

## The Crafts 18

### Chapter 18 : The Old Man And The Little Girl

Two hundred and seventy (270) federal coins was not chicken change no matter how one looked at it. While federal coins were the major unit of currency, there was a lesser unit called federal pence, of which one hundred of them were equivalent to a federal coin. This was a means to prevent inflation due to the high value of a federal coin.

Generally, most everyday transaction was calculated with pences and usually didn't exceed thirty coins. Even the latest technical gadgets wouldn't go past this figure most times, unless it had something to do with stellar energy or freelancers.

The impressive value of the federal coin could be seen from the fact that the Vinis store charged twenty coins for a prepaid debit card, which was very costly for an average folk.

So when the store employees saw as Lucas was unperturbed by the price of the trench-coat despite his looks, they were shocked and realised that they probably underestimated him.

Being human didn't deny one of the majority of opportunities, and while there weren't much human freelancers, it didn't mean that there weren't wealthy characters amongst them. At this point, the man who worked as a salesman in the store, guessed that Lucas was one of them.

'Damn it.'

The store had a rule against loiterers but not customers as that would be dumb. Now, the man was stuck in a difficult situation. He could simply swallow his pride, apologize and process the deal, but he didn't want to.

It was just like Lucas had guessed; the man had prejudice against humans and looked down on them. Despite the obvious fact that humans descended from humans, he looked down on the latter and felt that the comparison was the same as placing apes on the same pedestal as humans. So even if Lucas could afford it, the man wasn't willing to give up.

He had some authority in the store, and refusing to sell to some random human should not affect him negatively, even if the news got to the manager.

"I'm sorry, but the item is out of stock." The man said this to Lucas.

Not just Lucas, but even the salesgirl by the counter was shocked. The customers in the store who were paying attention to the scene were also surprised but some had a knowing look on their face. It was clear what was going on, but there was no solid reason for them to intervene; it had nothing to do with them.

"Out of stock?" Lucas glanced at the man as if he were a fool.

Holding back his anger, the man blandly replied, "Yes. What you see here is the last of our stock, and it has already been reserved by a high-value customer. As such, we can't sell it. Please come again next time, and maybe we will have one available for you."

At this point, Lucas realised that the man wasn't willing to give up. One way or the other, he was determined to humiliate Lucas.

Just when Lucas was considering whether he should blow the matter up or not, two individuals happened to appear close-by. One of them was a young girl, not more than fourteen years of age. She had brown hair and orange eyes, showing that her genes were extraordinary. The other individual was an elderly man with grey hair and a friendly smile.

He looked like a genial grandfather figure as he held the little girl's hand and walked closer.

"Grandpa, what's going on over there?"

"Oh, it seems like the store's employee is clashing with a customer."

"Really? That's bad."

Some were surprised that the two were talking without a care in the world, despite the situation at hand. Even the man who was confronting Lucas had a slight frown on his face.

Lucas, on the other hand, felt the duo were strange, especially the elderly man. Based on his experiences and senses, Lucas felt that the man was quite powerful. There was also a special feeling the man gave off. It wasn't obvious and was even somewhat suppressed, but Lucas was quite sensitive to it.

This sensation was one from someone in a powerful position as well as a figure who had seen blood; and lots of it. The old man was definitely not as ordinary as he seemed.

"Grandpa, why does that guy give me a strange feeling?" The little girl said this as she pointed at Lucas, not caring how he felt.

The latter raised an eyebrow in surprise but didn't argue with her, as she was a little girl.

"Hmm, that's cause he's human." The old man replied.

"Human...?" The girl knit her brows.

"Oh, like the people they taught us in school. The older generation. That's amazing." The girl stared at Lucas with interest.

"But why is he so weak?" She mumbled.

"That's how they are." The old man answered.

'...system, are you happy now? Even a kid mocks me in broad daylight.' Lucas complained.

"Host should open the store and then maybe there's a chance." The system replied.

Lucas' eyes brightened, but then he calmed down. This might still be a ploy by the system to get him to open the store as soon as possible.

The man was tired of the charades of the two, so he faced Lucas once again.

"Since you are not buying anything, sir, please vacate the premises so we can better attend to other customers."

Lucas frowned and for a minute, didn't know how to respond. Based on the man's reply, it was clear that even if he wanted to buy something else, the same dumb excuse would be given to him and Lucas could do nothing about it.

Just then, the little girl's voice sounded again.

"Are they bullying him? Grandpa, can you lend him a hand?"

The elderly man didn't say anything but simply nodded as he glanced at the man.

"Young friend, could you let him off for my sake?"

The man frowned, seeing as the elderly man was about to intervene. He wanted to speak back, but when he glanced into the old man's eyes, the man suddenly froze. Fear was in his eyes as he began to shiver slightly. Even breathing became an issue for him as he slowly felt his head become light.

The robot guard that stood on standby noticed this and turned to the man, but he merely glanced at it, and the robot similarly froze in place. Despite the programming within it urging the robot to make a move, it just couldn't.

"You will do me this favour now, won't you?"

The man could finally breathe, but he was still terrified. He realised that the person facing him was not an ordinary figure but a freelancer, and a very high-ranking one at that.

"Y, yes. Process the payment, quick!" The man rushed the salesgirl.

She was stunned but did as she was told.

Lucas paid for the item, and it was given to him right away.

Seeing that everything was settled, the old man turned to the young girl with a smile on his face.

"Let's go elsewhere. I don't think what we are looking for is here."

"Sure, grandpa." The girl nodded.

The girl was previously interested in Lucas' identity, but it seemed like she had lost interest as she didn't bother with him again.

"Esteemed sir, please wait. I can help you look around for what it is you want. Even if we don't have the exact model, a suitable replacement should be available. There are also a few nice items in stock."

The salesgirl could guess a thing or two and realised they were high-value customers. If they spent a lot, she might get a commission, so she tried to convince them to stay.

"No, thank you." The old man responded and left with the little girl.

The robot was now free to move, yet it didn't make a move any longer. The duo had already exited the store, and considering they didn't commit a crime, its programming prevented it from chasing

after them. Also, the robot knew that it could do nothing against the elderly man. After all, it was equipped with machine learning capabilities, so it was intelligent.

As for Lucas, he had also left the store, not bothering to remain behind any longer. However, he did something no one else thought of doing.

"Why are you following us?" The old man glanced behind.

"I didn't say my thanks for the help sir offered." Lucas bowed slightly and smiled.

"No need." The old man responded with a flat tone.

"If there's anything the elder would like, I may be able to offer my help to you." Lucas said.

"No need."

"..."

At this point, Lucas felt that he was communicating with a physical version of the system that usually went 'Access denied' each time he was fishing for important information. Nonetheless, those experiences made him adept at handling such a situation.

"Thank you for the help, little girl." Lucas said.

"As a way to offer my thanks, I have a gift for you."

Saying that, he took out a box, opened it, and displayed the content, which immediately attracted the little girl's attention.