator, it had taken a while for them to figure out a way to pull out a piece of his Soul. In the end, Bright Star and Selia provided. He felt Selia's will reach out and help him with the task while the forge around him thrummed with power.

Erdania's soul flowed into the connecting pieces, the ones fashioned out of the bones of the Mountain God. Touches of the meaning of her Worldstone Aspect mixed with Gravity, the weight of such an idea reinforcing the formations related to anchoring and balance.

Ryun's soul flowed into the core, the source, the gemstones, and the conduits that spread on the inside of the armor from the gemstones. He focused his intent the pieces, imparting a meaning. The purpose of the Oblivion in the armor was only to remove Essence out of the armor when its wearer wanted, nothing more.

A piece of Zach's soul flowed out, guided by Selia and his own will. It flowed into the plate mail, sinking into the majority of the armor and infusing his meaning. The desire to learn, to discover new knowledge about the Aspects.

The last was Selia, and her intent flowed into the helmet—the piece of armor that was fashioned out of the bones of Hastur. Already the helmet had high affinity with the mind and dreams, and Selia added meaning. She held the Class of **Soul Smith of Twin Legacy, Scythe** and she had done a lot of mental creation. What she added was just a way for the power in the helmet to manifest itself, imagination.

And then, it was over, all four of them sagged in relief and exhaustion. Though Ryun had noticed that giving a piece of himself was much easier now. He felt pain as he cut it off, but he also knew that he had already regenerated it back. His body and soul were now one, which had both upsides and downsides. Still, he was mentally exhausted.

He reached out to the armor and took a look. They had already decided on its name.

<p>Spiritual Tool — Armor of the Aspect Foundation</p>	<p>Requirements: Mastery of Three Aspects; Immortality; High Mental Resistance; Sage of Aspect</p> <p>Trait: Soulbound; Bodybound; Linked;</p> <p>Stats:</p> <p>+1,000 to all base stats</p> <p>+10,000 to all stats</p> <p>Effects: The Armor anchors the wearer to the ground based on their will, making disorientation and balance impairing effects 90% less effective. When worn, the wearer is able to enter the dreams of any person sleeping in their vicinity and have limited influence over the dream world. The Armor passively pulls in surrounding Essence into its core, storing it, then infusing the suit with the power of those Essences. The quality of the Essences and amount dictate the bonuses.</p>
---	---

Base bonus:

-Resistance to corresponding Essence up to 9x

-Increased effectiveness of the corresponding Essence up to 9x

The wearer can halt the passive storage of Essence and purge the infused and stored Essence. The wearer can also trigger the storage of any Essence they have mastery over but must provide a source of it.

If the armor is infused by only a single Essence, max base bonuses are doubled. Depending on the quality of the Essence, the armor will make a connection with the Essence plane of the Essence infusing it. High quantity and quality of Essence will

Make a direct connection turning the armor into the source of the Essence and pulling on the deepest concepts and ideas behind the Essence to infuse the armor with.

Cost: Soul and mental strain when used.

“Well,” Ryun said, looking around at the three. “Now all that we have to do is test it.”