

The Crafts 112

Chapter 112: Another Win

Whereas Arlott saw the scores to be a lucky win for Lucas, Nicholai and the overseer—as well as a few others—saw things differently.

Previously, Lucas had competed in multiple vestige duels. This led to there being a boatload of information about the performance of the brown shield. However, comparing that to the current information, they realised that there was a problem; the two weren't the same.

The brown shield got 484 points in the hardness test, but in the past, it only managed to get 459.

'Is this change brought about by a single metal disc? He didn't make any previous adjustments, now did he?'

Improving a masterpiece wasn't against the rules or anything, but it was easier said than done. Nonetheless, Nicholai felt this was the most likely explanation. He just couldn't believe that a simple metal disc could improve the stats of a vestige by so much, even if one were to consider Lucas' words that the brown shield was previously incomplete.

The crowd regained themselves and the duel had to go on. The overseer wanted to confirm his suspicions, so the next test was just the same as the first—one that gave the shield an advantage. The strength test.

In this test, Lucas once again scored higher with the brown shield.

Then came the durability test, and surprisingly, it was a draw, which was very rare.

The current scores were two wins with one draw for Lucas, and one draw for Nicholai.

Even though he was losing, Nicholai wasn't as worried as one would expect. However, he was a bit anxious. This anxiety didn't come from the fact that Lucas was taking the lead, but rather that the points the brown shield scored in the following two tests after the hardness test differed from previous records.

It was just as he had feared, Lucas, or the vestige-smith behind him, seemed to have upgraded the masterpiece by a notch. It was closely approaching the level of work for the top ten companies.

"Shall we go on?" The overseer asked as he glanced at the two sides.

"Of course. I don't know about you guys, but I haven't had breakfast yet. So, I need to get this done as quickly as possible." Lucas said.

Nicholai didn't say anything either, silently accepting the same decision as Lucas.

With both sides having come to an agreement, the overseer could only do as they wished, as his role was simply that of a referee.

The vestige duel went on, but with each test carried out, the gap increased.

'How come?' Nicholai gritted his teeth and widened his eyes, both in shock and fear.

At this point, Nicholai didn't want to win the normal way again. He simply hoped he could win just one test. Even the sharpness test was similarly lost to the shield.

The stellar energy tests of purity and matrix efficiency came along then. The brown shield's clean sweep of the Winter-Summer axe was so unexpected, that the overseer had even personally inspected the runes of the brown shield himself.

While no one had said it, some were beginning to consider that the duel was rigged in Lucas' favour because everything that took place was unexplainable. But the issue with this judgement was that the Silver Fig Trade Convention would be drawn as a suspect. The entire equipment for this vestige duel was provided by them, and Lucas had no way to interfere.

So, the only explanation based on this suspicion, was that the organizers wanted to side with Lucas for some reason. Maybe he was an industry plant, or his backer had connections with them, who knew which exactly?

The overseer feared such news breaking out and tainting their image so, he decided to actively participate in the vestige duel in an attempt to find a fault. However, he was astonished to realise that he couldn't identify any of the runes on the brown shield.

Not all appraisers were vestige-smiths, but they knew the trade as well as the latter, especially when it came to runes and stellar matrices. While vestige-smiths learnt the application, appraisers learnt the history and identification. Despite this, the overseer had failed to identify the runes on the brown shield when he had inspected it personally.

'Just who was the vestige-smith behind this creation? Did he explore ruins? Does he have connections with the pioneers? Is he from Baylands city-state?'

The overseer had so many questions, but now wasn't the time to be asking them.

When it was time for the stellar purity test, the Winter-Summer axe scored an Alpha reading Grade 3 with a class reading of light Yellow.

Greek letters were used to refer to the stage of stellar refinement. Alpha, being the first letter of the Greek alphabet, represented the Apertures Opening stage, which was the first stage of true stellar refinement.

The class reading was divided into six colours: Red, Orange, Yellow, Ice-Blue, Grey and White, each further sub-divided into three shades: light, median and deep.

Baylands city-state's highest-ever class reading on all Grades was median Ice-Blue and this was for a Grade 1 vestige made by a Tier 1 Master from the Central Prefecture district.

For the Winter-Summer axe to land a light yellow reading was pretty impressive. It easily surpassed at least eighty-nine percent of vestiges in the convention. However, the brown shield was not one of them.

"Alpha reading Grade 3. Class reading light Yellow." The robo-tester announced.

When the score was called out, everyone stared at the brown shield in shock. It was another draw, but in the stellar aspect.

This was the last test, and totalling it with all the others, Lucas won five and drew two. Although it wasn't a devastating loss as with the previous challenges, the result still shook many. However,

having reached the stage, not everyone was stunned. The constant victories and one draw had already made it clear that Lucas would win.

"You can forward the payment to my account," Lucas said before picking up the brown shield and walking away. He still had two more victories to take.

'Ah. This is getting boring now. I'll just wrap it up with some small wins.' Lucas thought.

Nicholai was a Tier 1 Elite and the strongest Lucas had met. He was at the sixth level of the Apertures Opening stage. Having a card at that level was pretty powerful and could help Lucas deal with most of his problems and some in the future. For instance, Ramirez, who was at the fifth level.

As Lucas left, he noticed someone was after him. He stopped and glanced behind to see there were two people following him. One was Lucy, and considering she wanted to sign a contract with him, it was understandable. However, the second person was actually the overseer for the vestige duel, who was an appraiser from the Silver Fig Consortium.

"Pardon my actions, but I needed to clear some of my doubts." The man said once he got within talking distance.

"First, I'd like to invite you to the auction. Your masterpiece is more than capable of qualifying for such a prestigious event. As this is your first time, I'll be forwarding to you the rules regarding the auction as well as an invitation card. It can be used to attend either physically at the conference venue in the Central Prefecture district, or the online broadcast."

The Silver Fig Trade Convention organising committee has access to the information and contact details of the participants, so Lucas wasn't surprised this could be done.

"Next, if possible, I'd like to discuss with you about those runes. Preferably in private." The man sneaked a look at Lucy.

"No need. I don't know anything about that, as I am not the vestige-smith." Lucas flatly declined.

This was one reason he had decided to create a persona to take on the role of the vestige-smith. At the lower level, one might not notice anything, but the professionals and veterans might spot something different between Lucas' vestiges and the ones in circulation. Unlike them, Lucas couldn't use stellar matrices or the runes concocted in this world.

On one hand, it was because Lucas was lacking stellar energy. On the other hand, it was because he didn't know them.

Having a fake identity to take all the blame and suspicion would put him in a safer place.

"I am aware of that, but I just want you to help connect me to him." The man pleaded.

Lucas hesitated, before replying with a sigh, "I'll see what I can do, but the master isn't a fan of outsiders or guests."

"Thank you." The man smiled before walking away.

As an appraiser, he still had to mind his behaviour as well as public perception, especially with how the vestige duel had ended. Spending too much time conversing with Lucas might raise suspicions about the result of the vestige duel.

"Let's talk at the stall." Lucas said to Lucy before walking away.