

The Crafts 109

Chapter 109: The Anticipated Duel

When Lucas arrived on the fifth day, he noticed a crowd of people gathered around his stall but he wasn't surprised by this. Lucas had already gotten used to having people follow around him ever since the previous day.

Ignoring them, he opened up his stall before leaving once again. The act of opening the stall was a somewhat mandatory action as it implied to any passerby or potential client that the owner was around, even if there was no one present at the moment.

The entire point of this was to make it so vestige-smiths wouldn't lose out on an opportunity, but at the same time, they would be able to freely explore the convention.

If anyone interested in the stall wanted to have a conversation with the owner or see more vestiges, there was a contact info pasted on the side of the stall.

Leaving the low tier region, Lucas stepped into the mid tier region. It was just as many had speculated -he wasn't going to stop challenging at just sixteen wins, and he was going to face the vestige-smith who had mocked him. Having built a reputation now, Lucas was confident that he wouldn't be rejected on the grounds of being "too weak" or unknown.

If the other side were to avoid the duel, it would be perceived both by the system and the people as a win.

But before that, Lucas stepped into a random mid tier region stall and smiled at the staff. When they saw who it was, their blood froze and they glared at him.

Even though Lucas was human, he was currently the most feared character for all stalls and vestige-smiths outside the high tier region. Although the losers in the low tier region didn't have it as bad after comparing themselves to the others who lost, the participants in the mid tier region were scarred by his presence.

They would display a hint of fear upon seeing him as the outcome was generally known even before the duel began.

Some of them had even tried to bribe Lucas in secret to prevent him from coming to their store, even though the odds were low. However, despite his recent love of money, Lucas refused the offers. To Lucas, no amount of wealth could compensate for the mission.

"I'm here for a vestige duel. " Lucas stated.

"Is there even any meaning to this?" The manager in the stall complained. However, Lucas paid him no heed and waited for an appropriate response.

After hesitating, the manager finally sighed and shook his head.

"It's our loss. We surrender. "

[[Congratulations to the host for the seventeenth win in a row.]]

"Time to round this up." Lucas said before leaving for the venue everyone expected him to be at.

A few minutes later, Lucas was now at the scene. As he walked, a few eyes moved towards him as he scanned the area. Compared to the crowd following him, there were a lot more people present here, seemingly having anticipated this final showdown. Lucas even spotted Autumn's Gate guild and some members of the Red Fang in the scene.

He would have seen a lot more but unfortunately, these were the only ones Lucas was familiar with.

"Are you the one?" A man who stood at the entrance of the building like a guard asked as he saw Lucas walk forward.

"I don't know what you mean by that, but I'm here for only one thing." Lucas calmly said.

"State your purpose." The guard glared imposingly at him.

"A certain vestige-smith had once called me out for being a frog in a well. So today, I decided to come pay him a visit to broaden my vision and experience." Lucas smiled, but beneath that smile, many could feel a lurking blade hiding underneath.

The security guard clearly understood why Lucas was here and couldn't stop him, so he went in to call the vestige-smith.

Meanwhile...

"Hey, isn't that that guy from back then?" Juán pointed at Lucas.

"It's him. What's he doing here? Don't tell me he's the 'masterpiece killer'?" Leno was surprised.

"It's said that the 'masterpiece killer' has never really made an appearance in public, and all the duels have been carried out by his human employee. I'm guessing that's him." Crimson Fang commented.

The Autumn's Gate guild wasn't the only one with something to say after spotting Lucas. Lieutenant Lily wore a shocked expression, and even her lower rank, Barry, was also surprised by this. The other Red Fangs lieutenant who showed up with them was confused by their expressions. However, when he sensed that Lucas wasn't a hyumankin like him, but a human being, he pieced two and two together.

"Is that the guy? I thought you said he runs an average vestige-smith store?" The man felt like he had just discovered a shocking detail.

"I also thought the same." Barry appeared stupefied seeing Lucas there.

Unlike the crowd, the Red Fangs had done some digging on Lucas' background, so they were aware that his vestige-smith store wasn't being backed by any notable vestige-smith. It was difficult—almost impossible—for someone that good to sneak through the Red Fangs network. The only reason the terrorists made it past was due to the possible existence of a mole, otherwise, it would have been impossible.

However, Lucas never had such a connection, and there was no other mole found after the department's cleansing. So, it was clear that the store belonged to Lucas, although how he made the vestiges was unknown.

Never in their lives would they have thought that the human they ignored and considered to be just a side character, would have developed into a main character in just a few days.

"Do we ask him to help us?" Barry's eyes flashed as he expressed his thoughts.

The lieutenant frowned slightly but began to actually consider the subject. He had previously joked about it, but with Lucas now turning out to be the 'masterpiece killer', or at least related to the real fellow, having him help them with a new vestige batch was looking like a reasonable idea.

"Let's see whether he wins and can make it to the auction first." Lily Mayer cut in.

Just then, a group of people walked out from the building. One was the recognisable silver haired middle-aged man who had made the comments that sparked all of this the previous day.

Beside him was someone dressed in a suit with a monocle on his left eye. The monocle was actually a communicator with appraisal capabilities.

Seeing this 'one-eyed man', the crowd was surprised.

"That's an appraiser from the consortium!"

"Indeed. Today is the fifth day, so they should already be moving. Considering this is the most hyped duel, it's not impossible for at least one to be in attendance."

Many whispers broke out, but the gist of the matter was that the man was an appraiser from the Silver Fig Consortium, sent over to rate the masterpieces of the various vestige-smiths.

Usually, there would be at least ten appraisers who moved around both secretly and in the open. The appraisers would inspect the masterpieces of each stall that had one and give it a detailed rating in a similar format as a vestige duel, m from one to ten, with ten being the highest.

After the day came to an end, the ratings would be gathered and calculated, with the rankings being formed from it. The top fifteen on the rankings would be announced the morning of the next day; from there, proceed to the auction to be held the evening of the same day.

A trip from any district in Baylands City to the Central Prefecture usually took roughly five hours or less using a light rail train, so there was no issue with the process.

It was because the system of rating used by the appraisers was similar to vestige duels that the top companies and vestige-smiths usually avoided challenging a masterpiece with a masterpiece. If they were to lose, it would make their vestige look bad even if it was quite strong.

The appraisers wouldn't turn biased because of a loss, but with a comparison in mind, the public would have their own thoughts. Also, with a clear lead, it was unavoidable that the loser would end up with a worse rating than the victor.

Apart from the appraiser, there was someone else who happened to be with the silver haired man.

"Oh, Lucy. Is that you?" The man asked.

Lucy glanced at the brown coloured man by the side who had orange hair. Just like her, he was also an agent from Novanio Tech.

Novanio Tech was a company that designed and developed stellar processors. Novanio Tech was a really big company in Eretre, but the branch in Baylands city-state wasn't doing really well. As such, they wanted to delve into the weapons market.

However, the weapons market was already somewhat fixed, and it would be difficult for a new competitor to be born, especially if the existing players in the industry found out the competition was started by a multi-million federal coins corporation like Novanio Tech.

To ease their entry, Novanio decided not to develop their own vestige-smith industry for weapons, but to start a dealership or a vestige business. However, for this to succeed, they needed a supplier.

Most top vestige-smiths were already in exclusive deals with other dealers, or were hired to work in top vestige-smith companies. So, the board at Novanio Tech Baylands city-state branch decided to search low.

On this matter, there were three factions with differing opinions. One opted to find some established vestige-smiths and poach them from other companies or steal exclusive rights from other vestige dealers.

The second faction thought to aim a bit lower and find the less renowned vestige-smiths and sign deals with them.

The third faction went even lower and wanted to find vestige-smiths with potential and invest in them. The advantage of this was that if Novanio Tech ever had a change in mind and decided to start a weapons vestige-smith branch company, these low ranked vestige-smiths potential can become the core force and foundation of that company.

After all, unlike established or renowned vestige-smiths who were quite prideful, a vestige-smith they invested in and supported from the hardest stage up, would definitely feel like they owe them a lot and wouldn't mind working under them.

Lucy belonged to this third faction, which was why she was in the low tier region. As for the orange haired man, he was a member of the first faction; the faction that aimed to find top vestige-smiths and get exclusive sales rights from them.

The top ten were all companies with a couple of vestige-smiths under their belt. Only the eleventh place wasn't a registered vestige-smith company but a single vestige-smith doing the work. Such a party was exactly what the first faction wanted best.