

## **“A Night Without My Phone”**

**Cheung Si Ya Elinor, St. Paul's Convent School**

It was a clear, cloudless night. The sky outside was indigo, decorated with tiny silver stars. They were not very noticeable, however – their brightness was blocked out by the blinding neon lights on the streets. Masked faces were everywhere. Even during the epidemic, people did not seem to hesitate to go out in public areas, barely keeping 1.5m apart. Seeing a man on the street who did not wear a face mask, I was relieved to be in the comfort of a car.

I felt my phone buzz in my pocket. One of my teachers must have posted an assignment on Edmodo, the online learning platform that my school uses. I groaned inwardly. What else did I have to add to my mental to-do list?

Every day seemed to be the same. It starts with listening to my teacher’s monotone voice through the internet and ends with a failed attempt to clear my never-ending list of assignments. That night, I went to my grandparents’ home for dinner, a change from the takeout from the same restaurant that I had every night. I was glad to step out of the doorstep again, even if not for long. I haven’t seen my grandparents in a long time, and I missed Grandma’s cooking.

My phone buzzed again. Two notifications? I sighed as I pulled out my phone. I was right; both of the notifications were from Edmodo. I swiped up but my phone didn’t sign me in with the facial recognition. ‘Oh right,’ I thought, ‘I have my face mask on. I just have to enter the passcode then.’ So I entered it. But it was wrong.

It hit me that I had changed my phone password that afternoon, but hadn’t used the passcode to unlock my phone since. I entered the new password, the one that I remembered changing to. My phone showed that it was also incorrect. I must have clicked the wrong button. I entered the new password again. After three failed attempts, my phone was locked and I could only try again in five minutes.

Did I click the wrong button in the last two attempts? That seemed unlikely, but why else would my phone be locked? I was sure I remembered the new password correctly. What

if I couldn't unlock my phone anymore? 'I should try again', I thought, 'Surely five minutes have passed'. I looked at my phone. Three minutes were left.

After the five minutes were up, I was ready to try the password again. It occurred to me that I couldn't waste a single chance, not if it meant risking everything stored in my phone. I tried to recall any other series of numbers that I might have changed the password into, but to no avail.

In this time of Coronavirus, I need my phone more than any other time in my life. Without it, I couldn't chat with my friends through WhatsApp. I'd lose all their contact numbers since I didn't back them up. I would be disconnected from the virtual world of social media. Am I relying too much on technology to keep the bond with my friends?

After a long wait of 1 hour, without access to my phone, I tried again with another guess of the password, but it was wrong again. Using my dad's phone, I searched for another method to save my phone, and there was no other way except to reset it. I couldn't believe that I had to give up everything stored in there just because of my carelessness, but what other choice did I have?

The next day, I spent the whole morning to set my phone up again. I downloaded the apps, entered my email, logged in to all my accounts.... Although I'd lost some of my latest work from school projects and preparations for competitions, I was relieved to see the familiar lock screen every time I turn on the phone.

I hesitated when my phone prompted me to set up facial recognition. It's a dilemma. When technology advances and does everything for us, we start to rely more and more on technology and are not able to detach from it, just as we will forget our password when we only use our face to unlock the phone every day.

Still, I chose to set it up. Using my phone would be a lot more convenient without having to enter the password every time, and facial recognition wasn't invented for nothing. I should make use of this technology, and at the same time be responsible for remembering the password, as I learned in this seemingly negligible experience.