

Grounds for Termination

by Joshua Lander

Act 1, Scene 3

SAM I can't believe we've been talking for over an hour.

BILL Have we? Oh – well, I'll be damned! Yeah, 72 minutes.

SAM What?

BILL Nothing.

SAM So –

BILL Yeah?

SAM Were you talking about Rambo just now?

BILL Right – of course! First Blood – it's one of my favorite films.

SAM I haven't seen it in years.

BILL Oh, you should rewatch it – it's – I mean, except for the ending, which I've always thought was a little disappointing – it's a classic. Absolute classic. So, but – wait. How did we even start talking about First Blood?

SAM As I recall, you were comparing the scene where Rambo shoots the window out of the helicopter to the one from that Star Trek film –

BILL Yeah, the new ones – the new Star Trek.

SAM The new Star Trek, yes. Was it the second one?

BILL Yeah – or – wait, maybe it was the third one. Was it the third one? Have you seen that one?

SAM Oh, I've seen them all.

BILL The new ones, even?

SAM Yes, the new ones. That's what we're talking about, right?

BILL Yeah, the new ones.

SAM Yep, but I can't remember –

BILL Whether it was the second one or the third one, yeah. Neither can I. But – how did we start talking about Star Trek, then?

SAM I don't even know how we arrived at cinema as a topic of discussion.

BILL Well – me, neither.

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SAM As a matter of fact, I don't even know why you're calling in the first place. Do I?

BILL No, but –

SAM I'm fairly certain I don't.

BILL No, you certainly don't. I mean, you wouldn't. I mean, I guess I haven't said. Sir, I'm calling today to – honestly –

SAM Oh, I always prefer honesty.

BILL Sure, yeah – I feel like I already knew that about you. Well, in that case, the reason I'm calling is – well, I'm a little embarrassed about it now, if I'm being honest.

SAM I always prefer –

BILL Honesty, right – I know. Well, see – okay, here it is – I was gonna try to sell you a home security system, but the thing is –

SAM A home security system?

BILL Yes, but you don't –

SAM So you're a telemarketer?

BILL Well, yeah. Did you think – wait, who'd you think I was?

SAM I don't know. Wrong number? But now that you mention it, I'm glad it was you, er –

BILL Bill.

SAM I'm glad it was you, Bill, because Mrs. Donahoe told Karen – that's my wife – she told Karen that their house almost got robbed just last Saturday night after the block party, and, well, the Donahoes are only three doors down. Three doors down – can you imagine?

BILL You said they were almost robbed?

SAM Almost.

BILL I can't imagine.

SAM Neither can I. It just goes to show you –

BILL Show you what?

SAM Well, that it can happen to anyone.

BILL Sure can.

SAM Anyone!

BILL Mmm hmm.

SAM So it's your lucky day, Bill, because I happen to be in the market for a home security system.

BILL Oh – no – are you kidding me? I'm not gonna sell you one.

SAM Why not?

BILL Because I can't sell you one!

SAM Why not?

BILL I couldn't. I mean – I know you now, y'know? I just couldn't.

SAM So you won't?

BILL Well, I would if you insisted, I guess, but I've gotta be honest with you, Sam –

SAM How did you know my name?

BILL Well, it's right here on my screen next to your phone number.

SAM Oh, right.

BILL Yeah.

SAM That's right, you're a telemarketer.

BILL Yeah. Anyway, Sam, I've gotta be honest with you – the home security systems I'm selling are... well, they're absolute crap, really.

SAM They can't be that bad, can they?

BILL They're the worst, Sam. Literally the worst. Really, I mean – it's not even fair that they ask me to sell them, y'know?

SAM They're that bad, huh?

BILL The worst, Sam.

SAM Then why do you keep selling them?

BILL Well, why does anyone sell anything, really? It's a job. And it's not half bad, actually, if I'm being honest.

SAM And I always prefer – well, you know.

BILL Honesty, yes, of course. It's air conditioned, I get my own desk, and they give me frequent breaks. It's just –

SAM What is it?

BILL Well – I'm afraid I haven't met a single sales quota yet.

SAM I'm sorry to hear that.

BILL Yeah – I mean – it's a little disheartening. But I'm sure I'll make it this month.

SAM That's the spirit. How many more home security systems do you need to sell?

BILL Well, I haven't sold any yet this month – so – actually, I'm not even sure how many I have to sell to meet my quota. It hasn't really come up yet.

SAM The month's almost over, Bill.

BILL Yeah. Crunch time – that's what my supervisor calls it, anyway.

SAM Your supervisor has a way with words.

BILL Oh, for sure.

SAM How many did you sell last month?

BILL Yeah, so – that's the thing – none, actually. So I haven't exactly felt very competitive about it. But it's gonna happen soon, I can feel it.

SAM How long have you been working over there?

BILL Over here? Just these two months – this month and last. Like I said, it's not half bad, though –

SAM So you haven't sold a single home security system?

BILL No – not yet, at least. I almost sold one last week, but –

SAM What happened?

BILL As it turns out, I was talking to a child. A kid – someone's kid.

SAM Well, kids need to be secure in their homes, don't they?

BILL Sure! And – wouldn't you know it – that's just the angle I took, Sam. You'd be good at this, y'know?

SAM I'm flattered.

BILL Seriously. Anyway, I would've had the sale, too – it's a shame. It's just –

SAM You didn't feel right about it?

BILL No – it's like you said, kids need to feel secure in their own homes, too, right? I mean – what a shame, really. I even sold her on the monthly maintenance plan. Money was no object to her!

SAM So why couldn't you close the deal? She sounds like the perfect customer.

BILL Well – but – she was a child, Sam.

SAM But kids need to feel –

BILL Secure, yeah – in their own homes – but she didn't have a credit card.

SAM Oh.

BILL Yeah.

SAM Well, then, I suppose you could say money was literally no object to her.

BILL Hah!

SAM As in she didn't have any. No object. Get it?

BILL I got it! It was funny. I laughed, remember?

SAM Did you?

BILL Yeah!

SAM Thanks.

BILL Of course. Like I said, it was funny.

SAM Bill?

BILL Yeah, Sam?

SAM Let me be your first sale.

BILL Oh, but, Sam, I couldn't. These systems are truly junk! Seriously. It's just – it'll give you headache after headache.

SAM I'm willing to take the chance if it means you'll be closer to meeting your quota.

BILL That's very kind of you, but – I'm just saying, though – it wouldn't be a smart decision.

SAM Well, I can't just let you hang up without giving you a sale. It wouldn't be right!

BILL Why not?

SAM Because I know you now, Bill. I couldn't.

BILL You won't?

SAM I would, if you insisted. Not purchase a home security system, I mean.

BILL Of course! Well, in that case – I insist.

SAM Really?

BILL Really. It's all right – it's for the best – because, I mean, if I'm being really honest, Sam – and I know you prefer honesty –

SAM You know me, Bill.

BILL If I'm being really honest, the whole home security installation industry is kind of a racket. It's a scam, y'know? You could buy the equipment yourself and save a lot of money.

SAM At the hardware store?

BILL Well, I mean – maybe. I'm not sure, really, and it depends which hardware store, I guess – or maybe they sell it but they just don't stock it, so you might have to special order it. I don't know.

SAM I could probably even get one online, couldn't I?

BILL Oh, that's true – and, I mean, it might even be cheaper online.

SAM Probably.

BILL Hm.

SAM Are you sure about this?

BILL Yeah – oh, definitely.

SAM Then I'll go ahead and let you go, Bill.

BILL All right.

SAM Talk to you later?

BILL Yeah, talk to you – but – wait, later? I mean, how could we?

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SAM You can call anytime! I hope you know that.

BILL It's just – the system autodials for me. What I mean is, I can't call out.

SAM But you have my number.

BILL Well, of course – it's right here on my screen.

SAM You could copy it down and take it home.

BILL I could, couldn't I? Now that you mention it, yeah – I think I will.

SAM You should.

BILL I did! I just did. Y'know, I'm glad you thought of that.

SAM Me, too.

BILL Well –

SAM Talk to you later, then?

BILL Until then, Sam.

SAM Take it easy.

BILL You, too.

SAM Goodbye.