

## The Crafts 230

### Chapter 230: Joker

After narrating the history of Drift racing, Luka went on to explain to Lucas the rules of the game as well as some of the top teams.

The K1 drift racing league consisted of various races that took place at different times spread across a period of three months. This period was termed as a season. The league was hosted two seasons a year, which meant a total of six months. The top three of each season, apart from the reward money and other prizes, would gain the qualifications to participate in a second tier league anywhere in Belfargos city-state. There was only one first tier league and that was the Exo Rally, but there were multiple other second tier leagues, albeit only enough to be counted with one's hands.

The winner of a season was determined by the total number of points they had accrued from each race. In a season, there could be as many as thirteen races, split in a 4-4-5 arrangement across the three months. Apart from the main races, there were also qualifying and prep races, but these didn't count much.

After giving Lucas a rough idea of the K1 drift racing league, Luka also talked about the drivers.

Most of them were individual drivers who were sponsored by either a vestige-smith company, while some were drivers who had a bit of skill in modifying sare shuttles.

Twenty minutes had gone by and it was soon time for the first race of the day. The participants had begun to exit their stations and take their positions on the track.

While they did so, Luka described some of them to Lucas.

"That guy in the green shuttle is from Yoko-bunny. The name might sound a bit strange, but don't underestimate them. It's a drift racing team formed by the third generation princess of the Verantino family —the fourth strongest family in Trundel City. They're one of the top teams in the K1 league and got formed only last year. Even so, they're tipped to get promoted to a second tier league this year."

"That red shuttle is from the team Red Mouse, and the driver is nicknamed Red Devil. He's a newcomer to the league, but he made headlines in the leagues of other cities. He arrived with his

team to Trundel City just recently, and it took him only half a year to position himself as a potential promotion figure. He's not to be underestimated."

"The black shuttle is from Lugo Vido autos, or LVA for short. They're a vestige-smithing company in the hover car and sare shuttle industry. They aren't top class per say, but they do make good rides. They've been in the competition for five years now, but this year is their best. Part of it has to do with the black shuttle, which is one of their best creations for this league. Many of us even suspect that they will finally achieve promotion this year."

Luka described to Lucas the top competitors for the race as the participants began to take their positions.

"Who's the guy in the blue-striped vehicle?"

Lucas noticed that a certain driver happened to be getting some attention. Apart from that, he could sense that the man's stellar energy was on another level. This level wasn't simply in terms of power, but quality. The aura the man gave off, even from a distance, was completely different from the other drivers.

"Oh, that guy? That's Joker. He's a black horse in this season's league. He came out of nowhere, has no backers or history before this season. It's even said that he doesn't come from a rich family and is only a sare shuttle enthusiast. However, he's already performed really well in previous races. In the three test circuits, he managed to get into the top ten and even the top five on two occasions." Luka said as he stared in the same direction as Lucas with praise in his eyes.

Test circuits were the first set of races before the league officially began, and they rarely exceeded three. Usually, most drivers and teams wouldn't do their best in these races. Many would only perform at around sixty to eighty percent (60%-80%) of their true skill, so one couldn't exactly use these races to judge the skills of the drivers. However, performing in the top ten out of thirty drivers, was still a praiseworthy feat, especially for a new racer.

Lucas, although he didn't know much about the league, was impressed by the Joker. On one hand, it was because of the driver's rankings in the yes circuits, but on another hand, it was because the Joker had come this far all on his own.

One should know that of the thirty drivers in the league, more than half of them were sponsored by vestige-smith companies. The majority of the remaining half were supported by scions, wealthy individuals, or other companies. Even the team, Red Mouse, was an official team created and sponsored by a joint venture between a millionaire and a top company.

Very few drivers were actually solo drivers, and in the K1 drift racing league, they didn't exceed the number three. This was because, without having a backer, it was virtually impossible for one to achieve much.

Although the winners got paid a lot, their expenses were also a lot. The team's salaries, cost of equipment, cost of vehicle maintenance, cost of vehicle improvement, and so on. The prices of all these added up to hundreds of thousands and even millions in some cases. Hence, drift racing, especially in a league, wasn't a sport for the poor or for regular individuals.

For the Joker to have come this far while being an enthusiast and with no significant background of any kind, it was a testament to his talent.

"But talent can only get you so far." Luka sighed as if reading Lucas' thoughts.

"Why do you say so?" Lucas turned to him.

"This is drift racing. Even though it's a third tier league, this is the best of all third tier leagues. You can't simply win by being only a good driver or a shuttle lover. Without adequate resources, his failure is set in stone, and everyone knows that. We just want to see how far he goes." Luka replied.

Lucas didn't say anything as he turned his attention to the track. The race was about to begin.

"Ladies and gentlemen," The voice of the announcer energetically sounded.

"welcome to the twenty-third season of the K1 Drift Racing League!"

Cheers abruptly broke out from the crowd. The fervour in the stadium was raised to a new high as the crowd was stoked.

"This league's races are destined to be epic. Sit tight, my dear spectators and witness as history is once again made!"

For the second time, the crowd was electrified as many screamed or roared the names of their favourite teams. Even Lucas felt a strange vigour awaken within him, and was surprised that he was affected by such a simple speech.

As if noticing his confusion, Luka whispered,

"It's a superpower; well, a half-baked one. The emcee is someone who has awakened a hint of his superpower and it seems to be related to influencing people's emotions. It's not so powerful, but if the target has already been aroused—even just a bit—the effect is more pronounced."

Lucas couldn't help but be stunned by the explanation. He already had experience with humans who had unlocked a hint of their superpower, but the announcer's skill was even more handy. If it weren't because Lucas was new to the league and didn't think much about the teams or drivers, he might have gotten influenced just like the crowd.

Suddenly, Lucas turned and glanced at Luka. The latter was similarly unaffected by the skill.

"It's nothing special if you already know the trick to it." Luka grinned upon sensing Lucas' gaze on him.

The conversation ended there and the duo turned their attention towards the race track.

The drivers had already gotten into their shuttles and the countdown had already begun.

Due to the designs and parameters of the engines of some vehicles, they needed to start ahead of time. These engines were very powerful and some could accelerate up to one hundred and fifty kilometres per hour (150 km/hr or 93.2 mph) in 0.8 seconds. However, some of them needed a 'preparation period', which was necessary for both the driver and the vehicle to get into form. As such, the countdown was a thirty seconds countdown.

As the displayed digital counter reached the ten seconds mark, some of the same shuttles had already gone into turbo-drive mode. In turbo drive mode, it would take only half a second for them to reach the above speed, rather than 0.8 seconds. Depending on the make, they could even reach the same speed in 0.3 seconds. This was why vestige-smiths of the shuttle industry were very important members of racing teams.

"Here. We. Go!"

The announcer roared following which the timer hit 0 as the race officially begun.