



Messages

Rena

Edit

Plz?



by John Fuller

Send

“How much longer, Dad?”

“About an hour.”

*Do it, Rayshaun commanded himself.
Before you chicken out.*

Rayshaun never did anything daring.
So texting Rena was monumental.

*Hey. Would you want to get
together sometime? Movie,
or...? Please text back before
I get to camp in one hour,
cuz no phones allowed... for
two weeks!*

There. Plenty of time for Rena’s reply.
Rayshaun reclined against the headrest,
imagining their first kiss — which would be
his first romantic kiss ever.

Rayshaun checked his phone. Nothing.

His father turned off narrow Route 64,
onto microscopic Route 271. Crossing a
little covered bridge, they entered a valley
so steep it was like driving down the crease
of a barely-opened book.

He checked the phone. All it showed was a demoralising *No service...Searching...*

“Dad, will we be out of this valley soon?”

“Nope. Forty-five minutes on 271, then six miles on Lower Mine Shaft Trail, and we’re there!” So cheerful.

Rayshaun never got even one pathetic little signal bar. He actually might have to wait two weeks for Rena’s answer. “Agony,” he said, distractedly.

“What?” asked his little brother Charles, taking a break from the crazy singing he’d kept up for the past several miles.

“Nothing.”

“Dad, what’s agony?”

“Torment. Really bad pain.”

Ya think? Rayshaun said to himself.

At camp he suffered, downcast, through the lice check. Two weeks of not-knowing. He supposed camp might take his mind

off everything back home, and he'd forget about Rena until Mom came to pick him up in 216 hours.

“Impossible,” he said, puzzling the nurse examining his scalp.

He hugged his brother and dad good-bye. *Torment; really bad pain.*

And it was. He thought about Rena incessantly : in private, for sure; but also during archery and rappelling, when self-preservation would have been a better focus. Rena would never kiss him if he was dead, after all.

Two weeks of what felt like 40-hour days! Rayshaun gravitated toward the homesick, moody kids — the ones who hung loosely at the fringes. His counselors admonished him for not even trying to have fun. On pick-up day, he was the first to have his things packed and on the main lawn.

When Mom appeared, after a fleeting hug, he asked desperately, “Did you bring my phone?!”

“Of *course!* I know how much teenagers love surfing the internet!” She handed it over.

Dead.

Trying not to whine, he asked, “Where’s my *charger?*”

“Oh — sorry, baby.” His mother apologised. Barely concerned! Rena’s answer would have to wait until he got home.

In Burlington, he bounded from the car, and attacked the stairs. He burst into the apartment and flew past Charles into his bedroom. The precious jumbled cord lay on his bed. Five minutes gave the phone just enough charge. He opened Messages. There it was :

You’re so sweet. I’ve been wanting to do something with you, too.

Rena!

Not a movie, though. We probably like very different things.

You’re the boss!

Call and we'll make plans for
Thanksgiving.

Thanksgiving?!

Love grandma ;-)

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Ptz?