

The Crafts 23

Chapter 23 : Upgrading The Short-sword

To the twelve men in the waiting lobby, two hours wasn't long. They were all freelancers and usually spent days in the Wastelands, where there were man-eating horrors and monstrosities that could give one sleepless night. Compared to that, sitting in a comfortable place and admiring some artwork for just two hours was no problem.

In the work-station, Lucas kept the short-sword on a work bench as he prepared his equipment.

Repairing the short-sword wasn't a difficult task, and he could get that done in twenty five minutes or less. The problem was upgrading it.

Due to the limitations of the materials used in making the sword, Lucas couldn't upgrade it from its current grade, Grade 1, to the next.

The grading system for vestiges was the same as the power system for stellar refinement. The main classes were Aperture class for Aperture Opening stage stellar practitioners, Origin class for Guardian stage or Origin stage stellar practitioners, and Moon class for the Moon Walkers or Sage realm practitioners. Each class of weapon was subdivided into lower levels based on quality and power.

In Eretre, the vestiges were all Aperture class vestiges and graded from 1-6. Grade 1 was a beginner level of Aperture class vestiges and was typically used by first or second Aperture Opening stage warriors. Third Aperture Opening stage freelancers used them too, but most preferred the next.

Grade 2 was still in the beginner ranks, but better than Grade 1. It was also a more common option for veterans, as they were affordable but still more powerful than Grade 1 vestiges.

Grade 3 vestiges were used by the stronger and wealthier professionals, usually freelancers at the fourth or fifth stage, as at this stage, it would take some effort to be able to afford it. Most sixth Aperture stage[1] practitioners also used this.

Grade 4 Aperture class vestiges were even more expensive, and only the top freelancers could afford them. They were usually found in the hands of seventh Aperture stage stellar practitioners or the more powerful sixth Aperture stage practitioners. People like this usually lead famous

paramilitary freelancing groups or guilds, while some hold high positions in the military or other powerful forces.

Grade 5 vestiges, were on a different level, and some could even be considered family heirlooms. Not just anyone could get their hands on them, as the vestige-smiths capable of making them were all concentrated in the Oklo Dynasty. It was rumoured that only the city lord residences and top families of each continent had them.

These vestiges were best suited for eighth and ninth Aperture stage stellar practitioners. Even the tenth stage practitioners used it. These were individuals who led a powerful family or a very powerful force. For instance, the current city lord and head of Baylands city-state is a stellar practitioner of the tenth Aperture Opening stage.

The head of the Ross family, which runs a few industries, is at the eighth stage. Other similar family heads, like the Mertens, were at the ninth Aperture stage.

As for Grade 6 vestiges, they couldn't be found in Baylands city-state or even the entire Groeten continent. Only in the Bernin Continent ruled directly by the Oklo Dynasty could one find such, and it would only be in the Dynasty's royal palace.

Back to the present, Lucas couldn't upgrade the short-sword before him so easily. In fact, the process of upgrading a weapon to the next grade without smelting it and reforging it was impossible. If one were to reforge it, the runes and stellar matrices on the vestige would be ruined, and new ones would have to be traced on it.

As such, upgrading a weapon was costly for the customer and tiresome for the vestige-smith. This was one of the reasons other stores upgrade services weren't so popular.

Although Lucas could pull it off, he didn't offer such an upgrade simply because it couldn't be termed maintenance any longer. Reforging a vestige wasn't a maintenance service.

The advanced repair, however, was different. It involved changing or strengthening the stellar matrices and runes. Such an act could only be performed by a skilled vestige-smith whose rune and matrix-tracing skills were much higher than those of the vestige-smith who made the vestige.

It wasn't easy to find someone of that calibre and this was one of the reasons other stores didn't offer this service.

Another reason was that, it wasn't profitable to do so.

Why make the customer's equipment last longer and reduce the number of visits they make to their store?

But none of that worried Lucas. In fact, it would serve as an advantage for him and draw customers to his store.

Lucas performed the basic repairs on the short-sword first, cleaning it, fixing up the notched parts, sharpening the blade, and polishing the sword, taking only twenty minutes to get these done. For an average blacksmith on Earth, just fixing the nicks and notches alone would take half an hour or more, but Lucas didn't have such issues.

Not only was his equipment of the highest standard, but his skills were also on par.

After the basic repairs, Lucas dipped the short-sword in a special gelatinous material and left it for five minutes. The liquid was a special compound that could eliminate the runes and stellar matrices on a vestige without damaging the product.

Advanced repair was to either change or upgrade the matrices and runes, but for the short-sword, Lucas felt it was best to change the tracings (both stellar matrices and runes) on it. A magical rune from his past life crossed his mind when he saw the vestige and the damage done to it.

The rune was an ancient draconic rune, meaning it was made by dragons of yore. The dragons used the runes on their flesh to strengthen the defensive property of their scales. This would in turn make them more sturdy and impervious to various attacks and damages, such as the corrosive effects of slimes.

Lucas estimated that this rune would similarly be effective in making the short-sword more durable when facing Nolkins. Of course, it would also become stronger, but the increase wasn't noteworthy enough to raise its grade.

Apart from the draconic runes, Lucas also added two special magic sigils which would help with the flow of stellar energy, after all, this was a vestige. While he couldn't trace stellar matrices, there were still similar arts in his first life, considering stellar energy was also a type of mystical energy just like mana and true energy.

Inscribing the draconic runes from scratch took Lucas thirty minutes, and he spent twenty minutes working on the two sigils. In total, Lucas used seventy five minutes or an hour and a quarter (15 mins), to work on the vestige. There were still forty-five minutes left from the estimated 2 hours of advanced repair, but Lucas didn't intend on using them all.

In truth, he took quite some time working on this vestige, as it had been a while since he last inscribed draconic runes.

Lucas then dipped the sword into another liquid for five minutes, but this time with the intention of strengthening the sword's structure and cleaning off the surface. During the first five minutes of sword-dipping, Lucas had been working on the sword's scabbard. He concluded the work during these five minutes and sheathed the sword right back.

After that, he walked out of the work-station with the short-sword in hand.