

HOW IT STARTS

Written by

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EXT. INNER CITY STREET - MORNING

JOE, late 20s, scampers down the sidewalk, weaving a path through the crowds of PEDESTRIANS. His fit physique is hidden under his ill-fitting suit.

A HOMELESS MAN leans against a shop-front window brandishing a dog-eared cardboard sign that reads "Less wars, more whores".

HOMELESS MAN  
We're all gonna die!

Joe dodges him and comes to a group of MOTHERS wheeling their prams in the standard selfish formation: three abreast, leaving no room for others to get past.

He sidesteps onto the road.

A car pulls out in front of him, the driver blasts his HORN.

He hops back onto the sidewalk, the satchel dangling from his shoulder clips one of the mothers.

MOTHER #1  
Hey!

Joe doesn't stop.

JOE  
(over his shoulder)  
I'm really, really sorry!

He continues sprinting along the sidewalk until he reaches a corner where he --

-- stops dead in his tracks.

The line for the bus is long and there's no bus in sight.

As he dawdles towards line, the mothers catch up to him.

Mother #1 slaps him.

MOTHER #1  
Scum-bag!

MOTHER #2  
She's a MOTHER you know!

JOE  
I'm ... I'm sorry.

Joe shrinks into the line. A fellow COMMUTER raises his eyebrows and smiles.

SARCASTIC COMMUTER

Jesus, should send them into  
battle.

An ELDERLY WOMAN standing in front of Joe is watching a news report on her smart phone with the volume turned up to the max. Joe shakes his head in disbelief.

On phone: a MAN in a suit stands at a lectern puffing his chest out.

Joe rolls his eyes and watches the traffic.

MAN (O.S.)

Yesterday, we as a nation were  
dealt a telling blow. Three of our  
beloved citizens were executed by  
the fanatical death cult, Islamic  
State. Today we are at war. We are  
at war with the death cult itself,  
and with any nation harbouring them  
--

A garbage truck BLASTS past the bus line with its horn  
BLARING, causing everyone to jump out of their skin.

EXT. BUS STOP - MOMENTS LATER

The line of COMMUTERS makes its way on to a bus one-by-one.  
Joe trudges towards the doors.

As he is about to climb on, he spots a MAN with slicked-back  
hair charging towards the bus in his tailored pin-striped  
suit.

Mr. Slick leaps onto the bus ahead of Joe.

JOE

Hey!

The bus driver raises his hand to signal the bus is full. He  
spots Joe's venomous glare and thinks better of it.

BUS DRIVER

Okay, one more.

INT. BUS - MOMENTS LATER

Joe stands at the front of the bouncing bus facing Mr. Slick.  
He eyeballs him.

MR. SLICK

Can I help you, champ?

Joe seethes in silence. Suddenly, the bus jerks to a halt.

The doors open - PASSENGERS file out, those left standing look for an empty seat.

Mr. Slick sits in a seat reserved for the elderly. Joe's eyes flare with exasperation.

MAN (O.S.)

Joe?

He turns towards the back of the bus and sees his friend CAMERON, early 30s, waving at him. Cameron is dressed in sportswear and is shaking his traditional morning protein shake.

Joe sits next to him.

CAMERON

Nice suit.

JOE

Thanks.

CAMERON

Interview?

JOE

Yeah.

CAMERON

Cool. You excited?

JOE

I don't get excited anymore. I'm thinking of writing a textbook on what not to say.

CAMERON

Things will pick up. Maybe they'll introduce some work for the war effort scheme or something.

JOE

Yeah, that shit escalated quickly.

A moment of silent contemplation.

The bus jerks to a stop. People get off, people get on.

A PREGNANT WOMAN waddles along the aisle. Mr. Slick remains seated.

Joe seethes, starts to stand.

Another MAN stands, offers his seat to the pregnant woman.

Cameron notices Joe's anger and puts his hand on Joe's arm.

CAMERON  
Stand down.

Joe sits.

JOE  
Sorry... I just hate that giant pin-  
striped dicks is all.

Joe maintains a silent rage.

CAMERON  
You alright? You seem, aggressively  
hormonal.

JOE  
Sorry... Just need today to go  
well.

INT. BUS - MOMENTS LATER

Cameron and Joe sit in silence. Rain starts lashing the  
windows.

CAMERON  
How are Anna and Jane?

Joe smiles.

EXT. PARK - DAY

JANE, 18 months old and painfully cute with blonde pig tails,  
stumbles into Joe's waiting arms.

JOE (V.O.)  
Good. Jane's walking now. All this  
shit that's going on goes straight  
over her head.

INT. BUS - MORNING

Joe, still smiling, gazes out the window.

Suddenly, DUB-STEP MUSIC BLASTS throughout the bus, cutting  
into every conversation.

Mr. Slick pulls out his RINGING phone, answers it.

MR. SLICK  
(loudly)  
Crawford! How are you man?  
(listens)  
Yeah man, I'm on the bus.

Joe, incredulous, turns to Cameron.

CAMERON

Relax Joe.

JOE

I'm trying, it's just that this guy is such a douchebag, I can't even think of what to call him.

CAMERON

How bout a giga-douche?

JOE

What comes after a gigabyte?

CAMERON

A terabyte.

JOE

Well there you go, he's a tera-douche.

MR. SLICK (O.S.)

Looks like we'll have to dust off the war bonds.

Joe turns back to Cameron.

JOE

Banker. Fuckin' typical --

CAMERON

-- Relax. That vein on your temple is starting to grow a vein of its own.

Joe closes his eyes and massages his temples while Mr. Slick continues his phone call.

CAMERON (CONT'D)

You've gotta chill out. Take solace in the thought that, that guy, probably has a micro-penis.

Joe stops massaging.

JOE

Are micro-penises really a thing?

CAMERON

Oh yeah! Saw a guy at the gym the other day with one. Looked like a shriveled up grape.

Joe resumes massaging.

JOE  
 Okay. Thinking of his micro-penis.  
 Staying calm. Micro-penis, micro-  
 penis, micro-penis --

Joe opens his eyes and instantly stops massaging his temples.

The WOMAN in the seat directly in front of them glares at him while covering her young DAUGHTER'S ears.

JOE (CONT'D)  
 Sorry.

The Woman turns back around.

A moment of silence between Joe and Cameron as Cameron vibrates like a paint mixer in an effort to suppress his laughter.

JOE (CONT'D)  
 It's hard to relax when the whole  
 country is on edge, you know?

Cameron fends off the laughter and stares out the window. Mr. Slick continues WAFFLING into his phone in the background.

CAMERON  
 Yeah. A lot of uncertainty for a  
 whole lot of people. I think  
 they'll announce when the second  
 deployment will ship out to the  
 Gulf soon. You know anyone who's  
 been deployed?

JOE  
 Brother-in-law.

CAMERON  
 Shit. Sorry man.

JOE  
 Thanks. I just don't understand how  
 it came to this. I mean it's not  
 like --

Joe turns to Mr. Slick, he's still on his phone.

MR. SLICK  
 -- So you done her already?  
 (listens)  
 Reckon she'll be up for it?  
 (listens)  
 Friday maybe?

Joe snaps.

JOE  
(to Mr. Slick)  
Can you spare us the details of  
your next indecent assault charge?!  
Fuck!

The Woman in front covers her daughter's ears again.

Mr. Slick turns around and holds up his hand, his fingers extended. He stares at Joe with his shark eyes. Joe sinks into his chair like a turtle taking refuge in his shell.

One-by-one, Mr. Slick curls his fingers into the palm of his hand. He keeps the final finger, his middle finger, extended for an extra moment before completing his fist.

Joe, slightly shaken, turns to Cameron.

JOE (CONT'D)  
Sorry, what were we talking about?

INT. BUS - MOMENTS LATER

The bus is now full. Joe and Cameron lean in close to hear each other above the MURMURING of the other PASSENGERS.

JOE  
You see, they say that, but I don't understand what was so special about these hostages. Why are we all of a sudden at war with an entire region because some rogue Arab militia knocked off a reporter's daughter and an oil tycoon's son? Plenty of other people have been killed.

CAMERON  
We'll never know. How's Anna coping?

INT. APARTMENT LOUNGE ROOM - NIGHT

ANNA, late 20s, cute as a button, lies on her side on a gigantic couch SOBBING.

JOE (V.O.)  
Mark gets deployed on Saturday. She's upset, that's probably an understatement. I actually prefer it when she cries, sounds crazy I know, but at least when she cries I know to give her a hug. Poor little Jane doesn't know what's happening.



Joe slides onto the couch behind Anna, puts an arm around her and pulls her towards him to spoon.

Jane, standing in front of them, stares.

JOE (V.O.)  
Breaks your fucking heart.

INT. BUS - MORNING

The bus stops. Passengers standing in the aisle shuffle about to make room for those getting off.

A shoulder bag clatters into Joe's face.

MAN (O.S.)  
Sorry!

JOE  
(to the passenger)  
No worries.  
(to Cameron)  
I just can't comprehend how opinions, beliefs, disputes, whatever, escalate to the point where we think it's okay to send thousands of people to the other side of the world to die. I mean how did it all start anyway?

The bus pulls away. A woman standing in the aisle falls in front of Mr. Slick who ignores her gesture for a helping hand.

Joe GROANS.

Mr Slick stares directly at Joe's retinas.

CAMERON  
No idea.

JOE  
(staring at Mr. Slick)  
Huh?

CAMERON  
I've got no idea how it all started. Maybe someone couldn't let something go, and it just snowballed from there. That was my Gran's recipe for disaster. Snowballs.

Mr. Slick, still staring at Joe, slices his finger across his throat.

JOE  
Maybe your Gran's on to something  
there.

INT. BUS - MOMENTS LATER

The bus slows down. Joe turns to Cameron.

JOE  
This is me. I'll see ya next  
Thursday, yeah?

Joe stands, checks his pockets and notices Mr. Slick  
standing.

CAMERON  
Sure will. You take it easy. And  
quit picking fights with fuckin  
psychos.

Mr. Slick stands in the aisle bouncing his head to a tune in  
his headphones.

JOE  
I will, it's all good. Chakra is  
centered. I'll be fine.

Cameron CHUCKLES.

CAMERON  
See ya buddy.

JOE  
Bye.

Joe hops off, closely followed by Mr. Slick.

EXT. BUSY INTERSECTION - MOMENTS LATER

Joe stands on the very edge of the sidewalk. Behind him a  
large army of suits and gym ready professionals jockey for  
the best position to cross from.

Joe is inches from the passing traffic. A bus THUNDERS past.  
A gust of wind pushes him back into the people behind him.

The mass of people continues to grow. Five rows back from Joe  
stands Mr. Slick. His glare could kill every puppy in the  
world.

Another bus WHOOSHES past.

JOE  
Shit!

An ELDERLY WOMAN propped up by her Zimmer frame stands next to him.

ELDERLY WOMAN  
It's just hellish isn't it sonny.

Joe nods.

The crowd surges ever so slightly towards the road.

ELDERLY WOMAN (CONT'D)  
(to the crowd)  
Careful! You fucking idiots!

Joe smiles.

A garbage truck RUMBLES towards the intersection, fast.

Mr. Slick spots it and lurches forward causing another crowd surge that pushes Joe and the Elderly Woman onto the road.

The crowd GASPS, they're all paralysed.

Joe picks up the Elderly Woman and pushes her back onto the sidewalk.

The garbage truck's horn BLASTS.

Its tires SCREECH.

Joe turns just in time to see the truck plow into him.

His body explodes under the front wheel of the truck.

Mr. Slick slides out of the crowd, unnoticed, as it converges on Joe's shattered remains.

Some people look away in horror, some SHOUT at the people next to them, accusing them of causing the surge.

The crowd starts pushing and shoving each other.

Further along the sidewalk, Mr. Slick strides away from the chaos with a satisfied grin.

He pulls out his phone, calls someone and pops headphones into his ears.

MR. SLICK  
Crawford! We're gonna make a  
killing selling war bonds today!

FADE TO BLACK.