

The Crafts 64

Chapter 64: Suppression

"Interesting. I underestimated you somewhat, but this is all you will be achieving today."

The man in the hat said as he slowly stood up from his seat.

Even with the two lackeys he brought lying dead on the floor, he showed no sign of remorse for them. It was as if they were nothing more than insects who had served their purpose and died.

"I hope you can entertain me a bit, or I'd have to take back some interest." The man chuckled as he took off his hat.

It was then that Lucas realised that the man was bald. However, the lack of hair wasn't the most startling reveal; rather, it was the jarring scar on his spotless head.

Lucas didn't have enough time to study the blemish, as the man had abruptly appeared in front of him with a wide grin on his face.

A fist appeared in Lucas' field of view, and he could barely respond to it as it connected with his abdomen.

Bam

Lucas released a low grunt as he was forced back by the attack. The pain was intense, and if it weren't for the Host Protection Mechanism, he would have been dead.

As for why he had been forced back, it was simply because Lucas had used the HPM's passive mode, which would allow a certain degree of damage to take effect on him but not enough to injure or kill Lucas severely. The reason he had done so was that Lucas wanted to figure out the difference in pure strength between himself and a second level Apertures Opening stage stellar practitioner.

'That really hurts.' Lucas couldn't help but frown.

The second stage of Stellar Refinement, the Apertures Opening stage, was supposed to focus on opening the apertures within a human's body, enabling them to store stellar energy and increase their refinement speed. For every aperture opened, the practitioner would gain an extra storage 'tank' and their refinement speed would increase by a varied percentage.

This step in stellar refinement was essential and unavoidable for humans as if they attempted to skip it, their progress speed in stellar refinement would be very slow. It would be so dawdling that even with a thousand years of lifetime, it would be impossible to get to the fourth stage of stellar refinement, the Sage or Moon Walker realm, irrespective of their mDNA count.

Because the second stage, Apertures Opening stage, was focused on opening the body's apertures, it was thought to be more focused on energy, with the increase in physical attributes being secondary. Despite this, Lucas felt that the casual blow from the man was on par with a peak Body Strengthening stage practitioner's all-out punch.

"Hmm? You're uninjured." The man was surprised.

He was confident that the force within his attack was enough to incapacitate, if not severely injure, an average peak Body Strengthening stage fighter. However, Lucas was still standing.

Another thing which caught the man's attention was that at the very last second after the punch connected, he felt a strange sensation upon collision with Lucas' body. While the man felt the entire force of the punch transfer over, at the same time, it felt like a majority of it disappeared. The feeling was fleeting, and the man wasn't sure if he had made a mistake in his senses or something.

Nonetheless, he wasn't worried. The scarred man didn't say another word as the air around him abruptly changed.

Lucas, who had recovered from the previous hit, could sense something brooding in front of him. His instincts went crazy, informing him that there was great danger ahead.

Lucas glanced at the scarred man and noticed that, at some point, he now had a pole in his hands. Scrutinising the weapon, he found that there was a strange energy wrapped around it. Lucas wasn't unfamiliar with this phenomenon.

It was stellar energy.

Until the tenth level, when Apertures Opening stage practitioners unlocked their innate superpower, most of the combat was physical. Although there were a few individuals who unlocked a hint of their superpower before the tenth level, for instance, the Red Fangs member Nafir, all battles were commonly done this way.

Vestiges were used to supplement one's attack power, while stellar energy was used to boost one's damage and power those vestiges.

The vestige the scarred man had taken out was a Grade 2 vestige which was understandable as Grade 3 vestiges were costlier and could only be properly used by fourth level practitioners.

Whoosh

'Full activation.'

The pole, laden with stellar energy, swept through the air and struck towards Lucas. It was so fast that Lucas was only able to get one thought in before it appeared right in front of him.

Bam

The pole struck Lucas' left arm, emitting a thud, but Lucas stood unaffected.

The man was a bit stunned by this, but being a veteran at dealing with people, he didn't drop his guard or slow down his pace as he unleashed another furious attack.

The pole was immediately retrieved and lashed out in the very next second, but this time, it was a thrust.

The head of the pole once again connected with Lucas' flesh, but there was neither any sign of harm nor a resultant effect from it. Well, there was one, which was the clothes Lucas had on being shredded at the targeted spot, but that aside, Lucas took no damage whatsoever.

'Interesting.' The scarred man grinned horrifically.

It was like a child seeing a new toy and couldn't help but be attracted to it. Like a predator who had found tasty prey, the man stared down at Lucas. He relentlessly attacked with the pole, striking Lucas with every hit, but the latter remained firm even after the man had increased his force.

On the other hand, Lucas was beginning to get frustrated. Just in terms of physical prowess alone, Lucas was greatly lacking compared to the man. In terms of pure strength, he wasn't doing badly.

Lucas had already summoned his craftsman gloves to amplify his strength, and with the added effect of the Host Retaliation function—due to the difference in strength between him and his attacker-, Lucas' attacking power was somewhat equal. However, his speed and reaction were a notch slower. By the time Lucas had discerned the man's attack, he could barely react in time.

'I need to make an opportunity.' Lucas thought as he tried to dodge the man's attacks but to no avail.

There was a reason why the hyumankin were superior to the human race, and it was thanks to the difference in stellar energy prowess. The gap between a first level Apertures Opening stage stellar practitioner and a peak Body Strengthening stage practitioner was already massive, much less when the former was a second level Apertures Opening stage stellar practitioner.

Bam

Another strike from the pole landed on Lucas, but rather than the usual indomitable response, he was flung in the direction of the attack while coughing up a slight amount of blood.

The active mode of the HPM would eradicate the force of any attack on him. While this was impressive, it prevented Lucas from being able to use the force of his opponent's attacks to his advantage, like in retreating. So, Lucas had to deactivate the HPM's active mode, bringing it back to its passive mode.

There were two reasons for this, the first was to utilise his opponent's attack to retreat, and the second was to create an illusion.

'It looks like whatever he's been using is approaching its limit.' The scarred man thought as he chased after Lucas.

'Retrieve.'

Lucas swung his hand at the man while internally chanting the inventory keyword.

A sword suddenly appeared in his hand, and it brandished its way towards the scarred man.

The enemy wasn't befuddled by the sudden appearance of a vestige. He had already noted that Lucas could summon items out of thin air from when he had taken down the other two men and with the gloves' abrupt appearance. Such a technique wasn't really special. It could be achieved with a piece of special equipment called a spatial vault.

A spatial vault was an accessory that contained a certain amount of space within it. It was very expensive, being equivalent to a Grade 4 vestige in terms of price; which meant that it would cost at least a breathtaking fifty thousand federal coins. It was very rare, and only a few amongst the top freelancers, families and organisations had one.

The only reason the scarred man knew about it was because he had once seen a famous freelancer guild leader use it.

Although he was surprised that Lucas had one, the scarred man was more pleased because it would become his if he took Lucas down.

When the sword came his way, the man took a step back and easily dodged the blade of the vestige with a smirk on his face. He followed up by swinging the pole at Lucas once again. The stellar energy revolving around the pole was even more vibrant than before, and it had a deathly feel to it.

The appearance of the vestige had ignited his greed, and the man wanted to end the battle quickly.