

The Crafts 242

Chapter 242: The Valley's Teeth

"Ladies and gentlemen, this is where skill trumps build." The announcer energetically said.

Staring at the screen, Lucas began to recall the briefing session the team had earlier.

The Cayern Windway was a popular underground drift racing track. It was made up of multiple terrains like towering rocky mountains, large lakes, undulating valleys and so on. But the most notable feature of the Cayern Windway was its tough winds that generally blew at about 90 km/hr (55.9 mph), but could reach speeds up to 224 km/hr (139.2 mph). Such speed was enough to rival a category 4 storm on the Saffir-Simpson scale [1] back on Earth. The constant wind that terrorised the Cayern Windway was the reason why the region was dubbed as such.

The Cayern Windway also had another notable feature. It consisted of seven distinct segments, each possessing a certain degree of danger that could even cost one their lives. Of the seven segments, the 'Valley's Teeth' was the first one.

The Valley's Teeth was a large valley within the area that spanned at least two hundred kilometres long and had winds reaching speeds of up to 148 km/hr (92 mph). One would need to maintain a speed of at least 200 km/hr (124.27 mph) for an hour before they would even approach the exit.

However, this didn't seem like much of a challenge to drift racers, who drove shuttles that could survive at such speeds and comfortably maintain a speed of at least 300 km/hr (186.4 mph). If anything, one would call it a walk in the park for them.

Despite that, the Valley's Teeth was recorded as a danger zone within Cayern Windway and that was for a reason.

The true threat of the place didn't simply lie in the winds, but also the terrain. The road of the Valley's Teeth wasn't necessarily large, only capable of handling six racing shuttles side by side at one instance. However, there were stalagmites protruding from the surface of the floor which hindered drivers from moving in a linear path.

'With the presence of these stalagmites, a road that could easily contain six racing shuttles could only manage three at a time.' Lucas thought.

Manoeuvring through the stalagmites while maintaining an appropriate speed that would counteract the impeding wind from in front became a challenge for most drivers. They needed to be fast to maintain the lead or overtake the person in front. But driving too fast could be too much for them to handle. However, driving too slow would lead to their shuttles being heavily affected by the wind.

For one to conquer the terrain, they needed the right amount of skill, intuition and driving experience.

"Here they go!"

The announcer roared right as soon as the leading shuttle was a kilometre away.

Whoosh

The driver in front immediately drove into the valley through the passage which gave off a baleful aura. From a distance, it looked like he was driving into the maw of a beast.

Soon after, the other drivers drove in as well.

Counting from the front, Callus was in the second group of racers, which happened to be the closest group to the leaders in the first group. This was all thanks to the improvements made to the Juggernaut. However, because there was more focus on stability and efficiency, the Juggernaut's linear acceleration wasn't exactly spectacular so he could only hang on at the bottom half of the second group. Regardless, it was a result he had not anticipated as the old Juggernaut would have been in the bottom tier of the third group instead.

In other words, the changes made within just a day was enough to raise the vehicles prowess by an entire level.

While he was glad, Callus didn't let it get to him as the race wasn't over yet.

'If I can maintain my position in the Valley's Teeth, that would be great. But this is the best chance to go a bit further.' Callus thought as he stepped on the pedal.

The Juggernaut were designed while considering the internal appearance of the human era's cars. As such, it used pedals instead of buttons. However, the pedals functioned in a similar way as buttons and not like those of cars.

While the internal design might seem retro, it had its advantages.

Using buttons would have the driver add more burden on their arms. This would cause them to spend a bit of time whenever they wanted to utilise some functions in the shuttle. Although, with proper training, the time spent was miniscule, it was still something.

On the other hand, relinquishing some of the functions of the shuttle to be activated via pedals, would reduce the burden on the arms, wrists and fingers. With a bit of training, one would be able to have their legs respond as quickly as if it were an arm. Then without a doubt, four arms would be better and faster than two.

The first one kilometre into the Valley's Teeth was safe and without any trouble. However, after that, the stalagmites made their appearance.

The top drivers zoomed past them and easily dodged the protruding rocks while maintaining the same speed they used to enter the valley. The less experienced ones slowed down a bit before circumventing through the obstructions.

When Callus came across them, he slowed down, but not by much. The Juggernaut's transmission, stability and handling had all been improved thanks to Lucas. So the trial of the Valley's Teeth that was a problem to the other races, was only a bit troublesome for Callus.

The first ten kilometres was easily traversed by Joker and he had even successfully overtaken one driver.

After the first ten kilometres, the difference in build in each racing shuttle began to show.

The more stable racing shuttles slowly began to catch-up and even overtake others, while the ones that prioritised speed with little focus on stability began losing ground.

Fifteen minutes after the drivers had entered the Valley's Teeth, the live rankings had changed.

Thirty minutes later, the rankings began to stabilise.

At this point, Callus was in thirteenth place and the Black Star team was pleased, but they didn't celebrate yet. The Valley's Teeth was only one of seven danger zones in the Cayern Windway, so the current rankings didn't really mean much.

Even Lucas didn't take on a confident look seeing that the results were in his favour.

"Oh my god!"

"Watch out!"

"Shit!"

Exclamations sounded from the crowd as a racing shuttle crashed right into one of the stalagmites. It was unexpected, but not entirely. The Cayern Windway track was a dangerous track and already known to have taken lives in the past, so an accident wasn't out of the equation.

Luckily, the racing shuttle's safety measures were deployed and the driver didn't die. However, he was automatically disqualified.

The audience didn't have too strong of a reaction to this since the driver was one of the last runners. However, it seemed as if the accident had made them pumped and looking forward to the latter parts of the race.

It took about an hour for the drivers in the lead to get out of the Valley's Teeth. Of the original six drivers who made up the leading group, only four remained. The other two got demoted into the second group while another driver from the second group managed to close the gap and get into the first.

Currently, there were five drivers in the lead first group, twelve in the second, ten in the third and two in the fourth. One of the thirty drivers had been eliminated.

In truth, the eliminated driver could stage a comeback by fielding in a new vehicle, but it was technically impossible to get a position other than last, so he quit.

"Come on. Let's go!"

The Black Star team cheered from the control room.

They had a communicator linked with Callus and the Juggernaut, which allowed them to communicate with the driver and monitor the state of the racing shuttle.

"You might need some thruster checks soon, Callus." One of the five original crew members said.

To prevent confusion, he was in charge of communication with Callus.

"Hold it off after the second segment." Callus responded.

Lucas stared at a display screen projected by the side. Different from the other two display screens that showed the race and tracked the team's drivers, this display screen showed the state of the racing shuttle as discerned by the built-in sensors in the shuttle.

'The next segment should be the monotone lake.' Lucas thought.

The monotone lake was a large lake that made up a part of the Cayern Windway track. The land surrounding the lake was white while the lake itself was black.

The risky factor regarding this segment was that there would be random geyser blasts from the lake's underwater geysers. With the lake being black, it was obvious that there was something wrong with it, which was true. The lake possessed an incredibly powerful corrosive factor that could even melt a Grade 1 vestige.

With there being indeterminate geyser eruptions from the lake, it made it difficult for drivers to dash through at full speed as there would be a significant chance that they would get caught up in a geyser eruption. What's more, the radar technology within the shuttles were unable to sense the situation underneath the lake.

As such, the drivers would have to rely on their quick reflexes and intuition to be able to traverse the lake.

'From here on out, the real challenge begins.' Lucas frowned.