

CUTOFF TIME

By

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INT. CALL CENTER - LATE NIGHT

A maze of empty cubicles stitched one to another in a brightly lit, seemingly endless space.

A cubicle in the middle of the office shows some signs of activity.

VICTOR (early 40s), boring tie, and shirt all combined in a way unofficial style sits on his office chair. Head-set hanging around his neck.

In front of him - a large PC monitor scrambled with a thousand running apps.

He SPEAKS on his cell phone as we meet him. As he does that, we focus on some more memorabilia in his cubicle.

VICTOR  
(over phone)  
...yup! let's make it eleven plus  
eleven...yes please, stripes and  
hot wings...

His cubicle is painted with dozens of sticker notes, half-empty soda and a coffee cup battle over on the tiny left space on the desk, just next to the keyboard.

VICTOR (CONTD)  
...well, I'll take a cheeseburger  
menu...Coke, please...yes...

Among the junk, there is a priceless thing - framed picture of his 15-year old daughter, SARAH - a cutie. Takes important place on his desk. Nothing even near it.

VICTOR (CONTD)  
Delivery please...yes...no, to the  
office, please. I live near by.  
Great! Thanks a bunch.

He ends the call. Starts typing on his cell phone.

VICTOR'S P.O.V.

*Text message. Says: Dinner's ordered. See you in a short!*

Victor sets the cell phone aside and focuses on the hard-copy document.

He flips over it. Takes a look at the monitor.

VICTOR'S P.O.V.

(CONTINUED)

Corporate call app. Different preferences. At the top, right angle - clearly notable box - cutoff time counter.

Victor gets back to the hard-copy document.

VICTOR'S P.O.V.

Monthly evaluation. Poor grades. We see some sentences underlined:

*"LOW PRODUCTIVITY, POOR ELOQUENCE, UNDER THE AVERAGE, SOFT SKILL EXERCISES ARE A MUST..."*

Victor sets the doc aside. His face expression tells us that it's Deja vu...

He lets his emotions sink in. Takes out the small format Dictaphone from underneath his desk. Turns it on.

VICTOR  
 (into the device)  
 Take 15...  
 (beat, then officially)  
 Good day, you have reached  
 Sit-n-Shop, Victor on the phone,  
 how may I be of service?  
 (listens to the imaginary  
 customer)  
 Of course sir! We have the offer  
 that suits you up! Would you be  
 interested in...  
 (halts)

He kills the device. Exhales. A new scenario cooking in his head.

He turns the device on.

VICTOR  
 (into the device)  
 Take 16...  
 (concentration)  
 Good day, you have reached  
 Sit-n-Shop, this is... AH THE FUCK  
 ALREADY!!!

He tosses the device across the desk. His head in his palms. A few moments of complete silence. Catharsis...

He looks at the wall clock. Start's gathering his stuff along the desk when --

--App on the monitor BURSTS INTO LIFE! AN INCOMING CALL.

(CONTINUED)

Victor quickly sets himself up at the desk. Businesslike. His head-set in on his head now, mike near his mouth.

Before taking the call, he throws a peek at the cutoff time counter.

VICTOR'S P.O.V.

**20 min until the cutoff time.**

Victor gathers himself in a second. He is calm, he is professional.

VICTOR  
Good evening, you have reached  
Sit-n-shop, this is Victor  
speaking. How may I be of service?

Silence.

VICTOR (CONTD)  
Good evening, Sit-n-shop. How can I  
be of service?

We hear a MALE VOICE - middle aged, dead serious.

MALE VOICE  
Halo? Sit-n-shop?

VICTOR  
Yes sir. May I take your order?

MALE VOICE  
You said it's Victor, right?

VICTOR  
Yes sir. Talking to Victor. How can  
I assist?

MALE VOICE  
(exhales)  
Yeah...you still have  
that...ehm...that device...'think  
it was called the leaf master?

VICTOR  
Leaf master? You are referring to  
the leaf vacuum?

MALE VOICE  
Well...technically I would say it's  
more of a leaf blower.

(CONTINUED)

VICTOR

(rolls eyes)

Yes, you are correct sir. It's a leaf gatherer actually...Unfortunately, we do not hold it in our current assortment. It's a season product, but the order is plausible...

MALE VOICE

No! I don't need an order. I need leaf master.

VICTOR

Well...

(checks the timer)

You know what? We're nearing the end of the shift today, would you be kind enough to give a call tomorrow, we can warm transfer you to our storage personnel right away...

MALE VOICE

Victor...you're sales representative of Sit-n-Shop, right?

VICTOR

(confused)

Pardon me?

MALE VOICE

What is your motto?

VICTOR

Our motto?

MALE VOICE

You gonna repeat yourself all night?

(bursts out)

WHAT'S YOUR GOD DAMN MOTTO!!?

Victor jerks back. He quickly gathers himself. Just a pissed off customer, been there before.

He eyes a larger-format paper note hanging on the cubicle wall.

VICTOR'S P.O.V.

*"Layoff phrases for a PESKY CU"*

(CONTINUED)

- *Sorry sir, we have an incoming call awaiting.*

- *Unfortunately I am not acquainted with...*

...and so on...

Victor gets his attention back to the monitor app.

VICTOR

Sir, unfortunately, I have another call awaiting...

MALE VOICE

Let him wait.

VICTOR

Sir, really...

MALE VOICE

(interrupts)

With just one call...what? You remember what?

VICTOR

(awed)

...in your hands. With just one call right in your hands...

MALE VOICE

Thank you for remembering the motto. Now, how many times have you respected that motto with the customer?

VICTOR

Sir, we will really have to end...

MALE VOICE

You damn fuck. You've still haven't figured out who's calling, right?

Victor's puzzled.

MALE VOICE (CONTD)

Seven fucking years aboard. Seven years given my best to serve that motto. Seven best evals in a row...For what? To get dumped cause of a fuckhead like you? Cause you're so incompetent, uninterested, un-fucking-motivated...

(beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MALE VOICE (CONTD) (cont'd)  
Rings any bells now?

VICTOR  
Look, whatever happened, now is not  
neither time nor place to deal with  
it.

MALE VOICE  
(dead serious)  
Now is the time! Place as well. I  
was your **mentor** you piece a shit! I  
failed to provide you with proper  
motivation back then...It was my  
skin...I'll try again now...you  
fail, it will be your skin.  
Understand?

VICTOR  
(eyes the timer)  
Sir...I'm sorry if you're  
dissatisfied with our service, but  
the time...

MALE VOICE  
Still have a cutoff time counter,  
huh?  
(laughs)  
You think that will save you?  
(beat)  
Listen good now. Here's how you  
introduce a proper motivation. You  
have time 'till cutoff, tonight to  
convince me as a buyer that not  
only you have that leaf master on  
stock, to buy it right now, no  
discounts, no offers even if I am  
on a high-rise flat, convince me to  
buy it...now.

VICTOR  
This is ridiculous. We must end the  
call...

MALE VOICE  
If you fail to do so, you  
underachieving fuck... your  
daughter's neck will snap so  
loud...you'll hear it right there.

Victor's numbed.

(CONTINUED)

VICTOR  
What did you say?

MALE VOICE  
I think you've heard me.

Victor activates the app's chat. A chat balloon appears.  
It's someone named ANA G.

Victor stars typing really quickly.

MALE VOICE (CONTD)  
Do I have your full attention now?  
So, here are the rules. You don't  
get of the line, no mute, not warm  
transfer, just you, me, and your  
sales qualities. Time flies, my  
friend and if the cutoff time ends  
the call before I'm satisfied...you  
know what comes next.

VICTOR  
(typing)  
You're liar! This call is being  
recorded, you'll have PD on your  
doorstep by the morning!

Same time, he pings ANA G.

CHAT BALLOON:

*"Ana, you there? Ana reply quick! Call police have madman  
threatening me on call"*

No reply.

Victor looks at the cutoff timer.

TIMER:

***13 min until the cutoff time.***

MALE VOICE  
Am I? Okay. Am I lying you live on  
115 st. number 37?

Victor's eyes widen. He's totally shocked.

MALE VOICE (CONTD)  
...and this...gorgeous angel  
sitting right next to me is named  
Sarah?

(CONTINUED)



VICTOR

You fucking animal! Let me hear her! Put her on the line RIGHT NOW!

Quiet on the other side. We hear a faint girl's VOICE. We can feel her trembling of fear.

SARAH (O.S.)

(crying)

Dad?

VICTOR

Sarah? Sarah, honey, you OK?

SARAH (O.S.)

Dad, please don't let him hurt me...

VICTOR

Sarah, everything's gonna be okay honey. You hear me?

MALE VOICE

(interferes)

I think this was sufficient for proof of life. Now, you use this little time you have wise.

VICTOR

(matter of fact)

You're crazy! Whoever you are, whatever I have done to you, please do not hurt my kid! You hear me!

At the same time, Victor tries to text 911 from his cell phone.

MESSAGE READS:

*"Please help. My kid held hostage at 115 St. no 37."*

Sends. "No reply" message bounces back in a second.

*" Messaging service for emergency numbers is unavailable. Please call 911."*

MALE VOICE

Tick- tack, Victor. I'm not kidding, man...

Victor's in hell, stress and panic literally pouring outta him, yet he does his best to stay focused.

(CONTINUED)

He's all over the place trying to find a way to detach himself.

Suddenly - his cell phone buzzes. Text message received.

Victor pays attention.

MESSAGE READS:

*"Your order is with the deliverer, ready and awaiting".*

TIMER:

***10 min until cutoff the time.***

Victor scans around. He spots the Dictaphone at the desk's angle. An idea!

INT. VICTOR'S HOME - SAME TIME

Lights are off. Dark as in a dungeon. We only see hardly shaped SILHOUETTES, two of them sitting on a couch.

The LARGER silhouette has a phone receiver next to his ear.

Holds the SMALLER silhouette - Sarah next to him tight.

He listens to Victor's elaborating on the other side.

VICTOR (O.S.)

(monotonously)

...so, I can assure you that due to these top performances and extremely suitable price, and of course our motto, you have a reason more to buy the marvelous leaf master and have it as irreplaceable asset to your home this fall...

There's a CLICK sound cutting Victor's speech off. Now we hear polite recorded addressing of the HOSTESS announcing the cutoff time.

HOSTESS (VOICE)

Respected customers! Sit-n-shop shift for the day is over! We kindly ask you to call us back tomorrow, working hours being...

The large silhouette slowly lowers the phone receiver. We can almost feel his disappointment over the outcome.

(CONTINUED)

We hear Sarah WHINING in the dark.

MALE VOICE

My God...I have never encountered  
jackass this size in my life...Even  
with your life on a line, he's dead  
meat all through...not a single  
spark of energy...

He starts leaning over her. She starts SOBBING hard.

MALE VOICE (CONTD)

Sorry girl...this kind of  
father...does not deserve you...

SARAH

No, please! No!

A blunt HIT outta nowhere sends the large silhouette to drop  
as unplugged.

CLICK - Lights go on - showing Victor, all breathless and  
sweaty. Holding chicken wings bucket and baseball bat in his  
hands.

VICTOR

(to the man lying on the  
floor)

You can consider this VIP delivery,  
you crazy FUCK!

Sarah, whom we first time see in flesh, all startled jumps  
into her's father arms.

SARAH

(joyfully)

Dad! You've made it!

(beat)

How...

INT. CALL CENTER - SAME TIME

It's the **Dictaphone** on Victor's desk. Tape inside still  
rolling.

Victor's head-set around it. The device fits it perfectly.

VICTOR (ON TAPE)

...and remember! With just one  
call, right in your hands!

Tape ends.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

11.

FADE OUT: