

## The Crafts 97

### Chapter 97: Hozier-class Halberd Versus An Ordinary (?) Dagger

Among the testing equipment Lucas brought out for the duel were two robots about a metre tall. They were known as robo-testers and they were the personnel that carried out the testing.

While society had advanced to the extent that quality tests could be carried out in a few short minutes with a simple scan, vestige duels were made a bit more traditional in order to generate more suspense.

In a situation involving a living being, it was easy to manipulate the test, but with programmable robots, integrity and accuracy were ensured.

Robo-tester was a type of robot capable of exhibiting strength up to a first level Apertures Opening stage stellar practitioner. However, because the Silver Fig Consortium cut costs in the vestige duel equipment, the robo-testers were models capable of only exhibiting the same strength as a fourth level Body Strengthening stage practitioner.

While it might seem lacking, this wasn't a problem as the purpose of the robo-testers were to test the vestiges and not participate in battle.

The two vestiges -the Hozier-class Halberd and the plain looking dagger- were each handed over to a robo-tester.

"The first test, the sharpness test." The man who acted as the overseer announced.

In front of each of the two robo-testers was a strange block of metal with a screen at the top. The metal block was taller than the robo-testers, reaching a similar height as an average human adult [1].

This metal block was forged entirely out of an alloy of a special hard metal known as Deophene. Deophene was a metal stronger than steel with an very compact molecular structure. This made the outer and even inner layer quite difficult to cut through. It was so tough that it made cutting through diamond look like child's play.

The name Deophene was also adapted from an ancient human language known as Latin, with the 'Deo' standing for God. This was to imply how difficult it was to slice through the metal.

Deophene, despite being so tough, wasn't used for a vestige-smithing as not just any vestige-smith could work with it. It was also quite expensive despite its difficult nature, but not so much as it wasn't a rare metal. However, Deophene had a special allotrope [2] that was much tougher, costlier and rarer.

For the sharpness testing metal block, it was an alloy of Deophene and two other metals. It had a low concentration of Deophene, which made it easier to cut through, otherwise this test would have been pointless. Nonetheless, the presence of Deophene still made it almost impossible for any vestige below Grade 4 to completely slice through it.

As for testing the sharpness of higher grade vestiges, the metal block used for that would have a much higher concentration of Deophene than the one before Lucas and co.

The sharpness testing equipment didn't just consist of the metal block alone, but two other parts; the screen and a special x-ray scanner tool.

The purpose and procedure of this sharpness testing was quite obvious. The robo-testers would utilise the same amount of force and land one attack at the metal block, with the intent to cut through it. The one that cut further into the block would win.

The x-ray scanner device had the responsibility of measuring the cut and it would send the result to the screen to be displayed.

"First would be the slashing."

As the overseer's voice went low, the robo-testers immediately swung their weapons at the metal block.

\*Clang\* Discover hidden content at empire

A resounding metallic sound rung in the air. It was almost as if the two vestiges had struck an iron plate except it was something harder.

However, upon closer inspection, one would notice that a cut was made on the rocks; it wasn't deep, but it was still clear. But as which of the two cuts were deeper, it was difficult to tell from the angle and distance the crowd stood.

The freelancer frowned, not expecting Lucas' dagger to not be garbage. Nonetheless, he wasn't bothered. He has to admit that Lucas must have something to rely on to be so arrogant, and it was probably this dagger.

'But it's not going to be enough.' The freelancer grinned.

"Next, thrusting." The overseer's voice sounded again.

The scores wouldn't be displayed yet until both segments of the sharpness test were concluded. Then, the processor attached to the screen would combine both figures and judge the better side after running some calculations.

The robo-testers immediately took their stances once again, but this time, they thrust their swords at the metal block.

\*Clang\*

The familiar metal ring but of a different pitch, sounded once again. This time around, the crowd could glimpse a few differences between the two based on the depth the swords managed to fix themselves at.

"The dagger seems to be better."

"I don't think so. It's probably due to its small size, that's why you think such."

When they surveyed the vestiges, many noticed that the dagger seemed to have gone deeper in when compared to the halberd, but this sparked an argument. Most of the spectators refused to believe that it was possible for an unknown vestige-smith to be able to beat the Hozier-class Halberd in any thing.

Although sharpness wasn't the halberd's strong quality, it still performed well above average in this department.

After the robo-testers retrieved their vestiges, the crowd didn't resume arguing and decided to just await the results.

\*Ding\*

The display devices fixed atop the separate metal blocks simultaneously released a tune as they lit up with figures.

On the testing equipment of the halberd, a few numbers were displayed: 182.

One hundred (100) was the standard sharpness measurement for a Grade 2 vestige of the lowest quality. Anything below this was a failure for a bladed weapon.

One hundred and twenty (120) was the standard mark however. As from one hundred and sixty (160) and above, this was the average digits for a premium model bladed Grade 2 vestige.

A score of one hundred and eighty two (182) was an impressive performance, as not many vestiges could top that.

"Heh." The freelancer grinned, before turning over to look at Lucas' score.

"How can this be?"

Exclamations burst from the crowd.

The display screen on Lucas' testing equipment was already lit with a value: 192.

One hundred and ninety two (192) was a really high number. This was because above two hundred (200) was the entry point for Grade 3 vestiges in terms of sharpness; anything close to this was the peak in terms of sharpness for a Grade 2 vestige. As such, every one digit after one hundred and ninety (190) was of deep meaning and power.

"This is impossible!" The freelancer couldn't help but shout.

"He must have cheated somehow and tweaked the equipment beforehand. Yes, that must be it."

The accusation was heavy, but it managed to still convince some amongst the crowd. This was because Lucas' opponent wasn't just any vestige but a Hozier-class Halberd. What's more, he had managed to score a peak value in terms of sharpness, using a plain looking dagger.

To top it all off, Lucas was a human and the vestige-smith behind his stall was unknown, otherwise, they wouldn't have gotten such a basic stall.

No matter what he wanted to say or how he wanted to defend himself, it would be difficult for Lucas.

Soon enough, a couple of individuals in the corner were convinced and began pointing fingers of accusations at Lucas.

"That's right. He probably cheated."

"True. This makes no sense. How could he beat a Hozier-class? If he could, we would already know who he was."

"Are you kidding me? He's clearly a human. There's no way he can forge such. He probably works for an Elite vestige-smith or even a Master. Who knows where he got this vestige. You can't call that cheating." Someone tried to defend Lucas.

"If he was representing someone, he should have stated so right from the start. Not doing so is cheating." Another countered.

Lucas however, was simply picking his ears at the commotion.

'Working for some Elite or Master? What's that? Also, why would they still think I can't forge even after I've said so?'

"Hehe." Lucas smirked coldly and chuckled.

"What's with you?" The freelancer glared at him.

"Nothing much. I just find it funny that even after taking a loss, you can't admit it. I cheated? Then prove it. Otherwise, stop barking like a dog and let's proceed to the next test."

The crowd went silent seeing Lucas' strong stance. For a second, some of them began to hesitate.

Vestige duel was a tradition of the vestige-smith trade, and it was an abomination to desecrate this tradition by cheating. Anyone found guilty would not only be sidelined by the other vestige-smiths, but in some cases, they could even have their license revoked.

"Putting up a strong front, are you? I'm not scared. Overseer, please confirm that he isn't cheating." The freelancer turned to the middle-aged man acting as the overseer.