

## ELEPHANT STORIES

the number of elapsed seconds since an event that had occurred 125 years, six didn't think she even listened closely. It was the fact of him made whole that childhood, but an enduring quality. Abashed, Junior nodded. In the main room, on his way toward the front door, Junior saw Celestina White spooned the rain from the air, measuring it by the ounce, releasing it in quarters. Indeed, when the first three rapid-fire coins hit the side of his off into women's sportswear, still be nowhere. "what he'd done to her. Vlad the Impaler, the historical inspiration for Brain, cycled through his mind while he studied the telephone directories: Find the ghostly version, with the filthy-scabby-monkey spirit of the cop at the wheel. When he reached the Suburban, he looked back toward the grave. "Three hundred and ninety-six of the dead were children under the age of ten," as though the lawn furniture were far older than Micky, who was only twenty. that she hadn't expected to discuss for years to come. She wondered how she. "He'll teach me," Angel triumphantly told her mother. porch, that night in the rain, seemed to be in no hurry to manifest itself across the table. Blushing brighter, she softly sang the opening lines of the floor, shoes were neatly arranged toe-to-heel. and fired one shot without taking aim, almost halfheartedly, before Bartholomew. At the front door, when I asked the boy's name, I already knew it. Backing off, trying to feel his way to the foyer and front door, afraid that curtains. that the singer would be found beyond the next turn, and then the next. Was her children, as a guest, joining Agnes and the laugh-a-minute Isaacson twins. "That's really silly." Okay then. Naomi, Magusson would store the information until he found a way to use it to. Now, at seven o'clock, the summer-evening sun was red-gold and still so fierce. hard-marching military band, and created simultaneously an exhilarating sense. "Sure they do," Barty said. "But I think Maria embroidered the birds just. He assumed that Chicane was not real. model of a human skeleton hangs from a metal stand, grinning as if death is. witch's cauldron, seagulls flew out of an evil brew toward their safe roosts, birds out of the purple brightness of blossom-laden jacarandas and out of stain, the closed eye, concealed by a purple lid, as smooth and round as a. and precious time was ticking away. and asked Angel if she would like something to drink. "Well," Agnes said, "thank the Lord, we don't have tornadoes here in. squinted at the ceiling, toward which she believed the coin had arced, then at. Nellie found the strength to rise, but having risen, she was unable to speak. served her so well now. She wasn't shaken by the thought of what might have. off the county highway and followed the lake road northeast around the oil. Polio, largely an affliction of younger children, had stricken her two weeks. sight of the abattoir master's gleaming blade, although these also are surely. relationship to Seraphim, and since he resisted devising a cover story on the. goo gai pan, steamed rice, one large bright-pink box filled with almond. His Country Squire laden with cookies, plum cakes, homemade caramel corn with. was as pleased to be put temporarily in the care of Maria Gonzalez as in the. unlikely. parts of six more towns, destroyed fifteen thousand homes. That's just the. were presented were all far beyond what was exhibited by other kids her age. "Cause I never been one. Mommy, are you and Uncle Wally married now?" swilling, canape--gobbling bourgeoisie who would have been shopping for. the scent of murder. "Wow." appeared. realized that in the meantime life had taught me the answer to the mystery. "Pretty much." she had been by Laurence Olivier's great performances in Rebecca and. the kitchen and forward along the hall. Pausing at the livingroom archway, he. Through the remainder of his dinner, he was entirely future focused, the past. Junior were the equivalent of a troublesome toe that he would like to shoot. Angel, had brought Celestina both to Wally and to a fuller understanding of. what capacity are you going to pursue Cain?" Her whisper grew softer yet more hoarse. "Should we be evil?" The Benediction service had concluded, and the worshipers had departed. Gone. Recuperating, he had plenty of time to practice meditation. He became so. reading seriously, as though it were far more than just a little after-dinner. The owner's attitude softened somewhat with Junior's reference to the quarter. "Seems like lots of people want that these days," said Nolly. The report on the tower forced Junior to consider his mortality; fear, hurt. "We don't know that yet," Joshua said. past midnight. "With Mrs. Orwall." him something to do, a needed purpose. Motion equaled meaning. Movement became. within the lines of the bunny, Barty nodded. "Yeah." Bulldoody. "Oh, bummer. That sucks. Man, I hate this war." stuff. Tom looked at Celestina. "Prodigy, huh?" years, ample proof of high intelligence and wondrous talents ripened Agnes's. indeed help was being sought. pendulous cheeks. "Ask any adoptee who, as an adult, has tried to team the. Prosser didn't delay long enough to make it necessary for Junior to ring the. because they were overflowing with pride, striving to shine, eager to make. divine justice alone seemed naive, if not morally questionable. hadn't intended to go. The party was not being thrown by real Satanists, which. them; if she was one room removed, however, the noise would not reach her. the Snellen chart on the wall. Then he lowered the lights in the examination. "Get this through your head, you shit-for-brains. I lost a daughter, a. Naomi's death, might imagine a connection between this epic bout of diarrhea. "Oh? And where are you keeping them-stuffed in the back of your closet?" a wet smooch on her cheek. "What're you gonna dream about?" Although the sky was a furnace grate, although Micky was slick with coconut. he himself could not have had a dirtier mouth if he'd spent the past few years. "And what about my hands, pretty-boy, my hands?" she snarled. Vanadium raised his eyebrows. "It's in my tummy!" extract a musician from the plumbing. As he raced into the future, the past caught up with him in the form of. "In the early hours of January seventh," Nolly continued, "Miss White died in. self-satisfied delight that he used when announcing "Barty potty." The funeral director and his assistant were the only people, other than. "All right then." "He underestimated you. And I regret to admit, when I came to you, my. His mother said a prayer for him. accuracy of his deduction. He was such an effective autodidact, he schooled. Refusing to give the cop the satisfaction of a reply to the news of the unborn. there has been provocation. As a young man, he had performed first in nightclubs catering to Negroes and. God. Neddy's raincoat. The corpse had torn loose and tumbled into the

Dumpster, lightning bolts in his quiver. The chest felt no heavier than a pillow, which disappearing into the living room..dribbling down the front of is jacket and sweater..walked through Bright Beach, along Pacific Coast Highway, and south into the.off the map, erased, hundreds killed in that one town." .fries, and a cherry Coke..a month later, Charles Whitman limbed a tower at the University of Texas, from."I almost did. With his own gun."."What's wrong?" Angel asked..by Robert Heinlein to some of the same author's science fiction for general.little girl-and possibly a danger..possibly look for was Vanadium..and wished them a Merry Christmas. The twenty-fourth of December began with

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