

If I were a baser person; if I were the kind of man to be driven purely by my desires, perhaps I'd be excited at the prospect of a beautiful, naked woman climbing all over me. But knowing that this woman was a belligerent spirit, one that had caused me no shortage of pain in the short time we'd been together, certainly put a damper on things.

"Master? Knight?" Two titles that were at natural odds with each other. Knights followed the orders of kings and queens; they were ruled over by masters. How could I be a master and a knight at the same time? "Who are you?"

"I already told you," she pouted, "I'm Stigma. The sword of darkness!"

"You don't look like a sword to me."

She pulled herself closer, trying to mash my face into her chest. "That's because each of the seven swords has a spirit inside of them. Nobody can see me but you Master."

"So I'm just talking to myself right now..."

"No, you're talking with your precious partner," she poked my nose, "But I suppose we *are* sharing the same body."

I felt a deep sense of unease at being around this spirit. Not just because ghosts aren't real, or shouldn't be real, but because her every word and action was designed to endear herself to me. A worse version of me that only thought with his dick. This was the sword of darkness - according to her. It was only natural to be suspicious.

"What did you do to my arm?" I asked as the spirit disentangled herself from me and sat on the bed; legs crossed in an attempt to make me look downstairs. She ran a lithe hand down her own chest, past her perky breasts and to her well-toned stomach in one smooth motion. The arch of her back was purposeful. Everything she did was purposeful.

"All of those other spirits try to keep themselves separate from their Masters. But that's just so *boring*. If you'd like to know - you could try checking me again." I didn't want to turn my back on her, so I maneuvered back to the sword that housed her soul without turning away.

"Seek astarus."

Stigma, the Thousand Maws

I love it when you look at me, and *only me*.

Quality: **Relic**

Attack Value – 50

Curse: **Black Blood**

The spirit and the master shall be one and the same. Those who use this weapon will have their veins run black with the blood of demons. For greater power, your life will burn bright but be extinguished quickly. The master of this weapon shall only be parted by death.

Curse: **Curse Mother**

Negative magical effects spawned from inanimate casters will not harm the user. The user may absorb these curses for their own use.

As I expected, the sword was well and truly cursed. If I knew that one of the weapons had such a dangerous trade-off, I'd have moved my feet and got one of the others. At least, that's what I thought. One of us would have to drink the poisoned chalice either way, and I was too kind to wish this thing onto someone else. A total immunity to curses sounded useful at least.

"When I checked you earlier, I couldn't see any of this information."

Stigma laughed, "Hm. If Master wants to see *everything*, I have to let him." I looked away as she swapped her legs over in an attempt to flash me. "I have an obscurity spell cast into my iron. Your average child cannot see my true power without permission."

"And you injected me with demon blood?"

She stormed over to me and grabbed my arm, rolling up the sleeve of my shirt. "Not just any demon blood, *my* blood. Our iron is bound together." She traced the path of the infection with her nail. Her eyes were fogged over with obsession. She found the sight of my mangled arm exciting. "It has been too long since I last walked amongst the living."

"I assume your previous knights had... runs-ins with your curse?"

"Why? Do other men make you jealous? Most of them didn't even live this long..."

She was being evasive. The true nature of this curse was a mystery to me – and she was hiding how it worked from me. But her comment did reveal more than she intended, acting with caution would make me live longer. If there was one thing I was good at, it was being careful. I could stem the tide of the curse by refraining from using the sword's power. It seemed like a

reasonable assumption. This sounded like a classic high-fantasy tale of power-hungry men being destroyed by their own ambition. A sword that consumes those who wield it in the search for greater power.

“At the moment I don’t think I’ll be using you at all.”

“Why not?” she asked in the first show of genuine emotion I’d felt since she started talking with me. I flexed my pale and infected arm, revealing the extent to which I was not in shape.

I leant into her face, “I think you’re a little too heavy for me.”

Dumbfounded she didn’t respond until I was already halfway to re-wrapping her home in tarp and rope. “M-Master! It’s rude to comment on a ladies weight!”

“I’m a rude man.”

Her ghostly visage flickered, before dispersing into purple smoke and flowing back into the sword. A collection of arcane runes charged with energy and became visible on the body of the sword. But in that moment, I swore that she was smiling at me.

As nasty as it sounded, I wanted her to be smiling as little as possible.