

WHEN THE SIGNAL DISAPPEARED – A STEP BACK IN TIME

They say that disasters start with sirens, darkness, or panic.

Mine began with silence.

One afternoon, just as I was about to move on to the next video, the screen froze. The Wi-Fi sign disappeared. My phone became just a piece of plastic. I thought the battery was empty, but at the same moment the lights went out, and the whole house seemed to sigh, as if it had lost its breath. Then I heard my mum's voice from the other room.

"The power is out," she said.

At first, it didn't sound scary. The electricity always comes back quickly, right? But minutes passed, and the Wi-Fi didn't return. The TV stayed black. Even the microwave didn't work. The house was suddenly quieter than ever.

And then, her words hit me like a thunderbolt. No electricity meant no internet. No internet meant no world as I knew it.

For the first ten minutes, I walked around the house like a ghost. I pressed buttons that didn't work. I opened apps that wouldn't load. I felt nervous, but even worse – I felt bored. Really bored.

My mom suggested that I go to my grandma's house. She said, "A step back might be good for me." I didn't know what she meant, and it didn't sound very exciting, but I had no better idea. I put on my jacket and went to Grandma's.

On the way, I realized I wasn't the only one without a signal. People were sitting in front of their houses. Talking. Laughing. Children were drawing with chalk on the street. It was like someone pressed pause on the modern world and turned on an old version.

Grandma welcomed me with a warm smile, as if she had been waiting for me all day, and as if nothing unusual was happening.

"Oh, the power is out?" she said calmly. "How nice."

"How can that be nice?" I asked, confused.

"Welcome to my childhood," she said with a smile.

In her kitchen, there was no noise from machines. Only a clock ticking loudly and the smell of tea. We sat at the table, and I told her I was bored.

"That's a good beginning," she replied.

"When I was your age," Grandma began, "there was no internet. We didn't know what it meant to be 'offline', because we were always present."

She told me how days used to be slower, but fuller. Children knew all their neighbours, and friendships were made face-to-face, not through screens. Kids called each other to play by shouting through windows. There were no video games, phones, tablets, or internet, but there was togetherness and a lot of laughter. They played hide and seek, tag, jumped rope, climbed

trees... they were freer, they were just kids. They did homework by lamplight. They waited all week for Sunday evening to watch the only movie on TV – and it felt special.

Then she showed me an old photo album. The photos were old, black and white, with no filters, but full of life. The smiles looked real. People looked happy.

Then she took out a letter. A real letter. Paper, handwriting, feelings that couldn't be deleted with one click. I touched the paper. It was yellow, but the letters were neat and careful. Someone had put time into them.

“This is waiting,” she said. “This is patience.”

I asked her if she thought her time was better than ours.

“No,” she said after a short pause. “It was different. Harder in some ways. Easier in others.”

That answer confused me, but it also made me think.

That afternoon, we baked a cake without an online recipe. We played games, like Ludo, without screens. I listened to Grandma's funny stories from her childhood, and we laughed for no reason. Time didn't fly. It felt like it decided to walk.

When I came home in the evening, the signal was back. Everything was fast and loud again. But I had changed. I understood that technology is not the problem. The problem is when we forget what the world looks like without it.

Maybe the past wasn't better. Perhaps the present isn't worse.

But the future will be better only if we sometimes dare to take a step back.

That evening, I sat on my bed and thought about the day. I don't want to live without technology. I like games, videos, and messages. But that day taught me something important: the world didn't start with Wi-Fi. And it won't end if the signal disappears.

Maybe sometimes it's good for the world to stop for a moment – so we can really see it again.