EVAN JACOBS

LOCKED OUT



No Cell Phones or Internet Means . . .

OLD SCHOOL TO THE RESCUE!
LANDLINE PHONES (NO INTERNET OR DATA NEEDED; WORK IN OUTAGES, SO EMERGENCY SYSTEMS STILL USE THEM)



TV ANTENNAS



TALKING, NO TEXTING



ONLY WAY TO SEE FRIENDS IN REAL LIFE IS IN PERSON



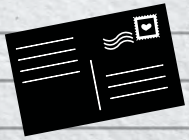
QUESTIONS YOU MAY ASK:

- IS THERE A LOGICAL EXPLANATION OR AN ALIEN INVASION?
- AM I BEING WATCHED OR IS STRESS JUST MAKING THINGS **FEEL** SCARIER?

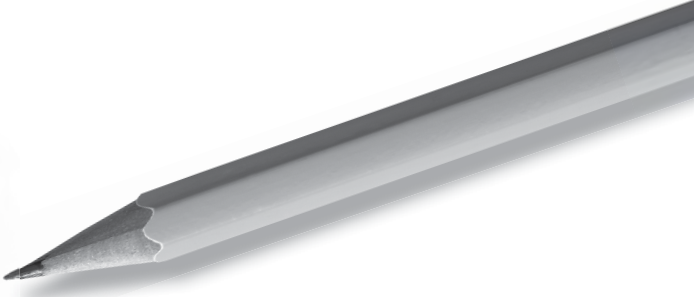
UNPLUGGING CAN BRING PEOPLE CLOSER. BEFORE SMARTPHONES, PEOPLE HAD TO USE THESE TO STAY CONNECTED . . .













What is that Sound???





CHAPTER 1

OFFLINE

It had been a long year of fast changes. Rachel Mason was finally getting used to them. A serious virus had been sweeping across the world. The sickness spread easily. Infected air made people very ill. Breathing around others wasn't always safe.

People went outside only when it was essential. Even then, they wore masks. Some masks were the surgical kind. Others were made of cloth. There were also more advanced ones. But everyone wore

masks. This was most people's first encounter with a pandemic. Everyone wanted to protect themselves.

Rachel was in her bedroom. She sat in front of her tablet. It was how she went to school now. Students attended from home. No one could meet in classrooms anymore. There was too much risk. The virus could easily spread at schools.

Every weekday morning, Rachel was at her bedroom desk. At 7:50 a.m., she opened the school app. The app allowed her to attend online. It connected everyone to their classes and assignments.

Rachel had been using the app all year. It worked well every day. This day was different.

The app showed a blank screen. Rachel checked her Wi-Fi. There was no internet connection. Sometimes, her tablet did this. Usually, it was when she first turned it on. That wasn't the case this time. It had been on for a while.

She checked her phone. Rachel saw its signal

didn't have any bars. Next, she navigated to the Wi-Fi settings. Her phone wasn't connecting to that either.

Rachel thought of her best friend. They had first period together. *I need to call Nia. Maybe she can tell the teacher why I'm late. Wait. Can I make calls?*

She tried to call Nia. It didn't work. The phone wouldn't start the call.

Rachel rubbed her eyes. Last night had been rough. She hadn't slept well. Around 3:00 a.m., a bright, white light beamed through her window. The light woke her up.

At first, Rachel wondered if it was a plane. But the light was too bright. It had forced Rachel to open her eyes.

After that, she got out of bed. She went to her window. The light moved toward the airport.

It's definitely a plane, she thought.

Rachel got a better look. She saw what was flying. There were two objects. They were shaped

like large triangles. Neither object looked like a plane.

You're really tired, Rachel told herself. *Maybe your eyes are playing tricks on you.*

She heard a noise. It sounded like static. But it didn't last long. The noise eventually stopped.

Was that something outside? she wondered.

Rachel returned to bed. It had taken a while to fall asleep. This morning, she was feeling the effects.

Her phone's clock showed 7:51 a.m. Rachel only had nine minutes to log on. Her first class started at 8:00 sharp. She started to panic.

The internet needed to return soon. Otherwise, she would be late. Even worse, this could last for hours. Rachel didn't want to miss a day of school. She was a great student. Yet she put pressure on herself. Falling behind worried her.

Rachel kept trying to refresh the app. She even uninstalled and reinstalled it. Nothing changed. Times like this made her think. Usually, Rachel

was fine with school from home. Other times, she longed for how life used to be. Being online had never been this essential. It was just part of her life. Now it seemed like more than that. There was almost nothing she could do without connectivity.

An added worry was the virus itself. Rachel and her family had caught it before. It was awful. She was grateful they were better now. Still, Rachel didn't want to think of them getting it again. Just the thought of it gave her chills.

She found comfort in her phone and tablet. Rachel used them for everything. Her friends couldn't come over. Instead, they video chatted. No one could meet up at school. There were no large holiday gatherings. Birthday parties were not an option. Even Halloween had changed. Trick or treating was eliminated. People feared door-to-door contact.

Socializing was mostly done on devices. Some people gathered outdoors. It was a way to be in clean air. Yet only a limited number of people

could get together. Everyone would still wear masks too.

Rachel's devices needed the internet or data. Not having either was unbearable for her. She felt hopeless offline.

"Come on!" she yelled.

Just then, Rachel heard an odd noise. It sounded like some sort of repeating chime.

What is that? she wondered.

It stopped.

Her mom's voice was next. "Hey, Rachel! Nia is on the phone!"

Rachel knew her phone wasn't working. Nia couldn't reach her. That's why Nia called Rachel's mom. Still, Rachel had heard a weird sound. It puzzled her. *Did Mom change her ringtone?*

She went to the living room. Her mom was holding a weird device. It had a keypad like a phone. But it looked nothing like a smartphone.

Rachel was confused. *Is that an old cell phone?*

Mrs. Mason held it out to her. "Here. It's Nia." She noticed the look on her daughter's face. Rachel's mom laughed. "This is an old cordless phone. Well, I guess you wouldn't know one with a cord either. Remember learning about landlines? Your dad and I kept the service for times like this. Nia's family did the same. None of our cell phones are working."

Rachel stared at her.

Mrs. Mason sighed. "Some people still have landlines. I know that may be a shock to you. Just take this. And talk to Nia." She smiled.

Rachel nodded. "Oh, so that was the sound I heard. That thing was ringing?"

Her mom chuckled. "Right." She still held the phone out.

Rachel finally took it. "Hey, Nia."

"Nothing is working!" Nia yelled. "Now I have to use this weird phone!"

LOCKED OUT

FRIENDSHIP, SCHOOL, UNDERSTANDING DOGS

CORDLESS TELEPHONES, THE UNEXPLAINED, SERVICE OUTAGES

RACHEL THINKS LOSING HER INTERNET AND PHONE SERVICE DURING A PANDEMIC IS THE WORST. THAT IS UNTIL EVERYONE IN THE CITY IS AFFECTED. SOON SHE WONDERS IF A STRANGE LIGHT IN THE SKY AND AN EERIE STATIC HINT AT MORE THAN TECH ISSUES. SOMETHING COULD BE OUT THERE, AND THE OUTAGES MAY BE THE LEAST OF RACHEL'S WORRIES.



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