



## CASE STUDY - MIA

Mia, a 24-year-old recent college graduate, works as an entry level graphic designer at a prominent public communications firm. She has been there for three months.

Grace, a manager, asked Mia to team up with James, a more senior employee with five years' experience at the firm, to complete a rebranding project for a new client. Mia looked forward to working with James because he is well-known in professional circles and his mentorship could potentially help advance her career.

Early on in the project, Mia and James met with the client, an environmental conservation organization. Mia had enthusiastically and extensively prepared for the meeting, due in no small part to her recent completion of a website redesign for an environmental justice organization as part of her senior project. James initially led the discussion, but it became clear that the client didn't like the direction James had proposed. When Mia stepped up to share her ideas, James immediately cut her off and asked her to go get some alternate design boards out of his office.

After the meeting, James yelled at Mia in the hallway and told her not to ever embarrass him in front of a client again or he would have her fired. Mia was stunned, was overcome with emotion, and inadvertently encountered Grace while trying to get to her office as quickly as possible. Grace asked Mia if she was ok, but Mia was within sight of James and opted to tell Grace that everything was fine.

Later that week, Grace took the team out to lunch to welcome a new summer intern. After a couple of drinks, Grace and James regaled everyone with stories from the numerous conferences and social gatherings they attended together as colleagues, which made it evident to Mia that Grace and James shared a strong professional friendship. On the way back to the office after the lunch concluded, Mia overheard James discuss the intern's looks with another male member of the team. Mia heard them say that the intern was "hot" and musing on "how well she moved her black girl hips."



The next day James called Mia to his office to discuss the project and closed the door. He pulled a chair up to his desk where Mia saw an image of two nude women kissing on his screen. Upon seeing her shocked face he immediately apologized and said, “You went to an all-girls school, right? You must know all about that.” James rubbed her shoulders and then turned the conversation back to work.

Mia felt increasingly uncomfortable around James but didn’t feel like she was able to talk to Grace because of the friendship Grace seemed to have with James. Mia was worried she wouldn’t be believed, and didn’t want to seem like she was being too sensitive and couldn’t handle the job. Mia’s work performance began to suffer as she avoided James, often showing up late to meetings to ensure she wasn’t alone with him. She was feeling depressed and was having trouble concentrating. She no longer spoke during meetings and avoided socializing with others. She frequently had headaches and started losing a significant amount of weight. During a check-in meeting, Grace asked Mia about a recent missed deadline. Mia mentioned she was having trouble sleeping and joked that she would need to drink more coffee to keep up.

One afternoon, James stopped by Mia’s office to check-in on a logo Mia was designing. James noticed framed photos from Mia’s time volunteering in Nicaragua that Mia had placed behind her desk. He ventured behind her desk and asked, “Oh, is this where you are from? How long have you been in the U.S.?” Mia responded, “No, I am from Colorado. I volunteered with the Peace Corps after graduating,” and attempted to change the subject by re-directing James’s attention back to the design on her computer screen. Still standing behind Mia, James leaned over her, grabbed her mouse, and began making changes directly to the image. At some point, he pressed his groin against her body and said, “There, that is much better,” and added, “We will need to work late tonight to finish these concepts to meet the deadline.” Mia quickly said she needed to catch the 5:30pm bus home and couldn’t stay. James responded by saying, “That’s okay, I can give you a ride,” which Mia declined. James walked out of Mia’s office saying, “Clearly, you are not committed to this work.”

The next day Mia called in sick. When she returned to work Grace called her to her office to discuss her performance.