

Customer Service

by

Vincent P. Désilets

FADE IN:

INT. STORE - DAY (EVENING)

SIMON is behind the counter, watching the flower clock. The store is weakly lit and empty, except for outdoor items and boredom.

Simon is startled by the SOUND of the door opening. A STRANGE MAN walks across the aisle, PUSHING a lawn mower. He lets go of the handle and puts his hands on the counter.

STRANGE MAN

I want a refund. The damned thing gave up on me.

SIMON

What seems to be the problem with it?

STRANGE MAN

How should I know? I'm no mechanic. The thing just stopped working.

SIMON

(going around the counter)

Let me take a look.

Simon sees that something is dripping from the lawn mower, right on the floor he just mopped.

SIMON

(slightly annoyed)

Looks like you're losing oil.

He looks closer, and frowns. An unpleasant smell gets to his nostrils. The puddle spreads, and when it reaches a better lit spot on the floor, Simon sees that it's red. He turns toward the strange man.

SIMON

(in a weak voice)

What happened?

STRANGE MAN

What happened is you sold me a piece of shit of a lawn mower. And now I'm stuck with a broken machine and an unfinished job.

Simon is out of words.

STRANGE MAN
They didn't hire you for your
quickness, did they?

Simon has an idea.

SIMON
(walking)
I'll go check in the backstore if I
can get you a new one.

The strange man gets in his way.

STRANGE MAN
No, you stay here.

SIMON
I'll be back in a minute.

STRANGE MAN
If I let you go back there, you'll
talk behind my back, call your
friends and complain about how
shitty of a customer I am, and all
kind of negative stuff. No way
I'll let that happen. You stay
right here between my two eyes, and
you take care of that lawn mower
right here and right now.

Simon slowly turns the lawn mower on its side.

SIMON
Sir, I understand your concern, but
our return policy doesn't cover a
physical break, only mechanical
one.

STRANGE MAN
It won't work anymore, that's
pretty mechanical to me.

SIMON
Yeah, but the reason it doesn't
work isn't a manufacturing defect,
it's because you got... what seems
to be a bone that blocked and broke
the blade.

STRANGE MAN
So?

SIMON

So, unfortunately, you can't get a refund for that.

He turns the mower back up.

STRANGE MAN

Well, sometimes you got bones on your lawn, don't your company take that into consideration?

SIMON

You'll have to check with them. You can come back tomorrow if you wish to talk to my boss. We close in ten minutes.

The strange man walks around the mower.

STRANGE MAN

So you're telling me that the only way I can return that piece of crap is if you've sold me a piece of crap in the first place? That's already broken before I even use the damned thing?

SIMON

That's... not how we phrase it. But that's pretty much it, yeah.

The strange man looks at Simon with murderous eyes.

SIMON

But even then... you won't get a refund. But you can exchange it.

STRANGE MAN

So you can give me another one of those crappy things? That could be broken too.

SIMON

(looking down)

That's right...

Simon looks at the clock. Less than ten minutes left to his shift. He takes a deep breath.

SIMON

(hesitating)

But then again... the item has to be in a reasonable condition if you want to return it.

STRANGE MAN

It is. All the pieces are there.

Simon looks at the dripping bag.

SIMON

Yes, but there seems to be some
pieces that shouldn't be there.

(then)

Maybe you rolled over a cat?

The strange man grasps the handle of the mower with both
hands. He seems about to do something. Simon feels that.
He clears his throat.

SIMON

We can give you store credits on
our cleaning products.

The strange man looks at him, then looks around the store,
then back to Simon. He sighs.

STRANGE MAN

You people make me sick.

He DRAGS the mower toward the door and walks out, leaving a
red trail behind him.

Simon looks at the soiled floor, then at the mop behind the
counter, then at the clock.

FADE OUT.