

Blue Elephant



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BEEP.

BEEP.

BEEP.

Nothing.

BEEP. BEEP. BEEP.

Jamie reached out his hand, searching the nightstand for the alarm.

BEEP. BEEP. BEEP.

He couldn't find it. He groaned.

BEEP. BEEP. BEEP.

"Jamie!" His mother shouted from the kitchen.

"Turn off your alarm already, it's time for breakfast."

He stuck his head out from under his pillow. With all the effort he could muster, he found his phone on the floor. He shut off the alarm and quickly dozed off again.

BEEP. BEEP. BEEP.

"DAMN SNOOZE BUTTONS!"

Jamie sat straight up, grabbed his phone, typed the 6-digit security code and turned off the alarm.

“Jamie!” His mother called out again. “Your pancakes are getting cold.”

“Just a sec mom!”

His eyes caught glimpses of red circles with numbers around them. They were all over his phone menu. What did I do the night before again? Jamie thought.

“Jamie!”

“WAIT ONE SECOND MOM.”

Jamie opened his NostalgiaBook app first. He had six notifications and two Delivery responses. A shot of dopamine flooded his brain. Most notifications were pretty meaningless, consisting of old friends asking him to like their new businesses and friends of friends’ birthday reminders. There were 24 likes on the photo he posted – apparently from last night. The picture was of him and Daron in front of a house filled with fellow graduate students. She had joined him to attend the semester’s residence party. That explains the massive headache I have.

He flipped through his newsfeed looking for photos from last night’s party, scrolling past news articles on the earthquake that happened in Puerto Rico, life hacks, and Donald Trump’s impeachment trials. If he recalled correctly – which by no means he was completely sure of – there were hundreds of students that attended, including many of the girls in his classes. Did I score last night? Jamie wondered.

“Jamie! I’m not going to call you again.”

“ALRIGHT I’M COMING. GOD.”

Jamie rolled out of bed, slipped on a pair of university sweatpants and a Superbeam brick-coloured shirt and waddled downstairs to the dining room. His plate of pancakes had already been laid out for him, along with a banana and a glass of orange juice. Jamie’s mother was feeding his baby sister on one end of the table, while his father was reading the newspaper on the opposite end. Jamie poured maple syrup and began chowing down.

“How was your night, Jamie?” His father asked, looking up from the Sports Section.

“Fine,” Jamie replied. As he said this, he felt a vibration in his pants pocket and pulled out his phone. It was a Delivery message from Daron: Need to talk. Let’s meet after morning class.

Jamie started feeling a bit anxious and tried to recall any memory of last night. Had I done anything wrong?

“What time is your class?” His mother asked.

“I’m 26 mom, I know I’m running late.”

“That’s not what I meant. I genuinely wanted to ask you about your class and what it’s about.”

“Jah moo gie,” Jamie’s sister added. His sister was just two years old. She was holding her favourite toy, a blue stuffed elephant, trying not to get it in her bowl of cereal. There was a huge gap in their age and so Jamie didn’t really do anything with her unless his parents asked him to babysit. His parents would often go out to the movies, have dinner at exotic restaurants, and go dancing at the Latin Discotheque.

“It’s just about molecular biology. You probably wouldn’t understand.”

Jamie gulped down the remaining pancakes and banana, chugged the glass of orange juice, and flew upstairs without another word. He showered, got dressed and was out the door in efficient time. He put on his headphones and opened the JukeboxInfinify app to listen to the latest music from his favourite artists. He felt relieved scanning through his suggested playlists and seeing the top listened songs of his preferred genres. He saw the bus was already at the stop as he rounded the corner of his street and ran as fast as he could to catch it.

“Just in time,” the bus driver said, “you must be going somewhere important.”

Jamie didn’t hear nor look up at the bus driver as he scanned his pass and sat down.

He was preoccupied with hypothetical things that could have happened last night. Had he been mean to Daron? Had he hooked up with one of the other girls in his class and left her there alone? Jamie was so preoccupied inside his head that he didn’t even notice that he sat down on someone’s lap.

“Boy, get off me!” The lady exclaimed.

“I’m sorry,” Jamie said, as he took the seat next to her.

The lady was an elderly Jamaican woman who had just gotten off work, doing overnight custodial duties at the new hospital next to his house. She was a single mother of five children, two of which had moved away to California to pursue their acting aspirations. Her eldest daughter was a computer scientist at Frugal and stayed home during the night to watch over the other two children, young twin boys who really liked playing tackle football in the house.

“W’ur you learn how to si’ down?” The lady grumbled.

Jamie wasn’t paying attention to her. He really wanted to find out what had happened last night. He opened the Filteram app and started scrolling through the front page. Among them were photos of famous celebrities having fun at the beach, graduate school peers hiking through some rainforest in South America, and pets happily obeying their owner’s commands. Kevin’s cat playing fetch with a rolled-up paper ball made him grin with delight. Finally, he got to the pictures of the party. Lots of people having a good time dancing and playing games. There’s one with him in the background talking to his crush, Ariana! Dopamine shot. There’s



another one with him, Daron and a group of other students! Another shot.

He arrived on campus full of energy and ready for morning class. When he got to the room, he scanned for Daron but couldn't find her. He decided to sit near the back of the class where the professor wouldn't be able to see his laptop screen, nor would other students in the room. There were 15 other students there, all with laptops out. Some were listening and jotting down notes as the professor changed the intonation of her voice. Others were not paying attention, but instead were checking emails, using the Frugal app

to search for nearby food places to eat at lunch, or catching up on the latest fashion news. That last one was Ariana. He noticed she was perusing fashion trends, which made him open her Filteram profile. What an insane number of followers, Jamie thought.

Class ended but Jamie had barely noticed until Daron walked up from near the front of the class and sat beside him. She looked terrible. Her eyes were really puffy, as if she had been crying the night before. Her blonde hair was not brushed and there was no attempt at putting on any makeup. Jamie was concerned.

"How's it going?" Jamie asked.

"Can we talk outside?" Daron replied.

"Have you been crying all night?"

"C'mon. Let's talk outside."

Jamie and Daron walked out of the building and sat in a semi-secluded area surrounded by small hedges. There were other students there; two were doing various yoga positions, while two others were playing a card game.

"I want to talk about last night," Daron began.

"Is there something that happened?" Jamie's heart began to race.

"I'm upset about what you did."

"What did I do last night?"

"You posted a picture of me on your Chirper profile," Daron said, tearing up again.

Jamie knew about the NostalgiaBook post but not this other picture. He took out his phone and opened the Chirper app. He did post a picture last night. Well actually it was a picture of himself, taking a selfie in what seemed to be the backyard of the residence in front of a beer pong table. His expression was that of a puzzled smile, holding two beers and a ping-pong ball all in one hand. Beside him was his friend Tyler, who had just made the craziest trick shot that Jamie had ever seen. He captioned the photo: Guess I won't be the only one scoring tonight.

"I just see the picture I took with Tyler."

"Look in the top right corner."

Jamie's gaze went to the top right corner. There was Daron, embraced by a tall man in a sports jersey. They were making out. His face looked familiar.

"That's John, my ex-boyfriend."

"Oh no," Jamie whispered.

"Why did you post that! Eric saw that post and was messaging me all throughout the party. On every single app. You know how my phone dies super early every night.

Stupid battery keeps running out! I couldn't answer and explain myself."

"How could I know that was you in the corner of the picture? It could have been any couple making out!"

"Well it was me! Thanks a lot."

"What happened when you got home?"

"We had this huge argument and broke up. He said he wouldn't have been so angry if I had just contacted him to explain what was going on. It's all your fault!"

"Hey, don't put all the blame on me! What were you thinking, making out with your ex?"

"I didn't know he was going to be there! I only noticed when he posted on NostalgiaBook that he was having fun at a party tonight. Then he posted a picture of him and some friends in the residence on Filteram. Just a huge coincidence. I remember my heart pounding and I went out to get some air. And there he was."

"Still doesn't explain why you guys made out."

"I don't know, Jamie! Life is complicated, full of feelings and thoughts that you can't always put into a few words. It's not simple. It was a lapse of judgement. I feel terrible about it."

"You want me to take it down?"

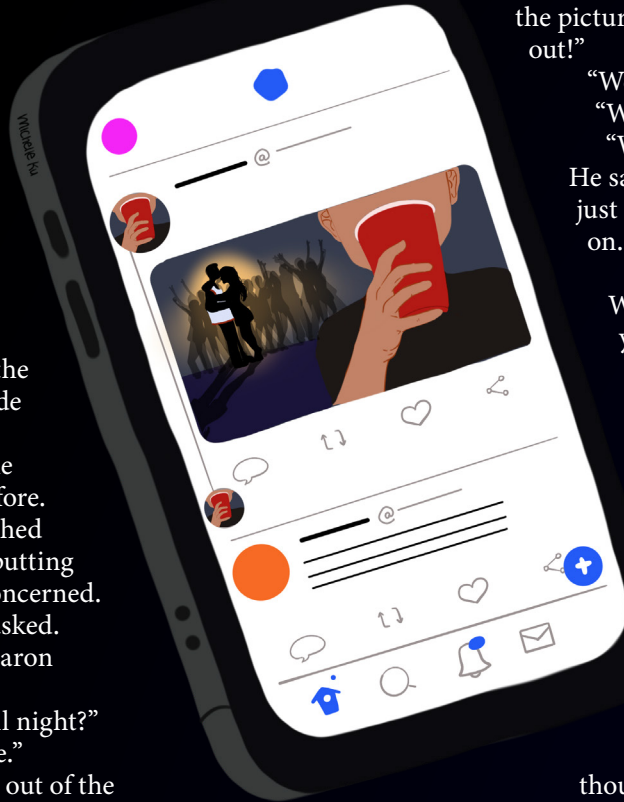
"No. It's too late now. I'm just so depressed. I downloaded the Spark and Buzz apps to try and move on. It's making me feel a little better, but I still feel so alone."

"I think you need to just relax and take it easy. I'm subscribed to this guru on ShortVideoAddictions who meditates every single day. He seems really happy. Maybe you could try it."

"I don't know. I'm not much into sitting down and being aware of where my mind wanders. I just need to get over this quick. Anyway, I'm late for class, I'll talk to you later."

"Okay. Sorry again, Daron."

Jamie watched as Daron got into her PersonalStranger car and sped off to class across campus. Jamie looked at his phone, it was past noon. He realized he had two NostalgiaBook messages that he had not checked before. One was from a group chat he was mysteriously added to with no actual content. The other was from his mom reminding him that they had Latin dancing lessons at 1:00 pm today and needed



him to babysit his little sister. Damn, I forgot, Jamie thought.

Jamie called a PersonalStranger car and went home. It was just in time too, as his parents were about ready to leave.

“You’re late,” Jamie’s dad said.

“Sorry, there was a lot on my mind after class.

Micro-stressing over things.”

“Talk later?” His mom asked, putting on her coat.

“Um, yeah sure.”

Jamie and his sister watched his parents leave the driveway and then sat down on the couch. Jamie’s sister started crying. Confused, he stared at his phone, then put it down and started looking around the house for her blue stuffed elephant.

