

# **Big Game**

By Mike Mariano

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*The scene opens in a bar. A stuffed pink elephant, like one you would win at a carnival, sits motionless in a bar stool, facing the audience. After a moment, JILL enters, carrying a drink, dressed for the singles scene. She casually takes the stool next to the elephant. She looks around, and then settles back in her seat. She glances at the elephant.*

**JILL**

Hey...

*Beat.*

I like that color on you...

*She lets out a nervous laugh.*

My name's Jill. I saw you sitting here from the other side of the bar, and I thought I'd...

*She trails off. Beat.*

You know, you look familiar... You weren't just down the shore...at the boardwalk, were you...?

*JILL frowns.*

I was down there with my boyfriend. Last week. It wasn't very... We just had a big argument, and the trip to the beach was maybe to patch things up. I met him there, and then I smelled... He was wearing some thick cologne or something; aftershave, but he didn't look like he shaved in days.

I recognized it, though. It took me a second, but I remembered; it was the stuff he was wearing when we first met. I had forgotten the name, but the smell, that musky, ridiculous—

*She smirks.*

**JILL** (cont.)

He thought it made him irresistible, "This is what attracts the big game," he said once. So I guess after the argument we had, I was the big game again, and he was... hunting.

I could see right through him—smell right through him, and I knew it wouldn't work. Nice try buddy, but... But... I don't want to say it was the scent, but something told me to stay just a little bit longer.

So, we walked along the sand, looking at each other. Looking into his eyes for any redeeming value that might have been there before. But any redeeming values there, in his eyes, were staring at some blonde walking her dog past us. But the smell...

*JILL sips her drink.*

Then we went up onto the boardwalk. We shot some zombies in the arcade, played some skeeball; it wasn't bad...

We went back outside, and I thought for a second: we don't irritate each other half as much as we want to.

Outside were some of the carnival rides. My favorite ride there has always been the space shuttle; you know, one of the ones that goes back and forth then upside-down and you get nauseous? Well, it's not so much the nausea that's fun; it's the setting. All the other rides on the boardwalk, they seem to be pirate or jungle themed. Stuff that's exciting. I'm not sure if a space shuttle still holds a lot of excitement. What can you pretend you're doing, besides launching a satellite or fixing a telescope?

But the space shuttle, it's so hopelessly out of place that I feel sorry for it, and I kind of want to stick up for it. Plus I love going upside-down, grasping somebody's hand with almost nothing separating me from the sky, or bloody death, or...

But I like it, I really do. And I thought, well, if I'm being hunted, maybe it's time to turn the tables and do some hunting of my own. So I suggested to my boyfriend that we go on, and he immediately says no.

He said that the rising and falling of the ride had an undesirable effect on, well... On his "male equilibrium". He said I wouldn't understand; that what the ride did to a guy "down there" felt the same as getting kicked "down there".

**JILL** (cont.)

He was right; I didn't understand.

You're a... do you have any idea what he means?

*Beat.*

Do you even have anything down there?

*JILL shakes her head.*

I'm sorry; I'm sorry. That wasn't a—I shouldn't have asked.

Still, if you do, you're not hiding it very well. I mean, I could check if I wanted to, there's not much stopping me...But I won't.

So due to male equilibrium, I ended up on the space shuttle alone. And I really—it isn't very fun alone. When I'm upside-down like that, I want to be just me, the sky and someone else. Someone in the same situation as me, to reassure me.

*She sighs and looks at the elephant.*

Just someone.

All right, this next part I'm going to tell you in rhythm because, well, that's how I saw it. In rhythm. When the space shuttle goes back, I can see the boardwalk and my boyfriend on it. When it goes forward, I can only see the beach. We go forward first, then back, and my boyfriend is... adjusting himself. Then forward, then back and he's looking bored. Then forward, it's the beach, then back and he's gone.

Forward, back, forward, back; there's no sign of the guy. Maybe he's in the bathroom. It would be an improvement; he's not marking his territory in the sand anymore.

Forward, back, forward, back and I see him. He's standing on the other side now, right next to that blonde from the beach. One hand is petting that dog of hers and the other is sliding around her waist. Forward, and I see nothing. Back, and I see it all again. That's him, that's another woman, and that's not what we came here for.

Forward, and by this time we're going so high the shuttle's about to loop around. While I'm upside-down I see everything. He winks at her. He holds her closer. He kisses her.

**JILL** (cont.)

And as we begin to swing back down, I smile. Hey, at least it's over. The hunt is over.

And that really was wonderful. I'm at a 60-degree angle to the ground and at that moment, officially single. I got off the ride, dizzy, but determined. I staggered over to him, fired off a "goodbye", and walked away.

Alone was good. Being alone this past week felt really, really good. Some girls, they think they have to run to their friends after a breakup, like pack animals. Usually they do this to make sure they still have friends, after snubbing them during the relationship. But I was still close to my friends. Close enough. So I didn't need them this week. I didn't need to join the pack, hunt for another man. I just needed me.

*She takes some nuts from a nearby bowl. Unconsciously, she slides the bowl in front of the elephant. She looks over at him, then at the bowl.*

Oh, I'm sorry...

*With an embarrassed smile, she slides the bowl away.*

I—I didn't mean to imply...

*She sighs.*

Maybe I'm better off alone. I really am... Heck, I enjoy it... I even went back to the boardwalk tonight. Walked the beach, played some skeeball... Rode the space shuttle, too; gotta stick up for the space shuttle. Still, nothing to hold onto but the cold metal bars...

But hey, what are you going to do, right? Men aren't my game of choice at the moment. The intelligent man is probably an endangered species, anyway. All my girlfriends have trophies of their own that need stuffing and cleaning. They were already out when I called them... So... So I don't need them...

So I guess I'm left without any big game left to hunt, huh?

*JILL sighs. A beat. JILL gathers her courage and turns to the elephant.*

Hey, have you ever been on the space shut—

*As she turns, she hits the elephant with her arm and spills her drink on it.*

**JILL** (cont.)

Oh!

*She grabs a napkin off the bar and begins to blot the elephant. It falls off the stool.*

Oh my God! Oh...

*JILL picks the elephant back up and rubs it with the napkin. She stops, notices her hysteria, and stops rubbing. She tosses the elephant a fresh napkin.*

Here.

*She catches her breath and looks at the stain.*

Is that going to come out?

*JILL sighs.*

Listen... I think—I think I've bothered you enough tonight.

*She stands.*

If you ever...

*She stops.*

It was nice talking to you. I'll see you around...

*JILL exits. The elephant remains motionless as the lights fade.*