

The Phone Challenge by Laiba W.

It was a hot afternoon in the suburbs of Chicago, where a 10-year old, brown-haired boy named James Hernandez was lying across his leather couch, scrolling through his phone. Suddenly, he groaned loudly and threw his phone across the room. “Ugh!”

His best friend, the Fly—yes, he’s a fly who can speak fluent English and *buzz buzz buzz*—shrieked from shock of James’s action, which almost squished him like a rotten banana.

“James!” cried out the Fly.

“I’m sorry,” James sighed. “It’s just that these people are just annoying me too much!”

“C’mon, James. Instead of being mad at *fake people* that you will never meet since you never get out of the house anyways, why not try this new thing called “*don’t use your phone*”?” suggested the Fly sarcastically, rolling his huge eyes.

James stood up from his seat with a finger in the air. “You know what? Maybe you’re right. I think I should take a break from my phone—wait, why are you in a suit and tie? And where is that music coming from?!”

“Breaking news!” reported the Fly, who appeared in a news reporter outfit, all set up with a microphone out of nowhere. “James Hernandez finally, *finally* puts his phone down after his whole life, *and* actually listens to his best friend for once!”

James rolled his eyes. “After my whole life? Really? I didn’t use a phone when I was a baby!”

“Well, how am I supposed to know?” he shrugged, ditching the outfit. “I’m just a fly, James!”

The sound of a phone notification rang from across the room. James rushed to get his phone, but the Fly stood in his way, blocking him.

“Stop right there!” he said. “You’re not going back to your phone again! I challenge you to not use your phone for 24 hours.”

James raised an eyebrow. “Uh, and why would I want to do that?”

“C’mon, you’re on your phone, like, all the time, and it’s not good for you. Besides, if you pass this challenge, I’ll take you to the fanciest restaurant in the city.”

James’s eyes popped open and gasped, “No way! A meal over there is like almost 500 dollars!”

The Fly nodded and challenged, “Yup, but if you lose, you’ll be the one paying for our meal. So, you better get your wallet ready.”

“Ha-ha,” James sarcastically laughed as the Fly put his hand out.

“Deal?”

James looked at his hand and accepted with a smile. “You bet, and for your information, you better get your wallet ready, buddy. Let’s start this challenge already!”

“Okay, then,” the Fly smirked. “Give me every single device you own.”

“Easy.” James shrugged confidently.

“Also, watching TV or any device that isn’t yours is not allowed,” he explained. “Break these rules, and you’re paying for our fancy meal.”

James nodded impatiently. “How hard can it be? It’s not like I enjoy the people on social media, anyway. This is going to be a piece of cake!”

While he started off strong with ironically eating all the leftover cake that was in the fridge from the Fly’s birthday a few days ago, one hour through the challenge was when James started to break.

“Ugh,” he groaned into his pillow as he flopped onto his bed. “I’m so bored! Seriously, what did they do back then before devices existed? I would’ve played video games at this point in the day, but clearly that isn’t allowed.”

He rolled over onto his back and stared at the ceiling fan before he groaned again. “What else can I do other than say *ugh?*”

James thought very hard for an answer, maybe too hard because he quickly fell asleep. Five hours later, he was woken up by the Fly and his unimpressed look. “Really, James? I thought you were doing something productive.”

James rubbed his eyes and yawned, “What do you mean? Sleeping is productive! I got to give my brain some rest!”

“Rest from doing what, exactly? Stuffing your face with my leftover birthday cake?” joked Fly as he pushed James out of bed. “New rule: sleeping the whole 24 hours does not count.”

James sighed as the Fly left and kicked a pile of dirty clothes and some other junk on the floor. This made him think. “Might as well clean my room.”

It took him a few hours, but his room was finally clean for once. He even found his old basketball he thought he lost. Feeling excited, James went outside to play until 11:50 p.m.

“Man, I totally forgot how much fun playing basketball was,” said James with a grin that became wider as he looked at the time. “Guess I’m gonna’ win the challenge after all.”

The Fly started to worry. He never expected James to actually win! Besides, he’s broke! The Fly had to think of something quick. He looked at his phone and smiled. “Hey, James, check out this video game that came out!”

“I know what you’re doing and it’s not going to work.” James said, drinking some water, although he had waited months for that game to come out.

The Fly had a plan. “Guess you really might win this one. I’m gonna’ go to the bathroom okay?”

He left the kitchen with his phone on the table unlocked and hid behind the door, waiting to see if James would finally break.

James looked at his best friend’s phone nervously. It was only 11:58. He wondered if it was worth a “peek” at his phone. After all, James had been dying to play the game.

Slowly, he approached the phone and checked to see if the Fly would come back. Fly was getting excited as he whispered, “C’mon, James! It’s 11:59!”

But as much as James wanted to, he decided it wasn’t worth it. Luckily, it was finally 12 a.m. He had won!