

CHEERS

"The King Of Beers"

TEASER

A

FADE IN:

INT. BAR - NIGHT

CLOSING. CHAIRS ARE UP ON THE TABLES. THE BAR IS EMPTY, EXCEPT FOR FRASIER. SAM ENTERS FROM THE OFFICE, WEARING HIS COAT AND JINGLING HIS KEYS.

SAM

Frasier, why are you still here?

It's two-thirty in the morning.

FRASIER

I'll tell you why I'm here, Sam.

Because five hours ago, Lilith called and told me to get my fat butt home pronto.

SAM

So?

FRASIER

So, I'm showing her that she can't  
order me around.

SAM

She really got to you, huh?

FRASIER

I'm sending a message, Sam.  
Frasier Crane is his own man. If I  
choose to stay here ten hours or  
ten seconds, then so be it.

SAM

Good for you, man.

FRASIER

I'll not live under her thumb. I  
refuse. Lincoln freed the slaves.

THEY HEAD FOR THE EXIT. FRASIER HESITATES.

FRASIER (CONT'D)

Oh, Sam?

SAM

Yeah, Fras?

FRASIER

Could I stay with you tonight? I'm  
afraid to go home.

SAM PUTS HIS ARM AROUND FRASIER AND THEY EXIT.

DISSOLVE TO:

MAIN TITLES

ACT ONEB

FADE IN:

INT. BAR - DAY

A QUIET AFTERNOON. THERE IS A SMALL PILE OF DEBRIS IN FRONT OF NORM.

WOODY

What are you doing, Mr. Peterson?

NORM

I'm cleaning out my pockets, Woody.

WOODY

Can I watch?

NORM

It might not be pretty.

WOODY

That's okay. I have a strong stomach. Remember the day we all tried to figure out what was coating your tongue? I was one of the last to drop out.

NORM

All right, then, so far we have lots of Kleenex, a ticket stub from the movie "Any Which Way But Loose," and keys to God knows what.

WOODY

Wow. This is like opening a time capsule.

NORM

We also have a checkbook from an account that's been closed for two years, and a crumpled pack of Luckies.

CLIFF

Norm, I didn't know you smoked.

NORM

Well, I must have, unless these belonged to the guy who owned these pants before me.

TWO DELIVERY MEN ENTER, WHEELING IN A HUGE CRATE. ONE MAN CARRIES A CLIPBOARD.

MAN #1

Sam Malone?

SAM

Right here.

MAN #1

G. & S. Amusements.

SAM SIGNS THE CLIPBOARD.

SAM

(TO THE MEN) Thanks, guys.

THE DELIVERY MEN EXIT.

WOODY

What is it, Sam?

SAM (CONT'D)

Open it and see. All right, everybody, I know how you think I'm a little behind the times, so I thought I'd spend some money and prove that Cheers is just as hip as any bar in Boston. Especially, now that we've got... Pong!

CLIFF

Yes!

REBECCA

We're inches away from bankruptcy, and you spent money on a game nobody's played in fifteen years?

SAM

It was a steal. The company's going out of business. Besides, these things are addictive. We'll be raking in the dough big time.

WOODY REMOVES THE LAST OF THE CRATE TO REVEAL NOT A VIDEO GAME, BUT A SLOT MACHINE. ALL GATHER AROUND IT.

SAM

Wait a minute. This isn't Pong.

WOODY

What is this thing?

CLIFF

Come on, Woody, surely you've seen the old one-armed bandit.

WOODY

Sure, Mr. Clavin, in the Hanover prison. Talk about scared straight. I could live to be eighty, and I'll never try to steal a rottweiler. Of course, we could never understand why anyone would try to steal a rottweiler in Hanover, since they roam free anyway. (RE SLOT MACHINE) So, what is this thing?

NORM

This, Woody, is a slot machine. Allow me to demonstrate. You take a nickel--

REBECCA

Hold it right there, Norm. Nobody plays this thing. Back to your seats.

ALL AD LIB PROTEST.

REBECCA (CONT'D)

I mean it. If we get caught using this, they'll close us down.

CLIFF

Great. We got a slot machine and we can't even play it.

FRASIER

Slot machines, Bah! Now, craps. There's a game. Pure science. Odds can be calculated, law of averages predicted... Yes, Lady Luck can be bested by intelligence. Of course, Lilith didn't buy that crap when I lost half our savings in Reno last year, but hey, baby needed a new pair of shoes.

MEANWHILE, NORM IS APPROACHED BY ANOTHER MAN, DON.

DON

Excuse me, sir, I'm doing a survey.

NORM

(INDICATING DEBRIS) I'm sorta busy.

DON

In that case, could you point me to someone who drinks a lot of beer? We're conducting a taste test.

NORM CRAMS THE GARBAGE BACK INTO HIS POCKETS.

NORM

I'm never too busy to help my fellow man. So, you need somebody to taste some beer, is that it?

DON

I'm doing market research for a  
local beer manufacturer.

NORM

Very good. And I get to have some?

DON

We'll be conducting a focus group  
in order to research public  
opinion. Are you interested?

NORM

You said something earlier about  
drinking beer. I heard you.

DON

If you're available, come to this  
address at two o'clock.

HE HANDS NORM A PAPER.

NORM

What exactly do I do?

DON

You'll sit in a room with a couple  
other guys and drink several  
glasses of beer for about ten  
dollars.

NORM

Ten dollars, huh? (FISHING OUT HIS  
CHECKBOOK) Will you take a check?

DISSOLVE TO:



C

INT. CUBICLE - LATER

NORM AND TWO OTHER MEN, RAY AND CHUCK, ARE SEATED AT A LONG TABLE. A SMALLER TABLE HOLDS A PITCHER. DON IS SPEAKING.

DON

Gentlemen, you've been selected to take part in this study due to your ages and drinking habits. Norm, there seems to be a typo on your average beer intake.

NORM CHECKS THE CLIPBOARD AND SHAKES HIS HEAD. NO TYPO.

DON (CONT'D)

Wow. (THEN) Okay, let's get a basic customer profile. Ray, what do you do?

RAY

I'm a civil engineer.

DON

Very good. Chuck?

CHUCK

I'm sort of between jobs. I mostly hang out, watch TV, and drink beer.

NORM

Same here.

DON

Alrighty, now if each of you--

RAY

Excuse me. I'm not a civil engineer. I guess I was just too embarrassed to say I was unemployed. Sorry.

DON

Okay, fine. Now, if each of you could tell me in what social context you drink the most beer; family gatherings, social get-togethers, etcetera. Ray?

RAY

Usually, I'll go out with my wife and have a few.

CHUCK

Not me. My wife never understood when it came to me and beer. So I drink it with my friends.

NORM

(TO CHUCK) I don't even know you,  
but I feel I could tell you  
anything.

DON

Okay, now--

RAY

Excuse me. My wife and I don't  
really get along. I don't know  
what I was trying to prove. Sorry.

NORM

You're not very comfortable with  
yourself, are you, Ray?

RAY

No.

DON

Gentlemen, Our first sample --all  
right, who drank all the beer?

NORM AND CHUCK LOOK GUILTY.

NORM

I'm pretty sure it was Ray.

RAY

No, I didn't!

NORM

He's been lying all day.

DON

(SHOUTING) Stacey, more samples!

(THEN) I'd like you to each take a sip and give me your impression.

A WOMAN ENTERS, DROPS OFF A TRAY OF SAMPLES, AND EXITS. RAY AND CHUCK SIP. NORM DOWNS A WHOLE GLASS. ALL LOOK AT HIM.

NORM

I want to be accurate.

DON

Ray, what did you think? Would you drink this beer in your home?

RAY

Pretty good. I'd serve it at home.

DON

Chuck?

CHUCK

Real good. Good aftertaste.

DON

And Norm?

NORM

Well, I guess this is where we separate the men from the boys. I felt it was a little sweet, but kind of hollow. You know, like they used some kind of imitation corn mash. It's something people won't notice at first, but after a few, it'll be less satisfying.

DON

(WRITING IT ALL DOWN) What about  
sample B?

HE HANDS NORM A GLASS, WHICH HE DOWNS.

NORM

Ah, beachwood aged. Only this is  
more of a smoked hickory. Gives it  
character, but restrains. I'd have  
to be kind of mellow, maybe put on  
"Rubber Soul". Too much work.

DON WRITES FURIOUSLY. HE GIVES NORM ANOTHER. NORM DRINKS.

DON

Sample C.

NORM

Another corn synthetic, only this  
one's sweeter. Still doesn't make  
it. Come on, challenge me.

DON

(CALLING OUT) Stacey! Samples D  
though V.

STACEY ENTERS WITH MANY BEERS. NORM PATS HIS STOMACH.

NORM

(TO HIS STOMACH) Fasten your  
seatbelt, pal, it's going to be a  
bumpy night.

DISSOLVE TO:

D

INT. BAR - THAT NIGHT

SAM AND REBECCA ARE PLACING THE FINAL POTTED PLANT IN FRONT OF THE SLOT MACHINE. IT IS AGAINST THE WALL, FACING THE PIANO. THE ONLY THING VISIBLE IS THE HANDLE. REBECCA, WHO HAS BEEN BENDING OVER TO DRAG THE PLANT, NOW STANDS.

REBECCA

(TO PAUL AND CLIFF) How's that?

PAUL

We still see the slot machine. Try  
moving the plant to the left.

REBECCA BENDS OVER AGAIN, TO MOVE THE PLANT OVER. PAUL AND CLIFF GIVE EACH OTHER A THUMBS UP AND ADMIRE THE VIEW.

REBECCA

Is that better?

CLIFF

Maybe just a bit to the right.

REBECCA BENDS. THEY SNICKER AND HIGH FIVE. SHE GETS WISE.

REBECCA

How's that?

PAUL

A little more to the right.

REBECCA

Why don't you get it, Sam?

THE GUYS ARE DISAPPOINTED, AS SAM BENDS OVER.

SAM

(STANDING) How's that?

BARRY

A little to the left.

SAM STEPS BACK AND TAKES A LOOK. IT'S FINE. HE CROSSES AWAY. AS REBECCA LOOKS AT THE MACHINE, CARLA APPROACHES.

CARLA

Maybe you should plug it in. You know, make sure you didn't break it in the move.

REBECCA

Sure, Carla, and then a cop walks in, and I'm in jail. No thanks.

CARLA

I'm just saying, if it's broke, you'll want to know, so you can fix it before they make you pay for it.

REBECCA

You have a point there. (THEN)

Okay, watch for police.

REBECCA PLUGS IT IN. THE LIGHT REFLECTS OFF HER FACE.

REBECCA (CONT'D)

Okay, it works. Let's unplug it.

CARLA

You can't know if it really works  
until you put in a nickel.

REBECCA

Forget it.

CARLA

Hey, you want to pay for this  
thing, that's up to you.

REBECCA

Just make sure no one's watching.

REBECCA INSERTS A NICKEL AND PULLS THE HANDLE, STARING AT  
THE SPINNING WHEELS.

REBECCA (CONT'D)

Okay, it works, see? Cherry...  
cherry...come on cherry...orange.  
There. Are you happy? Now can we  
unplug this thing?

CARLA

Go ahead.

REBECCA UNPLUGS THE MACHINE.

REBECCA

Well, that's that. 'Course, I lost  
a nickel, but I guess it was worth  
it to find out if it worked.

CARLA

Right.



REBECCA

(STARTS TO TURN AWAY, THEN:) You know, for a split second, there, I thought that last one was going to be a cherry.

CARLA

You were robbed.

REBECCA

I'll say. (RE MACHINE) Look what I would have got.

CARLA

Are you sure it didn't pay off?

REBECCA

I don't think so...

SHE FEELS TO SEE IF THE COIN MIGHT BE JAMMED.

REBECCA (CONT'D)

Unless maybe it's stuck in there, somehow. Is that possible?

CARLA

Happens all the time.

REBECCA

Maybe I can jar it loose.

SHE HITS THE SIDE OF THE MACHINE.

REBECCA (CONT'D)

(TO THE MACHINE) Come on. Come on, give me my nickel.

CARLA CROSSES AWAY, UTTERING A LOW, GUTTURAL CHUCKLE. NORM ENTERS, TO HIS USUAL GREETING.

WOODY

What are you up to, Mr. Peterson?

NORM

About twenty beers a day and we're falling behind. Move it. (THEN)  
Oh, what the heck, pour everyone a round and put it on my tab.

WOODY

Sorry, Mr. Peterson, Miss Howe says I'm not allowed to let you buy rounds. It costs too much and we're barely getting by as it is.

NORM

Then how about a round on the house?

WOODY

I don't see why not.

CLIFF

What's the occasion, big guy?

NORM

I got a job.

PAUL

Excuse me?

NORM

I got a job.

CLIFF

Everybody just stand back. (TO  
NORM) Okay, mister, I don't know  
what pod you crawled out of, but  
you're not welcome in our world.  
Now go in peace, and give us our  
Norm back.

NORM

I'm serious. You know that focus  
group? It turns out they like my  
opinions so much they want me to  
work at the brewery!

CONGRATULATIONS ALL AROUND.

SAM

Congratulations, Norm. When do you  
start?

NORM

Tomorrow. I have to tell you, I'm  
pretty excited. I've never been in  
a brewery before.

SAM

You're kidding. Never?

NORM

Well, this is kind of weird, but  
one time, years ago, I got in this  
car accident, and as I wandered  
around dazed, I realized I'd

(MORE)

NORM (CONT'D)

somehow walked into a brewery.

There was beer everywhere, as far as I could see. Then I heard these voices saying "Come back Norm", and I woke up in the hospital. Later, the doctor told me I'd been dead for like three minutes.

NO ONE KNOWS QUITE WHAT TO SAY.

NORM (CONT'D)

Now when I see those people on TV with life after death experiences, I don't laugh anymore.

AS EVERYONE SUBTLY FEARS THAT NORM MIGHT BE A LITTLE INSANE,  
WE:

DISSOLVE TO:

E

INT. BREWERY OFFICE - THE NEXT DAY

THIS IS A SMALL OUTER OFFICE, FILLED WITH A COUPLE LOCKERS, A DESK, AND A GUY NAMED MIKE. MIKE IS A BURLY GUY IN A LUMBERJACK SHIRT. THERE ARE TWO DOORS. ONE LEADS TO THE OUTSIDE, AND ONE LEADS INTO THE MAIN BREWERY. NORM ENTERS THROUGH THE FIRST ONE. HE LOOKS AROUND IN AWE.

NORM

Here's a switch: me inside a  
brewery.

MIKE

Norm Peterson?

NORM

Yes, sir.

MIKE STANDS AND SHAKES HIS HAND.

MIKE

Mike. I'll be your supervisor.

NORM

Nice to meet you, sir.

MIKE

I was looking over your sample comments, and I must say, they're very impressive. Welcome aboard.

NORM

Thank you, sir. Glad to be here.

MIKE

So, have you ever been to a brewery before?

NORM

No, sir, but three times a day, I face it and pray.

MIKE

Your job is very simple. You are to ingest random samplings of beer off the line and give us your opinion. That's it.

NORM

You mean like that little focus group thing?

MIKE

Exactly. Only here's where you'll be working.

MIKE LEADS NORM OUT THE BREWERY DOOR AND WE:

CUT TO:

H

INT. BREWERY - CONTINUOUS

MIKE ENTERS, FOLLOWED BY NORM, WHO SIMPLY STARES AROUND HIM.  
THERE IS BEER AS FAR AS THE EYE CAN SEE.

MIKE

You're allowed to sample as much beer as you can take. Actually, the more, the better. If you wish to make more than your current salary, we encourage you to work overtime. Your comments-- Are you crying, Norm?

NORM

Just something in my eye, sir.

MIKE

Is there anything you need before you get started?

NORM

Um, where's the bathroom?

MIKE

(POINTING) Right over there.

NORM RUBS HIS HANDS TOGETHER AND GATHERS HIMSELF FOR WORK.

NORM

Okey dokie.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE



ACT TWOJ

FADE IN:

INT. BREWERY - THE NEXT COUPLE OF DAYS

WE SEE A MONTAGE (BACKED BY "PUT ON A HAPPY FACE") OF NORM WORKING AT THE BREWERY. HE HAS NEVER BEEN SO HAPPY. HE GRABS RANDOM BOTTLES AND DRINKS FROM THEM, HE FILLS A MUG WITH HIS NAME ON IT FROM A TAP, HE RIDES ON ONE OF THOSE SLOW-MOVING FORKLIFTS, GIVING THE THUMBS-UP TO OTHER WORKERS, WHO WAVE AT HIM, HE ENTERS THE BREWERY TO A LOUD CRY OF "NORM!", HE IS AT A VAT CONTROL BOOTH, ADJUSTING THE KNOBS EVER SO SLIGHTLY, ETC.

THE MONTAGE ENDS WITH MIKE HANDING HIM HIS FIRST PAYCHECK.

MIKE

Here you go, Norm. You've had a  
great first week.

NORM

What's this?

MIKE

It's your paycheck.

NORM

Oh my God, I remember these!

MIKE

I have to admit, I've never seen anyone put in as many hours as you, Norm. You're very dedicated.

NORM

I love my work, sir.

MIKE

Well, it shows. You were right about the timer being off on the number three fermenting tank. And that temperature fluctuation during the heating process was something our computers should have spotted long ago.

NORM

(HUMBLY) A computer can only be so precise, sir.

MIKE

Just be careful you don't burn out, Norm. In the past week, you've tested the same amount of beer the average man drinks in a month. The men can't figure it out.

NORM

How I can be so accurate?

MIKE

How you can still be alive.

NORM

Well, if you'll excuse me, I've  
been drinking beer nonstop all day,  
and I'm exhausted. I think I'll  
change out of these clothes and  
crawl into Cheers, maybe hoist a  
few before I go home.

MIKE

You're kidding, aren't you?

NORM

Yeah. These clothes are fine.

HE EXITS, AS MIKE LOOKS ON IN AWE AND WE:

DISSOLVE TO:

K

INT. BAR - THAT NIGHT

ALL PRESENT EXCEPT NORM. REBECCA ENTERS FROM THE OFFICE,  
AND CROSSES TO SAM, KEEPING AN EYE ON THE SLOT MACHINE.

REBECCA

Sam, when are those people going to  
come and get their stupid slot  
machine?

SAM

I called them, and they can't get  
anyone out till tomorrow.

REBECCA

When they get here, I want them to  
open it up and get my nickel out of  
there.

SAM

I can't believe you're still  
thinking about that stupid nickel.

REBECCA

Well, it's in there.

CARLA

You know, Rebecca, there might be a way you can get it out. Nah, forget it.

REBECCA

What is it? Come on, tell me.

CARLA

Well, I was thinking, maybe you could try putting in another nickel. You were real close last time. Maybe this time it would pay off and you'd win your money back.

REBECCA

Forget it, Carla. It's illegal, and besides, there's no guarantee.

CARLA

You're going to have the guy open it up tomorrow anyway. What's the difference if he fishes out one nickel or two? Besides, if you win it back, you won't have to explain why you put the first nickel in there.

REBECCA

Watch the door.

CARLA DOES. REBECCA FEEDS ANOTHER COIN TO THE SLOT MACHINE  
AND PULLS THE HANDLE. SHE WATCHES IT SPIN AND...

REBECCA (CONT'D)

I wasn't even close.

CARLA

That's strange. You let the handle  
snap back and everything?

REBECCA

What do you mean?

CARLA

You're supposed to let the handle  
snap back. Haven't you ever been  
to Atlantic City? they say  
sometimes it jars the machine into  
paying off, but it's probably just  
an old wives tale.

REBECCA

Well, I have one nickel left, and  
three's always been my lucky  
number.

CARLA

Really?

REBECCA

Well, except once when I was  
watching a Little League game and a  
big number three fell off the  
scoreboard and broke my collarbone.

(THEN) Alright, watch the door.

But this is the last time.

SHE WORKS THE MACHINE, WITH NO RESULTS.

REBECCA (CONT'D)

Well, that's that. I quit. I should have known. Of course, you'd think in three pulls it would have paid off. I mean, don't the odds increase, like, each time? Not that it matters. I lost fair and square.

SHE EXITS INTO THE OFFICE. AFTER A BEAT, SHE ENTERS THE BAR, TAKES A STEP TOWARD THE MACHINE, THINKS BETTER OF IT, AND EXITS BACK INTO THE OFFICE. CARLA CHUCKLES EVILLY.

PAUL

Did you ever see that "Twilight Zone" where the guy gets hooked on a slot machine and he actually hears it calling his name?

CLIFF

Yeah, (IMITATING THE WEIRD SLOT MACHINE VOICE) Franklin... Franklin...

PAUL

(SHUDDERS) Man, that guy was over the edge. Can you imagine being so sick that you hear your name spoken over and over by machines while you try to sleep?

CLIFF

(TOO QUICKLY) No. Can we talk  
about something else?

NORM ENTERS, TO HIS USUAL GREETING.

SAM

Beer, Norm?

NORM

No thanks, Sammy. I'm kind of  
full.

ALL MOTION STOPS.

WOODY

Wow. Don't you love when you're  
dreaming, and you realize it's a  
dream and you can do anything you  
want? Where's Miss Howe?

NORM

Hey, I was kidding. Fill 'er up.

WOODY

(OFF THEIR LOOKS) I was kidding,  
too.

SAM SERVES NORM A BEER. HE SIPS, AND MAKES A FACE.

NORM

Sorry, Sammy.

SAM

What do you mean, "sorry, Sammy?"

NORM

This beer. It's no good.



SAM

Excuse me?

NORM

I suggest you change kegs and clean out the line. And try letting the hose dry completely, preferably in a warm wind, before running beer through it again.

SAM

Very funny, Norm. Just drink the beer.

NORM

Look, Sammy, I know what I'm talking about. This is not quality beer, and I'm not going to abuse my taste buds with it.

SAM

There's nothing wrong with this beer.

NORM

Sammy, Sammy, Sammy. Do you have any idea who you're talking to?

FOR A BEAT, SAM LOOKS AT NORM, STUNNED.

WOODY

(SOTTO TO SAM, HELPFULLY) Norm Peterson.

SAM

Thank you, Woody.

CLIFF

Sammy, Norm's not the only one with superior beer tasting prowess. Let me try.

HE SIPS A BEER.

CLIFF (CONT'D)

Tastes okay to me.

FRASIER

I must say I've been drinking beer all night, and I haven't noticed anything amiss. Except, of course, that my brain keeps endlessly replaying the moment I said "I do" louder and louder and... is there any Tylenol behind the bar?

CARLA

No one else has complained, Sammy.

SAM

(TO NORM) There, see? Now shut up and drink your beer.

NORM

You people are pathetic. All of you. I've sampled beer with every possible variation of ingredients. I advise top brewers on technique, and I get paid a nice amount of

(MORE)

NORM (CONT'D)

money for my opinion. If I say this is swill, then you can rest assured it's swill, and I won't grace my bar tab with it.

SAM

What about the fifty thousand dollars worth of swill you drank earlier?

NORM

Are you going to change that keg or not?

SAM

No!

NORM RISES AND HEADS FOR THE EXIT.

NORM

Fine. I don't need this. I can get all the beer I want, and get paid on top of that. At least at the brewery, my opinion counts. So long, suckers!

NORM EXITS. ALL WATCH HIM GO IN STUNNED SILENCE. CLIFF SIPs HIS BEER.

CLIFF

Actually, Sammy, now that I taste it again, I do taste a slight unevenness in the hydrogen distribution--

SAM

Shut up, Cliff.

REBECCA ENTERS FROM THE OFFICE, WEARING HER COAT.

REBECCA

Well, I'm out of here, everybody.

Goodnight!

SHE EXITS THE BAR, AND STARTS UP THE STAIRS. SHE TURNS AND RE ENTERS THE BAR. SHE CROSSES TO CARLA AND SLAPS TWO DOLLARS ON THE BAR.

REBECCA (CONT'D)

Give me a roll of nickels.

CARLA WORDLESSLY HANDS HER A ROLL OF NICKELS, WHICH SHE HAD READY AND WAITING. REBECCA CROSSES TO THE SLOT MACHINE, PULLS UP A STOOL, AND STARTS FEEDING IT WITH NICKELS. PAUL AND CLIFF LOOK AT EACH OTHER.

CLIFF/PAUL

(IN THAT EERIE VOICE) Franklin...

DISSOLVE TO:

L

INT. BREWERY - THE NEXT MORNING

MIKE IS SITTING AT HIS DESK, GOING OVER PAPERS, AS NORM  
ENTERS, CARRYING A LUNCH BOX.

NORM

Hey, Mike.

NORM CLOCKS IN, OPENS A SMALL LOCKER, OPENS HIS LUNCH BOX,  
PULLS OUT HIS MUG, THEN CLOSSES THE EMPTY LUNCH BOX AND PUTS  
IT IN THE LOCKER. HE STARTS FOR THE BREWERY EXIT.

MIKE

Just a minute, Norm, I need to talk  
to you.

NORM

Did I do something wrong?

MIKE

No. You're good. You're very  
good. But sometimes, you don't  
have to be so good. You know what  
I mean?

NORM SHAKES HIS HEAD.

MIKE (CONT'D)

(RE PAPER) Tuesday, vats four through seven. According to you, there was a slight barley to hops ratio imbalance.

NORM

Well, there was.

MIKE

Oh, I don't doubt you. But the thing is, who's really going to taste that? I sure as hell couldn't. And the cost to throw it away was a little high.

NORM

Wait a minute. Are you saying that if I have a problem I should look the other way, so you can save a few bucks?

MIKE

Let's just say you could be a little less picky. Look, Norm, You've got a good thing going here. Don't screw it up.

NORM

I can't believe this.

MIKE

What's the big deal? It's just beer.

NORM

Just beer? Just beer? Let me tell you a little story, pal. When I was a little kid, my father and I never really had anything in common. We never talked. We lived with my mom in a tiny apartment building with no air conditioning. In the summer, it would get so hot that at night everyone would sleep out on their fire escapes. Anyway, my dad drove a cab. A miserable, sweaty little cab. Six days a week. Then on Sundays, he and his friends would gather in our living room to watch the fights and share some cold beer. And from the kitchen, I'd watch them laughing, and talking, and yelling at the TV, and I knew how important this time was for them.

MIKE

Very moving.

NORM

I'm not done. Well, one Sunday morning, I got up and found the refrigerator was on the blink. It was already getting hot, and my dad's beer was starting to warm up. So I rode my bike to the dairy and started filling an orange crate with ice. I made three trips before I had enough to keep the beer cold. When my dad saw what I did, he put his arm around me and told me I was all right. He even let me watch the fights with him. That day I realized that beer is the common denominator. The wrecking ball that tears down the walls between people. I'm sorry, Mike, but if Norm Peterson comes across an imperfect brew, it will be reported, and no budget hound is going to stop me!

MIKE

That was beautiful. You're fired.

NORM

What, you didn't like my little play?

NO RESPONSE.



NORM (CONT'D)

Come on, don't you know when a  
guy's kidding around?

MIKE

I'm sorry, Norm. Your principles  
are just too strong.

MIKE OPENS THE DOOR FOR HIM.

NORM

Please let me stay. I can play the  
game. The stuff could be poison,  
I'll let it go. Please?

MIKE IS UNMOVED. SADLY, NORM GETS HIS LUNCH BOX AND EXITS,  
AS WE:

DISSOLVE TO:

M

INT. BAR - A SHORT TIME LATER

THE BAR IS DARK. SAM UNLOCKS THE DOOR AND ENTERS, FOLLOWED BY WOODY AND CARLA. IT'S TIME TO OPEN THE BAR.

CARLA

Let's get some lights on in here.

WE HEAR THE SOUND OF THE SLOT MACHINE'S HANDLE BEING PULLED.

SAM

What the hell is that?

HE TURNS ON ALL THE LIGHTS, AND WE SEE REBECCA AT THE SLOT MACHINE. SHE IS STILL WEARING THE COAT FROM LAST NIGHT, AND HAS A CIGARETTE HANGING OUT OF HER MOUTH. IT IS OBVIOUS SHE HASN'T GONE HOME. SHE DAZEDLY WATCHES THE WHEELS SPIN.

REBECCA

Damn.

SAM (CONT'D)

Rebecca, how long have you been  
here?

REBECCA

Sam! Aren't you going home?

SHE INSERTS A NICKEL AND PULLS THE HANDLE.

SAM

I've been home. How much money have you put in there?

REBECCA

(RE MACHINE) Damn. (TO SAM) Not much. About six hundred dollars.

SAM

Where did you get six hundred dollars in nickels?

REBECCA

Carla was nice enough to sell me a whole bunch last night.

CARLA

It was the least I could do.

SHE WANDERS AWAY, CHUCKLING.

SAM

(TO REBECCA) Alright, honey, pack it up. Let's go.

REBECCA

Not yet, Sam. This stupid machine still hasn't hit. It's got to, one of these times. (PUTTING IN A NICKEL) Well, twelve thousandth time's the charm.

SHE PULLS.

REBECCA (CONT'D)

Damn.

AS SHE FEEDS ANOTHER NICKEL IN, NORM ENTERS.

NORM

'Morning, everybody.

NO RESPONSE.

NORM (CONT'D)

(WEAKLY) Norm!

HE SLINKS TO THE BAR.

NORM (CONT'D)

Hey, Woody, how about a beer?

SAM

I'm sorry, sir, we only have swill  
here.

NORM

Come on, Sammy, quit kidding  
around. It's me, Norm.

SAM

(TO CARLA AND WOODY) Well, look,  
who's graced our lowly bar with his  
presence. It's Norm Peterson,  
adviser to master brewers.

NORM

Not anymore. I lost my job.

SAM

So now you just expect to waltz  
back in here like nothing happened?

NORM

You're offended, aren't you Sam?

SAM

How could you tell? Oh, let me  
guess --you tasted it!

NORM

Look, you guys, I'm really sorry.  
I guess I was kind of an ass.

CARLA

Good guess.

NORM

It's just that I was never really  
good at anything. I'm not a babe  
hound like you, or a big doctor  
like Frasier, or even a proud  
working man like Cliff. I was a  
lousy accountant and an even  
lousier painter. But there was  
always one thing I could do, and  
that was drink beer. And for  
awhile, it looked like I'd finally  
found my calling. And maybe I got  
a little carried away. Forgive me?

SAM

Well, I suppose if I don't, you'll  
just start hanging out at Gary's.

NORM

Are you kidding? After the things  
I said in there?

SAM SERVES NORM A BEER. NORM TAKES A SIP.

SAM

How's that?

NORM

Well, it's a little sour...

SAM

That'll be two fifty.

NORM

Actually, I like it better this way.

TWO POLICEMEN ENTER.

SAM

Can I help you gentlemen?

COP #1

Yes, we got a tip that there's an illegal slot machine in this building.

REBECCA HAS JUST INSERTED A COIN AND STARTED TO PULL THE HANDLE. SHE FREEZES.

SAM

Who told you that?

COP #2

We didn't get a name. We only know it was a female who kept chuckling.

COP #1

Is there a slot machine in here?

SAM

As a matter of fact--

REBECCA

No!

THE POLICE LOOK AT HER.

REBECCA (CONT'D)

I mean there was. But it's gone.  
Someone took it. Now, it's not  
here.

COP #1

(SUSPICIOUSLY) What are you doing  
back there?

REBECCA

Just... hanging up my coat.

SHE WHIPS OFF HER COAT AND HANGS IT ON THE HANDLE. SHE  
STARTS TO LEAD THEM TO THE EXIT.

REBECCA (CONT'D)

Sorry to have wasted your time,  
gentlemen, but I'm afraid you've  
been sent on a wild goose chase.

AS THEY GET CLOSER TO THE EXIT, WE SEE THAT THE WEIGHT OF  
REBECCA'S COAT IS PULLING ON THE SLOT MACHINE'S HANDLE.

REBECCA (CONT'D)

No, unfortunately you'll have to go  
back empty-handed. I can't believe  
someone would lead you on like  
that, but the whole idea's  
ridiculous. There isn't a slot  
machine within a hundred miles of  
this place.

THE HANDLE PULLED, THE MACHINE HITS, AND HUNDREDS OF DOLLARS WORTH OF NICKELS BEGIN TO ERUPT FROM THE MACHINE, AS A BIG RED LIGHT BEGINS SPINNING WILDLY. EVERYONE IN THE BAR WATCHES THIS SIGHT. CARLA CALMLY WALKS OVER TO THE MOUNTAIN OF NICKELS GROWING ON THE FLOOR AND PICKS UP A NICKEL, WHICH SHE HOLDS OUT TO REBECCA.

CARLA

Here's your nickel.

REBECCA SMILES WEAKLY AT THE COPS AND WE:

CUT TO BLACK.

OVER BLACK, WE HEAR THE SOUND OF COINS DROPPING OUT OF THE MACHINE AS CARLA CHUCKLES.

END OF ACT TWO