

The Crafts 32

Chapter 32 : The Power Of A Vestige

Hovering in midair, the trio took out their vestiges and prepared to battle.

Anna had a bow that looked technical and not like a product of wood carving. The bow was metallic and made of different tiny parts linked together to make the weapon, just like a compound bow. While it still maintained the structural appearance of a typical compound bow, the crafting of this weapon was much more complex.

Every metallic part was integral to the weapon's efficiency and functioned a specific role, being very distinct from their traditional counterparts. Even the string wasn't as thin as regular bows, but was a metallic string the thickness of a thumb. Instead of the usual wheels, there were instead special rails built on it.

At a single glance, one could indeed call this a bow, but at a closer look, it was much more advanced and even different.

The bow didn't use physical arrows, rather, it consumed the wielder's stellar energy to form a stellar arrow, while applying the effects of the stellar matrices and runes carved on it to the arrow. Unlike a regular bow, it even had a semi-automatic feature, meaning that as long as one had enough stellar energy, the bow could fire as fast as an assault rifle.

The weapons Leno had were a pair of pistols, but not like the ones back on Earth. Its attacking ability was dependent on two factors; the user's stellar energy and the rounds fired. However, the guns could still be used even without specialised rounds, as one's stellar energy could compensate; the only difference being that its attacking power would be much weaker.

Apart from that, Leno also had a golden staff hanging behind him. It was currently in its passive form, measuring only a metre long. Compared to the pair of pistols though, the staff's energy level was much lower, clearly a sign that in terms of grades, it couldn't be placed alongside the former.

It was quite normal for freelancers to have more than one set of vestiges, as each type performed a different function and could be used a different way. Nonetheless, not everyone was financially bouyant enough to afford such.

Most times, a freelancer would concentrate their funds into one equipment, while those who desire the path of having a backup, would have their main and auxiliary vestiges, with the latter being weaker than the former.

This wasn't to say that they didn't want both to be in the same grade, but the financial resources required to not only acquire the vestiges but also maintain them, was no chicken feed.

The duo, who were already armed, immediately headed for the cockatrice. As for Lisa, she remained on standby. Her role for the battle was to prevent the monster from escaping and also ensure that her teammates didn't get hurt. Also, if she managed to spot a chance to deliver a heavy blow to the monster, she would take it. In summary, she was the backup for the battle.

While they were expected to end the battle quickly, they took every opportunity as a moment to hone their skills and train. Lisa stepped out of the way to give Anna and Leno enough space as well as an opportunity to face a peak fourth level desolate beast on their own.

To prevent the monster from escaping, Lisa had also taken out her vestige; a black streamer that was inlaid with special gems and carved with countless stellar matrices.

Once the cockatrice got within a one hundred metres distance from them, Leno released his stellar energy and channeled it into the pistols. He took aim and at the very next second, let loose his weapon, firing multiple shots at the monster.

Pew-Pew-Pew

Aquatic blue dots with a slender shape shot out from the pistols, almost at the speed of light. The shots tore through the air, heating it immediately and striking at the cockatrice. However, a peak fourth level monster, especially one from the Astranian Forest.

Bang *Bang*

The Blue-gemmed Cockatrice gave off a light blue shimmer from its body which then solidified to form a sturdy shield in front of it. The shots from the magical pistols collided into the light shield, forming sparks with each collision yet failing to penetrate through.

Even so, Leno was unbothered as he kept raining shots after shots down on the monster, forcing its speed to slow down as it focused on defence.

Although each shot wasn't backed with a rune-carved round, the pistols themselves were a Grade 3 vestige and had a special enhancement function. Through this, Leno -despite being at the third level- was capable of releasing fire power comparable to a peak third level or a beginner fourth level practitioner.

Even for the cockatrice, this firepower, although not deadly, was still of harm to it, so it regarded the attacks with caution.

In the meantime, Anna wasn't just taking the spectator role as she gripped her bow and drew the string right from its nocking point while injecting her stellar energy into the vestige.

An energy arrow began to take shape on the bow, giving off an intimidating aura that could quell ghosts.

The cockatrice suddenly sensed something as its gaze shifted from Leno to Anna, but by then, it was too late.

Twang.

The string was released alongside a one chord melody, with the energy arrow darting at its target at a speed difficult to be caught by the human eye.

Bang

Unlike with Leno's attacks, the light shield formed by the cockatrice shattered immediately the tip of the arrow made contact with it. Like a glass wall falling apart after a gunshot, it broke into shards, but the arrow was not done yet.

The remnant energy of the strike broke through the shield and hit its target with next to no resistance. As the cockatrice wasn't expecting such a powerful attack to be made available so soon, its guard wasn't completely up and the arrow dug into its left wing.

If it weren't for the tough hides of the monster as well as its natural constitution, the arrow would have penetrated all the way until the other side.

Lucas marveled at this scene as he could witness the difference between a fourth level and third level stellar practitioners of the Aperture Opening stage while using vestiges of the same grades. Albeit there was some slight difference in quality, both the bow and the pair of pistols were Grade 3 vestiges, but the effects they produced in the hands of their users differed due to their levels.

While Leno found it difficult to shatter the light shield, Anna was able to do it with one shot.

The cockatrice had now identified Anna to be a threat as it turned its horrifying gaze at her.

Originally, it had kept a lookout for Lisa as its instincts could sense that she was the strongest. But the distance between them made it less cautious. Also, even though it had sensed Anna to be at a somewhat similar level as itself, the cockatrice was a proud and cocky monster and deigned to believe that a creature much smaller than it could pose a significant threat to it.

Leno's shots being unable to penetrate its light shield gave this conclusion more grounds of being a fact, and so, it didn't put up much caution against them.

There was also the fact that this Blue-gemmed Cockatrice was an adolescent and probably didn't have much, or even, any experience dealing with humans so it underestimated the group.

Being injured by creatures it considered lesser, the Blue-gemmed Cockatrice didn't get scared or consider a retreat. Rather, it flared up with anger, spreading its wings wide as it cawed at the duo. Its menacing eyes glared red as its fangs glistened with its mouth wide open.

Vroom

A blue beam of light exited from the mouth of the formidable creature, blasting its way forward towards Anna.

Anna had already expected such a counter attack as the information regarding the Blue-gemmed Cockatrice was already publicised amongst the freelancers. In fact, to minimise fatality rates, information regarding many desolate beasts was either open to the public as general knowledge or sold by Pioneers.

Very rarely would one die at the hands of a desolate beast in the Wastelands unless they were uninformed, inexperienced, or facing a much stronger desolate beast.

The blue pulverizing ray was a common attack method of a Blue-gemmed Cockatrice, apart from its physical attacks with its claws, beak or tail.

Anna's battlesuit surged with an intense intense blue light and a low hum, as she hurriedly dodged the beam.

Meanwhile, Lisa flung her streamer with at the beam, effectively blocking it with the vestige and forcing the attack to dissipate. This was to prevent the pulverizing ray from causing a commotion elsewhere and attracting the attention of other desolate beasts towards their location.

Right after that, Lisa controlled the streamer to extend around the battle zone, forming a circle around the three combatants.

The radius of the circle was quite large and the cockatrice was in an enraged mode, having its attention on Leno and Anna alone, so it failed to notice this stealthy action.

Meanwhile, Leno kept firing shots at the monster, and while the damage dealt to the cockatrice wasn't much, it did succeed in drawing its aggro towards him. When the situation looked deadly or when she spotted a chance, Anna would shoot her energy arrows at the monster.

In this fashion, the duo kept the cockatrice busy, but this time, Anna's arrows didn't always hit the target as the cockatrice relied on its natural airborne talent to dodge the attacks. Even for the attacks it felt difficult to handle, it would clash head-on with them using its claws that glowed silver right before each collision.

When Lisa's vestige, the black streamer, formed a complete circle, the gems on it lit up and the light extended to envelope the markings of the stellar matrices. When all the matrices were lit up, Lisa then muttered a word.

"Seal."

A strange wave was released from the black streamer, encompassing the battlefield and forming an invisible sphere over it. Inside the sphere were the trio: the Blue-gemmed Cockatrice, Anna and Leno.

At this moment, the monster felt a shiver and immediately awoke from its enraged state, but it was all too late.

"Bury." Lisa said with a solemn voice, like a monarch declaring an indelible command.

In the very next second, something incredible took place. The stellar matrices 'separated' from the streamer and turned into seven large black and red magic circles, encompassing a much larger height than the streamer.

At the centre of each magic circle, a bolt of pure energy began to form, turning into magnificent weapons that suffused with the scent of death. In the eyes of the Blue-gemmed Cockatrice, fear appeared with a trace of anxiety as the creature dashed towards the opposite direction of the duo, ignoring them and fleeing for its life.

However, the cockatrice didn't get far away as it crashed into an invisible barrier that forced it back. Even though it was injured from that experience, it didn't relent as it charged once more and clawed at the barrier. But all its efforts were for naught as the monster feared by many, was incapable of passing through the barrier.

It only managed to keep attacking for two seconds before the bolts of deadly energy took aim and fired right away.

Boom

All seven bolts, despite the distance between them, reached the Blue-gemmed Cockatrice all at the same time and exploded into a terrifying surge of energy. The attack was so powerful that even the invisible barrier materialized by the streamer failed to remain standing, dissipating alongside the creature.

In that moment, Lucas was in awe. Even though he has seen much more powerful and stronger attacks and weapons in his first life, if he were to consider the level and strength of an Aperture Opening stage stellar practitioner, being able to produce such a formidable attack was very much impressive.