Best Friends

The light from the movie screen bathed the small Brooklyn theater in an eerie cerulean glow. Evelyn Sinclair and Sasha Goldberg sat in the second row, eyes transfixed on a technological executive who delivered a speech on the new iPhone.

This was the common case for many young people in New York. Everyone in the theater was under 35, Evelyn figured. No longer did movies attract them to theaters; everyone wanted to, or at least wanted to brag, about their new devices. The world surged outside, but Evelyn and Sasha remained seated. The techie stopped, and even though hardly anyone had truly comprehended his complex points, monstrous applause erupted. Sasha and Evelyn, best friends since ninth grade, made anxious eye contact and slinked out of the theater.

It was about ten in the evening on a Thursday, and Williamsburg was alive with gruff men in tight black paints and flannels, and women dressed in the trendiest clothes, and individuals of every hair color, natural and unnatural, roamed freely. The one common trait was that they all stared at the hot, glowing metal in their hands: smartphones. Sasha had even pulled out his iPhone 5s, a vintage model from about a year ago, and scrolled through a social media app when they descended into a subway tunnel. He was forced to rip his eyes from the hypnotizing digital images as he and Evelyn strode to the platform, cut off from the world not only because he was underground, but because there was no cell service.
The friends had not exchanged a word so far, but they were okay with that as they boarded a Manhattan-bound train. Every other passenger had their ears plugged into headphones.

“Hey,” Evelyn ventured. It was a blurted, random greeting, but she was dying just to say a word.

“Hi,” Sasha replied in a hushed tone.

“What do you think of the new iPhone, after that presentation?” she inquired. Evelyn, deep down, didn’t care about the iPhone, but was desperate for a conversation piece.

“Eh, it’s fine. I mean, I don’t have any strong feelings. I feel like I’m missing something, because everyone is so captivated by the new thing. But I’m okay with what I have.”

Evelyn nodded. She replied, “I understand. Don’t worry about it.”

Sasha smiled. “This is why we are friends.”

“Right.”

The train stopped. Sasha lived one stop below Evelyn. He gave her a quick hug and exited the train. Five minutes later, Evelyn unlocked the door to a big, dark, empty house. Her parents weren’t there; her mother and father were both likely still at their respective offices downtown, even this late at night. Evelyn donned her silken pajamas, checked her phone for what felt like five minutes but was actually fifteen, and as the device began to sting her hand with burning radiation, she turned it off and closed her eyes.

The next morning, Evelyn and Sasha convened with their usual circle at school. There were about seven friends in total, each showing another funny Instagram posts or ridiculous tweets. They each wore the same style of prep school uniform, which signified that their parents
cared greatly about what information attempted to be learned while they texted friends under a mahogany desk. The bell rang, and Sasha and Evelyn meandered to their shared first period.

After everyone was situated and the teacher was beginning the class, and announcement rang over the speaker.

"Attention, students and faculty. This is your principal speaking. It is with great sorrow that I announce a bomb has just gone off in Los Angeles, killing 20 people so far. This is a suspected act of terror. Not much is known about the situation yet, so stay informed on your cell phones. At this time we will begin to evacuate the campus," the principal orated.

As she spoke the word "evacuate," a previously numb Evelyn sprang into action. She gathered her things, seized Sasha’s hand, and pulled him into the silent hallway. They left quickly, missing the chaos in which the school was descending.

Again, they found themselves wordless on one of the last subway cars of the day. In the face of national disaster, even subway operators got to go home to be with their families.

"Sasha," Evelyn breathed, staring at her friend. She had never seen him so sad, but now his eyes churned with upset droplets of tears.

"It’s not fair," Sasha uttered, after a short while.

"It’ll be okay, Sash. This is really a terrible thing, but, gosh, I’m really glad it didn’t happen here. New York has had too many tragedies," Evelyn whispered. She thought of 9-11, the perpetual brown spot on the otherwise gleaming Big Apple that was her hometown.

"I guess you’re not wrong," Sasha said timidly.

They found a park bench that bordered Central Park near 96th Street. Hardly anyone walked the streets at that time.
Evelyn exclaimed, “Don’t you think it’s bizarre that we received hardly any information, but everyone’s freaking out?”

Sasha sighed. “How about a little compassion, Ev? It’s not everyday that a national tragedy occurs.”

This comment, laced with a teaspoon of malice, compelled Evelyn to be quiet. Soon, she and Sasha sat on the bench, tapping on screens, as the silent, mourning world rotated around them.

“Ev, EV!” Sasha abruptly hollered. He gestured maniacally to his phone, and the two read the article on it, stating: *Los Angeles death toll reaches 100 as investigators confirm that bomb was hidden in new iPhone packaging by homegrown terror group.*

Sasha and Evelyn looked at each other. Evelyn’s eye caught a flash on Sasha’s screen, and her phone buzzed as well. In panic-induced awe, the two phones spazzed out. The news site had suddenly updated, saying that the terrorists had somehow gotten ahold of the satellites in charge of America’s iPhones. Sasha immediately launched his to the ground as the hackers began to play propaganda on the screen. It shattered into a hundred pieces like a 22nd-century puzzle.

A society lady simultaneously charged out of one of the townhouses bordering the park, screaming, “I didn’t pay 700 dollars for terrorists to begin their cyber regime on me!” She subsequently hurled a gleaming piece of metal into a nearby trashcan.

Sasha’s eyes fixed on Evelyn’s iPhone that remained clutched in her grasp, eyes growing harsher by the second.

“Well?” he implored.
With a pained look, Evelyn glanced down at the machine that had slowly become her best friend through months upon months of constant usage. She looked back up at her friend, then back down at the best friend.

“Well,” she replied.