

The Crafts 179

Chapter 179: A Setup

"Is the owner around? Please, is the owner around?"

"Can the owner come out? We just want a quick interview."

A group of individuals crowded the entrance of the Seven Sparks Forge store but didn't go in. Based on their attire and equipment, it was clear that they were members of the press. The press agents had arrived at the store to interview Lucas, but since they came for reasons not related to the store's services, they stood outside. If they were to invade the store, it was possible for Lucas to sue them for disrupting his business.

"What are those guys doing here?"

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Some of the customers inside the store glanced outside through the see-through french windows.

"I'm guessing they're here for an interview."

"No shit, Einstein. But isn't it quite late for that? Or did something new happen?"

"Well, you can never tell to be honest."

The customers discussed the reason for the press team arriving today, even though the announcement of the new SS vestiges -the Adjudicator, the SS communicator, and the SS boots — had been made about a week ago. To most, it didn't make sense for the press to have taken this long before covering the incident.

Meanwhile, Kelvin glanced at the display monitor on the counter and narrowed his eyes on the uniform of one of the journalists.

"Any problem?" Lucas looked at him, noting that the latter's reaction was off.

"See that guy over there." Kelvin pointed at one of them on the monitor.

"He's from Sicalien Central Media. The media company reportedly shares the same owners as Thebes Corporation, a top fifteen vestige-smith company and one of the members of the alliance."

Although Kelvin didn't say anymore after that, Lucas got the message. There was a chance that this gathering was orchestrated by the alliance. As for the reason for it, Lucas couldn't really be so sure, but he had a suspicion.

"I'm guessing they're about to make their move. Let's go."

Lucas walked towards the door and left the building. Kelvin reacted a bit slowly, but he also left his task and went outside together with Lucas. The two were now in contact with the press agents. Seeing this, the other customers in the store turned their attention towards the commotion, with some even leaving the store to get a closer look.

"Mr. Lucas."

"Mr. Lucas, over here."

"Mr. Lucas."

Lucas yawned as he asked, "what's it today?"

One of them, who seemed to be respected even by the other agents from different media corporations, took the lead and spoke up.

"It's nothing too much, Mr. Lucas. We just want to meet with the creator of the era-defining SS vestiges and ask a few questions."

"Shouldn't you have done that long ago? Also, if you want to ask questions, that's what press conferences are for? If the press harasses businessmen like myself just as you have done, it would affect our business, you know." Lucas coldly said.

"Let's get this over with then. Only five questions." Lucas raised a hand.

"Think carefully because I won't answer more than that."

Lucas knew that the journalists had all arrived today with an intention in mind. However, even though he wanted to fish out what it was, Lucas didn't plan to do so while moving to their rhythm. By stating the fact that he would only answer five questions, they had to consider those questions properly and would more or less, go straight to the point.

After a short while, one of the journalists asked.

"Mr. Lucas, from what we know, the release of the three new SS vestiges has a lot to do with the restrictions you got over a week ago. As such, we want to know, what is your opinion about that?"

'As expected.' Lucas narrowed his eyes. He could more or less figure out the intentions of this group, but that didn't mean he would walk away.

"What opinions could I have other than it was somewhat unexpected. My regards to the two commissions for looking out for me and informing me about the duly process. They were equally helpful when I went to clear my errors. As some of you may already know after doing a background search on me, I'm a nobody. I don't know how to run a business either. It was only thanks to those notices from the commissions that I realised my inadequate knowledge and worked on myself right after. As such, I have to thank them for looking out for small-time vestige-smiths like myself." Lucas answered with a smile on his face.

The answer was unexpected, but from a neutral point of view, it was almost perfect.

Lucas focused on the two commissions, the Baylands City Tax Commission and the Baylands City-state Commission for Technology, placing them on a higher stand point and moral ground. To others it might have seemed that the two commissions had timely targeted Lucas alongside the EVL and the alliance, but Lucas made it look like they were just doing their job and even looking out for him. He even made them appear to be nice agencies that had assisted him all the way.

This might have sounded surprising, but once one considers that the notice was handed to Lucas before the six months period elapsed, it did sound like the two commissions were being nice.

Through this response, Lucas effectively turned around the public opinion on the two commissions which were already moving to the negative side. As for why he did so, it was obvious.

48 Laws of Power, Law 1: Never outshine the master.

No matter which world one was in, it was best to not offend the government or any government agencies, especially as a business. Rather than be on their bad side, it was best if one could get closer to them.

With this response from him, Lucas had seemingly erased any negativity that may have existed between them, and also created an opportunity to work together.

"Then, what about the alliance and the EVL? What are your opinions on them?" Another journalist asked.

Lucas switched his smile into a nonchalant expression.

This was the second question and it was even more direct.

In his previous response, Lucas had purposely dodged the EVL and the alliance for a reason. With the journalist now calling that into place, it was obvious why they were here. He had just talked about it with Kelvin the previous day, so it was somewhat surprising that his suspicions took place the next day.

"While I understand the concerns of the alliance, I find it funny that they seem to forget that we are both competitors in the same space. They also seem to underestimate the production capabilities of the Seven Sparks Forge. First and foremost, this is a business and not a philanthropic movement. There is no way we can give our technology out for free. If that were so, the alliance members should publicise their inscription methods and logic to other vestige-smiths. Wouldn't that also help with the advancement of Baylands city-state's technology? Wouldn't that strengthen Baylands city-state and also increase its revenue derived from exports?

"But since they haven't, it is obvious why, and we can't do the same as well.

"As for the EVL, I have nothing much to say, since their notice wasn't done with the intention to cause harm, nor could it even do so. They simply pointed out a fact. However, the EVL seems to forget that they are not an official organisation to control or supervise vestige-smiths; they simply exist to offer benefits to vestige-smiths. As such, membership under their umbrella is neither important nor mandatory. The EVL's board should remember why it exists, and not deviate from that motto."