

COLD CALL

INT. APARTMENT, KITCHEN - DAY

The interior is plain. Pre-fab furniture and generic cooking utensils on the counter offer the only decoration.

A late twenties man, MARSHALL, sits at a small table. He eats a microwave breakfast meal.

He eats one last forkful of food and tosses the container into the garbage nearby. He gets up and exits.

EXT. HIGH RISE APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Marshall steps through the door and makes his way to a white van parked nearby.

He gets in and drives off.

INT/EXT. VAN - DAY

Marshall sits at red light. The green arrow pops up and Marshall steps on the gas. He stops instantly as he almost runs over a PEDESTRIAN.

The pedestrian pounds on the hood.

PEDESTRIAN

Hey, asshole! Why don't you watch
where the fuck you're going?

Marshall sighs heavily, waits for the pedestrian to pass and the actual traffic light to turn green, and drives off.

INT. CALL CENTER - DAY

Marshall sits in a cubicle in the middle of the room that's surrounded by a hundred others, each occupied by their own operator.

He wears a headset, and looks at a computer screen in front of him. On the screen is "JAMES McALLISTER. 555-2260".

Marshall punches a number into the keypad of his computer, and a second later the phone rings on the other end.

JAMES (V.O.)

Hello?

MARSHALL
Hello. Mister McAllister, please.

JAMES (V.O.)
This is he.

MARSHALL
Hello, Mister McAllister. My name is Marshall, and I'm calling you today on behalf of T-T-O telephone service.

JAMES (V.O.)
Go fuck yourself, loser.

The phone clicks and Marshall is left with the sound of a dial tone.

Marshall laughs lightly to himself and hangs up. He presses a couple keys on the keyboard, and a new name and number pop up. "SHARON MELVILLE. 555-6408".

He hits a couple keys once again, and a moment later a phone rings on the other end. A MAN answers.

MAN (V.O.)
Hello?

MARSHALL
Hi. Miss Melville, please.

MAN (V.O.)
She's kinda busy at the moment. Who's calling?

MARSHALL
Hello, sir. My name's Marshall, and I'm calling on behalf of T-T-O telephone service. I'd like to take this opportunity to--

MAN (V.O.)
You're fucking kidding me, right?

MARSHALL
Sir?

MAN (V.O.)
Calling people in the middle of the day and bugging them like this?

MARSHALL
I'm just doing my job, sir.

MAN (V.O.)
Then get a new fucking job!

The phone slams down. Hard. Marshall winces. He slowly moves his hand to the keypad, but stops when he hears a woman's scream on the other end.

WOMAN (V.O.)
No! Please! Just leave me alone!

MAN (V.O.)
Shut up! You'll only make it worse!

WOMAN (V.O.)
Please, just let me go! I won't tell anyone! I swear!

MAN (V.O.)
I said shut up!

The woman's scream pierces through Marshall's headset and he quickly removes it.

He hold the headset at away from him, just enough to hear what's going on. He listens to the screams until they suddenly stop.

Marshall quickly puts the headset back on. His eyes are wide with fear.

MARSHALL
Hello? Hello?

MAN (V.O.)
Forget you ever heard this.

The phone clicks and Marshall is left with nothing but the buzz of a dial tone.

MARSHALL
Hello?

Marshall hits a few keys on his keypad and an address pops up under Sharon's name and phone number. "500 W MONROE - APARTMENT 512".

Marshall writes the address down and quickly exits.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Marshall sits in his van, parked across from the building at 500 W Monroe.

He watches people enter and exit, and eyes each one of them suspiciously.

A MAN, late thirties, exits the building with a large black garbage bag in each hand.

Marshall notices the man look at his surroundings before he walks into an alley around the corner.

Marshall quickly exits his van and follows the man into the

ALLEY

The man tosses one garbage bag into a dumpster. He raises the second, and just as he's about to chuck it in, Marshall comes from behind and grabs hold of it.

MARSHALL

Give me that.

MAN

What the fuck are you doing?

MARSHALL

You're not getting away with this.

MAN

Let go you fucking psycho.

Marshall and the man struggle with the bag until it tears open. Garbage spills out all over the street.

Marshall freezes and the man tosses the empty, torn garbage bag to the ground in anger.

MAN

Nice job, asshole. Have fun cleaning it up.

The man storms off. Marshall reaches into the dumpster and tears through numerous bags. Nothing but garbage in all of them.

He exits the alley.

INT. 500 W MONROE - DAY

Marshall, covered in dirt and garbage, enters and walks to the front desk where a CLERK, early thirties, sits and reads a newspaper. The clerk looks at him in disgust.

CLERK

What the hell happened to you?

MARSHALL

Oh, nothing. I was wondering if you could help me find someone who lives in this building. Sharon Melville?

CLERK

Oh, she skipped out on you too, huh?

Marshall is confused.

MARSHALL

I don't follow.

CLERK

Let's just say you're not the only one looking for her. She skipped out on us without paying her last month's rent.

MARSHALL

She did?

CLERK

Left her furniture and everything.

MARSHALL

But I just called her. Some guy answered, and she sounded like she was in trouble. She was screaming.

CLERK

Listen, fella, I don't know who you think you talked to, but Sharon Melville hasn't been in her apartment in six months. Nobody has.

MARSHALL

What? Six months?

CLERK

That's right. Now if there's nothing else I can help you with, I'll have to bid you good day.

MARSHALL

She just disappeared? Didn't you try to track her down?

CLERK

Filed a police report, per the usual, but that's gotten us nowhere.

MARSHALL

Yeah, but are they still looking for her? I mean, I just heard her.

CLERK

I don't know, buddy. I'm not a cop.

The clerk goes back to his paper. Marshall exits. He shakes his head in bewilderment.

INT. VAN - DAY

Marshall sits in the driver's seat. He stares at the paper with Sharon's address written on it.

MARSHALL

I'm such a fool.

He crumples it up and throws it into the passenger seat.

He looks up into the rear view mirror and spots SHARON MELVILLE, mid twenties, in the back seat.

Her hair is dirty and matted, and she has numerous scratches on her face.

He quickly turns to the back seat. Empty. He looks back to the rear view mirror, and she's gone.

He shakes his head in disbelief, and catches a glimpse of the wadded up paper in the passenger's seat, now with a slight red tint to it.

He picks it up and unfolds it. In large red letters, written over the address is "FIND ME".

MARSHALL

How? How do I find you?

Marshall looks to the rear view mirror to find nothing once again. He throws the paper back into the passenger's seat and drives off.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Marshall sits at a computer, reading an internet article about Sharon Melville. The headline reads "DOWNTOWN WOMAN STILL MISSING AFTER 3 MONTHS".

Marshall rests his head in his hands.

MARSHALL

You're just imagining things. Being cooped up in that cube all day has finally got to you.

Marshall gets up and heads to the

BATHROOM

He turns on the faucet and runs his hand under the water. He cups his hands and splashes water on his face.

He turns the faucet off and opens the medicine cabinet.

He takes two aspirin from a bottle, pops them in his mouth, and puts the bottle back.

He closes the medicine cabinet and Sharon Melville stands behind him in the reflection. He quickly turns around to look at her.

MARSHALL

Tell me how to find you? Where are you?

Sharon points at the mirror. Marshall turns around to see "ROUTE 41. DRIVE SOUTH" written on it in thick black letters.

MARSHALL

Route forty one? But where?

Marshall turns back around. Sharon is gone.

Marshall quickly exits to the

LIVING ROOM

Marshall grabs his keys off a hook on the door and exits the apartment.

EXT. ROUTE 41 - NIGHT

Marshall's van speeds down the lonely highway.

INT. VAN - DAY

Marshall peers through the windshield. He searches through the darkness.

MARSHALL

C'mon, Sharon. You're gonna have to help me out more than this.

Sharon suddenly appears up ahead, just at the end of the headlight's reach.

MARSHALL

Oh shit!

Marshall quickly slams on the brakes. He stops only a few feet from Sharon.

Marshall stares at her as she stands perfectly still in front of the van.

The headlights shine brightly upon her and expose numerous cuts and bruises over her entire body.

She slowly raises her left arm and points to the woods on the side of the road.

Marshall looks over into the darkness and back to Sharon, who stands perfectly still.

Marshall reaches over to the glove box and removes a flashlight.

He exits the van and walks into the woods.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Marshall slowly walks along and uses his flashlight to scan the surrounding area.

A rustle in the bushes stops him in his tracks. He points his flashlight at it to find a raccoon.

MARSHALL
Jesus Christ.

Marshall points the flashlight back to the path ahead and shines it right on Sharon.

Marshall jumps in fear, but quickly regains his composure.

MARSHALL
Please stop doing that.

Sharon raises her right hand and points to a shovel that sticks in the ground nearby.

Marshall walks to it and looks back to Sharon. She moves her hands in a mock digging fashion.

MARSHALL
What? Here? This is where you
are?

Sharon points to the shovel again.

MARSHALL
Okay.

Marshall picks up the shovel and digs.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT - LATER

Marshall stands in the hole, which is now up to his knees. He scoops up a shovel full of dirt and tosses it to the side. He stops and bends down for a closer look.

An arm protrudes from the dirt. Marshall looks at it in shock, then turns his gaze to Sharon who stands nearby.

She motions for him to continue. He scoops out the dirt around her with his hands and exposes her face and torso.

MARSHALL
Don't worry. I'll have you out of
here soon enough.

Marshall looks up. Sharon is gone.

MARSHALL
What the hell?

A large stick whacks Marshall in the back of the head and knocks him unconscious.

EXT. RIVER BANK - NIGHT

Marshall lies unconscious and tied to a tree. STOVEPIPE, early fifties, throws a bucket of water on his face and he comes to.

Marshall looks around and struggles to get free. Stovepipe laughs.

STOVEPIPE

I wouldn't bother if I were you. You ain't goin' nowhere.

MARSHALL

What are you doing? Let me go!

STOVEPIPE

Sorry, friend. I don't think I can do that. What I can do is beat you to death and throw you in a shallow grave like I did your friend.

MARSHALL

You killed Sharon?

STOVEPIPE

So that was her name? Interesting. She didn't look like a Sharon. A Jill? Maybe. Aww hell, I guess it really don't matter what her name was, now does it?

MARSHALL

But why? What did she do to you?

STOVEPIPE

Walking around the city like she owned it, buying her five dollar coffees and hundred dollar shoes and looking down on me like I was some kind of bum. I ain't no bum. I got a home.

Stovepipe points to a ratty houseboat seated on the edge of the river. It has two large windows and the cabin is fashioned out of ratty, dried out shingles.

STOVEPIPE

But apparently that wasn't good enough for old Sharon. Oh no. Bitch couldn't even spare a buck for something to eat. Ri-goddamn-diculous if you ask me.

MARSHALL
So you killed her?

STOVEPIPE
That's right. Nobody looks down on
Stovepipe.

MARSHALL
Is it money you want? I have
money. Just let me go.

STOVEPIPE
Can't. You know too much now.

Stovepipe reaches into his back pocket and retrieves a rusty pocket knife.

He bends down and presses the rusty blade against Marshall's cheek and slowly drags it across, cutting a gash in Marshall's face. Marshall screams in pain.

Stovepipe stands up straight.

STOVEPIPE
Don't worry. I won't keep you
around for few days of fun like I
did with her.

Stovepipe laughs and slowly bends down toward Marshall with his pocket knife at the ready.

Leaves rustle nearby. Stovepipe quickly stops and looks over.

He uses Marshall's flashlight to scan the area and shines it right on Sharon, who stares at him with a look of pure evil.

Stovepipe's expression turns to one of pure horror.

STOVEPIPE
No...No...You're dead. You're
dead!

Sharon slowly moves toward Stovepipe. He picks up a large rock and throws it at her. It misses completely.

Stovepipe backs up as fast as he can, his eyes fixed on Sharon as she slowly advances.

Stovepipe trips over a root in the ground, but quickly gets up and retreats into his rickety old houseboat.

Sharon stops and moves to Marshall, who stares in fear.

MARSHALL

Please. Don't hurt me. I was trying to help you.

Sharon bends down over Marshall. He turns his face away and screams. She unties his ropes and lets him loose.

Marshall stops his scream. He and Sharon lock stares.

Sharon points to the houseboat.

MARSHALL

What?

Sharon slowly moves her finger along the river bank and stops at a gas can, seated on the dirt just next to the boat.

MARSHALL

I can't do that.

Sharon points again. This time more forceful. Marshall slowly gets up and walks to the gas can.

Marshall grabs the gas can and looks to Sharon. She moves her hands up and down in a dumping motion.

Marshall pours the gas over the houseboat as Stovepipe watches through the window.

STOVEPIPE

Stop that! Stop it!

Marshall watches Stovepipe disappear from the window, and a second later sees the doorknob turning feverishly.

STOVEPIPE

Let me out of here! Let me out!

Marshall looks to Sharon. She holds her right hand out as if she grasps the doorknob.

She raises her left hand and motions thumbs down.

Marshall removes a matchbook from his pocket and lights it aflame. He stares at it momentarily before he tosses it on the houseboat. It bursts into flames.

STOVEPIPE

Please! Let me out of here! I'm sorry! I'm sorry!

The fire quickly engulfs the houseboat and Stovepipe's screams echo over the sound of crackling wood.

Stovepipe punches out a window just as the roof of the houseboat caves in. His screams subside.

Marshall watches the boat burn until it sinks like a stone. All is quiet on the dark river.

He looks to his right, and Sharon stands next to him. She is no longer covered with cuts and bruises and looks quite attractive.

She smiles as the last portion of the boat sinks into the river.

MARSHALL

You're...you're not cut up anymore.

SHARON

You've done a good thing.

MARSHALL

But...why me?

SHARON

I knew you'd listen. That you'd hear and you'd help me.

MARSHALL

Hear what?

SHARON

What I needed you to, and you came through for me.

MARSHALL

But, I'm nobody. I'm just a telemarketer.

SHARON

You're much more than that. You're a hero.

Sharon reaches over and slightly runs her hand over Marshall's cheek.

A bright light shines down from the sky. Sharon steps into it and slowly drifts away toward the heavens.

She looks down at Marshall.

SHARON

Thank you, Marshall. Thank you for everything.

Sharon slowly fades away with the bright light, and leaves Marshall alone in the darkness.

EXT. ROUTE 41 - NIGHT

Police cars and an ambulance are parked along the road with their lights flashing.

Marshall leans against the back of his van and stands next to a FEMALE DETECTIVE, mid thirties. He has a bandage over the cut on his face.

Marshall watches paramedics carry a body bag into the back of the ambulance.

The Detective takes a pen and small notepad from her pocket. She opens the notepad.

DETECTIVE

So, can you run me through how you found the body again?

MARSHALL

Well, I pulled over for a little rest stop, was walking down the hill there to get out of sight, and fell over it.

DETECTIVE

And that's how you cut your face?

MARSHALL

Yeah. A branch on the ground got me.

Marshall holds a hand up to the bandage. The Detective closes her notepad and puts it back in her pocket.

DETECTIVE

Understood. You did the right thing calling this in. She's been missing for about six months now, and we can finally close this one out. We'll probably need you for some further questioning though.

MARSHALL

Whatever I can do to help.

DETECTIVE

Guess it's just one of those things, huh? Like you were meant to find her.

MARSHALL

Maybe.

DETECTIVE

But I'm sure her family will be grateful. They can give her a proper burial and hopefully move on.

Marshall looks to the sky.

MARSHALL

Yeah...move on.

THE END