

### **Incident with a *Szemrowice***

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You remember I told you about the incident with the hamster? Benny has a nasty habit of stealing girls away from me. No, wait. Benny *is* a nasty habit. I don't know how he thinks we're friends, but I can't seem to shake the *szemrowice* loose. Benny. What kind of a name is "Benny," anyway? Sounds like a real *szemrowice*. Yes, I'm grumpy today, damn it.

It happened again last Thursday. I was with Isabella. I'm mad crushing on her. The way that dark hair falls in her eyes. Yikes. It makes me tingle. Not in a perverted way. I'm not a pervert. I should clarify, though: she does get me going. I'm not weird, you know? I'm capable. Anyway. Where was I? Sorry, those eyes make me...yeesh.

Right, Isabella. We'd met up at Johanneum, which I'm not super crazy about because it puts a hurting on the credit, but the bandwidth is hot. We were talking about websites and how you can run them through the Einlanzer Machine without getting flagged, and then I showed her my navel. I know, I know, who does that at Johanneum? I thought maybe it would impress her and get her mind off getting flagged. She really hates getting flagged. I hate to see that girl down, with those big eyes lowered and her lovely hands tapping out a rhythm on the table, if only I could touch them...

...Sorry, did I say "navel"? God damn it. "Novel," not "navel." What a novel mistake, am I right? Ha ha ha. Sorry. I get distracted, you know? When a girl stretches her arms and her shirt lifts and you get that flash of bare skin and belly button it's a little hard to form language. I dunno, maybe it's just me.

Anyway I showed her my novel and was super nervous because what if the girl you're mad crushing on doesn't like your novel then you might as well die, I mean seriously. But she was all impressed and showering me with praise and I told her she should go into the business of comforting people, she could print up business cards with "Isabella Duncan - Assurance Services" and spend her life making people feel better about themselves, or maybe just making me feel better about myself, and then she brought up Benny.

Sometimes I fill a cup with cold water and pour it on my head and that's what this felt like only worse because it involved that *szemrowice*. I guess she ran into him at the Dongfang Electric, which I was going to go to except my mom said no more damaging my hearing and I'm like "Mom. It's my hearing to damage" but she was totally being a *szemrowice*. So I missed Dongfang but apparently Benny didn't and he didn't miss Isabella either, which is totally the crap he would pull, being Benny. How many girls at Dongfang? Really? Out of all the girls at all the shows he has to walk up to mine, apologies to Bogey.

Isabella was telling me what a charmer Benny is and I was just sick to my stomach and trying to dissuade her and explain that he is actually a complete *szemrowice* and she said "I mean, *caecum wayae*, you know?" and I was like "yeah I think that means 'ever the fat bastard'" which was pretty clever but she was kind of frowning and then the fat bastard walked through the door. What a *szemrowice*.

He saw us immediately and glided over to our table in the way that he does and I must admit he is not actually fat, he just strikes me as bloated with evil, but actually he

is in pretty good shape and I could see Isabella admitting that too and I did not like the look in her eyes, the way they pointed at Benny instead of at me. *Caecum wayae*.

“Alex!” he shouted and slapped me on the back so I spilled my drink, and then he turned to Isabella and began talking to her like I wasn’t even there and she was talking back and he was telling her about how he’d just about lost Tom Evans and I was like “the comedian?” and he was like “no, dummy, my lucky baseball” and slapped me on the back and spilled my drink again. Who names a baseball? I don’t care how lucky it is, it’s not a goddam Les Paul. I looked to Isabella to see if she was treating this *szemrowice* with the appropriate level of scorn, but she didn’t seem appalled like I would expect what with eyes like that. Damn.

I tried to put the conversation back on some sensible track with jokes I’d picked up from Tom Evans (comedian) but they were all laughing and flirting about Tom Evans (baseball) and I could just see that this *szemrowice* was going to walk away with the girl just like he did that time with the hamster. And sure enough pretty soon he was standing up and offering her his hand and talking about showing her the Albrecht Jones maneuver and how does a novel compete with that? I mean if I’m really honest with myself. They’re out the door without a backward glance and I haven’t heard from her since, and can you really blame me for being grumpy?

**Dongfang Electric; *Caecum wayae*; Kevin Murray (Australian footballer); Chris Avery; Tom Evans (baseball); Assurance services; Johanneum; Mohi-Din Binhend; Karl Theodor Bayrhofer; Szemrowice**