

The Crafts 232

Chapter 232: Joker 2

"Damn it."

A young man threw his racing helmet on the floor and cursed. Frustration, anxiety and anguish could all be seen on his face as he squat down with tears in his eyes. His entire being was wrapped around in an aura of hopelessness and intense melancholy.

If people who knew who he was saw him in this fashion, they would be shocked.

The young man was a somewhat famous driver who had done well in the test circuits, but performed substandard today. He was the driver of the blue-stripped racing shuttles, Joker.

Joker had been a deep lover of sare shuttles from a very young age. His father was also a vestige-smith for a big hover car company, so it was understandable why Joker had developed such a passion from early on.

From a young age, he would play around with toy cars and even try his hand at building one himself. Later on, Joker would follow his dad to his work place and watch him at work. When he got older, his father converted their garage into a repair shop and began teaching Joker some of his skills. This helped Joker improve a lot and he began showing signs of being a genius.

By the time Joker was seventeen years old, he was already good at fixing the common parts in sare shuttles and hover cars. He could even make a car [1] all on his own.

It was at this age, that he then got exposed to drift racing and developed an intense passion for it. Unlike the usual sare shuttles, racing shuttles gave an entirely different feeling. Since they didn't pursue other features like security and durability against desolate beast attacks, their development pattern focused on speed, durability and acceleration.

To a young man who loved vehicles, speed was paramount, and it was easy to see why Joker became interested in racing shuttles and drift racing.

When he was twenty two years old and a third level Apertures Opening stage stellar practitioner, Joker had already learnt to fix the more complex parts in sare shuttles. Whether they were the

stellar energy transmission systems, the turbo boost engines, or even the electronics aspect of these shuttles, he could fix them all. Joker could even make impressive modifications to them, which then gave him the confidence to consider a career in drift racing. But he didn't rush it despite feeling confident.

Instead, Joker took two years out and to earn a lot of money, while making modifications to a sare shuttle he had his eyes on for a while.

When he was twenty four years old, Joker's preparations were completed and he finally decided to push forth with his plans. He formed a team with a few of his colleagues from his work place; a repair shop he had been working under for the past three years. Then, he signed up for the K1 drift racing league as an independent driver.

Having performed well in the test circuits, Joker became confident and thought himself to be a talented genius. However, he still tried to keep himself calm and humble. It had been seven years since he started following drift racing leagues, so Joker knew that the test circuits weren't to be taken seriously.

It wouldn't be until the first race began that the true capabilities of the drivers and shuttles would be seen. Regardless, Joker was still pleased by his performance. It was something to brag about as an independent driver even if it was just the test circuits.

However, when the first race came, Joker understood how greatly he had underestimated the other drivers. Even though he didn't look down on them after the test circuits —since he knew that they weren't performing at their top— Joker had still misjudged them.

Originally, he believed that he could struggle into the top ten in the first race. But even the top fifteen spot was out of his reach at the end of the race. Scoring nineteenth (19th) place out of thirty drivers, while incredible for an independent racer, was still not enough for Joker.

Don't give up so soon, buddy. It's only the first race." One of the crew members sighed.

"Yeah, he's right. We can go back and make better preparations." One of his closest friends walked over and patted Joker behind the back.

"That's the problem. It's only the first." Joker gritted his teeth.

If after the first race, he only got nineteenth (19th) place, one could only wonder what his league ranking would be at the end of the season.

A season spanned a period of three months, but during that time, there would only be thirteen races of four hours each, or a total of fifty two (52) hours. That's exactly two days and four hours of driving. In the other days that consisted of the season, the other teams would be focused on making minor or even major changes to their racing shuttles. At the final month of the season, it was most likely that the racing shuttles would be on a whole different level as compared to the start of the league.

For someone like Joker, who spent two years just to achieve this level of modification, there was not much he could improve within the next two months.

Joker's strategy was to perform very well in the first month, do just alright in the second month, and try his best to survive in the third month. That way, his league ranking would be somewhere in the middle; a good ranking especially for an independent driver.

However, at this rate, he would most likely end at the bottom when the season comes to an end.

It should be known that to pursue his career as a drift racer, Joker had quit his job and even convinced his friends who supported him to do so. They had no means of earning other than this. Joker had even taken out loans because his salary wasn't enough to carry out his modifications. As such, if he couldn't get a good placement at the end of the season, the reward money won't be enough to cover the debts and settle his crew who had given up their careers to support him.

"There's only one thing to do."

A voice cut in as a newcomer walked into the room. The group turned towards the entrance where they saw the speaker. It was a young man with spiky yellow hair and brown eyes, looking like an archetype of a shonen manga main character.

"You need to find a sponsor." Luka said.

"You again." Someone amongst Joker's crew of six glared at him.

This wasn't the first time the team had met with Luka. On the contrary, it was the fourth time.

Luka was the scion of a family who had a passion for drift racing. However, unlike the other scions who simply hung around in the VIP section while appreciating the sport or gambling on it, Luka wanted to follow in the footsteps of the the third generation princess of the Verantino family; he wanted to create his own team. But that was easier said than done.

Not only would one need a huge sum of money, but they also had to find the necessary talents to fill in the roles. This was especially so for the role of a drift racer which wasn't an easy spot to fill.

It was then Luka stumbled upon Joker during the test circuits. Joker had the necessary talent and skills for a drift racer, but the issue was his vehicle. In Luka's opinion, that was holding him back but it wasn't unsurprising since Joker didn't have a backer.

If he could get him on his team, Luka was confident that he could create a team with the potential to win the league within two years. And so, he had been soliciting the latter ever since.

"Don't be quick to chase me away." Luka smiled.

"You should have realised it by now. The difference between an independent driver and one with a backing. In this sport, it is impossible to go far without money and resources. You have the skills, I have the money. Why don't you consider my offer more seriously?" Luka smiled.

At this point, Joker began to hesitate.

Luka was right. It was foolish of him to believe he could make a difference all in his own. At least with Luka's support, he could go further. Apart from that, there was not much time.

The first half of the first month was the final period for teams to make major changes to their lineups. This included changes to the driver, the crew, or even the owner of the team. After this period, the K1 drift racing league's organisers would place a ban on such activities until the season was over. In other words, these first two weeks was the final opportunity for Joker to decide whether or not to continue as an independent driver or not.

"So, what do you say?"