

The Crafts 90

Chapter 90 : The Duel Tests

After the unveiling of the trident by Sofoklis' disciple, it was the turn of the Gold Rain Factory team to display their vestige. The staff who had been sent away had returned with a similar box as Sofoklis' disciple. It was similar in length, but compared to the latter, it appeared to be more decorated.

There was a ruby-like gem inlaid atop the box, and on the sides were carved some cryptic writings.

The vestige-smiths and well-learned ones among the spectators easily identified the gem to be a special material that had a sealing-like function, and the writings as runes. The runes worked in tandem with the gem to create a seal that worked over the box. While this sounded like magic, it was just a different method of utilising stellar energy and a part of the humankind's technology.

It was just like how a caveman would consider the idea of sending messages or voices from one part of the world to another as magic, but the modern man would term it technology.

When the box was opened, a burst of energy exploded into the air and was felt by the crowd. Roughly ninety percent of the spectators were freelancers at the first level of the Apertures Opening stage and above, so they were quite sensitive to stellar energy.

The nature of the stellar energy was quite pure and aggressive. It was like the aura of a warmonger general whose loyalty lied to the country—a man who would slaughter enemies on the battlefield until his last breath, even if he was the last man standing, simply because he had a people to protect behind him. This was the sensation the crowd could feel from the aura exuding from the box.

"What a marvelous creation." An experienced vestige-smith in the crowd couldn't help but exclaim.

A vestige that could arouse emotions from the wielder and stir the crowd just by the aura it exuded was definitely not an ordinary one. This was another masterpiece. It was of a different nature to Sofoklis' vestige, but that didn't make it any bit weaker.

The people who attended the convention as clients today couldn't help but be glad. No one would have expected that two masterpieces would be revealed today, and even more so, be pitted against each other in a vestige duel.

Masterpieces usually came out on the last days of this five-day convention, but it was merely the second day. Also, even when masterpieces were revealed, they were hardly challenged to a vestige duel. The reason for this was simple. Every participant who had a masterpiece creation revealed it for the sole purpose of attracting the attention of the appraisers from the Silver Fig Consortium.

As long as they captured the interest of the appraisers, they would earn a slot for the auction. Since the appraisers could determine the quality of a vestige at a glance, there was no need for a vestige duel; those were used only to impress the public.

For these auction aspirers, a loss in a vestige duel could affect their chances of getting a slot. Even if the appraiser clears their vestige to be auctioned, the final price might end up affected by that negative sentiment born from the loss. Although winning would increase their chance of getting selected for the auctions and even possibly raise the final bid price, the risk was more.

Recovering from the shock of the stellar energy, the crowd stared at the item inside the box. It was similarly a long weapon, but rather than a trident, it was a spear; an overbearing one at that.

The spear was coloured gold with the runes and stellar matrices engraved on it with a special white ink. There was a purple-red gem fixed on the shaft, just below the point where the blade connected to the shaft. A white tassel was attached to the joint, giving the spear a royal feeling.

"I present to you all, our masterpiece for this year's convention: 'Annalia'. It takes its name from the ancient human race era, meaning 'God's grace to me'." The manager introduced.

"It seems the rumours are true. It all makes sense now." Someone in the crowd said.

"What rumours?"

The man explained, "It's said that Grey Finger has a rival in the Ecclesiastics. Both sides were talented vestige-smiths and had competed with each other ever since they got their certificates. His rival was said to have gone missing a few years back, but about two years after the Gold Rain Factory announced that they had recently attracted a new vestige-smith into their ranks.

However, the vestige-smith's identity wasn't disclosed, even on their official website. However, rumours eventually came out that the new vestige-smith was of the Ecclesiastics branch. The Gold

Rain Factory neither refuted nor admitted to this, so the rumours later died down. But it seems like they were true; and the vestige-smith is probably that man."

Although no name was mentioned, the crowd could guess who 'that man' was. When they thought about things, it finally made sense.

Sofoklis probably knew that his rival had joined the Gold Rain Factory and that this year's masterpiece was a product of his, hence why he challenged the Gold Rain Factory to a vestige duel. By using his masterpiece to compete, the Gold Rain Factory would be forced to do the same, unless they wanted to throw the towel or just refuse the duel.

However, the Silver Fig Trade Convention wasn't an ordinary exhibition fair. Any action taken here by a corporation or vestige-smith would affect their reputation in the market negatively or positively, depending on the nature of the action.

Throwing the towel or refusing the challenge would definitely affect the public opinion since Sofoklis wasn't a nobody, so they would most likely give it their all.

From the start, Sofoklis wasn't competing with them to find out the better side, but was merely re-enacting his rivalry. He didn't come to compete with the Gold Rain Factory, but his old rival. Read exclusive content at empire

The spectators were once again swept in emotions and couldn't wait for the duel to begin. Even Lucas couldn't help but look at Sofoklis differently.

"Let's begin." The overseer said.

Sofoklis' disciple wielded the trident while the staff who brought the box carried the spear in hand.

The vestige duel was a general duel that comprised of multiple tests to evaluate the performance of a vestige. It was similar but different to the quality tests performed by vestige-smiths.

The tests of a general duel for cold-weapon-type vestiges were focused on seven properties: durability, sharpness, hardness, strength, power, rune or stellar matrix efficiency, and finally, stellar energy purity.

Durability was the ability of a vestige to withstand damage and wear.

Sharpness was a measure of the vestige's piercing factor.

Hardness was the ability of the vestige to retain its shape under resistance.

Strength, similar to hardness but entirely different, was the vestige's ability to maintain its structural integrity under stress or strain. Simply put, it was the ability of a vestige to resist permanent deformation.

The difference between strength and hardness was that the former was the measure of how much stress a vestige could handle before permanent deformation or fracturing. In simpler terms, it was a measure of how much force a vestige could handle before cracking or breaking. As for the latter, it was a measure of a vestige's ability to resist surface deformation, like scratching or piercing.

Power was a measure of the vestige's grade, or better yet, the grading system for vestiges.

Efficiency of the runes and stellar matrices was a measure of the inscriptions' ability to function. Some runes were more powerful than others, and some stellar matrices could draw stellar energy from the vestige's wielder faster than others.

Even if two vestige-smiths were to use the exact same runes and stellar matrices for their creation, there would be differences in efficiency, resulting from the differing inscription expertise of the two vestige-smiths.

Stellar energy purity was a very important property as this not only determined the grade of a vestige, but it also affected its ranking on the grade. It was well known that even within a specific grade, there would be differences in raw power between vestiges.

For instance, Lucas' vestiges were more powerful than other vestige-smiths, which was why Harry didn't mind paying the bill for one even though it was costlier. This was all due to the fact that the stellar energy purity was on a different level.

Stellar energy purity didn't rely on whether or not the vestige-smith had stellar energy. Instead, it was influenced by the material used as well as the refining process.

Every material used in forging vestiges had some amount of stellar energy naturally stored within them, and the higher the stellar energy and its purity was, the more valuable and rare the material became. However, the purity and even concentration could be affected by the forging method of the vestige-smith.

The ability to retain almost or the exact same quality and concentration of a vestige, defined a vestige-smith's ability. In some cases, some vestige-smiths could even raise the stellar purity and concentration by creating a resonance with other materials used.

For instance, if one were to create a vestige using an alloy of a valuable material and a lesser one, if the vestige-smith's skill was up to the task, he or she could create a resonance between the two materials. By doing so, the final product -the alloy- would have a stellar energy quality and purity not just higher than the lesser material but even on par with the more valuable material.

"For the first test, the durability test."