

CUSTOMER SUPPORT

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. ARCTIC - NIGHT

A snowstorm blasts across a flat expanse.

Between the gusts, the shadow of a structure peeks through.

A shipwreck.

INT. SHIPWRECK - NIGHT

A cramped space. The walls are bent and rusted.

MACK, 84, lengthy beard and torn clothes, sits at a small table, eyeing a chess set.

His eyes are tired and, in between coughs, he moves a piece across the nearly empty board.

MACK

Ha! That'll rattle them old bones.
What say you to that?

He glances across the table.

A skeleton, GENE, unknown age, sits at the other side of the chess board. He holds a chess piece in one hand and a bag of sunflower seeds in the other.

Mack sits back, strokes his beard, glances at a television perched in the corner.

The screen flickers with the colorful images of a children's cartoon, the sound barely audible over the howls of the angry winds outside.

The picture on the screen blips to static, then black.

Mack sighs, eyes Gene suspiciously.

MACK

I know where every piece is, so no
funny stuff.

He slowly pulls himself from his seat, shuffles to the TV, gives it a good whack. There's no change.

He turns it off, then back on. Still, no picture.

MACK
Dammit, Gene. You been messing with
the TV?

He plops back into his seat, grabs a satellite phone from a nearby shelf, extends the antennae.

He dials.

INT. SMALL OFFICE - NIGHT

Tidy. Empty walls. Bright white lights.

RUSSELL, 58, diminutive and bald, slides a headset over his shiny head.

A red button flashes in front of him.

He reaches for an hourglass, the smallest of three lining the edge of his large desk, and turns it over.

He hits the button.

RUSSELL
Thank you for calling Specter.
Please listen carefully as our menu
has changed.

INT. SHIPWRECK - NIGHT

Mack groans.

RUSSELL (V.O.)
For office hours, press one. For --

MACK
-- Representative.

RUSSELL (V.O.)
I'm sorry. I don't understand.
Could you please say your request
again, or press zero for --

MACK
Rep -- re-- sen -- ta -- tive!

INT. SMALL OFFICE - NIGHT

Russell reaches up, turns over the second largest hourglass.

RUSSELL
You said, 'representative.' A
customer service specialist will be
with you shortly. You are currently
caller number --

He grabs a pair of nearby dice, rolls them.

RUSSELL
-- Eleven. Please hold.

INT. SHIPWRECK - NIGHT

Mack lowers the phone.

MACK
(to Gene)
Two o'clock in the dad-gum morning
and we're eleventh in line. I told
you this company was shit.

Mack puts the phone on speaker, sets it on the table. He
points to the board.

MACK
(to Gene)
Your move.

Over the tinny phone speakers... music. And, singing.

RUSSELL (V.O.)
*Believe it or not, I'm walking on
air, I never thought I could be so
free...*

MACK
You gotta be shittin' me. Greatest
American Hero? I hate that song.

The singing stops. Mack looks at the phone.

INT. SMALL OFFICE - NIGHT

Russell scrambles to insert a new tape into his portable tape
player. He hits play.

A new song starts. Russell taps his toes, waits for the right
moment, then...

RUSSELL
*A little ditty, 'bout Jack and
Diane...*

INT. SHIPWRECK - NIGHT

Mack picks up the phone.

MACK
Someone there?

INT. SMALL OFFICE - NIGHT

Russell ignores the question, jams to his own tune.

RUSSELL
*Jack, he's gonna be a football
star...*

The final bits of sand in the first hourglass drain out.

Russell stops singing. Hits pause on the music, flips the hourglass again.

RUSSELL
Your continued patience is
appreciated. A customer service
expert will be with you shortly.

He restarts the music, and the singing.

RUSSELL
Oh, yeah, life goes on...

INT. SHIPWRECK - NIGHT

Mack sets the phone down.

MACK
Guess not.

He sneezes.

RUSSELL (V.O.)
(softly)
Bless you.

Mack grabs the phone.

MACK
I heard that!

INT. SMALL OFFICE - NIGHT

Russell tries to cover by picking the song back up.

MACK (V.O.)
You can waste my time, but don't
treat me like an idiot.

Russell stops the music and his singing.

RUSSELL
I'm not supposed to talk to you.

MACK (V.O.)
How long am I gonna wait?

Russell glances at his dice, pushes them aside.

RUSSELL
You're next in line.

He reaches for the large hourglass, turns it over.

RUSSELL
It won't be long.

Yes, it will.

MACK (V.O.)
Please don't sing.

RUSSELL
You don't like my voice?

INT. SHIPWRECK - NIGHT

Mack pulls at his beard.

MACK
It's not that. It's just -- up
here, it's just me and Gene. And,
Gene don't talk much.

RUSSELL (V.O.)
You're lonely.

MACK
Eight years. Only thing I got for
entertainment is TV and chess. And,
Gene don't even bet.

Mack looks at Gene.

MACK
Ain't no fun if there's no skin in
the game.

Mack looks at the phone.

MACK

So, yeah, you could say I'm lonely.

INT. SMALL OFFICE - NIGHT

Russell glances to a nearby table where a chess set sits, mid-game. There's an empty chair on one side and a large, stuffed teddy bear on the other.

He turns the large hourglass back over.

RUSSELL

Let's see if we can't get that TV back working. Let me transfer you to a customer care expert.

MACK (V.O.)

That'd be great, thank you.

Russell slides his headset off, slides a new one on. He hits another button.

RUSSELL

Welcome to Specter customer care, this is Russell. I understand you're having problems with your television signal?

INT. SHIPWRECK - NIGHT

MACK

Seriously?

RUSSELL (V.O.)

Do you have any goggles?

MACK

Goggles?

RUSSELL (V.O.)

For your eyes.

Mack coughs, looks around: There's a few canned goods, a couple of empty crates and a pile of rusty tools.

MACK

I got a screwdriver, a nasty cough, and Gene. That's about it.

RUSSELL (V.O.)
Okay. Let's check the connection.
Carefully.

Mack moves to the TV, reaches around and unscrews a cable from the back.

MACK
Seems fine.

RUSSELL (V.O.)
Try blowing on it.

MACK
That's your advice? Blowing on it?

RUSSELL (V.O.)
Carefully.

Mack shakes his head, blows on the connector.

MACK
Having survived that dangerous
maneuver, what's next?

RUSSELL (V.O.)
Screw it back in, see if that
helped.

Mack does. The TV remains blank.

MACK
Nothing. Color me shocked.

INT. SMALL OFFICE - NIGHT

Russell flips through a manual.

RUSSELL
Let's check the cable.

MACK (V.O.)
Alright. How?

Russell reaches below the desk, to a box with several cables extending from it. He counts over to the third cable, wraps his hand around it.

RUSSELL
Just give it a tug. A light one.
Whenever you're ready.

The line goes tight, then drops back to the floor.

RUSSELL

Hmmm. Looks like we have a good connection. Let me check a few things on my end.

He picks up a small hammer, lightly taps the box with it.

Next, he grabs a can of WD-40.

He opens the box, squirts the oil inside, drops the lid.

RUSSELL

Any change?

MACK (V.O.)

Nope.

RUSSELL

Let me see if I can't boost the signal.

He reaches to another box -- large, with a handle on the side. Russell cranks the handle vigorously. Stops.

MACK (V.O.)

Nothing.

RUSSELL

It seems we'll have to schedule a service appointment.

He types into a computer.

RUSSELL

I've got your address as -- Oh, my. Is that right?

MACK (V.O.)

Yep.

RUSSELL

Okay, I'm afraid our next available opening is in eight days.

MACK (V.O.)

Eight days!?

RUSSELL

Well, I am in Arizona, sir.

INT. SHIPWRECK - NIGHT

Mack stares at the chess board. There's no change in the pieces' placement. He coughs, wipes his nose with a tissue.

There's a KNOCK on the side of the boat.

MACK

Come in.

Russell, wearing a giant parka and huge gloves, pushes his way into the small space.

He props a snow shovel against the wall, stomps the snow from his boots.

RUSSELL

I'm looking for a Mack Robbins?

MACK

You're looking at him.

Russell sets a container on the table.

RUSSELL

For the cough.

Mack checks the container.

MACK

Chicken noodle. Thank you.

Russell sees the skeleton.

RUSSELL

You must be Gene? Nice to meet you.

Russell reaches into his pocket and takes out a small piece of equipment.

RUSSELL

Let's check the signal strength.

He plugs the cable into the little box.

MACK

It's been fine for eight years.
Don't know why it went out now.

RUSSELL

It's cable. Nobody ever really
knows why it goes out.

He pulls the cable from the box.

RUSSELL
Signal looks good.

He pulls out a magnifying glass and some tweezers, inspects the back of the TV.

RUSSELL
Here we go!

He holds up a sunflower seed.

RUSSELL
It was wedged in the TV input.

Mack glances at Gene, shakes his head. He snatches the bag of sunflower seeds from Gene's hand.

MACK
That's why I don't like you eatin'
in here.

He turns to Russell.

MACK
Sorry you had to come all this way.

RUSSELL
It's no problem.

MACK
And, sorry I called your company
shit.

RUSSELL
We get that a lot.

MACK
You like chess?

Russell nods. Mack pushes Gene from the chair.

MACK
Lets see what you got.

Russell sits, slides a five dollar bill next to the board.

Mack smiles.

MACK
Oh, I like you.

The game begins.

FADE TO BLACK.