

DING Canada will pay millions to make amends for forcibly taking indigenous children from their families and putting them up for a...

DING @haleyscomment and 38 others liked your photo. BZZZ You're almost there! Walk 2,370 more steps to reach your daily goal.

Anna brushed upwards to dismiss the notifications.<sup>2</sup> Three more passive-aggressive emails to write before she was able to take a break. "Sorry, Ethan," she composed to a colleague from the Sydney office, "for possibly being unclear on the call earlier. In the future, would you kindly mind not slurping your takeaway noodles so violently while listening? I wouldn't mind except that it obscures the other voices. Thanks so much in advance." SWOOSH One down.<sup>3</sup> It felt pointless to place actual phone calls these days, anyway. She would much rather communicate on Slack or email, where everything could be archived and no-one had to worry about the difference in time zones.

DING The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan,<sup>4</sup> will suspend service on all... DING @jon\_jon replied on your story.

DING @Anais-Yelen requests £2.97 for last night's uber sorry haha! love ya thankss

Anna dismissed all of them, rubbed her eyes and opened Tinder. It had been months since she'd been on a proper date (or any kind of date at all). She knew the app wouldn't necessarily bring her to her soulmate but three (!) of her girlfriends had recently gotten married. She could also tell that her followers thought that 31 was too old to still be posting ironic photos of her dog sharing her bottle of wine

(#whoneedsaman). *Were those sorts of posts ever funny?* Anna felt hot<sup>5</sup> and slightly embarrassed – feeling at this point that it would be statistically best to swipe right on every guy. Gun lover, fish guy, way-too-religious dude, fine.

She leant back against the doors of the Tube, stumbling a little as the train sped west. The crowd jostled, jockeyed for space. "I don't know anything anymore," someone<sup>6</sup> said.

*You don't need to know anything, anymore,* Anna answered in her head as she swiped. It's all right here. Right, Right, Right. Left. *Okay, definitely left.* Right. Right. Right. Ri – A sharp elbow flew into her side, thrusting her thumb left. Anna narrowed her eyes, primed to shoot the elbow's owner<sup>7</sup> with a furious scowl.

DING Ethan Musgrove Re: Noodles. She forgot about the elbow and kept her eyes down.

<sup>1</sup> A modern short story written by Erin Meisenzahl-Peace.

<sup>2</sup> Although Anna didn't read the *Times'* notification about the indigenous children, the man peeking over her shoulder, Alex Okalik, did.

<sup>3</sup> Alex heard the swoosh as he breathed in, futilely attempting to shrink his six-foot-two frame as others filled every possible inch around him. He thought about his family in Ottawa, his grandmother's repeated tale of being wrenched from her village. He noticed Anna's hair – a dark, glistening ginger.

<sup>4</sup> J Hapley (2021) 'The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, will suspend service on all westbound lines following explosion', the *Guardian*. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/19/oct/explosion-underground-khan> [Accessed 19 October 2021].

<sup>5</sup> She's hot, Alex thought. He imagined her ginger hair on his pillow, considered how to start a conversation.

<sup>6</sup> S Hyland (2021) Telephone conversation with Marianne Hyland, 19 October. "Your father was hurt," her mother said harshly through her tears on the other end of the line. "Please get off and come home, Sophia."

<sup>7</sup> Alex Okalik, 6'2", age 34. Dreamy blue eyes. Interests: Wine, Passive-Aggressive Emailing, Dogs. Four friends in common. One metre away.