

## The Crafts 338

### Chapter 338: Underhanded Methods

"You're still racing?"

A middle-aged man with a thick brown beard glanced at Mason and sneered, looking down on the other.

The other racers gathered in the preparation room were all the same. Some had looks of scorn on their faces while the others disregarded Mason.

In terms of experience, Mason—a twenty five year old—was way below these middle-aged men. If this was a third tier or lower league, it wouldn't be a problem. But from the second tier leagues and above, the winnings from each race were well ahead of the league's below. As such, teams in these leagues were loaded with quality, whether it was the crew (the vestige-smiths) or the drivers.

Usually, no one below a certain experience rank was allowed to take charge of an important aspect of the team, unless said team had no intentions of performing well and remaining in the league. Those who underperformed got demoted and they would be losing out on a lot of earnings from racing.

All the drivers in the preparation room had at least eight years of racing experience, with the majority having at least ten years. On the other hand, excluding his training years, Mason had only four years worth of professional experience.

"What does it have to do with you?" Mason nonchalantly replied.

Having spent four days racing almost nonstop, Mason was too exhausted to hold a long conversation, especially with people that were clearly hostile towards him.

The man who spoke with dark intentions was surprised by Mason's words and approached him to cause trouble.

"You punk!"

"That's enough. Fights aren't allowed in the preparation room."

One of the drivers who was present interrupted.

The middle-aged man was irritated by this and turned to see who spoke, but after identifying the other party, he froze and left with a huff.

The man who had interrupted was a man in his mid 30s with at least ten years of drift racing experience under his belt. Most of all, he was actually representing one of the top ten teams in the league, Blue Gate.

The Blue Gate team currently ranked second place on the table, ahead of the Red Dogs team. If there was no upset in the ensuing races in the league, they would qualify for promotion to the sole first tier league, the Exo Rally; and the man would be their official driver.

In truth, the man had participated in the Exo Rally before, but was eventually fired by his previous squad. But that didn't mean that his talent was lacking, as he was unarguably one of the best drivers in the Nadire Underground League, if not the best.

With such an individual interrupting the argument, it was only natural for the middle-aged man to step back.

"...thanks." Mason said.

"I didn't do it to help you. It's just like I said; fights aren't allowed here." The man coolly responded.

The preparation room was an area the drivers gathered to undergo a few tests, majorly doping tests. Even though this was an unofficial league, doping was still banned as the focus of the sports was on the specifications of the vehicle and the drivers skill. Since lots of bets were carried out during each race, it was only natural for the league's organisers to try and make the race as fair as possible which was why doping was illegal.

Because tests were carried out on the drivers here, it was the only place these competitors could gather at the same time before a race. However, not every driver was a good soul. An unofficial

league might have a few times, but too much would make it no different from the official league. As such, taunting and jeering weren't banned, but fights were as that could evidently affect a driver's performance.

Mason didn't say a word and instead tried to get some rest. Having experienced four days and four hours in the span of what was actually twenty hours, it was inevitable that his body and mind would feel weirded out by the experience. Even though he had four hours of rest in between, it wasn't enough, and could barely suffice to keep Mason's conscience clear.

'After this race, I'm going to take a one week holiday.' Mason thought.

However, that was impossible as a week from now would be the next race. But at the moment, Mason didn't realise any of that and was simply vividly imagining a holiday trip outside the city.

There were some staff from the league who walked around with special gadgets and tested the drivers. After a couple of minutes, the tests were completed and the drivers moved to their vehicles in the starting position.

"Better watch out, kid." The middle-aged man from before snorted as he brushed past Mason.

Unlike the official league, accidents were common in the unofficial leagues and deaths too. In fact, before a driver participated in a league and each race, they had to sign a liability waiver stating that the league wouldn't be held responsible for their deaths. Even teams had their drivers sign the same.

Most of the time, these accidents might be due to the dangers on the tracks, such as the traps and such set up. Other times, it could be due to vehicle fault or the driver's ineptitude. However, in a few occurrences, it was actually murder.

Sometimes, drivers would target their rivals on the track, seeking to eliminate them from the race by crashing into them or misleading them on the track. After such actions, the targeted driver would experience an accident and might even lose their lives.

In such cases, unless there was an overwhelming evidence, the death wouldn't be classified as murder, after all, drift racing was a risky sport to start with and each participant was aware that they could die.

Recently, deaths haven't been as common as they were in the past, but it didn't mean that they didn't happen. It was only that accidents were more common in lower tier leagues than high tier leagues because of the difference in skill between the drivers and shuttle vestige-smiths.

After hearing the man's threats, Mason's body shivered as he understood what has just happened. He was being targeted. The question however, was why?

Mason didn't know the man and this was the first time they had even exchanged words since he joined the Versoa team. What's more, there was no vile exchange of words.

'I might be overthinking it.' Mason shook his head and stepped into the Viper.

He was leaning more to the idea that the middle-aged man simply said those words to scare him, which wasn't uncommon. As for trying to kill him, there was no reason to do such, right?

Unfortunately for Mason, there was no way for him to know that before the race even began, Yovahn had reached out to the middle-aged man. Yovahn had told him to ensure that Mason doesn't get a spot above thirteenth place, and in exchange, he would compensate the man with a large sum of money. Even if there were 'accidents', Yovahn swore to handle them afterwards as long as the middle-aged man helped him achieve what he wanted.

The Eretrean government might be dead set to severely penalising murder and similar crimes, but accidents were outside the jurisdiction of the law, and Yovahn was confident of clearing the case up as an accident if the need arises.

From the very beginning, Yovahn had been making preparations for his bet with Lucas even before he met the latter. This was because he had already been informed that Lucas and Vienna would be arriving for the race even before they reached. Yovahn's real bet was that the Versoa team wouldn't make it past thirteenth place, but who would have thought that Lucas would have accepted the false bet.

Regardless, it didn't change the middle-aged man's task, so Yovahn didn't inform him of any changes.

"Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to this week's race." The broadcast announcer said through the microphone, his voice resounding across the entire arena.

"In three minutes, we will be kick-starting the event.

There were four unofficial rankings in each major vestige-smith ranking in a tier: low, middle, high and peak rank. Even though the Eretrian Vestige-smith League (EVL), the association overseeing the majority of vestige-smiths on the planet, didn't accept this ranking system, it was widely used in the vestige-smith community. This was because it added further emphasis and differentiated the more skilled ones from the average characters.

The Mastiff was the official racing shuttle for the Red Dogs team this season. Unlike the Viper, which was designed by a high rank Tier 1 Master vestige-smith, but the Mastiff was designed by a peak rank Tier 1 Master vestige-smith. Based on this, it was quite obvious that the Mastiff was a better vehicle than the Viper.

Usually, he didn't like socialising especially in this world where humans were basically second-class citizens. From how Vienna had treated him, it was obvious that both her and Yovahn were on opposite grounds. In that case, there was no reason to act nice with him.