COLD CALL

Written by

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Based on a true story

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DRAFT

INT. SCAFFLOW OFFICE - MORNING

A cramped, not-very-sexy startup office.

Cheap vinyl banner on the wall: "SCAFFLOW - THE CRM FOR SCAFFOLDING PROS"

Fluorescent lights hum. Exposed ductwork. A dying plant in the corner.

BARRY SPERRY, 40s, charismatic “good ol’ boy” ex-middle-school-baseball-coach energy in a startup hoodie, stands at a whiteboard covered in half-erased pipeline numbers and arrows. The company values are written on the board: OWN EVERY LEAD, CLOSE THE LOOP, NEVER LOSE A NAME, ALWAYS FOLLOW UP

MIA, early 20s, the lone intern, sits at a wobbly desk with a laptop and a cheap headset.

Barry underlines a number on the board with a squeaky marker.

BARRY
This right here is our whole life.

On the board: MONTHLY CHURN and NEW SUBS scribbled.

BARRY (CONT’D)
If this number... “new subscribers” stays bigger than this number “cancellations”... we get to keep coming here to drink terrible coffee.

He taps the churn number. Insert to an over used Keurig machine.

BARRY (CONT’D)
The second this one wins, we are dead. Not “pivot”. Dead.

Mia nods, half amused.

MIA
Inspirational.

BARRY
That’s the job. They tell you startups are bean bags and IPOs..

He gestures around at the dingy office. Clearly over caffeinated and feeling himself.

BARRY (CONT'D)
We're the "please don't unsubscribe" kind.

He tosses the marker, claps his hands once.

BARRY (CONT'D)
Alright. Big picture. Scafflow is a CRM for scaffolding and construction outfits. We help them track bids, jobs, who owes what. It is not sexy.

He holds up a hand.

BARRY (CONT'D)
But it is sticky.

MIA
(Half questioning, half confirming)
Sticky is good.

BARRY
Sticky is rent. Sticky is a big payout for all of us.

He moves to her desk, leans on the back of her chair, pointing at her screen.

ON MIA'S LAPTOP - a bare-bones web app. Rows of customer names, contact counts, subscription status.

BARRY (CONT'D)
Our guys don't read marketing blogs, they don't "join the funnel," okay? They don't care about drip campaigns or push notifications.

He catches himself, looks at her.

BARRY (CONT'D)
They care about not dropping a scaffold on somebody's Mercedes and getting paid on time.

MIA
So... no TikTok strategy.

BARRY
If you ever say "TikTok strategy" to one of these guys, they will hang up so hard your headset will fall off.

She smiles despite herself.

BARRY (CONT'D)
They work outside. They like clipboards. They yell a lot. They are not your average "technical savvy customer."

He makes air quotes badly.

BARRY (CONT'D)
Which is why conferences are gold. You get 'em in a hotel bar? You buy 'em a steak? That's where you close.

He taps her headset on the desk.

BARRY (CONT'D)
The rest of the year, we live on this. Cold calls. Actual conversations. Man to man.

Beat.

MIA
Or woman to man.

BARRY
Or woman to man. Absolutely. Just human to human. You talk to them like you'd talk to your uncle, not like a robot. Become their friends. Know their family. Transparency is everything.

Mia glances at the pipeline chart on her screen.

MIA
So most of my time here is just... calling people who don't want to talk to me.

BARRY
Yes. But the ones who do? Those are the difference between us being a company and me going back to yelling at seventh graders about grounders.

MIA
(pondering)
You coached baseball?

BARRY
Yeah. Middle school. Before this.

He shrugs it off.

BARRY (CONT'D)
OK. Let me show you how to do a cold call.

He sits at his computer, wakes up his monitor.

He leans in and makes a call.

No answer. He shrugs it off and immediately pulls up the next.

BARRY
(clicking fast)
We archive that for later then move on to the next.

Close up on monitor:

A simple CRM screen:
LEADS
JACOB HENLEY - HENLEY CONSTRUCTION
STATUS: NEW
TITLE: OWNER / CEO
PHONE: (713) 555-0134

Back to the scene:

BARRY (CONT'D)
Fresh lead. Met us at some regional conference in Houston. Watch closely.

He clicks CALL on a softphone app. The SPEAKERPHONE RINGS.

BARRY (CONT'D)
(low, to Mia)
Key thing is, you sound like a person, not a script.

He straightens in his chair as the line connects.

JACOB (V.O.)
Hello?

Barry flips the charm on.

BARRY
Hello, Jacob! This is Barry Sperry calling from Scafflow. We're the CRM for scaffolding and construction outfits. How you doing today?

JACOB (V.O.)
(Bit of a southwestern drawl)
I'm alright, son. Can't complain.

BARRY
Love to hear that. Did I catch you at a bad time?

JACOB (V.O.)
No, no. The business more or less runs itself these days. I don't really do much of the day-to-day.

Barry gives Mia a smug little nod. See?

BARRY
(Says with a witty smirk)
That's the dream.

JACOB (V.O.)
I spend most of my time on the ministry now.

Barry hits MUTE. The call timer continues silently.

BARRY
(to Mia, low)
This is where you act interested in their personal life. You connect, then you steer back to the pitch.

Mia nods, taking mental notes.

JACOB (V.O.)
Hello?

BARRY (CONT'D)
Sorry, still here, Jacob! Ministry, that's interesting. What kind of church is it?

A pause. Jacob's voice comes back changed. Softer, concentrated.

JACOB (V.O.)
Well, it’s not a church. It’s personal one-on-one work.
(beat)
Actually, Barry. I really didn’t expect this. The Holy Ghost is asking me to speak with you. Do you mind?

Barry blinks. Looks at Mia, who shrugs.

BARRY
Uh... sorry?

JACOB (V.O.)
The Holy Ghost is asking to speak with you, Barry.

Beat. Barry forces a smile he doesn’t feel.

JACOB (V.O.)
Rather, through me. Do you mind if I do?

BARRY
Sure. Yeah. Go ahead.

Mia sits up, uncertain if this is some weird sales tactic or not.

JACOB (V.O.)
You used to coach baseball?

Barry’s proud smirk comes up automatically.

BARRY
I did! I mean, yeah, a long time ago—

JACOB (V.O.)
Middle school boys. Red dirt field. Lights that didn’t always work.

Mia glances at a dusty LITTLE LEAGUE TROPHY on a shelf by Barry’s desk she hadn’t noticed before.

BARRY
Did I... did I tell you that at the conference?

JACOB (V.O.)
There was a girl who came to every game. Sat on the third-base side.
(MORE)

JACOB (CONT'D)
Ponytail. Green jacket. You remember her don’t you?

Barry’s hand tightens on the mouse. He’s looking at the contact in the software.

BARRY
I don’t... I’m not sure who you’re talking about.

JACOB (V.O.)
You know who I’m talking about, son.

Mia looks between him and the speakerphone, sensing the air change.

JACOB (V.O.) (CONT'D)
You thought no one would you see, Barry?

Silence. Only the faint electronic hum of the office.

BARRY
(Getting irritated and scared at the same time)
I have no idea what you’re talking-

JACOB (V.O.)
Did you ever say her name out loud after that night?

Barry’s leg bounces under the desk.

BARRY
(Irritated)
I don’t know what you’re talking about.

JACOB (V.O.)
You see the bruise on her cheek when you close your eyes. You hear the gravel under the truck tires.

Barry’s eyes well up.

Mia leans in, spooked.

MIA
(soft)
Barry? What is this?

He doesn’t look at her.

BARRY
(to the phone)
I think we should just talk about the software, sir, I don't—

JACOB (CONT'D)
Say her name, son.

Barry stares at the desk, jaw clenched.

JACOB (V.O.)
That's why you're stuck. That's why you grind all day and never feel full. Say her name. I'm here to help you.

Mia is frozen; half employee, half witness.

BARRY
(barely)
I don't know... I'm sorry.

It looks as though Barry is about to disconnect the call.

Jacob's tone shifts suddenly, almost cheerful.

JACOB (CONT'D)
Thank you for letting him speak with you, Barry. See? That's what I travel around the world doing for people. I don't know when the Holy Ghost wishes to speak, but when he does my job is to find the recipient. I actually don't even know what he says - that's between you and him. Now, where did we leave off?

Barry can't breathe. Mia watches him like he's someone she doesn't quite know.

BARRY
(looking at Mia, trying to be professional)
Could.. we find a good time to schedule a demo?

JACOB (V.O.)
No need, Barry. If it'll help my guys keep better track of jobs, send me the contract. Full thing. We'll start tomorrow.

Barry stares at his monitor.

BARRY
Uh... yeah. We can do... fifty percent off the first year. Full suite. All features, including the new A.I. models.

JACOB (V.O.)
That’s perfect! Email it over. I’ll sign it today.

CLICK. The call drops.

Silence. The call window returns to the CRM screen. The little LEAD STATUS flips from NEW to WON.

Barry swipes at his eyes, embarrassed. He looks at Mia, trying to reset.

BARRY (CONT'D)
And that...

He gestures weakly toward the speakerphone.

BARRY (CONT'D)
...is how you close a deal.

Mia just stares at him.

CUT TO:

Title Card: THREE DAYS LATER

INT. SCAFFLOW OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Same office, different day. A little messier. Coffee cups. Open chip bag.

Barry and Mia work at their desks. The mood is muted but “normal.”

A Slack notification DINGS on Mia’s laptop.

ON MIA’S SCREEN - a CUSTOMER SUPPORT CHANNEL

CLIENT - IRONSTATE SCAFFOLDING:
"HEY, SEEING SOME WEIRD DUPLICATE CONTACTS IN OUR ACCOUNT?"

Another one pops in.

CLIENT - REDRIVER RESTORATION:
"DID YOU GUYS PUSH SOME TEST DATA? ALL OUR DEALS HAVE THE SAME PERSON ON THEM."

MIA
Are we doing a test import or something?

BARRY
No. Why?

MIA
Customers are seeing duplicate contacts.

She clicks into the admin panel.

INSERT - Admin Console

The list populates with row after row:

CONTACT: Samantha Redding
ORG: HENLEY CONSTRUCTION
CONTACT: SAMANTHA REDDING
ORG: IRONSTATE SCAFFOLDING
CONTACT: SAMANTHA REDDING
ORG: REDRIVER RESTORATION
...

Same name. Dozens of different companies.

Back to the scene:

MIA
Oh, that’s... not ideal.

BARRY
What is it?

She swivels her screen toward him. He sees the name. Almost flinches.

MIA
Did somebody load sample data with one fake contact name?

BARRY
No. No, we don’t... we don’t do that.

Mia scrolls. The number climbs as more rows load.

MIA
It says eight hundred and... eighty three instances?

She starts typing into Slack.

MIA (CONT'D)
(reading as she types)
“Hey all, seeing hundreds of duplicate contacts named ‘Samantha Redding’ across unrelated customer accounts. Are we running an import?”

She hits send.

On another monitor, Barry opens his own Slack.

INSERT - Barry’s Slack

#dev-offshore

MIA:
"HEY, ANY TEST DATA HAPPENING? NAME 'SAMANTHA REDDING' SHOWING UP EVERYWHERE."

Beat. The channel shows “typing…”

RAJ - DEV OFFSHORE:
"NO TEST DATA. WE CHECKED. THESE ROWS SHOW 'CREATED_BY: SYSTEM' BUT NO SOURCE JOB. LOG IS WEIRD, LIKE THEY APPEARED AT THE SAME TIME."

Back to scene:

Barry rubs his forehead.

BARRY
Just... delete them. Nuke them all.

MIA
Ok... How?

BARRY
It’s junk data. It’s confusing customers. Delete them, we’ll send an email.

MIA
No, I mean, I’m sorry. How do we do that exactly? I have never done that.

BARRY
(Impatient)
I can do it.

He starts selecting rows.

INSERT: Admin Console

A warning:

883 CONTACTS SELECTED.
ARE YOU SURE?

He clicks DELETE.

A progress spinner. Then an error banner:

ERROR: FAILED TO DELETE SOME RECORDS.
Please try again.

Below, the list refreshes. Rows disappear...

Slack DINGS again.

INSERT - Company Slack

RAJ - DEV OFFSHORE:
"WE TRIED FROM OUR SIDE. HARD DELETE QUERY RUNS, SAYS 'OK', BUT THE RECORDS ARE STILL THERE. LIKE THEY DON'T EXIST AND EXIST AT SAME TIME."

Back to scene:

Barry clicks into a remaining entry.

INSERT: Contact Detail

Basic fields:

NAME: Samanatha Redding
EMAIL: —
PHONE: —
NOTES: (empty)

A Slack notification pops on Barry’s screen.

INSERT: - Barry’s Slack

RAJ - DEV OFFSHORE:
"ALSO, THE NEW 'LEAD RECOMMENDATIONS' JOB AI MODEL RAN AGAINST THESE RECORDS BEFORE WE SAW THIS. MIGHT HAVE PROPAGATED THEM TO CLIENTS. SORRY."

Back to scene:

BARRY
(under his breath)
Shit.

MIA
What does the lead recommendation AI do?

BARRY
It means...

He stares at the screen, voice hollow.

BARRY (CONT'D)
It means our customers might be seeing her as a hot lead.

INT. SCAFFLOW OFFICE - ONE DAY LATER - DAY

A little more chaotic now. The SUPPORT EMAIL INBOX on Mia’s screen is a mess.

Barry is making an espresso and burns himself.

BARRY
(whipping his hand and breaking the cup)
Fuck!

Mia is seen typing typing in the company chat.

ON SCREEN: emails scroll.

SUBJECT: "Random person in our account?"
"Who is Samantha Redding and why is she assigned to half our jobs?"

"You guys push a lead named 'Samantha' to us? Is this some kind of marketing thing?"

MIA
(Shouting to Barry as she picks up the phone)
Samantha-bug causing more problems!

Mia picks up the phone.

CLIENT (V.O.)
We’re seeing this Samantha person as “HOT LEAD” with no info. Is that like, a demo thing?

MIA
No, that... that’s a mistake.
We’re working on a fix.

ON Barry’S SCREEN - another Slack ping from a client.

On the screen: CLIENT - IRONSTATE: "One of my guys tried calling this Samantha contact.

Barry types back, fingers stiff.

BARRY (V.O.)
Please do not call that contact.
It’s a data issue. We’re
investigating.

He hits send.

Mia is on a call with OFFSCREEN VOICE, a CUSTOMER.

MIA
Yes, it’s a bug. No, you weren’t
hacked. Please just ignore any
contacts with that name for now.

She hangs up, sighs.

Another Slack notification pops on Barry’s screen, this one in a **CUSTOMER SUCCESS** channel.

INSERT: Slack

FRANK - IRONSTATE SCAFFOLDING:
"HEY BARRY, NEED TO TALK. ONE OF OUR REPS FOLLOWED UP ON THAT 'SAMANTHA REDDING' YOUR SYSTEM RECOMMENDED. GOT A FAMILY MEMBER. THEN A COP."

“Could we schedule a live call? Think Scafflow is getting us into some deep water and we do not have time for that.“

Barry stares at it. His cursor hovers, unmoving.

INT. SCAFFLOW OFFICE - EVENING

Most of the office lights are off. Only the area around Barry and Mia’s desks is lit.

On Barry’s monitor: a VIDEO CALL WINDOW, already connected.

FRANK, 50s, gruff, owner of IRONSTATE SCAFFOLDING, sits in his truck, phone angled up.

Barry's webcam shows him in his cluttered corner. Mia sits just out of frame, able to see his screen.

BARRY
Hi Frank! I'm... sorry. We pushed out bad data. It's likely due to the new A.I. features we're trying out. We'll comp your month, we'll—

FRANK (ON SCREEN)
One of my sales guys actually followed up on that contact, Barry. Did what your system told him to do. Called the number on there.

A beat.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Got her aunt, from the sound of it. When he read off the contact name and coordinates of the address your thing had, she went real quiet. Then hung up.

Mia's eyes flick from Frank to Barry.

FRANK (ON SCREEN) (CONT'D)
Today she shows up at our office. Hysterical. Husband with her. He tries to swing on my guy. She just keeps screaming, "What happened to my little girl."

Barry's hand tightens on the edge of his desk.

BARRY
Frank, I...

FRANK (ON SCREEN)
It's been a weird day, Barry.

FRANK (ON SCREEN) (CONT'D)
Detectives came by after that. Asked where we got her info. I gave them your company name, your name, the address that's in the software. So heads up, they're probably heading your way.

He shrugs, but there's guilt under the annoyance.

FRANK (ON SCREEN) (CONT'D)
Like I told 'em, we don't have time to be dealing with crime cases over here. We hang off buildings for a living. That's enough excitement.

Barry is barely breathing.

BARRY
I get it. We'll fix this. We'll make it right, whatever you—

FRANK (CONT'D)
Unfortunately, we're gonna have to cancel our Scafflow subscription. I need an export of all our data, clean, by end of week. You've been great to us through the years, Barry. I hope you understand. I'm sorry about this.

Mia watches, transfixed.

BARRY
I understand. I'll have my team get you that ASAP.

Frank gives a small nod and ends the call.

BARRY
Mia, you should head home. It's been a day.

MIA
Do.. do you know this Samantha person, Barry?

BARRY
(too fast)
No.

Mia studies him. She saw him during the Holy Ghost call. She saw him just now.

MIA
You nodded.

Beat. Barry won't answer.

MIA
This isn't just "a bug", is it.

BARRY
(Frustrated, panic)
It’s a bug that just cost us our biggest account and got the NYPD curious. That’s enough for one night.

MIA
If detectives are coming here, I don’t really want to be the intern who “saw nothing”.

MIA (CONT’D)
I’m serious, Barry. I’m in your Slack, your calls. If there’s something I should know, I’d rather hear it from you.

Barry is focused on the admin section. Deleting records.

Mis is discreetly doing research on the original lead: Jacob Hanley. We can see “Jacob Hanley HENLEY CONSTRUCTION” Googled on her screen. Not much concrete information is shown, including anything regarding the construction. A few results down is a GoFundMe for the family of Samantha. She clicks in.

Support for the Redding Family
Helping the Redding family in their time of loss. Funds will be used where needed.
Raised: $4,218 of $20,000
Creator: Jacob Hanley
Last update: “3 years ago.”
No updates.
No comments.
Only two donations.

Share stares, confused. Shocked.

She then googles Jacob Hanley HANLEY construction, Owner

Nothing. No website. Nothing.

BARRY
Go home, Mia. Please. I’ll have this cleaned up by morning.

She holds his gaze a beat longer than is comfortable. Then:

MIA
(hesitating, looking intensely at Barry)
Ok.

She grabs her bag anyway. Starts to go, hesitates at the door.

INT. SCAFFLOW OFFICE - AFTERNOON

The office is dark now. Only Barry's monitor glows.

On screen: a search for "SAMANTHA REDDING." Location coordinates:

"Open in Google Maps."

He opens it. It's clearly a pin drop in the middle of dense woods - no roads around. Barry is frozen.

He glances at the WHITEBOARD.
NEVER LOSE A NAME.
ALWAYS FOLLOW UP.

He turns off the computer.

EXT. WOODED PULL-OFF - DUSK

Barry is driving down a highway, sun is setting. Middle of nowhere, only woods. He pulls over and opens up slack on his phone.

He finds the "JACOB HENLEY - HENLEY CONSTRUCTION" contact.

"Call".

BARRY
Hi Jacob. It's Barry from Scafflow.

JACOB
I know, Barry. The Holy Ghost is
is waiting to speak. May I?

BARRY
Ok.

SAMANTHA
Dad?

Barry's whole body jolts. He drops the phone onto the passenger
seat.

He just sits there, shaking. We HEAR the voice faintly from the seat.

SAMANTHA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
You were a good dad. Please do not have pain because of me.

Barry clamps his hands over his ears, but he can still hear her
in his memory.

A beat. Shallow breathing on the line. He picks up the phone again.

He drops the phone sobbing but eventually picks it back up.

BARRY
(wimpering)
Sam, are you there?

JACOB
It's Jacob, Barry. He left.

BARRY
It was her...

JACOB
Excuse me, Barry?

BARRY
(Sighs)
Thank you.

Barry hangs up. Defeated.

He gets out of the car, wind whipping. A cold hard night.

Barry goes to the Voice Memo app on his phone:

BARRY
My name is Barry Sperry.

BARRY (CONT'D)
I am Samantha Redding's father.

He closes his eyes.

BARRY (CONT'D)
She used her mother's last name after the divorce.
I told myself that was healthy.
I told myself a lot of things.

The night air hums around him.

BARRY (CONT'D)
The night she got into my truck, she told me she didn't want to go home.
She told me she'd taken pills.
She asked me not to make a big deal out of it.
I wasn't the best father, but I kept my promise.

His voice tightens.

BARRY (CONT'D)
I didn't stop the truck.
I didn't call anyone.
I told myself I could handle it.

A beat.

BARRY (CONT'D)
She got quiet.
I panicked.

He grips the phone harder.

BARRY (CONT'D)
I didn't check her pulse right away.
I didn't call 911.
I kept my promise.
I thought about what people would think of me.
She passed.
She wanted out of this world.

His voice cracks—not loudly. Honestly.

BARRY (CONT'D)
Her coordinates are attached to this memo.

A long pause.

BARRY (CONT'D)
I was protecting myself.
I was keeping a promise.