

# Beep Off

By Kirsten Bakstran

“Alright everyone, look sharp” Johnson announces to the small group of underlings huddled around him. “Lets start this Monday off right. First, I want to congratulate Henderson on his fine work with the Dishwasher account.” The group of grey-suited guys applaud and nod. “His bleeding edge design has reduced post-cycle inter-beep time by 25%. No longer will customers have to suffer more than 1.5 minutes of consecutive, agonizing silence.” Henderson, clothed in an impressive pewter-toned suit, smiles as he shakes the hands of the colleagues beside him.

Johnson turns his attention to a few other men. “You fine folks in the microwave division should take inspiration from this. We shouldn’t settle for beeping every 20 seconds once food is done. I want more than that. I wanna see you guys get hungry.” A group of men in somber stone-shaded suits nods fervently. “And don’t forget, for everyone in kitchen appliances, please make sure all your beeps are the same tone. I don’t want to have to say this again.”

Johnson’s performative pout changes instantly to a grin as he continues with “On to more good news, I’d also like to acknowledge Smithy here. He’s done some truly impressive work on the car project. Tell ‘em what you’ve done, bud.” A bespectacled man in a suave cement-toned suit steps forward to speak. “Well, we all love how cars beep when they turn on, right?” The group nods in agreement. “Well, I just took that idea and ran with it. The new line of cars will now beep anytime the driver backs up, doesn’t have a seatbelt on, opens the trunk, opens a door, changes lanes, gets too close to a curb, isn’t close enough to a curb when parking or blinks their eyes at an inconsistent rate while driving over 15mph.” The group applauds and cheers. “And” Smithy says, “I don’t want to count my chickens before they hatch, but I’m pretty sure in the next year I’ll get those windshield wipers beeping with every completed count.” The group is in awe, unable to even mutter a single woot, hoot, or holler. “Didn’t I say he was something?” Johnson says proudly.

“Now, onto the bad news, and I hate to say it but there is bad news” Johnson says, frowning dramatically. “We’ve been getting some really bad quotes from the Cellphone division. Johnson F., can you explain this?” A small man (who is sweating clean through his insipid and frankly inadequate albatross-toned suit) steps forward. “Well, you see sir, uh, as much as I’ve tried to reinvigorate cellphone beeps, ever since ‘Do No Disturb’ was implemented-” the group hisses at the mere mention of such a foul word as this. Johnson F. forces himself to continue “ever since then, it’s just been an uphill battle.” Johnson stares at Johnson F., lips pursed, then says “Cellphone beeping used to be the cornerstone of our company. Back when we were just a couple of guys, fiddling around with low-battery fire alarms in my mom’s garage. The account really means a lot to me, so please pull it together. There’s always a way. And if anyone has any ideas, please pass them along to Johnson F. here.”

Johnson peers around at his group. “Alright, any last words before we break?” Perkins, draped in a dashing yet delicate dark gray suit steps forward. “Well, my guys in the washing machine and dryer division were thinking, what if, uh, what if washers and dryers beeped sometimes even when they’re not done? And then when a customer tries to open the door only to find it locked, they’ll think maybe they’ve only imagined the beep?” Silence... and then Johnson, with a fire blazing behind his eyes, exclaims “I LOVE it! Make it happen Perkins” Perkins smiles and fist pumps with his compatriots.

Johnson continues “Okay everyone. Now that we’ve handled that business, let’s start this day right. Hands in!” 22 perfectly smooth hands stack together at the center of the circle. “On three. 1, 2, 3” The group shouts in perfect harmony “BEEP THE WORLD!” Johnson can’t help but smile. “Amazing, have a beeping good day everyone!”

Johnson watches the grey mass of men dissipates before going back to his office. He sits down and peers out his window overlooking a bustling city. BEEP. Johnson peers down at his watch.

BEEP.

BEEEP.

BEEP. BEEP. BEEP. BEEEEEEP.

Johnson stares at his watch. A single tear rolls down his cheek. “And that’s what it’s all about.”