Spinning Reels

by

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INT. CASINO - NIGHT

A locals casino. PATRONS are milling about. Most are playing slot machines, set up in groups of six.

ROSE, at least a hundred years old, is sitting at a slot machine, rhythmically pushing buttons as the reels spin.

She repeats this action continuously.

Rose is smoking, with tubes in her nose. A rolling intravenous apparatus is attached to her wrist. An oxygen canister is bolted to her walker.

"GUY STACY" ARMSTRONG, a thirty something everyman with an androgynous name sits at the slot machine next to Rose.

GUY STACY

Hi! Any luck tonight?

Rose ignores him.

GUY STACY

(A bit louder)
I said any luck?

ROLAND and Mildred, mid eighties, stroll past.

ROLAND

She can't hear you, boy. Rose is in the zone.

MILDRED

The zone.

Guy nods.

He pulls a twenty out of his wallet and tries to fit it in the bill slot, upside down. The machine will not take it.

He fights with it furiously, but to no avail.

STACIE, twenties, approaches behind him. She is jaw-dropping gorgeous in a skimpy cocktail waitress outfit, well worth the price of admission.

Stacie is carrying a cork tray with a glass full of dollars and a full shot glass. An empty nip bottle of Jack Daniels stands beside it.

STACIE

You're putting it in wrong.

GUY STACY

Never got no complaints.

STACIE

The twenty. Jackson's head needs to face up, like this.

Stacie slides the money into the slot machine and it springs to life. He's got eighty credits.

GUY STACY

You sure are good with your presidents.

STACIE

Of course. Old Hickory, our seventh president. Not one of my favorites, but he did make it on the twenty. We casino employees are all well schooled in monetary matters.

GUY STACY

Alright. You sure sound smart. What's your name?

STACIE

Stacie. What's yours?

GUY STACY

Uh, I'm Stacy, too. But with me it's a guys name.

Rose grunts loudly, crushing out her cigarette in an overflowing ashtray. It is sitting next to her on a stack of upside down casino change cups.

STACIE

Alright, hold your horses. I got it right here.

Stacie sets her drink tray on top of Rose's machine.

She picks up the shot of whiskey off her tray and speaks into Rose's good ear.

STACIE

(Loudly)

Down the hatch, Miss Rose?

Rose opens her mouth, not missing a beat on the machine.

Stacie pours the shot down her throat.

Rose grunts again, but does not smile.

STACIE

Your welcome.

GUY STACY

Unbelievable.

STACIE

Can I get you a drink, Guy Stacy?

GUY STACY

I could use a beer...and maybe your phone number?

STACIE

Thanks, but I can't.

GUY

Bring me a beer?

STACIE

(Laughs)

No, I'll bring you a beer. The number. It's not allowed. I can't fraternize with the customers.

GUY STACY

Well, that's all right. I never went to college, so I didn't get to frat.

Stacie laughs slightly and moves back towards her drink tray.

STACIE

It's not that. Honestly. It's just a company policy. Rules.

GUY STACY

Maybe I could meet you outside after work...Then I wouldn't be a customer, either.

STACIE

Thanks, but no. Honestly, I'm in a committed relationship right now.

GUY STACY

You mean he should be committed?

Stacie smiles and picks up her tray, adjusting her outfit.

GUY STACY

I know, I know...But you are really are very pretty and, hell, you can't blame a guy for trying.

STACIE

You put up a noble fight, Guy Stacy. Be right back with your beer.

GUY STACY

He's a lucky man.

STACIE

She thinks so.

Guy is shot down in flames.

Stacie exits as Guy begins playing down his credits, one at a time. As he pulls the handle, the reels spin.

A bar. A Seven. A bar. No win.

He presses the "Play Credit" button once and again pulls the handle.

A bar and two cherries! A two coin payout!

Plunk, plunk. Two quarters fall into the coin tray.

GUY STACY

Yeah, baby!

This warrants Guy's exuberant victory dance. It is not pretty.

His performance attracts the attention of Roland and Mildred, who are strolling by.

ROLAND

You know, if you played more than one credit you could have won six credits on that payout instead of just two.

GUY STACY

Really? You can do that?

ROLAND

Yeah. That's how you can win the big jackpot, too. You have to play three coins at a time.

GUY STACY

Wow. Thanks for the tip, wicked old guy!

ROLAND

Sure thing, dumb ass young dude.

Stacie returns with the beer.

STACIE

Here's your brewski, Guy Stacy.

Stacy reaches into his pocket and gives her his business card, wrapped in five dollar bill.

GUY STACY

Here's my card...in case you maybe need help moving or something.

STACIE

Thanks. Maybe I'll do that. My grandfather has an antique bookcase that...

The rhythmic rattle of Rose's slot machine has suddenly stopped. Her credits are tapped out.

All patrons are silent, except for the canned noise on the sound system.

Rose drops her head on the machine, defeated.

Her frail hands place an empty coin cup upside down in the coin tray.

Pulling herself to her feet with great effort, she scoots towards her walker.

Mildred, Roland and the other patrons slowly begin applauding.

Rose grunts, grabbing her intravenous bag stand.

Bones seem to snap with every tortured step. She slowly exits.

The applause dies down and finally stops.

Stacie wipes away a tear, leaving a smudge of mascara.

STACIE

Back to your lives, citizens. Nothing to see here.

INT. CASINO - LATER

Guy's credits have run out.

Casually, he slides over to Rose's chair and slides a one dollar bill into the bill acceptor, ignoring the cup in the coin tray.

Rose, still shuffling along, suddenly stops short and glares ferociously back towards Guy.

The Patrons circle around Guy.

MILDRED

Stop! What are you doing? You can't do that!

GUY STACY

Do what?

MILDRED

That's Rose's machine. The cup. Didn't he see the cup?

ROLAND

I'm calling security!

GUY STACY

I-I didn't see her name on it...Tell you what; if I win I'll split it half and half with the old battle axe. How's that? Is that fair enough?

Guy reaches toward the handle!

MILDRED

(Threatening with cane)
No! Don't you touch it! You back
away from the machine, young man or
so help me I'll...

GUY STACY

But I only put in a buck. I'll just...

Guy grabs the handle!

ROLAND

Noooooo!

Roland's feeble arm hits Guy's hand, the downward thrust causing Guy to pull down the handle.

Time slows to a crawl as the reels spin.

The patrons are stunned. Silent.

Guy steps back from the machine in fear just as...

Rose tears back into the scene, nailing Guy hard in the crotch with a brutal, laid out, full on tackle.

FADE OUT