

Calls From Hell

By

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FADE IN:

INT. OFFICE, MAIN AREA - DAY

A fashionable, modern-day office with a large letter stand reading "MOMENT MARKETTING".

People are scattered on colourful couches, typing on their Mac laptops. Conference rooms surround an open area. Glass doors separate each - the new wave of transparency and openness of office spaces.

Behind one of those doors is MARGARET, 30s, with no makeup and in a wrinkled shirt, and TONYA, late 30s, put together and in an expensive suit, sitting across from each other inside the Conference Room.

They are talking, but glass doors completely absorb the sound. MIKE, late 30s, bouncing along, carrying a hot coffee, approaches the Conference Room door.

INT. OFFICE, CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

MARGARET

...but I am willing to learn.

Margaret dries her palms on her thighs while Mike enters the conference room and places coffee beside Tonya.

TONYA

Oh! Love this.

MIKE

Best part of my job.

TONYA

Alyce doesn't deserve you.

Mike and Tonya smile at each other and he leaves. Tonya takes a sip of coffee.

TONYA (CONT'D)

Mm. So, Margaret, where do you see yourself in three years?

MARGARET

Here.

Margaret laughs, but Tonya does not.

MARGARET (CONT'D)

I mean, this position is great. And
I am pretty good at assisting.

Tonya waits for more, but Margaret has nothing else to say.

TONYA

What about five years from now?

MARGARET

Marketing assistant as well.

Tonya types something on her laptop.

MARGARET (CONT'D)

It's a stellar position. Really.
And fully remote? I don't know what
could be better for someone with
kids. I am sure you understand.

TONYA

Not the kids' part.

MARGARET

Oh, I didn't mean- Sorry, I don't
assume everyone is a mother. That-

TONYA

Christmas party attendance is
mandatory.

MARGARET

Absolutely. Of course. You gotta
know who you are working with.

TONYA

We used to be in office five days a
week. All I ask now is just one day
in a year. Generous, don't you
think?

MARGARET

Very-

CUT TO:

INT. MARGARET'S APARTMENT, LIZI'S ROOM - DAY

MARGARET

(genuinely happy)
-generous of you, Lizi!

Margaret is in her pyjamas, standing in front of a flower-shaped child's potty, while LIZI(3) proudly shows her mom her poop. Margaret hugs Lizi.

MARGARET (CONT'D)

My baby! No more expensive nappies.

Margaret kisses Lizi on her cheek and lets her go. The toddler reaches for her poop.

LIZI

Let haw a tea poppy!

MARGARET

No, no, no!

Margaret picks up Lizi and carries her to the bathroom.

MARGARET (CONT'D)

We don't need that for a tea party.

INT. MARGARET'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN - DAY

Lizi picks up a letter and a pencil from a stack on the kitchen table. She draws on what we see as a "PAYMENT OVERDUE" notice while Margaret cooks breakfast. Phone rings.

MARGARET

(into the phone)

Hello?

TONYA (V.O.)

(over phone)

Hi, is this Margaret?

MARGARET

(into the phone)

Yes. Good morning. How are you?

TONYA (V.O.)

(over phone)

Good. We've decided that you would be a great addition to our team.

Margaret covers her mouth in excitement.

MARGARET

(into the phone)

Oh my God. Yeah, u-huh. I will.
Thank you. Thank you so much! Yes.
Right. Bye.

Margaret hangs up the phone. She dances to her humming of an upbeat song and lifts Lizi from her chair. Lizi is confused, but Margaret's contagious happiness spreads to the toddler.

Lizi laughs and drops the "PAYMENT OVERDUE" notice, which has drawings of flowers all over it.

INT. MARGARET'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN - DAY

Music is playing from a radio while Margaret works on her laptop. Lizi is building a colourful duck from the five-piece puzzle next to her.

A cooking timer goes off, and Margaret reluctantly leaves her work to remove a dish from her oven. She puts on oven mitts.

LIZI

Mama!

Lizi shows the finished duck.

DING! - Slack message arrives on Margaret's laptop.

MARGARET

Shoot!

Margaret rushes to her laptop, takes off the oven mitts and types something. Lizi pokes Margaret on her arm.

MARGARET (CONT'D)

Oh yes, that's beautiful! Who is next?

Margaret opens another puzzle of a frog and places it in front of Lizi, and then she returns to her computer. Margaret sniffs something and jumps up, grabbing her oven mitts.

EXT. GROCERY STORE - NIGHT

A storefront of an affordable grocery store. Busy weekday night.

INT. GROCERY STORE - NIGHT

Margaret packs her groceries at the checkout counter. Lizi is in the stroller.

Margaret's phone rings - the screen lights up "TONYA".

MARGARET
 (into the phone)
 Hello?

TONYA (V.O.)
 (over phone)
 What the Hell were you thinking,
 Margaret?

At the checkout, two women and a MALE CUSTOMER look at Margaret impatiently. The male customer taps his foot.

MARGARET
 (into the phone)
 Sorry?

MALE CUSTOMER
 Come on.

TONYA (V.O.)
 (over phone)
 The file you sent to the client. It
 wasn't final!

CASHIER
 Excuse me, miss?

Margaret waves her hand "do not bother me".

MARGARET
 (into the phone)
 I am so sorry! I'll resend it-

TONYA (V.O.)
 (over phone)
 Don't fucking bother.

Tonya hangs up.

<p>MALE CUSTOMER Can you do this later?! It's Tuesday, and I want to get home.</p>	<p>MARGARET (into the phone) Hello? Hello?</p>
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MARGARET (CONT'D)
 (nervously stutters)
 Just wait a minute. Can't you see I
 am on the phone?!

Lizi starts crying. Margaret jerks the stroller with Lizi,
 grabs her grocery bags and walks away.

INT. MARGARET'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN - DAY

Margaret is on her laptop, fidgeting, and Lizi draws beside her on a letter with heading LATE ALIMONY LETTER. The toddler lifts her drawing and shows it to Margaret.

LIZI
Orange tree!

Margaret notices that Lizi drew over the letter.

MARGARET
Lizi!

Margaret picks up Lizi-

CUT TO:

INT. MARGARET'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

-and sits her in front of the TV. Margaret turns on a kid's channel.

Lizi is about to cry as she watches her mom leave the living room, but the TV distracts the girl.

INT. MARGARET'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN - DAY

Margaret is on her computer, and she clicks the Zoom link. She enters an online meeting and her coworkers' faces appear on the screen.

TONYA (O.S.)
(on computer)
Hi! Let's wait a minute for
everyone to join.

Margaret takes a deep breath and unmutes herself.

MARGARET
H-hi! Tonya, I am so sorry for
sending the wrong file yesterday-

TONYA (O.S.)
(on computer)
Margaret, is that you? Someone's
mic is making annoying screeching
sound.

Margaret checks her mic.

MARGARET
 (nervously stutters)
 Hello? Can you hear me now?

MIKE (O.S.)
 (on computer) Yes, I can hear you.

TONYA
 We can't hear you!

Others on Zoom nod their heads "Yes."

MARGARET
 I am so sorry for-

TONYA (O.S.)
 (on computer)
 I can't hear still. We have to move
 on with a meeting.

"MUTED BY TONYA" pops up on Margaret's computer screen.

TONYA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 (on computer)
 Now that we are done with
 yesterday's delivery let's just
 jump to the Christmas OKRs.

INT. MARGARET'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Lizi sits in front of the TV.

MARGARET (O.S.)
 Fuck!

Lizi turns towards the sound, scared, then she turns back to
 the TV.

LIZI
 Fuck, fuck, fuck...

EXT. PARK - DAY

Margaret slowly walks with a stroller, and Lizi stumbles
 beside her, playing with a tree branch.

Mike comes down the park trail with his wife, ALYCE, 30s,
 soft smile, JOY(5), and inside a stroller, PATRIC(1).

MARGARET
 Mike? Hi! How are you?
 (to Patric)
 Gosh, you're a little one, aren't
 you?

MIKE

Hey. This is my wife, Alyce; this is Joy and Patric.

MARGARET

Margaret, nice to meet you. Yeah. Actually, it's great to see you.

(to Alyce)

Not in a weird way, just, ugh, sorry

(to Mike)

I wanted to chat about work with someone, you know?

Alyce points at Lizi's tree branch.

ALYCE

Hi, little lady. What have you got there?

MARGARET

Oh, that's Lizi. Lizi, say hi.

LIZI

No.

MARGARET

(to Mike)

How is work for you?

MIKE

Good! Yeah. Good. You?

MARGARET

Good! I love it. I just, umm, I sent the wrong file last week. So stupid.

MIKE

Don't worry about it. It happens.

MARGARET

Right.

MIKE

I'll see you Monday-

MARGARET

I wanted to ask about Tonya. Cause, you know, you've worked with her for a while.

MIKE

Yeah.

MARGARET

So? Was there anything, like, um, I mean, she is good, right?

MIKE

Yeah, she is.

MARGARET

But, like, could she be a little passive-aggressive or? Because I get calls from her, and I don't know how to describe it, but it's bad.

MIKE

Okay.

MARGARET

Is that normal?

Mike looks at Alyce and makes a small step towards her, trying to leave.

MIKE

I don't know, Margaret.

MARGARET

But you work in H.R., right?

MIKE

You know what? How about you come to me on Monday? We will schedule a meeting and record your thoughts.

Margaret waits for Mike to continue, but he only imitates a friendly smile. They both laugh awkwardly to break the pause.

MIKE (CONT'D)

You have a good one.

MARGARET

Right. Yeah!

Mike leaves, and Margaret grabs Lizi's hand and starts to walk away.

ALYCE

Dropped this.

Margaret turns around, surprised, to witness Alyce picking up Patric's pacifier from the ground. Mike and the kids are already at a distance.

MIKE (O.S.)

Darling, you coming?

Alyce stretches her hand, and Margaret shakes it, confused.

ALYCE
You should search Mia Green, 2017.

MARGARET
Excuse me?

ALYCE
I worked with Tonya. Bloom
Marketing.

ALYCE (CONT'D) MIKE
I wish I said something back Alyce!
then.
(to Lizi)
Bye, love.

Alyce leaves.

INT. MARGARET'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - TIME PASSES

View from a kitchen window. The red and orange leaves create
a lovely autumn palette. Phone rings.

MARGARET (O.S.)
Hi-

TONYA (O.S.)
(over phone)
Are you retarded?

MARGARET (O.S.)
I am sorry-

TONYA (O.S.)
(over phone)
I told you not to touch anything.

MARGARET (O.S.)
But it's my only job. You said-

Leaves fall off from the trees. The view outside of the
window becomes grey and hostile.

TONYA (O.S.)
(over phone)
I said don't touch shit! Do you
hear me?!

MARGARET (O.S.)
I don't understand; I completed
the-

TONYA (O.S.)
 (over phone)
 Margaret, do you hear me?!

MARGARET (O.S.)
 Yes.

Tonya hangs up, and Margaret starts crying.

Snow is falling outside the window. Icicles hang from the window overhang, and tree branches are covered in white.

INT. MARGARET'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Margaret's apartment is messy with pizza boxes, dirty laundry, and kid's toys.

Lizi sits in front of the TV like a zombie, eating Hula Hoops chips.

INT. MARGARET'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Margaret grabs a full wine glass; simultaneously, she fills out payment details on her phone. PAYMENT COMPLETE lights up on the screen. Margaret raises her glass.

MARGARET
 To another day in Hell.

She chugs the whole glass.

DING! - her laptop signals a new message from Slack. Margaret opens the "CHRISTMAS PARTY" chat.

Margaret types: "See you there, snakes", then she deletes and retypes "See you there, guys!"

The phone rings, and it is "TONYA". Margaret looks at the phone and starts hyperventilating. She forces herself to calm down. Finally, Margaret picks up her phone. Silence on both ends of the line.

TONYA
 (over phone)
 How annoying can you be? Really?

MARGARET
 What do you want? WHAT DO YOU WANT
 FROM ME?!

TONYA
 (over phone)
 Don't come to the party.

Tonya hangs up, and Margaret throws her phone across the room.

INT. MARGARET'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Lizi jumps from the loud noise but doesn't look away from the TV.

INT. MARGARET'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Margaret is anxiously trembling. She looks at the laptop screen and closes her Slack. An open Google Chrome window fills the screen - a news article titled "MIA GREEN. WORKPLACE BULLYING GONE TOO FAR".

EXT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

People enter the restaurant wearing festive clothes. Margaret walks up the stairs.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Margaret is at the bar. She watches Tonya across the room, chatting with NANCY, 40s, petite and bookish. Margaret turns to BARTENDER, 40s, have seen it all.

MARGARET
 One shot of vodka, please.

The bartender prepares her drink.

MIKE
 Margaret?

MARGARET
 Yes?

MIKE
 Nancy hasn't received her gift for Secret Santa. I checked, and it was supposed to come from you.

MARGARET
 Oh God, I completely forgot. I just am, I am such a-

BARTENDER
Shot of vodka.

INT. RESTAURANT, BATHROOM - NIGHT

Margaret wipes her tears and checks her face in the bathroom mirror. A YOUNGER WOMAN enters the restroom stall, ignoring how upset Margaret looks.

MARGARET
I am gonna lose this job. I need
this!

Tears fall down Margaret's face.

MARGARET (CONT'D)
You let this happen again. You let
them walk all over you. Enough!
Enough.

Margaret tries to smile. She straightens her back and fixes her hair.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Tonya stands and holds her glass of wine next to a stage with live music. A band is setting up, so there is just ambient noise. Tonya is the centre of attention, casually talking to Nancy, Mike, and TWO FEMALE COWORKERS. Margaret comes towards them.

TONYA
--Santa is not real, Bert. You're
46, I thought you knew that.

Nancy, Mike and two female coworkers laugh at every word.

MARGARET
This is as funny as the time we
first met!

TONYA
Excuse me?

Margaret steps closer and two MALE COWORKERS join the circle, and now Margaret and Tonya seem to be in the centre, surrounded by colleagues.

MARGARET
The interview?
(to everyone)
(MORE)

MARGARET (CONT'D)

She was like, who do you wanna be in three years? And I said, you know, assistant. And you were like, I eat those for breakfast.

TONYA

That is not how it went.

MARGARET

Sure, it did. You must have conducted so many interviews, you don't even--

TONYA

--as a matter of fact, I'll have to do more of them after the Christmas break.

MARGARET

You're letting me go?

TONYA

(smiles politely)

Margaret, this is a conversation for another time. So inappropriate. But so you!

MARGARET

Am I as inappropriate as your previous assistant? What was her name?

TONYA

What assistant?

MARGARET

Mia Green.

Tonya seems shocked.

MARGARET (CONT'D)

Oh yeah! Thank God they found her in that bathroom, huh? It would be harder to bury that lawsuit if she was...

Margaret mimics "dead".

MARGARET (CONT'D)

Isn't that why you left Bloom?

NANCY

What is she talking about?

Tonya looks at Margaret, defeated. Margaret savours the moment.

MARGARET

What am I talking about? I am talking about what it takes to be a boss. You have to put up a strong face and command people around you, so you can reach the goals. You can hurt people. And you can also make them happy.

(raises her glass)

How lucky we all are to have Tonya as our boss so our team closes every quarter. To Tonya!

EVERYONE

To Tonya!

Mike and the other four colleagues drink. Tonya offers to clink her glass to Margaret.

TONYA

Cheers.

Margaret reciprocates, and they drink simultaneously.

INT. MARGARET'S APARTMENT, LIZI'S ROOM - DAY

Lizi cries in her room. Margaret enters, tired and hungover.

MARGARET

Lizi, please. Not right now.

LIZI

You promised!

MARGARET

I know I promised. I am sorry, I-

Margaret stops and looks at her child. She picks up teacups and a teapot and places them on the tiny table.

MARGARET (CONT'D)

Miss Lizabeth, would you be so kind as to join me for tea?

Lizi smiles and picks up a teacup. A message from TONYA arrives on Margaret's phone. "Hi Margaret, hope you are having a great day off. So sorry to bother you...".

FADE OUT.