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In 1996 less than half of all American high school students had ever used the Internet.

Facebook would not be invented until several years in the future.

Emma & Josh are about to log on to their futures.

1://Emma

I CAN'T BREAK UP with Graham today, even though I told my friends I'd do it the next time I saw him. So instead, I'm hiding in my bedroom, setting up my new computer while he plays Ultimate Frisbee in the park across the street.

My dad shipped me the computer as yet another guilt gift. Last summer, before he and my stepmom moved from central Pennsylvania to Florida, he handed me the keys to his old Honda and then started his new life. They just had their first baby, so I got this desktop computer with Windows 95 and a color monitor.

I'm scrolling through various screensavers when someone rings the doorbell. I let my mom answer it because I still haven't decided between a shifting brick wall maze and a web of plumber's pipes. Hopefully it's not Graham at the door.

"Emma!" my mom shouts. "Josh is here."

Now *that's* a surprise. Josh Templeton lives next door, and when we were little we constantly ran back and forth between our houses. We camped in our backyards, built forts, and on Saturday mornings he carried over his cereal bowl to watch cartoons on my couch. Even after we got to high school, we hung out all the time. But then, last November, everything changed. We still eat lunch with our small group of friends, but he hasn't been in my house once in the past six months.

I select the brick wall screensaver and head downstairs. Josh is standing on the porch, tapping at the doorframe with the scuffed toe of his sneaker. He's a grade behind me, which makes him a sophomore. He's got the same floppy reddish-blond hair and shy smile as always, but he's grown five inches this year.

I watch my mom's car backing out of the driveway. She honks and waves before turning into the street.

"Your mom said you haven't been out of your room all day," Josh says.

"I'm setting up the computer," I say, avoiding the whole Graham issue. "It's pretty nice."

"If your stepmom gets pregnant again," he says, "you should talk your dad into buying you a cell phone."

"Yeah, right."

Before last November, Josh and I wouldn't have been standing awkwardly in the doorway. My mom would've let him in, and he would've jogged straight up to my room.

"My mom wanted me to bring this over," he says, holding up a CD-ROM. "America Online gives you a hundred free hours if you sign up. It came in the mail last week."

Our friend Kellan recently got AOL. She squeals every time someone sends her an instant message. She'll spend hours hunched over her keyboard typing out a conversation with someone who may not even go to Lake Forest High.

"Doesn't your family want it?" I ask.

Josh shakes his head. "My parents don't want to get the Internet. They say it's a waste of time, and my mom thinks the chatrooms are full of perverts."

I laugh. "So she wants *me* to have it?"

Josh shrugs. "I told your mom about it, and she said it's okay for you to sign up as long as she and Martin can have email addresses, too."

I still can't hear Martin's name without rolling my eyes. My mom married him last summer, saying this time she found true love. But she also said that about Erik, and he only lasted two years.

I take the CD-ROM from Josh, and he stuffs his hands in his back pockets.

"I heard it can take a while to download," he says.

"Did my mom say how long she'd be gone?" I ask. "Maybe now would be a good time to tie up the phone line."

"She said she's picking up Martin and they're driving into Pittsburgh to look at sinks."

I never bonded with my last stepdad, but at least Erik didn't rip apart the house. Instead, he talked my mom into raising parakeets, so my junior high years were filled with chirping birds. Martin, however, convinced my mom to start a major renovation, filling the house with sawdust and paint fumes. They recently finished the kitchen and the carpets, and now they're tackling the downstairs bathroom.

"If you want," I say, mainly to fill the silence, "you can come over and try AOL sometime."

Josh pushes his hair away from his eyes. "Tyson says it's awesome. He says it'll change your life."

"Right, but he also thinks every episode of *Friends* is life-changing."

Josh smiles and then turns to leave. His head barely clears the wind chimes that Martin hung from the front porch. I can't believe Josh is nearly six-feet tall now. Sometimes, from a distance, I barely recognize him.

* * *

I SLIDE IN THE CD-ROM and listen to it spin inside the computer. I click through the introductory screens and then hit Enter to begin the download. The blue status bar on the screen says the download is going to take ninety-seven minutes. I glance longingly out the window at the perfect May afternoon. After a blustery winter, followed by months of chilly spring rain, summer is finally arriving.

I have a track meet tomorrow, but I haven't been

running in three days. I know it's stupid to worry about bumping into Graham. Wagner Park is huge. It stretches along the edge of downtown all the way to the newer subdivision of homes. Graham could be playing Frisbee anywhere. But if he sees me, he'll hitch his arm around my shoulder and steer me somewhere to make out. At prom last weekend, he was all over me. I even missed doing the Macarena with Kellan and Ruby and my other friends.

I consider interrupting the download to call Graham's house and see if he's home yet. If he answers, I'll hang up. Then again, Kellan told me about a new service where some phones display the number that's calling. No, I'll be a grown-up about it. I can't hide in my room forever. If I spot Graham in the park I'll just wave and shout that I have to keep running.

I change into shorts and a jog bra, and twist my curly hair into a scrunchie. I strap my Discman around my arm with Velcro and walk out to my front lawn, where I stop to stretch. Josh's garage door opens. A moment later, he rolls out on his skateboard.

When he sees me, he stops on his driveway. "Did you start the download?"

"Yeah, but it's taking forever. Where are you headed?"

"SkateRats," he says. "I need new wheels."

"Have fun," I say as he pushes toward the street.

There was a time when Josh and I would have talked

longer, but that's been a while. I jog over to the sidewalk and take a left. When I get to the end of my block, I cut across and meet the paved trail leading into the park. I push Play on the Discman. Kellan made this running mix for me, starting with Alanis Morissette, then Pearl Jam, and finally Dave Matthews.

I run the three-mile loop hard and fast, relieved not to see any Frisbee games. As I'm nearing my street again, the opening guitar of "Crash into Me" comes on.

Lost for you, I mouth the words. *I'm so lost for you.* The lyrics always make me think of Cody Grainger. He's on the track team with me. He's a senior and an incredible sprinter, ranked in the top twenty in the state. Last spring, on the ride home from a meet, he sat next to me and told me all about the college scouts who've been calling him. Later, when I couldn't hold back a yawn, he let me rest against his shoulder. I closed my eyes and pretended to fall asleep, but I kept thinking, *Even though I don't believe in true love, I could reconsider that for Cody.*

Kellan says I'm delusional about him, but she's one to talk. When she got together with Tyson last summer, you'd think the girl invented love. She's got a genius IQ and writes intense editorials for the school paper, but all she could talk about was Tyson this and Tyson that. When he broke up with her after winter break, she crashed so hard she missed two weeks of school.

While I may pine for Cody, I still have to live my life.