

## The Crafts 296

### Chapter 296: Betrayal

This week's NUL race was fast approaching, but before the event could even begin, a shocking news dropped in the drift racing community. A likely contender for the top ten spots in the NUL had suddenly sacked about half of its vestige-smithing staff. The key takeaway however, was that the Design and Energy department was laid off.

During the season, three departments were vital to the operation of a drift racing team: the Vehicle manufacturing, On-site unit and Designs and Energy department, with the latter being a very valuable force. However, the Versoa team has just sacked the entire members of that valuable force alongside those of two other departments.

After a bit of digging, it turned out that the reason was because of a clash between the three departments and the latest shareholder of the company, who wanted to acquire the sponsorship rights. Many mocked the chairwoman, Vienna, for her decision, few felt pity, while some felt that this was their opportunity to overtake the team and end the season with a higher position. The fans were angered and some began to raise calls for Vienna to step down as she was incompetent. However, since the Versoa team was a private team, their complaints couldn't truly do much. However, it made the atmosphere within the team grim.

"Guilla has called for an emergency meeting, and the call was met with an agreement from two other stakeholders." Helnord reported to Vienna within her office.

"So, he's beginning to make his move." Vienna smiled.

She sat behind a desk and before her was a tablet projecting the latest financial and news reports of the company. It was somewhat strange that even as the reports all indicated a decline in the Versoa Team Co's value, Vienna could still remain calm and smile.

At that moment, Helnord wanted to say something but hesitated. However, Vienna had already noticed this.

"Speak your mind." Vienna glanced briefly at him.

After a short while, Helnord asked,

"If you had predicted this, then why did you go along with it? I just can't understand."

It was common practice in scheming to play along with someone's plan then turn things around at the opportune moment, but Helnord could not see how that would happen here. If anything, he was against Vienna's actions as it would cost the company a lot. It had only been three days since the laying off, but sales have dropped by 23%, public opinion was done drastically, and their Projected Performance Index Rating had lost five (5) points.

The Projected Performance Index Rating (P-PIR) was an economic metric in the federation used to measure the attractiveness of a company to investors based on their financial reports, evaluation and other viral factors. It was one of two major metrics used, alongside the Performance Index Rating (PIR); however, the former looked long term and tried to predict the future using trends while the latter was focused on the present using facts and raw data. It was like the difference between Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and projected GDP growth.

The Versoa Team Co previously had a P-PIR of 22.5, so losing 5 points was a big deal. That was almost a quarter of their entire points.

It was clear that even the financial analysts began to see the Versoa Team Co as a less attractive investment profile because of the decision of laying off three major departments. This would in turn affect their final rating and possibly have them relegated. Even if they weren't, the drop in position would make them a less appealing company to work with.

"It's about time I clear this place up a bit. I've left them for far too long and they may become a torn in my flesh if left unchecked for a long." Vienna explained while perusing through a few of the projected files.

"As for the reports, don't think much about it. We're a private company, so the P-PIR doesn't have much of a hold on us. As for our performance in the race, it doesn't necessarily matter. We can hold out without them for a while, especially with Lucas on board."

"You mean...?" Helnord was surprised.

"Indeed. So far, he's the best fit until we can find a better replacement."

Helnord thought about it and realised that Vienna was right. Lucas had displayed his skills already by designing the Destroyer all on his own. The recording and data he had sent had already been checked and confirmed by the vestige-smiths and Helnord. They all had to admit that the Destroyer was indeed Lucas' handwork, even though no one knew how he pulled it off.

If Lucas was to take on the role of the head of the Designs and Energy department, although he would have a lot on his plate, it was possible for him to be able to perform the task all on his own. He was truly the best possible replacement for the moment.

\*Beep\*

Suddenly, Helnord's communicator beeped and he took a lot at it. Immediately, his eyes widened as he was overcome by shock.

"What's the problem?"

Noticing something was off, Vienna looked at Helnord with an inquisitive glare.

"Reto quit." Helnord replied.

Vienna's expression immediately became dark and a frown appeared on her face.

Reto was the name of one of the two official drivers of the team. In consideration of emergencies and various scenarios, every drift racing team in the NUL was allowed to register two drivers before the start of the league. However, only one could appear on each race while the other acted as a backup or substitute.

Reto was currently the Versoa team's main and only driver due to an insane coincidence. The second driver had actually died a few weeks ago. He was one of the tourists at the East Brafftford relics during the day of that horrendous incident. Unfortunately, he wasn't lucky enough to be one of the survivors.

The Versoa team had been looking to find a replacement but were unlucky with that as the transfer window wasn't open yet, so it was difficult to snatch up talented drivers from other teams. They had initially planned to wait until the next transfer window to do so, and decided to rely on their second driver, Reto. In other words, they only have one driver. But with Reto now quitting, they had no driver available, which was the same as forfeiting the upcoming races.

"How is that possible? Isn't he aware of the penalties for breaching the contract especially at this time of the season?" Vienna questioned aggressively.

To prevent drivers from setting up teams, there were severe consequences for breaching a contract during the active period of a drift racing season. One of them was the compensatory damage fees which were absurd and around four times the original fee. There was also a suspension by the league which would be reflected across all other unofficial drift racing leagues on the same tier and above. Finally, the driver's reputation would take a hit after the incident. It would be difficult for other teams to trust that the driver wouldn't abruptly depart midway through the season as they did before, so most teams would avoid such an individual unless without a choice.

On the other hand, if they quit after the season is over, they would only face compensation fees for breaching the contract if they did so. Also, the fees would be the base value, unlike with the former scenario where it would be multiplied by four.

Because of the various consequences involved, drift racing drivers rarely quit before the ending of the season. In fact, they rarely even quit unless their contract was over. Those who did so before the contract expired would only quit during the end of the season, for personal reasons. That way, they would only have to pay the base compensation amount.

It was because of this that Vienna was surprised that Reto had quit. The compensation fee he would have to pay would be four times the base fee; that would be enough for one to build a house. He would also receive a one year, or two seasons, ban by the NUL and this ban would be carried out by other tier 2 leagues and above. Finally, his reputation would take a huge hit.

No matter which direction anyone looked at it, it didn't make sense why Reto had quit.

"Someone's instigating this matter and they probably have Reto on their payroll as well." Vienna thought out loud.

Being the boss of a popular company and a descendant of a powerful family, Vienna was quite experienced with schemes and the likes. Even without a single hint, she could easily guess that Reto was working for someone, and that party was willing to cover the damages due to breach of contract and the other penalties for Reto. Otherwise, it wouldn't make sense why the driver would quit abruptly at this stage of the season.

"You mean," Helnord's face displayed a twisted expression.

"Guilla."