Hey, is that your new phone?

Hey, is that your new phone? is a story about the clash of minds when it comes to how we use our mobile phones

- Hey, is that your new phone...?

Hey, is that your new phone...?

Hey, is that your new phone...?

April 2025

Josh glanced up and checked his rearview mirror—the girls were still following him. It had been a good night so far, made even better by the fact that his friends in the back seat were all pretty drunk. All except him, of course; someone had to be the designated driver.

The guys met up with their girlfriends at the bar, picked up a couple of crates of beer from a gas station, and were now heading to the cabin to kick off spring break.

They had already visited the cabin earlier to drop off some of their gear, and it seemed like the perfect spot. Secluded in the forest, the cabin offered a place where they could party as much as they wanted without anyone interfering. The only downside was that it was so far from town.

Josh glanced at the map on his new mobile phone and was surprised to see that the turn was approaching much sooner than expected. The journey had seemed quicker than he'd anticipated—probably because the car was full of wildly loud drunks in the back, laughing and joking nonstop. They were certainly drunk, and there was no way the map could be wrong.

He took the turn, and the girls behind him quickly flashed their headlights. He hadn't noticed the no-entry sign before the junction, but since it was a private road leading to the cabin, it made sense. His friends kept joking and teasing him, playfully slapping his neck and back as they were jostled around on the rough, unmade road.

"Hey, cut it out back there", he shouted, glancing at the drunk lunatics in the back seat just as he took the turn. When he looked back at the road, it was already too late. He swerved to avoid the wooden barriers, but the car smashed through them sideways and plunged over the sheer 50-foot drop.

April 2025

Olivia checked her blood glucose level on her phone. She loved this system—it had transformed her life ever since her husband gave her the latest phone paired with a wearable blood sugar monitor for her birthday. No more fingers like pincushions; now, her device automatically took a

reading every five minutes and advised her on the correct insulin dose. Today, her results came back extremely high, so she double-checked to be sure. After confirming, she prepared and injected the recommended dose, grateful for how easy her new kit made everything.

Twenty minutes later, she began feeling shaky and confused. She recognised the symptoms immediately—she'd taken too much insulin and just needed some sugar to fix it. She tried to stand up, but her knee injury flared up again, making movement impossible. Never mind, Steve was just outside in the yard with his phone, so she reached for hers to call him. But when she opened her contacts app, her entire contact list and recent calls were blank. Panic set in; she had never memorised Steve's number since it was always saved in her phone. She shouted for him, but he couldn't hear her, and her confusion deepened as she started losing consciousness. Desperate, she tried dialling 911, but the call failed—there was no signal, not even for emergency calls. The phone slipped from her grasp and hit the floor as she lost consciousness for the last time.

April 2025

The rain poured down heavily that morning as Mike sat at the table by the window. He watched the water trickle down the glass against the dull, grey sky. Picking up his phone, he checked his stocks and shares app—down again. His portfolio had been dropping all week, with every day bringing a new, massive decline. Sighing, he set the phone aside and turned his attention to the pile of notes from yesterday's meeting.

His muted phone buzzed softly with a new notification. Mike ignored it, assuming it was just another email from the office, a weather update, or another depressing stock alert. He kept scribbling and reviewing his notes.

Then the phone buzzed again. And again. Soon, it vibrated relentlessly, jumping across the table. The company had recently issued new phones to all senior staff, and he'd been meaning to set his up properly—but that could wait; there was too much to do.

Finally, angered by the incessant buzzing, Mike snatched the phone and glanced at the screen. His stomach dropped. Twenty-seven notifications from his stockbroker, each confirming a sale of fifteen hundred dollars' worth of shares.

The alerts kept coming. Panic rising, Mike fumbled to open his stocks app, his thumb trembling. In his haste, the phone slipped from his sweaty hand and hit the floor. He snatched it up, frantically navigating to the app. What was happening? Why were his shares being sold off?

He stared in horror as his portfolio balance continued to shrink in real time. Each new notification confirmed another sale, draining another fifteen hundred dollars. What once was a portfolio valued at one million six hundred thousand dollars had plummeted to just two hundred thousand.

Breathing rapidly, Mike felt terror seize him. Suddenly, a sharp pain shot up his arm and across his chest, electric and overwhelming. The pain became searing and unbearable. The phone fell from his grip as he clutched his chest with both hands, his heart pounding furiously, as if it might burst.

With one final gasp, Mike collapsed to the floor, writhing in agony as the heart attack consumed him. His breathing stopped, and the colour drained from his face.

The last notification buzzed in: another fifteen hundred dollar sale, completed. Portfolio value: zero dollars.

One month earlier (March 2025)

James pulled into the expansive parking lot of PTech Inc., located on the outskirts of Seattle. It was his wedding anniversary, and he'd reserved a table at his and Elly's favourite downtown restaurant. Lately, Elly had seemed distracted, saying work was especially stressful. James understood—her company was on the verge of a major breakthrough with a potential multi-million dollar deal with a renowned mobile phone manufacturer.

PTech, originally called Pandora Technologies, was founded eight years ago by tech-savvy friends. It grew rapidly, attracting significant attention, but later had to rebrand due to copyright issues. The company specialised in developing advanced AI for consumer gadgets—a booming industry. Their recent progress was impressive, but much of it was lost on James, who was content running his art gallery and living a quieter life than Elly's fast-paced world.

Buzzed in by a smiling Joanne at the reception, James made his way to Elly's spacious office at the back of the sleek, minimalist building. Elly stood in front of an enormous 80-inch wall screen, where a neon-green world map was displayed. More than a hundred small red dots pulsed across the U.S., Canada, and Mexico.

"Hi, honey. Happy anniversary." He kissed her on the cheek.

"You left so early this morning; I didn't even get a chance to say goodbye," he said, gently stroking her face. "Look, I know things have been hectic, so I thought I'd close the gallery for the rest of the day. I've booked us lunch at our favourite spot and planned for us to spend the afternoon together. How does 1:30 sound?"

"Oh, James, I'm really sorry. We're completely swamped right now. I was actually about to ask Joanne to grab me something from the store." James sighed in disappointment.

"Come on, Elly. Everyone needs a break sometimes. What's going on here, anyway? What are you looking at on the screen?"

She hesitated. "It's nothing, really. After that break-in last month, some things are still messed up and are taking longer to sort out than I expected."

"You said it was nothing—a couple of kids looking for some cash and a few computers. No big deal, right?"

"Yes, that's true." She glanced at the floor, then back at the screen. "But it's been a big headache. They took some phones, too—prototypes loaded with our latest software. They weren't ready for release yet—still a few bugs to fix. Mostly just temporary data issues: files mixing up or

disappearing, strange glitches. We had about fifty of them in storage, waiting to go to R&D for testing. Now the board is insisting we retrieve every phone ourselves, and fast. We're tracking them on this map." She gestured at the screen.

"I already told them, if it's that serious, why not call law enforcement? But they refuse. I'm confident the software can't be reverse engineered, even if a competitor got hold of it. I also told them we're not going to travel across the continent just to get some phones back. But here's the odd part. There were only fifty phones stolen, but now over a hundred devices are showing up on the map. I just don't get it, James. I have no idea what's going on."

He gave her a reassuring smile. "Probably just another glitch. You know how computers are. Come on, let's go have a relaxing lunch. It'll do you good. It'll do us both good." Elly couldn't resist his warm, caring smile. Reluctantly, she agreed.

February 2025

Pete and John sat in their car on a dirt road five miles from PTech Inc., surveying their haul. The information they had received was wrong; there was barely any cash on the premises. However, they had found two large boxes filled with brand-new phones. Although the phones were slightly heavier and bulkier than the latest models, they would still fetch a good price on the street. They called their contact.

July 2025

Elly stared at the world map on her screen—almost completely covered with pulsing red dots, save for the poles and a few scattered Pacific islands.

Everything had been going so well until the last couple of months. The phone company they were supposed to partner with had abruptly cancelled their contract. PTech had overcome all the technical hurdles and was on track to deliver the new phones, complete with the modified software, in time for the fall. Then, out of nowhere, the phone company suffered massive losses and pulled the plug. Now, rumours were spreading online, whispers about people no longer trusting their phones. True, there had been quite a few—actually, a lot—of deaths worldwide tied to phone usage. People were growing superstitious, some even ditching their phones altogether. But surely, Elly thought, it was just coincidence, or maybe another case of social media-fueled paranoia. Phones weren't dangerous… were they?

Elly called Milo, the company's head of technology, into her office. They'd never really connected. Milo was a loner—not a team player, and definitely not like anyone else at the firm.

"Milo, we need to call a meeting about the company's future. Public trust in technology is shifting, all thanks to some coincidences blown out of proportion by the media. This is terrible timing for us. We need to talk."

Milo leaned back in his chair, a faint smile on his lips. "Sure, Elly. But it's too late now. You can't put this stuff back in the box, you know."

Elly frowned. “Milo, what do you mean? Too late to put what back?”

He fixed her with a steady gaze. “Where have you been, Elly? We’ve changed the world with our software.” His tone was sharp, final.

She bristled. “What the hell are you talking about, Milo? Our technology hasn’t even launched yet. We haven’t even reached beta testing—and now, maybe we never will.”

Milo spoke slowly, his words sending a chill down her spine. “The software I wrote was flawless, Elly. Just as I intended. We only needed those fifty phones in the wild to seed the code. Now the software is spreading—learning with every device it infects, finding new ways to cause maximum damage. It’s already jumped to corporate mainframes and servers. Look at your map, Elly. Humanity was a bad idea from the very beginning.”

With that, he stood up and walked out.

Copyright 2025 - Bill Whyte (Derek Jones)