

Destroyer-of-Shins

This thoroughly nasty weapon dates back to the end of China's Song Dynasty. It is a *jain* (a double-edged, straight sword) that has been unfortunately enchanted to not rust or break; the hilt has a forward-facing guard, and can accommodate two hands. Destroyer-of-Shins has had a number of scabbards over the years, as the sword is apparently destructive of any scabbard that it is placed in. While Destroyer-of-Shins is an extremely well-made hand-and-a-half sword, it is best known (for given values of 'known') for the way that a single scratch from it can guarantee that the target dies, screaming, after a week of agony. There's no known cure or even palliative, whether magical or technological.

The 'mitigating' circumstance to this particular curse is that it only seems to work on targets that are from an extremely specific Chinese family (whose surname is usually translated as 'Shin'). This largely makes it excessively dangerous to a large but limited number of people in China and Korea; of course, to other people it's still as dangerous as any other sword of its type. Standard magical scans will reveal the spell/curse laid on

Destroyer-of-Shins. Genuine clergy of non-evil gods will simply detect the miasma of evil that pervades it.

Destroyer-of-Shins was effectively exiled from the Chinese Empire in the 1530s, when it was slipped into a collection of diplomatic gifts to the Portuguese. It ended up on display in Lisbon until 1807, when it was looted by Napoleon's army. From there the trail becomes murky, and so do the stories -- but it definitely surfaced last year as part of an estate sale involving an extremely strange and antisocial member of what remained of the White Russian emigre movement. The purchaser was later found dead in his Vladivostok apartment, minus his head and hands.

And now there are reports of murders going on in the People's Republic of China. Murders that match the reported symptoms of Destroyer-of-Shins. These days, there are people with that surname in the higher echelons of the PRC's military/economic/political aristocracy, and some of them are starting to hear that an item designed to murder them painfully has returned from overseas, and is targeting at least some of them. As you might imagine, these people are *perturbed*. Perturbed enough, in fact, to reach out to foreign superstitionists and, ever so deniably, beg for help.

Well, it never hurts to gather favors, so time to assemble a team and check this situation out.

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