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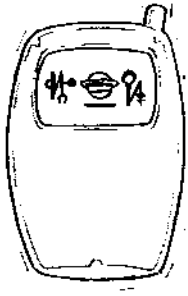


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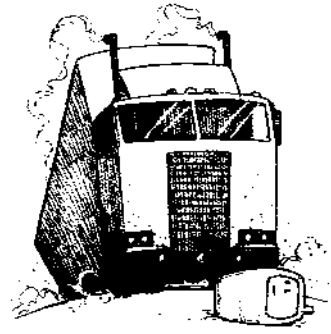
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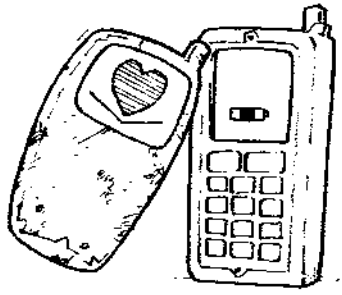
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Chapter One

No Phones



Somewhere a phone was ringing. It started softly – a tootling, footling tune – but it got louder. Soon the whole corridor was full of chirpy chirruping. Even in the hall, where everyone was at assembly, the ringing could be heard loud and clear:

Brill! Brill!

"I do hope nobody has brought their mobile phone into school," said the Head Teacher in shocked tones. "You all know what I have said: mobile phones must be left at home."

Trill! Trill! Trill!

"Shane: please go and find that telephone – wherever it is – and bring it to me," said the Head.

Why did she choose Shane? Who knows? Perhaps she knew him

to be an intrepid explorer and a fearless sleuth. Perhaps she saw that he had exceptional earsight. Perhaps she (secretly) thought of Shane as her trusty sidekick.

Or perhaps she chose him because he was sitting next to the door.

Shane was startled. He had been far away – imagining – being an explorer or a sleuth or a deputy. But now even he could hear the phone ringing in the corridor:

Trillo! Trillo! Trillo!

Outside the hall, the corridor stretched away into the distance. Along each wall hung coats and macks. The whole passageway was quilted with coats, but even they did not soak up the sound.

Thrill! Thrill! Thrill!

Under some of the coats stood wellington boots. It was as if Shane was walking between a guard-of-honour – or running the last leg of a big race with cheering spectators on either side. He jogged down the corridor, giving a cheery wave to the cheering crowds.



Thrillo! Thrillo! Thrillo!

The noise was so loud now that it hurt his ears. He must be getting close. Here were the coats of Class Two. Here was where Class Three threw their outdoor clothing at the hooks and let most of it fall on the floor.

Shane hoped the phone did not belong to anyone he knew: they would be in big trouble with the Head. He hoped the phone did not belong to Bagless Dyson or Knees Nelson or Wapper Harris. It was not Shane's fault he had been sent to find the phone, but Bagless and Knees and Wapper could be very unreasonable.

Gorillo! Gorillo! Gorillo!

Oddly, the phone seemed to be tootling a different tune now . . .

Here were the Class Four coats. Here were the gloves his friend Chiller hated so much because they were attached to his sleeves by tapes. Here was Maggie's pink bomber jacket and Millie's anorak and Smiler's mack. So it must be someone in his own class who . . .

Brilliant! Brilliant! Brilliant!

Shane wondered why people were not designed with zips on their ears. If ears had zips, they could be shut when phones rang too loudly for comfort.

Here was Shane's own anorak, facing the wall, as if it was playing hide-and-seek, counting to twenty. The fur trim on the hood was trembling.

Brylcreem! Brylcreem! Brylcreem!

Shane tried the coat's pockets first, then he slid his hand into the hood, but he already knew what he would find.



"Quiet!" he said aloud. "Shut up, will you?"

"Hello! Hello! Hello!" chirped the mobile phone.

"Shshsh! Or I'll be in trouble!"

In fact something told Shane that he was already in trouble, up to his neck – which was very unfair, given that he did not even own a phone.