



# Phone Trouble

Lucy and I had been best friends since nursery. I couldn't help it though, I always wished that I had some of the things that she was lucky enough to have. Although we often chose similar coats, shoes and pencil cases, it often seemed that hers were a little better than mine – all the latest fashions, most expensive brands. I had to admit that I was probably a little jealous of her. She always had everything that I wanted. Except maybe for one thing.

When I was given the new phone for my ninth birthday in the holidays, I was so excited! Lucy and I had both begged for one but our mums had told us to wait. Obviously, I was desperate to show her and wanted to take it to school on the first day of the new term, although I knew that we weren't allowed to have phones at school.

"Poppy, make sure that you look after that phone," Mum had said to me. "Don't go taking it out anywhere you shouldn't!" Her words were ringing in my ears as I flipped the phone around in my hands indecisively. I desperately wanted to take it to school but I knew it was wrong so I took it upstairs and placed it carefully into my top drawer. What changed my mind I'm not sure, but at the last minute, I ran back to my room and slipped it into the front pocket of my bag before leaving the house.

Almost late for registration, I hung my coat and bag and made it to the classroom just in time, without a chance to speak to anyone. As I headed to the cloakroom later at morning break, I remembered the phone and my heart picked up a beat or two. Waiting until everyone had gone outside, I slipped the shiny treasure from my bag. Almost immediately, I heard footsteps coming down the corridor. It was Miss Wall. Quickly, I turned and stuffed the phone back into the front pocket of my bag and went out onto the playground, hoping that she hadn't seen me.

By lunchtime, I still hadn't mentioned anything to Lucy as I wanted to surprise her. As soon as there was a chance, while everyone else was still eating in the dinner hall or on their way to the playground, I sneaked back to my bag. Reaching inside the front pocket, a lump caught in my throat and I froze. It wasn't there. I plunged my hand into every compartment and rummaged into every corner of my bag. Definitely, no phone. I felt sick.

What could I do? Maybe someone had seen me with it and stolen it. I wasn't even supposed to have the phone at school though so how could I tell Miss Wall? It would be me in trouble. What would I tell Mum?

All afternoon, I couldn't think of anything except how foolish I'd been to bring the phone with me at all. At the end of the day, I hung back for a moment in the classroom, deliberately taking too long to gather my other belongings. Part of me wanted Miss Wall

to ask what was wrong and then I could tell her. Another part of me just wanted to turn back time and leave the phone back in the desk drawer of my bedroom.

Sluggishly, I plodded out of the classroom and into the cloakroom as the last of my friends snatched their coats and bags from the coat pegs and dashed care-free to the playground. Knowing the outcome, I felt around inside my bag one last time – hoping by some miracle that my fingers had just missed touching the right place earlier. Trying to convince myself that maybe there was a hole in the lining of my bag, I sat on the floor and tipped it upside down, inside out, squeezed every corner. Nothing.

I knew Mum would be waiting outside for me now, wondering why everyone else had made it out before me. My chest was feeling tight and I was having to lift my shoulders to breathe in properly, when Miss Wall appeared in the doorway. I took one look at her and before I managed to force any words from my mouth, I felt the first tear form in the corner of my eye. My shoulders sank and I sobbed.

Barely stopping for a breath, I told her everything. I kept saying how sorry I was and I knew I shouldn't have brought the phone to school but my mum was going to be so angry. Eventually, my teacher managed to slow down my tears and helped me to put everything else back into my bag. Promising that she would speak to the whole class the next day, she led me outside towards my mum as I hung my head down, not wanting or daring to look up.

Miss Wall explained everything to my mum in that calm way that teachers do, as I stood there, regretfully. Waiting, expecting Mum's annoyed tone, I began to lift my head slowly to look sideways towards her – still not daring to make proper eye contact. It was enough to see Mum's hand emerge from her pocket - holding my phone! I blinked and felt my mouth drop open.

"That begins to explain this then," she said. "I was standing with Lucy's mother when Lucy came out a few minutes ago. She told us she'd found this in the front pocket of her bag. Luckily, I recognised it but had no idea how it could have got there!"

Of course. Lucy's bag looked just like mine – we'd chosen identical ones, to match our coats. In a hurry, I must have stuffed the phone into the wrong bag at break time.

"I'm so sorry Mum," I pleaded. "I promise not to bring my phone to school again."

*Steve and Olivia Johnson, 2015.*

