Society has forever changed since the adoption of computers into homeland security. After 9/11, no one expected another terrorist attack on the United States of America. At least not one as seemingly organized and large scale. We felt protected with our new security procedures and the creation of the Department of Homeland Security. Blissfully ignorant, we welcomed technology into our homes, hungry for the latest and greatest. We believed we were more aware; information readily available at our fingertips. How could we recognize that we were letting the enemy into every aspect of our lives? I can clearly remember how it all happened 30 years ago.

Monday: the worst day of all the days of the week. I hate it. I loath it! But every new week brings new stories to cover. I shut off my alarm as it reads 5:31 am. Only took a minute of blaring to wake you up this time, I think to myself. I was stepping out of the shower at 5:45 when my phone rings.

"Hello?"
"Have you heard what happened in New York?" My coworker is screaming!
"What? No! What happened?"
"I’m not sure! It started around 3 this morning! Something about a cyber attack,” she is breathing heavily.
"What? Like identity theft?” I was confused. Why is this a big deal?

Suddenly, my phone starts to make a loud, alarming sound. It’s like a boat horn constantly ringing through the speakers. I dropped it to the floor. The screen had gone completely red, and there was an unfamiliar logo in black. I picked it up and started tapping the screen rapidly.

"Chelsea? Hello? What the hell is going on?"
She didn’t answer. I tried desperately to turn the volume down. The siren blared on. Next, I tried to reset my iPhone by holding down the power and home buttons. The screen went black. Yes! The apple icon never displayed, and the screen went red again. At least the siren stopped.

Abruptly, my smart tv turned on and my laptop, all displaying the red screen and the black logo. I was really starting to freak out. Luckily, I have a home phone so anyone at the station can reach me. Just as I finished dialing our station’s office number, a deep, corrupt voice began speaking over all of my possessed devices.

"Good morning, America!" It mocked. “Today is the day a new order comes to light."
"Hello?" Rick, my station manager, answered the phone.
"Rick? What the hell is happening? Are you seeing this, too?"
"Yeah. I have no idea. It’s real. We got reports of it from New York. They can’t pass any information online-” the voice over the tv spoke again,
"You’re technology is now under our control. We can track your movements and location via your many devices, you gluttonous Americans!"
"Landlines seem to be working,” Rick stated.
“Obviously!”
“*We’ve been tracking you for sometime. Amazing how many of you love to give up all of your information so freely!*”

I could hear the tv in the station echoing the same chilling words. As I stood there in awe of what was happening, I began to put together how severe the situation was. This must be a cyber attack. A terror attack on U.S. citizens via our cyber channels?

“*By now, your president is hiding in his jet, certainly trying to reach you. I hope you still have a working radio, hahaha! Your money, electronics, and security are ours!*”

“Rick?”

“Yeah, I’m still here,” he whispered.

“I’m coming to the station.”

My devices sounded one last blast of the siren and went black. I slipped on some pants and a t-shirt. Grabbing my keys, I instinctively grabbed my cell phone. At the door, I halted. I realized I didn’t even know if I could use my phone. I clicked the home button and the lock button a couple of times. Nothing. Curious if there would be anymore announcements, I slipped the thin electronic device into my back pocket and headed down to my car. Outside, everyone who had a device to hear the warning on was standing in confusion. Clearly we were being threatened, but to what extent?

The state of Chicago was increasingly becoming more stressed. During my 30 minute commute to work, more and more people began to lose it. Looters were breaking into small grocery stores only 2 hours after the announcement had aired. Local police were doing what they could, but the city needed to begin our security measures we have in place for terrorist attacks. I came to a red light and checked each radio station. Station anchors were desperately trying to piece together a story and answer incoming calls. A few were playing songs about freedom, America, and even our National Anthem.

Rick greeted me at the elevator. We didn’t say a word, but walked briskly to the news room. Chelsea and our head anchors were preparing to send a live message to the city. The tech guys couldn’t get through whatever the terrorists were using to block our systems. The longer I sat there watching everyone rush around the office, the more I understood how much this would impact our country. Grabbing Robert, my cameraman, I rushed downstairs. We were going to record as much as we could with any equipment that used disks, cards, or even tapes. If we couldn’t broadcast, history needed to know what was happened in these first moments.

Outside the city was in shock. We watched as people lined up at banks, gas stations, and stores collecting things they thought were valuable to their survival. I realized I didn’t even have any cash on me, because I had grown so accustomed to paying with cards everywhere I went. I didn’t even know the nearest physical location of my personal bank.
Robert and I started recording.

“Good morning Chicago, I’m Lindsey Kelly with NDC Chicago. It’s been four hours now since we received the unknown message across our devices. We are still unable to broadcast at this time. However, we are still recording. What you see behind me is a local grocery store being ransacked for any goods that might be valuable to these families. Fear has certainly set in, as the city assumes the worst: terrorist attack."

We travel around for about thirty minutes capturing footage of the chaos going on around us. It feels like we are on a movie set rather than filming our city, our neighbors, and our viewers. We park in the company parking lot, somber silence between us. Robert switches the camera off. We rush back upstairs just in time to hear the President speak over the radio.

“Lindsey. Lindsey, you’re talking in your sleep, dear,” a nurse whispers to me. I can feel her shaking my shoulder vigorously. “Maybe I should talk to the doctor about your dosage.”
“No, I’m fine.”

She checks my blood pressure and heart rate before leaving the room. The interview I have tomorrow is the first like it since the terrorist attack 30 years ago. After the attack, I developed schizophrenia and a fear of technology. A lot of people did. This interview has increased my anxiety, and I have started talking in my sleep more frequently.

The doctors and therapists always tell me the same thing.

“It’s all over now.”
“Homeland Security is more organized and powerful, because of it.”
“All electronics with access to wifi are controlled, regulated. You’re safe.”

I no longer trust or depend on technology. I constantly dream up theories and ideas of the source of the terrorist attack, wondering if our government is to blame. I can’t help but think that if no one was in control of their personal devices before this attack, now we are slaves to our government rather than victims of terrorism. No one actually owns an electronic device. We all have identification cards to log in to any device. Our web browsing, online interactions, purchases are all monitored. This is supposed to protect us. I will never feel safe again, even if the Department of Homeland Security seal is on every device you see. Either way, we are not in control and we are not safe. I become so anxious when I argue with the therapists that I black out.

Then I wake to my alarm and it reads 5:31 am. Only took a minute of blaring to wake you up this time, I think to myself.