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Another Day on the Rig

By Cody Boulware

It's another day on the rig. The heat feels as if the sun is about to fall onto my head, and there is a thread protector stuck in the pipe that is sitting in the mouse hole. Time is running short, along with my temper. I holler over to the other floor hand, "Grab that hammer beside you." I proceed to hit the thread protector like I was trying to kill its whole family. Still, it doesn't budge, and my temper flairs more with every blow of the hammer. I finally resort to the mechanized equipment, an ST-80, meant for making up joints of pipe. I maneuver it into position, trying to operate this beast of a machine with the finesse of a brain surgeon. I gently clamp it down and spin the thread protector out.

I feel accomplished, but this feeling quickly dwindles when I look down to see that I damaged the pipe. Panic quickly set in. Should I just try to make it up and see if it works? Should I tell my driller what I have done? I finally come to my senses and walk into the doghouse to tell the driller.

"Brinkman, could you come look at this?"

"What is it?"

"I think I screwed this joint of pipe up."

"How did you do that?"

"With the ST-80."

To my surprise, Brinkman strolls out of the doghouse and inspects the damage. After looking it over, he looks over to me and calmly says, "I'll tell the tool pusher. If he says anything, then just tell him you picked it up like that."

"Okay," I say, feeling relieved.

I go on about my usual duties of scrubbing, power washing, and making connections. When I hear my name come across the intercom, I go to the nearest intercom box and hear Brinkman on the other end.

"Come to the rig floor," Brinkman says.



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I run up to the rig floor without any worries, until I see Big Chuck, our Tool Pusher, standing on the porch of the dog-house. Without any pleasantries, Chuck barks out, “What happened to that joint of pipe?”

“I noticed that when we picked it up,” I confidently explained to him, since that is what my Driller told me to say. Big Chuck looks down at me; I can see that he is getting mad as his face turns as red as a tomato.

“Bullshit! I can tell those marks are from the rollers on the ST-80. If you had picked it up like that, then there would be rust on it. Those marks are shiny.”

I look over at Brinkman. I can tell that he didn't stick to his own plan just by the look on his face. So at this point I only have one choice.

“I used the ST-80 to get the thread protector out because it was stuck,” I confess.

I didn't think it was possible, but Big Chuck's face reddens even more, to the point that I am thinking his head was going to explode.

“You idiot. You should never use the ST-80 to get a thread protector out! That machine is only meant for the drill pipe. And since you lied to me, I'm going to write you up, and dock you a dollar an hour for thirty days.”

I couldn't believe what I was hearing. Did a simple thread protector really just cost me money? Did my Driller really just throw me under the bus like that? It all became extremely real when I was signing a write-up in the Tool Pusher's house after work.

I lost a lot of faith for my boss that day. I was reminded about it every day that a paycheck came in for the next thirty days. I told myself that I wouldn't try to cover up my mistakes, even if my boss told me to do so.

But, of course, life isn't always that easy.

