

Elephant Empire: "Remember the Dibigong"

By

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Elephant Empire intro credits.

**EXT. ENDLESS SUBURBIA.**

Move in to one driveway. DAVE, smiling, waits with cooler and bag.

Car pulls up. Door opens.

FRIENDS IN CAR  
DAAAAAVE!

The friends load DAVE's stuff into the car.

Nonstop-excited chatter. The audience can only register their enthusiastic, shouting faces:

Maybe, if you're lucky, you can make out a few words.  
Simultaneous:

DAVE  
(overlapping)  
Let's do this! Big BBQ weekend! I brought steaks, I brought ribs, I brought wings, I brought chicken breasts, you like bacon? We got bacon, this cooler is basically a Noah's Ark of the Dead...

PETER  
(overlapping)  
This is going to be weekend of legend. We have every board game known to man. Risk, Monopoly, that game with the trap the mouse although we are missing some pieces, we got dice, we can play Yahtzee until 5am!...

MATT  
(overlapping)  
TGIF, am I right boys? What's better than being with your best buds for a sweet weekend. Office life is for chumps we were meant to run and drink and laugh. Not fax, who faxes? Why am I still sending faxes in this day and age, there are no fax machines in nature unless that's what the leaves in fall are. Thousands of tree faxes to nowhere...

HANNAH  
 (overlapping)  
 These are perfect cottage  
 conditions. I need to get in that  
 water. I'm talking swimming above,  
 swimming below, swimming just arms  
 switch it up just legs. Tubing,  
 jet-skiing, holding our breath  
 competitions, I LOVE treading  
 water, front crawl, backstroke, get  
 out the flutter boards old school  
 coasting...

During this explosion, the drive to the cottage begins.

ALL TOGETHER  
 Cottage weekend '99!

More excited simultaneous shouting.

It dies down. Silence.

MATT  
 Stop the car.

SCREECH brakes. Friends confused. MATT steps out.

PETER  
 What's up?

MATT  
 I don't want to do this if we're  
 not excited.

PETER  
 What? We definitely-

MATT  
 I'm talking 100%. All weekend. No  
 pauses.

DAVE  
 Maximum excitement...

PETER  
 Even when we're sleeping? Maybe I  
 can do 50 or 60 percent when I'm  
 asleep.

HANNAH  
 That's an average of 83%.

DAVE  
 83% is a good weekend.

MATT  
I don't want to live 83% of my  
life.

DAVE  
He's right.

PETER  
100% excitement the whole  
weekend...

HANNAH  
Let's do it.

MATT gets back in the car. All prepare to continue shouting-

PETER  
Wait. What is this going to do us?

MATT  
What's it going do to us if we  
don't do it?

Solemn nods from all.

All take a breath and restart the excited shouting.

This time the look on their faces is fear.

Freeze frame. Eerie music STING.

Transition: The car drives past a man being beaten in the  
street.

**EXT. STREET**

Riot Cops beating a suspect.

COP DAVE stops and thinks. Stops COP PETER to talk.

COP DAVE  
Do you think we're violent people  
and that's why we were drawn to the  
police force? Or. Is there  
something about the uniform and the  
power that makes one violent?

COP PETER  
(interested)  
Huh.

They resume beating suspect.

Transition: fade to black. The image of the police beating a man freezes and becomes a constellation of stars.

Pan down from the stars.

**EXT. GEORGIAN BAY. NIGHT. SUMMER. 3AM.**

Four friends in a small boat.

They are lit by their flashlights and the glow of a fish finder and a few pieces of video and audio equipment.

SUPER: Somewhere on Georgian Bay. 3am.

CONNELL

I'm going on the record. They're all made up. The Dibigong. Loch Ness. Bigfoot. Ogopog.

JERZY

Ogopogo.

HAILEY

Do you know the name of the snake that eats itself?

JERZY

Oroboros? That's more of a symbol than a cryptid.

MANNY

So what's a two-headed bird?

JERZY

Like a Byzantine crest or a Gandaberunda?

CONNELL

Ugh. Also, for the record, wizard here is the only of us who went into the sciences.

JERZY

Technically, this is pseudoscientific because the Dibigong lacks falsifiability. Karl Popper argued that science-

CONNELL

(overlapping groan) Boring.

MANNY

(overlapping)  
Okay, professor.

HAILEY  
(overlapping)  
I study literature.

JERZY  
I forgot you're all arts students.

HAILEY  
Hey , "for the record", do you  
believe there's any creature that  
hasn't been discovered?

CONNELL  
Maybe in the deepest part of the  
ocean.

JERZY  
Technically, we're connected to the  
Atlantic the ocean.

CONNELL  
Wow.

MANNY  
It's healthy to keep some wonder  
about the universe.

HAILEY  
All I'm saying is you're on the  
boat too.

CONNELL  
This was all JERZY's idea.

MANNY  
It's fun. It's great we're all back  
for the summer.

HAILEY  
I agree. If you lived near Loch  
Ness wouldn't you put in one night,  
in a boat, looking for Nessie?

CONNELL  
It's amazing to me that a sailor in  
1800 would be on the bay, see a  
rock in the fog and say, "blimey,  
it's a monstey", and a couple of  
hundred years later we -Dibigong!  
The Dibigong!

All look.

CONNELL (CONT'D)  
(laughing)  
Guys. It's made up. That's so sad  
you all looked.

MANNY splashes CONNELL.

MANNY  
No false alarms.

JERZY  
It wasn't a sailor it was a dentist  
on his yacht and the year was 1923.

HAILEY  
Memory like a steel trap.

CONNELL  
Everyone remember Mr. Temple?

JERZY  
Our teacher. Grade 5.

HAILEY  
Oh!

CONNELL  
Hold on. What did Mr. Temple dress  
up for on Halloween?

JERZY  
David Suzuki.

MANNY AND HAILEY  
Whoa!

CONNELL  
Every teacher was Suzuki at some  
point. Just because he acts certain  
doesn't mean he's got a good  
memory.

MANNY  
Mr. Temple was a cool teacher.

JERZY  
No he wasn't.

HAILEY  
Oh, the science report!

MANNY  
What?



CONNELL

You don't remember? Mr. Temple had all these tubes and boiled water for-

MANNY

I don't think I was there that day.

JERZY

You were.

HAILEY

Remember? We had to do a group report?

MANNY

(remembers)

Did we we fight about it?

CONNELL

Oh we fought! Because Mr. Temple set up all his science stuff and it didn't work at all.

HAILEY

So he just told the class what was supposed to happen.

JERZY

So corrupt.

CONNELL

But then on our group science report said "write down what you saw."

HAILEY

And JERZY insisted on describing how the experiment failed.

JERZY

Because that's what happened.

CONNELL

We knew what we were supposed to write.

MANNY

I don't think I remember this. Was Mr. Temple the one who threw chalk?

CONNELL

Did he?

JERZY

That was Mr. Polomo. He threw chalk  
at the kid who broke the chair  
during an indoor recess-

The large, scaly back of the Dibigong rises out of the lake,  
brushing the boat.

The friends stand. Rising shout. HAILEY, closest to the  
beast, reaches out, touches it.

The boat is rocked, tipped over. HAILEY falls in the boat.  
The rest fall overboard. Flashlights dropped.

SPLASHING.

CONNELL

MANNY?

MANNY

I'm here. Where's JERZY?

JERZY

Here. We're all here.

HAILEY

Get in the boat!

MANNY

It's cold.

All climb into boat.

CONNELL

Where is it?

HAILEY

I don't see it.

JERZY

Holy moly.

All laugh at everything. Especially, "holy moly."

CONNELL

Did you see that?

HAILEY

See it? I touched it. I touched it  
with my hand.

JERZY

You touched the Dibigong?

HAILEY

It was warm.

Transition: Pan up to the stars. It's the constellation of cops from before. Pan left, searching.

We found it. A different image of a police beating. It comes to life.

**EXT. STREET**

Riot Cops beat a suspect.

COP DAVE stops and thinks. Stops COP PETER to talk.

COP DAVE

Do you think people have a right to revolt against a corrupt state?

COP PETER thinks.

COP PETER

A right? An obligation.

They resume beating suspect.

Transition: close up on COP DAVE who keeps dropping out of frame to swing his baton.

His head pops back up into frame. Riot Cop costume gone. Now he's dripping wet.

**EXT. THE BEACH.**

DAVE is trying to revive dead PETER. MATT stops helping. Classic movie moment best realized in The Abyss (1989).

MATT

He's gone.

DAVE ignores him. Intensifies effort. Music SWELLS.

MATT (CONT'D)

It's over. DAVE, stop it.

MATT grabs DAVE.

MATT (CONT'D)

Stop! He's gone. You have to stop. There's nothing we-

Music STOPS.

DAVE

Why not let me do it? For five  
hours if I want? If he's dead who  
does it hurt?

MATT's reaction.

DAVE resumes his efforts and PETER is immediately revived.

MATT's shock.

PETER

I'm alive!

DAVE

He wanted me to stop.

PETER

What? Why not let him do it? Who  
does it hurt?

Matt's embarrassment.

TRANSITION: Matt puts a "Happy Birthday" party hat on. His  
embarrassment turns to disappointment.

**INT. APARTMENT**

Group of friends. MATT, unimpressed, in the middle.

It's a cheesy birthday party with streamers and a "Happy 36th  
Birthday" banner.

FRIENDS

(singing)

Happy birthday to you. Happy  
birthday to you. Happy-

MATT takes his little party hat off.

MATT

Really? I'm 36-years-old. Happy  
Birthday is a kid's song. Isn't  
there a grown up version?

HANNAH

You want the grown up Happy  
Birthday?

MATT

Yeah.

HANNAH

You're sure?

Lights out. Haunting SOUND. Furniture floats.

A small light approaches.

Small STRANGELING with candle, singing in high voice. Getting right up to MATT's face.

STRANGELING  
Closer to death/  
Closer to death/  
Is this your last breath?/  
Closer to-

MATT  
(panic)  
Can we do regular happy birthday?

Lights up.

<p>HANNAH Sure! (sings) Happy birthday to you, happy birthday to you...</p>	<p>STRANGELING No prob. Yeah (sings) Happy Birthday (getting strange again) tooo yooou...</p>
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MATT nervous.

Transition: The school bell RINGS. Matt walks out of frame.  
Person walks across frame hiding the cut to...

**INT. GRADE 3 CLASSROOM**

School bell RINGING as students leave for recess. SAD KID  
stays at desk, sobbing over sheet of paper.

TEACHER  
Is this about the 'B' on the  
science quiz?

SAD KID nods.

TEACHER (CONT'D)  
Work hard and the sky is the limit.

This hits hard. SAD KID sinks further into despair. TEACHER  
walks away.

TEACHING ASSISTANT  
Why would you say that? You know  
how badly they want to be an  
astronaut.

TEACHER

(cruel)

With a 'B' on a science quiz? No chance. Sky is the limit.

TRANSITION: Zoom in on the book the TEACHING ASSISTANT was holding. Multiple hands enter, fighting over the book.

**INT. CONFERENCE HALL**

A bookseller's stall at the "International Cryptid's Convention".

JERZY, HAILEY, MANNY, and CONNELL are all fighting over a copy of a book.

Shouts. Pages are being pulled out. CONNELL and JERZY are the angriest. HAILEY and MANNY are caught in the middle.

HAILEY

(overlapping)

Let him buy it if he wants to buy it.

CONNELL

(overlapping)

Don't touch this piece of lying garbage.

MANNY

(overlapping)

I'm allowed to buy it.

JERZY

(overlapping)

Get your hands off my book!

Freeze in mid-battle. Explore the intense faces in the tableau.

MANNY (V.O.)

This is not going according to plan. It's been years since Georgian Bay. Two of us realized we made a mistake. There's no evidence. There's no Dibigong. But JERZY believed. And he wrote a book. This book.

Unfreeze. The struggle finishes with the book torn up. The group splits like fighters going to their corners.

HAILEY calms JERZY.

MANNY calms CONNELL.

MANNY  
You're making a scene.

CONNELL  
I don't care. Look at this place.  
Cryptids Convention for Truth  
Seekers and other lonely nutjobs.

HAILEY  
Be calm.

JERZY  
They can't come here and try to  
embarrass us like Anna Marie  
Tremonti.

HAILEY  
She was fair.

CONNELL  
Look. They let every crazy on the  
street in here.

CONNELL swipes a hand drawn pamphlet from the table of a  
dishevelled man.

CONNELL (CONT'D)  
"The Chupacabra is Real"?

MANNY  
We're not here for this. We're here  
for HAILEY.

JERZY  
You're right. "Truth fights for  
itself."

HAILEY  
If we bury the truth with anger  
then no one is going to hear it.

JERZY  
I'm calm.

HAILEY  
Not even our friends.

CONNELL  
I am here for HAILEY. You're the  
one who wanted to buy his book.

MANNY

I'm trying to build a bridge.  
They're our friends.

CONNELL AND JERZY

He's not my friend. Friends don't  
lie.

CONNELL and JERZY head-to-head.

CONNELL AND JERZY (CONT'D)

You know what happened that night!

CONNELL

(overlapping)

We didn't see anything.

JERZY

(overlapping)

We saw the Dibigong.

CONNELL

You had no right to write this  
book.

JERZY

I understand you're upset. We all  
went through a lot in those first  
six months.

Freeze.

CONNELL (V.O.)

Oh, he understands? Well it was my  
face that blew up in that meme.

Unflattering memes of CONNELL with captions "Me saw it!"  
"Trust Dibigong is real." and "Me not so sure."

CONNELL (V.O.) (CONT'D)

People still snicker when I walk  
by.

Unfreeze.

JERZY

We were all ridiculed. It doesn't  
change the truth.

CONNELL

Don't drag other people into your  
"truth".

MANNY

Okay. We're leaving. We're only  
here because HAILEY's parents asked  
us to come. Are you seriously  
dropping out of university?



JERZY

The book tour is six months then we're both going back-

CONNELL

No one's talking to you. You're already going to end up a crazy street person.

MANNY

Your parents are worried. Call them.

CONNELL

You want your whole life to be about whether or not you saw the Dibigong? 'Cause that's not what my life's about.

MANNY takes HAILEY aside for a moment.

MANNY

I don't know if it's healthy for you to be surrounded by this. I recommend therapy. Talk to someone away from the noise. It helped me.

Freeze.

HAILEY

I know mass hallucinations exist. I've read it all. Marpingen 1876. Portugal 2006. They closed schools because so many students thought they were sick from a virus they saw on TV. The Dibigong is different. I don't know why I reached out but I touched it with my hand.

CONNELL had been reading a ripped page of JERZY's book.

CONNELL

What is this? "There was a breeze across Lake Ontario. MANNY sat at the bow in his U of T sweater" -no one was wearing sweaters. It was summer.

JERZY

MANNY was wearing a U of T sweater. You were wearing a striped shirt and jeans. And I was-

CONNELL

Maybe but MANNY wasn't wearing a sweater -tell him, MANNY.

MANNY

This is ridiculous.

JERZY

Yes he was.

CONNELL

Just because you act certain doesn't make it true.

CONNELL and MANNY leave.

HAILEY

They're going to believe what they want to believe.

Freeze.

JERZY (V.O.)

I get it. Most people don't care about truth. It doesn't keep you warm at night. Can't eat it. The truth doesn't love you. People care about living a good life and if truth threatens them they will beat it down and you with it. And I'm talking about my friends. My family. If you're fighting for the truth you can't leave any room for doubt.

Unfreeze.

JERZY

Are you having second thoughts about this book tour?

HAILEY

Why?

JERZY

Half of the people in the book have gone on record denying it.

HAILEY

They're tired.

JERZY

How are you?

HAILEY  
I'm tired. But I touched it.

JERZY  
It was warm.

TRANSITION: Zoom to door in background.

**INT. WAREHOUSE.**

Slow push on door. Two undercover cops burst into the warehouse.

ROOKIE  
Freeze, police-

TOUGH immediately fires shots into the room, killing four suspects.

ROOKIE (CONT'D)  
What have you done?

TOUGH  
Listen, Rook. I shoot first and ask questions later. (to the dead suspects) Where's the girl?

Beat. Uh-oh.

TOUGH (CONT'D)  
Who do you work for?

TOUGH realizes his methods are garbage.

TRANSITION: Close up of DAVE. He puts glasses on. He's sitting in a car.

**EXT. ONE LANE ROAD IN WASAGA.**

Classic Wasaga Beach traffic jam. A single line of cars moves two feet and stops again.

Mild-mannered MURRY driving, on edge, like Michael Douglas in Falling Down.

A car HONKS.

MURRY  
Okay. Yes. Lovely. Where do you want me to go?

A car HONKS.

MURRY (CONT'D)  
Move up? Another half inch? What  
are you thinking?

More cars HONKING.

MURRY (CONT'D)  
Oh yeah! Honk. Let's all honk. This  
is something.

Cacophony of cars HONKING. MURRY madly adding to the HONKS.

MURRY (CONT'D)  
(losing it)  
Now we're all honking. Yes honk.  
Honk. Honk.

The traffic jam clears. Cars moving briskly.

MURRY (CONT'D)  
Oh, that works. Thank you!

TRANSITION: Car drives by a police beating.

**EXT. SUBURBIA.**

Riot cops beating a suspect. COP DAVE thinks and stops COP  
PETER.

COP DAVE  
What's more beautiful? The vast  
expanse of the universe or a baby's  
first smile.

COP PETER contemplates.

COP PETER  
The baby.

The riot cops resume the beating.

TRANSITION: zoom into suburban home.

**INT. HOUSE.**

A married couple.

WIFE  
We did it honey. I'm pregnant. Your  
gonna be a dad.

HUSBAND  
 (dead inside)  
 This is the happiest day of my  
 life.

WIFE  
 I don't understand. I thought you'd  
 finally be excited-

DAVE walks away.

HUSBAND  
 I tried to tell you when we  
 married. I used up all of my  
 excitement

SUPERIMPOSED memories of nonstop 100% excitement.

HUSBAND (CONT'D)  
 in one "cottage weekend '99. We  
 burned bright but I am forever the  
 ashes.

TRANSITION: Outside the window. MATT is walking with a  
 backpack. He's hitchhiking.

We join him.

Car on road in Northern Ontario.

MATT hitchhiking.

Truck on the road.

**EXT. A SMALL HOUSE IN A SMALL TOWN. DAY.**

JERZY walks up and knocks on the door. Waits. Sits. Takes off  
 backpack and sleeping bag.

HAILEY opens the door.

HAILEY  
 How did you find me?

JERZY  
 Good to see you too. Long time.

Nothing from HAILEY.

JERZY (CONT'D)  
 People would post rumours on the  
 forums. They knew I was looking for  
 you. Then someone took a photo of  
 you at the Safeways on Court.

JERZY shows HAILEY the photo. HAILEY sighs.

JERZY (CONT'D)  
Blurry. I wasn't going to follow  
up. Couple of years ago, I chased a  
photo of you that was taken in  
Edmonton.

HAILEY  
I've never been to Edmonton.

JERZY  
I figured that out. Ended up  
finding someone that looks like  
you. (pause) False sighting.

The joke doesn't take.

HAILEY  
You can come in if you want to talk  
about other things.

JERZY  
I don't talk about other things.

HAILEY  
What do you want, JERZY?

JERZY  
I want to hear you say what you  
wrote.

HAILEY closes the door.

JERZY takes out a piece of paper and reads, loudly:

JERZY (CONT'D)  
I have lived a mistake for six  
years. In this time, I traveled  
across North America and Europe  
researching and writing about the  
phenomenon of the Dibigong while  
promoting a book-

HAILEY returns.

HAILEY  
Go away.

JERZY (continues to read)  
- I am announcing that I am leaving  
this life-

HAILEY snatches the paper. Beat. JERZY continues from memory.

JERZY  
 because I no longer believe the  
 reliability of my own claim. I did  
 not see or touch the mythical  
 creature known as The Dibigong-

HAILEY grabs JERZY by the arm and pulls him to HAILEY's car  
 in the driveway.

HAILEY  
 Get in the car.

JERZY  
 of Georgian Bay. I regret the  
 hardship and confusion this has  
 caused to so many caring,  
 thoughtful people-

Once they're inside. HAILEY crumples the paper and tosses it  
 on the dash.

HAILEY  
 Don't bring that here. This is a  
 different world. This is Thunder  
 Bay. I like it that way. I'm living  
 with someone and their kid and I  
 don't want any of this-

JERZY  
 You said you touched something  
 alive.

HAILEY  
 I'm not going back to that.

JERZY  
 I'm not asking you to come back.  
 You're out. I get it. No more road  
 trips. No more Cryptozoology  
 Conferences. No more arguments  
 about if those late night radio  
 talkshows help our cause-

HAILEY  
 It's not my cause.

JERZY  
 I get it. You wrote this-

JERZY reaches for the crumpled paper.

HAILEY  
 Leave it.

JERZY  
and you disappeared. I know you  
wrote this for everyone else. But  
not me. You never looked me in the  
eye and told me what you believe.

HAILEY  
That's it?

JERZY  
That's it. Did you touch the  
Dibigong or not?

HAILEY  
Can I be honest, JERZY? You smell.

JERZY  
I know.

HAILEY  
It's bad. Sour. When's the last  
time you showered?

JERZY  
I apologize.

HAILEY  
Where are you living? What  
happened?

JERZY  
It's true. I'm homeless and you  
have a home. You were right. The  
money ran out. I don't have a  
family. I made my choices and you  
made yours-

HAILEY  
That's not what this is-

JERZY  
It doesn't change what happened  
that night did you touch the  
Dibigong or not?

HAILEY  
What do you want me to say?

JERZY  
The truth.



HAILEY

The truth is I don't remember.  
JERZY... it was so long ago now. It  
was dark.

JERZY

I know it was dark. I was there.  
The four of us were there.

HAILEY

You're the only one still there.

JERZY

Did you touch the Dibigong or not?  
What did you touch? What was warm?  
Did you touch the Dibigong? You  
did. You did touch it. That's why  
you never said it to my face.

HAILEY

No. It was nothing. I touched  
nothing. There was nothing there.  
Is that so hard to understand? I  
didn't touch the Dibigong. There is  
no Dibigong. We were wrong. It's  
okay to be wrong.

JERZY

It didn't happen.

HAILEY

Let it go.

JERZY

I want to let it go. I don't have  
anything. But you touched it. You  
touched it with your hand. (he  
quotes the scene in the boat from  
memory) "Where is it? / Holy  
moly. / We laughed. / Did you see  
it? / I touched it with my hand."  
Don't take this away from me. I'm  
not crazy. Am I crazy? I'm crazy.  
It really didn't happen. What  
happened to me? What happened to my  
life? What have I been doing? I  
made a mistake.

HAILEY

JERZY...

JERZY

What did you touch?

HAILEY  
Nothing.

JERZY  
Then I'm crazy.

HAILEY tries to console JERZY.

JERZY (CONT'D)  
What did you touch?

HAILEY  
Nothing. The side of the boat.

JERZY  
The side of the boat.

HAILEY  
The side of the boat. (pause) Come  
here.

They hug.

JERZY  
Okay, the side of the boat. Okay.  
I'm tired.

A colourful, two-headed bird CAWS, lands on the hood of the  
car and settles.

The two watch the creature for a long time.

HAILEY  
Great.