

HOW IT HAPPENED

Written by

Gerry Lavery

30 October 2024

FADE IN:

EXT. THE STREET IN FRONT OF JEFF'S HOUSE - NIGHT

An UBER driver pulls up and JEFF (mid 30s) spills out. He sways momentarily after standing up on the grass lawn in front of his house. He turns back to the open door of the Uber and points to his (three) BUDDIES.

JEFF

You wankers.

An explosion of raucous laughter explodes from the open door. The door is pulled shut and the car drives off.

INT. JEFF AND JESSICA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jeff's head hits the pillow eyes already closed. Behind him JESSICA (late 30s) rolls over and we see it is three thirty two am on the ALARM CLOCK.

INT. INDUSTRIAL BUILDING - DAY (JEFF'S DREAM)

The lighting is poor and the air dusty. Several high windows cast harsh shadows across the interior.

MANDOSHAWAN (ageless), three m tall and two m wide waddle heavily around Jeff.

A POSTER on the wall shows smiling humans and Mandoshawan, expressionless in their EXO SUITS, awkwardly embracing in friendship.

Distinctive CHIRPS signal commands across the factory floor. PAPER STRIP commands are seen curling out of EMBEDDED DISPENSERS, and SERVANTS withdraw, interpret, and execute the commands.

Jeff follows his Mandoshawan Controller, attentive for his next command.

Jeff's Controller begins to BEEP and back-up and Jeff steps carefully between his Controller and others, minding his feet and the sharp swinging frills of the Mandoshawan.

*Beep Beep Beep!*

As Jeff keeps clear, his Controller's tiny helmeted head swivels on its frail looking stalk and catches sight of him.

Jeff freezes, uncertain of what is expected. The Mandoshawan sends no command.

*Beep Beep Beep!*

His Controller is staring at him now, its opaque eye shields look down from above.

Jeff holds still.

His Controller begins to rotate its enormous and dangerously frilled exo suit to face Jeff, never adjusting its gaze.

His Controller chirps and a command strip rolls out before him.

Jeff lowers his eyes to the dispenser and cautiously receives his command strip.

INSERT - THE STRIP, WHICH READS:

Jessica is angry.

BACK TO SCENE

Jeff's jaw drops as he snaps his gaze back up to his Controller.

Another command strip curls out with a chirp.

Jeff is quicker to receive the second strip.

INSERT - THE STRIP, WHICH READS:

Mica needs her Dad.

BACK TO SCENE

Another strip is ready. Jeff reads: Armand is fed up.

His Controller begins beeping and slowly back away all the while chirping and a continuous strip of commands spews forth.

FADE TO BLACK.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. JEFF'S BEDROOM - DAY

Jeff's eyes crack open and the image of 8:30 am registers itself.

JEFF  
Fuuuuuuc. Jessica?

Jeff drags himself naked out of bed and trots down the hall to check on MICA (7).

INT. MICA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Mica is not in her bed.

Jeff exhales his held breath and lightly punches the wall.

JEFF  
FuuuuuuucK.

INT. JEFF AND JESSICA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Jeff hurries back down the hallway and snatches his CELL PHONE off the pile of last night's shed CLOTHING and pokes in some codes.

POV - JEFF

Seven messages appear on Jeff's cell phone.

Jeff turns the phone and sees that it's set to silent mode.

JEFF  
Mother fuuuuuuuuCKK.

Jeff quickly dresses from the dirty pile of laundry while he calls DORIS.

JEFF (CONT'D)  
Hi Doris, Jeff here. Did everything go OK this morning with drop off?

INTERCUT - TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

DORIS  
Oh hi Jeff, yes everything went fine, why do you ask?

JEFF  
Oh, it was my turn to drop Mica off and I slept late.

DORIS

Jessica was right on time so no worries. Was that all; the beasties are full of vinegar this morning!

JEFF

OK thanks Doris, we'll see you tomorrow, bye.

DORIS

Bye bye, yup, bye.

Jeff stows his cell phone and finishes tucking in his T-shirt as he shuffles sock footed to the kitchen.

INT. JEFF AND JESSICA'S KITCHEN

Jeff throws the fridge door open and PICTURES and MAGNETS go sliding off the fridge door and onto the floor.

Jeff crouches and picks up the pictures, mostly of Jessica and Mica. He pauses momentarily and looks at the photographs, then closes his eyes.

Jeff places the unorganised mess onto the kitchen counter and returns to the fridge.

Jeff scans the fridge contents and spots Mica's after school SNACKS and two older GRANNY SMITH APPLES. He reaches in for the apples, pauses and then snatches out Mica's snacks.

Jeff heads for the door.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION WORKSITE - THE PARKING LOT - DAY

As Jeff pulls his PICKUP into the worksite parking lot, he sees ARMAND (mid 50s) with WHITE HARD HAT, hands on corpulent hips watching from the steps of the OFFICE TRAILER.

Jeff's face flushes red.

Armand points to the 324 EXCAVATOR and with a fleshy maestro's flourish directs Jeff to continue with excavating the utilities trench.

Jeff gives a nod, dons his BLUE HARDHAT and HIGH VISIBILITY VEST and jumps out of his pickup.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION WORKSITE - THE TRENCH - DAY

Jeff moves quickly across the yard with a hop in his step, circles the excavator and pulls himself up.

One hundred and ninety hp growls awake as Jeff checks his blind spots and mirrors.

Jeff lifts the bucket, the 324 squeals its way back to the trench.

Behind Jeff a UPS DELIVERY VAN is backing away from the office trailer beeping. Jeff is momentarily distracted by the sound but isn't sure why.

Jeff scans his worksite, makes eye contact with his SPOTTER and nods.

Jeff continues the trench where he left off the previous day. Scoop, dump, scoop, dump, back up, repeat. A LINE OF STAKES and SPRAY PAINT mark the path to excavate.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION WORKSITE - THE PARKING LOT - DAY

Jeff walks back to his truck and to his apples and snack. As he bites into an apple, a TOYOTA CAMRY pulls in beside him.

Jessica exits her vehicle and comes over to Jeff's PU truck window.

JESSICA

Hey.

JEFF

Hey.

JESSICA

I brought you LUNCH.

JEFF

Ohh. Thanks Jess, that's sweet of you.

Jeff is almost exploding from embarrassment and guilt. He squirms in the PU seat.

Jessica looks past him and spots Mica's snacks that she had prepared earlier. She holds out her hand points at Mica's snacks with her eyes and a chin nod.

Jeff looks confused and follows her eyes. Now mortified, Jeff picks up the snacks and hands them to Jessica.

JEFF (CONT'D)

Oh, I must have picked up Mica's snacks by mistake. I was in such a rush this morning.

JESSICA

OK.

Jessica turns to leave and pauses.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

We need to have a talk tonight.

Jeff nods in silence as Jessica resumes her departure.

JEFF

Yes. Thanks for the lunch.

Jessica pulls out leaving Jeff alone in his PU.

Jeff looks down at the beautifully prepared lunch, then to the half eaten bruised apple in his hand and screws up his face in a vain attempt to avoid crying.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION WORKSITE - BESIDE OFFICE TRAILER - DAY

After finishing his lunch, Jeff is exiting the PORT-A-POTTY and Armand is there waiting for him.

Armand hands him a formal REPRIMAND STATEMENT.

ARMAND

Come into the office at five, we need to talk.

Armand leaves Jeff in front of the Port-a-potty holding the reprimand.

Jeff watches Armand retreat into the office trailer.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION WORKSITE - THE TRENCH - DAY

Jeff folds away the reprimand, checks the time on his phone, glances towards the office trailer, and heads back to the excavator.

Before resuming trenching, from the cab of the excavator, Jeff scrolls through his contacts on his phone and hovers over Marguerite's Florist but understands that's a useless gesture and drops his phone to his lap.

Jeff phones Doris.

JEFF

Hi Doris, can you put Mica on for me please. I'll just be a sec.

INTERCUT - TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

DORIS

Oh hi Jeff, sure, she's been talking about you all morning! (Muffled but decipherable) come on honey, it's Daddy, he wants to talk to you.

MICA

(Off Phone)

Squeal. Daddy, daddy, huff huff

(On phone)

Daddy, Daddy, I made a macrony picture of you and mommy and mommy's dress has sparkles and your shoes have real mud on them and Benna thought it was dumb but she's dumb huuuh. Benna always says dumb things.

JEFF

Oh nice. I can hardly wait to see it. Don't worry about Benna. Her mom's not very

Jeff's attention is interrupted by a text.

ON JEFF'S SCREEN

Dude!!!! Were all set cu at 9 waaaaaaaaaaaaah!!!!!!

BACK TO SCENE

MICA

(On phone)

Benna's touching my

(off phone receding)

picture, NO Benna, stop it it's not yours.

DORIS

Op, she's off again, those two!

JEFF

Hehe, OK then. Bye Doris.

Jeff hangs up with Doris then rereads the text. Holding his phone in his hand he raises his eyes and stares out the cab window at nothing.

Jeff adjusts the idle on his 324 and scans for his spotter, but everyone is still on lunch. Jeff returns to excavating without his spotter.

Scoop, dump, scoop, dump, back up, repeat.

Jeff cuts into a fine SAND seam and sees in the distance that Armand is reaming out some NEW GUY.

The new guy is now running away from Armand towards Jeff and Armand is waving his arms and waddling.

JEFF (CONT'D)

Huh.

Jeff returns his attention to his levers and bucket and sees the unmistakable shape of a PIPELINE appear as sand strips away.

With an electric jolt, Jeff jerks his hands off the levers.

JEFF (CONT'D)

FuuuuuuuuuuuCKKKK!!

Tears stream down his face.

Jeff's hands hover over the controls.

The technician sent to stop Jeff from digging has stopped and begins to run in the opposite direction.

Jeff stares past the PICTURES of Jessica and Mica taped to the inside of the cab window and into death and divorce, unemployment and eulogies, the end of parenthood and...the end.

Thirty two tons of excavator flips into the air as the highly pressurised 42" pipeline ruptures.

The full flow of 2000 L per second erupts into the air like a Texas gusher.

INT. CENTRAL COMMAND MONITORING ROOM - DAY

Pressure drop alarms flash in central command in Calgary.

The automatic shutoff system is receiving a software update and the command centre is analog for the next half hour.

IAN (mid 30s) is in the washroom playing Wordle and AMIT (late 30s) is texting his new girlfriend, ear buds in, listening to the latest by Igorrrr.

TECHNICIANS burst into the monitoring room surprising Stu.

Stu rips out his ear buds to bings and dings, a dozen flashing red lights, and the swearing chastisement of the newly entered technicians.

Stu and the technicians begin to flip switches, turn dials and interpret routing maps.

FADE TO BLACK.

MONTAGE

Thick black goeey oil slides down a slope and into a creek.

Major switches and valves and red buttons are flipped, turned, depressed as water supply facilities go off-line.

At a funeral, Jessica is screaming and pointing and straining towards "the buddies" while being held back by family members. Armand is present but with an ankle bracelet on.

Pipeline executives and contractor executives and insurance executives yell and point fingers at each other in court. We see 4.7 Billion written on a flip chart.

A close up of Mica in bed eyes wet sniffing.

END MONTAGE

**THE END**