

## **“WORST CUSTOMER” by Alexander Lee-Rekers (StageMilk, 2024)**

*BEN and CHARIS work at a run-down local cinema. In the long breaks between screenings, they pass the time making meticulous, well-argued lists on every conceivable topic.*

**BEN:** Okay: Worst Customer.

**CHARIS:** Of all time? That's too broad. We'll be here until we die of old age.

**BEN:** All right all right: Worst Customer This Year.

**BEN:** *(Thinking.)* There are so many-

**CHARIS:** *(Talking over Ben.)* -I was just thinking that. Here goes: Special Mention, because it's a group and not an individual, "parents who let their kids lick the glass of the candy bar counter".

**BEN:** Oh totally. They're worse than the kids themselves!

**CHARIS:** That thing is filthy. I mean, I wipe it down at the end of every day, but the amount of kids who just run their tongue along it like it's a giant lollipop... *(She shudders.)*

**BEN:** Third Place? The old guy who fills our bin with cigarette butts.

**CHARIS:** Butt Man! Yes. How? Why? Is he collecting them all day in his pockets?! That's a great one. I'll have to think to top that ... oh. Becky Rogers. Comes in here with her new husband and baby, just *happens* to remember I still work here...

**BEN:** Becky's not so bad. She's nicer now that she was in school.

**CHARIS:** Yeah, but it's that "fake nice". Trying to be all grown up and forget the past.

**BEN:** I take that point.

**CHARIS:** Okay, Ben: number one, gold medal. Who tops our list of Worst Customer This Year?

**BEN:** ...I'm going to go with that guy from the other night. Aaron.

**CHARIS:** Him? Worst Customer This Year?

**BEN:** Not obvious, I'll admit. But he was just so- so smarmy. Charming. Talk about "fake nice"...

**CHARIS:** I didn't mind him.

*There is an awkward pause between the two of them. Suddenly, the game loses its lustre.*