

We SNAP into -

The glow of a phone-screen. A wallpaper background of ERIKA (late 20s/early 30s) and her MOM (60s) in a nice quiet moment. We see the various apps of a chronically busy person - Scheduling, productivity-optimization, Headspace, 5-Minute Yoga, etc. A REMINDER *dings* at the top of the screen - "ZOOM WITH SANDRA - 10 minutes".

We discover Erika at her table. Her laptop is open, and there's a ring-light propped up behind it for her (many) Zoom meetings. Books & journals cover the table, with a notepad and pen at the ready. She fiddles with her pen, then writes:

MEETING WITH SANDRA - Notes

She doodles for a secShe pulls up the messaging box with MARKUS. The following dialogue is seen over Instant Message (IM).

ERIKA (IM)
Hey! Wish me luck. I'm about to try to get that ref letter for a scholarship application from my new supervisor.

Markus's "talking bubble" pops up right away.

MARKUS (IM)
Sandra? why do u need luck?

ERIKA (IM)
I've checked with her about it a few times... I don't want to keep bugging about it, but the deadline is Monday and the letter NEEDS to be good...

MARKUS (IM)
Oh weird. Yeah she usually sends me stuff right away. Anyway good luck (Thumbs up emoji)

Reading this, Erika is taken aback. She tries to write a couple of different responses but deletes her attempts:

"Really? Does she do that for EVERYBODY??"

"Ugh, really?"

"WELL GOOD FOR YOU"

Erika can't stop thinking about Markus's message. Against her better judgement, she calls him.

Markus answers - he's eating chips in front of his laptop.

MARKUS
*(answering, strangely
 professional)*
 This is Markus.

ERIKA
 Hey. Sorry for calling you in the morning, I know you're probably busy...

MARKUS
(mouthful of chips)
 Pretty busy, yeah. What's up?

Music plays in the background, it's recognizable to Erika...

ERIKA
 ... Is that the theme song to *The Office*?

Markus quickly turns off the Netflix on his laptop, trying to feign being busy.

MARKUS
 Definitely not. Way too swamped for that. What's up?

CUT TO:

We see the wallpaper of SANDRA's phone. She opens up her photos, and looks at pictures of her husband and her children.

Then, just like with Erika, a REMINDER *dings* at the top of the screen - "ZOOM WITH ERIKA - 10 minutes". She sends Paul an IM.

SANDRA (IM)
 So tired of Zoom. Takes up way more energy than in-person meetings.

She sends this along, then after thinking for a moment, adds:

SANDRA (IM)
 ...I think I want to burn my computer.

Sandra opens up her e-mail inbox - it's crammed. The titles of the e-mails are all pretty similar - "Zoom Link for Thursday Meeting" or "Talk on the phone this week?"

She searches for Erika's name - and the e-mails from Erika pops up. She realizes she's forgotten a request - several requests - from Erika for a Reference Letter.

We see her put her face in her hands. She re-fills her mug of coffee with a nearby French press/container.

Then, she's startled by a RINGING - Paul's friendly display photo pops up, he's calling her on Google Hangouts. She answers.

PAUL

Hello!

SANDRA

Hi... (*distracted, still looking at e-mails*)

PAUL

My Mom says Hi, too. I saw your text, how are you doing?

SANDRA

(*quick, dumping:*)

I'm okay - I wish I could chat, but I'm talking with a student in a few minutes. I completely missed her request for a Reference Letter. I haven't had very much time to get acquainted with her research, but I know she's more interested in qualitative approaches, and you know me, I'm more quantitative.

PAUL

Whoa... sounds like a two cups of coffee sort of morning.

SANDRA

More like three.

Paul takes a sip of his coffee. Sandra pours her coffee straight from a French press/container into her mug.

SANDRA

I just keep the pot close by, these days.

PAUL

Fair enough. Was this student working with... (*trying to remember:*) what's his name...?

SANDRA

Allan. Yes. His students are always so inspired by him. But they don't know that when he left for U of A he didn't wrap up *anything*...
That's not very inspiring!

Sandra takes a breath and sip of coffee.

SANDRA

I don't mean that. Allan's great. I'm just tired, I think.

PAUL

Zoom fatigue is real.

SANDRA

I should be better at this by now.

PAUL

Don't beat yourself up. You have a lot on your plate, and you didn't get enough information from Allan when you took over his students. Plus, all the courses you've been migrating online...

SANDRA

I guess. It's just... when people look at me - my students, my colleagues - they assume I know what I'm doing. But... I don't.

CUT BACK TO:

Erika and Markus talking on the phone.

ERIKA

So Sandra gets back to you right away?

MARKUS

Well, not right away, but sort of, yeah.

ERIKA

Last week I was finally able to get a Zoom meeting with her, but she didn't even mention the letter I've been bugging her about...

MARKUS

Well, you've only been with Sandra for like, half a term, right?

(MORE)

MARKUS (CONT'D)

Maybe you could try to find a new supervisor?

ERIKA

I'm too far along into my research to try do that. Do you know what I think it is? I have this bad feeling she's not excited by my research...

MARKUS

Well I'm doing a meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials right now and she loves it!

Erika looks down - she realizes she's been scratching her pen into her notepad out of frustration/anxiety. She exhales and puts the pen down.

ERIKA

Honestly, I've been questioning everything lately. When my scholarship application didn't even make it past the department committee last year, I was like "should I have just tried to find work after my Master's? Why am I spending all this time doing a..."

Markus, not listening, is watching *The Office* and laughing at something on screen.

ERIKA

Uh... is something funny?

MARKUS

(*caught, guilty*)
Uh, nope. Not at all.

CUT BACK TO:

Sandra and Paul, talking on Google Hangouts.

PAUL

Is there any way you could shuffle things around? Maybe try to-

A buzz interrupts Paul - Sandra's Zoom meeting is supposed to start RIGHT NOW!

SANDRA

AH! Love you, have to go, bye!

CUT BACK TO:

Markus explaining *The Office* to Erika.

MARKUS

I mean, they really hit their stride, I'd say, Season 3...

ERIKA

(clearly not listening)

Uh-huh, right...

(she looks at the time)

Ugh! I'm supposed to do this meeting now. What should I say?

MARKUS

Talk about your research. That's probably what's stopped her from writing the letter, she doesn't know enough about your approach.

ERIKA

(that's actually not a bad idea)

Huh... thanks.

MARKUS

Yeah, no problem. *(eating chips)*
Here to help!

Erika ends the Facetime call, turns on the ring light, opens her laptop, logs on -

We see Erika and Sandra on Zoom together.

SANDRA

I'm glad we could meet today. I hope you're keeping well, considering...

ERIKA

Thanks for meeting with me. I, um...

Erika takes a breath, clearly nervous.

ERIKA

I know we don't know each other very well yet, but I was hoping I could tell you about my research. I'm really engaging with -

Sandra cuts in -

SANDRA

Erika - I can't hear you. You're muted.

ERIKA

(*fixing it*)

Ugh, sorry... I was just agreeing that it was good to meet, and-

SANDRA

Listen, first thing's first: I want you to tell me all about your research.

Erika's relieved to hear this.

ERIKA

Really?

SANDRA

Sorry that I haven't been more responsive to your request for a letter. I felt like I was missing a couple of key pieces when we started working together.

ERIKA

That makes sense. The transition happened really fast.

SANDRA

It did. I have to admit, you're talking about using a qualitative approach with a community I've never worked with before. I'm ... not sure if I'm the best supervisor for you.

POTENTIAL CUT HERE OFF ERIKA'S REACTION - STUDY GUIDE DISCUSSION POSSIBILITY. "WHAT IF IT ENDED HERE?"

WE PICK UP: AN AWKWARD BEAT. The Pause is so long that Erika thinks that Sandra must have frozen.

ERIKA

... Did you freeze, or?

SANDRA

No, I don't think so. I thought you did.

ERIKA

I thought you did.

SANDRA
(*trying to be cheerful*)
Well... nobody froze.

Another awkward BEAT. Erika realizes she's been scratching her pen into her notepad again. Just as with Markus, she puts her pen down and takes a breath.

ERIKA
I know your research methods aren't totally aligned with what I'm doing... But I really appreciate the social justice lens that you approach your work through.

SANDRA
I gravitate towards those aspects of your work, too. I'll highlight those aspects of the work in your reference letter.

ERIKA
(*thrilled*)
Great, thank you.

SANDRA
Now that we're talking, there are some people coming to mind who might make a good co-supervisor for you. Tell me more about your specific methodology.

ERIKA
That sounds great. Okay, well, I'm aiming to...

FADE OUT