

# The Line

By Linda Boubinová

I live in a house. It's an old house. We have a big garden, and we have a small farm. My parents and grandparents call it "Our Little Farm". They say that there are much bigger farms out there, in the Big World. My parents and grandparents talk a lot about the Big World. I've never seen it.

My name is Jack, and I am five years old. My Mom is called Susan, and my Dad is called Joe, but they are also called Mom and Dad. Grandma and Grandpa are called Grandma and Grandpa, but they are also called Mom and Dad. I am just Jack, but Grandpa says that I will also be called Dad one day. I wonder how many people will call me Dad, and how many people will call me Jack. Mom says that there is a whole lot of people out in the Big World. I wonder how much.

I have two friends. One of them is a cat, her name is Paws, but she is also called Cuddly. I call her Cuddly, even though Grandma says her name is just Paws. But I think that since I call her Cuddly, her name must also be Cuddly. My other friend is Sally. She is only Sally, because I named her. She's a tree, an old tree, in the corner of our garden. She likes to dance when the wind blows. Whenever the wind blows, she sways in rhythm with its music, and I dance with her. Sally is old, but she is a great dancer, and she is really kind. She lets me climb onto her branches, and her branches are ever so comfortable!

Every evening, when I am changing into my pajamas, I open the window and wave to Sally. Sally always dances even faster when I do so, to let me know that she hears me, and that she is waving to me too. After that, I go down the stairs, and I sit on Mom's lap, and I listen to what my parents and grandparents are talking about. They talk about very interesting things. On weekends, it is the most interesting though.

Every Sunday, Grandpa and Dad take some of the things from Our Little Farm to the market. When I was little, I didn't know what a market was, so I asked Grandma. Grandma said that it is a place where we can sell some of the goods from our farm and buy some stuff for us in return.

One weekend, Dad told us about what he had heard from this rich lady who lived in the town where he and Grandpa had gone to the market.

Apparently, she was some famous person, and she was supposed to receive a phone call from the President, but her phone had been offline when he had called.

Everyone started laughing. I asked what offline and phone meant. Grandpa said it meant that somebody was off the line, so they could not use the special device called phone to receive phone calls from afar. Mom added that it meant that if somebody wanted to phone call someone, both had to be online, and if one of them was offline, the other couldn't reach the person that was offline. Dad said that it was complicated, and that I would understand when I got bigger. I asked if we were online or offline. Mom said that we were offline, as we didn't have a phone. As I was about to ask another question, Grandma said that it was time to go to bed.

The next day, I tried to get on the line. Dad had once set up a big rope in between two trees, and we always called it the line. It was there to hold two old apple trees. Everyone had always told me not to climb onto the line, that it was dangerous. Only now, I had to get up on the line, so that I could be online, and the President would try to call us too, for sure. But I would answer the call.

Nothing happened.

I got off the line and found a stick. I named the stick Phone and got up on the line again. Mom had said we didn't have a phone, well, now we did. I stayed on the line, leaning on the Phone. Now the President had to call.

Nothing happened.

Perhaps the President didn't know he could call now. I got off the line and brought Cuddly. I found another stick, and I called it Phone for Cuddly. I laid Phone for Cuddly in front of Cuddly and told Cuddly to call me when I would be on the line.

I got up on the line and told Cuddly that she could call now. But Cuddly wasn't listening. Cuddly started playing with the stick, and evidently, playing with the stick didn't mean calling.

"Cuddly! Stop playing with the stick and call me! Look, I am online!" I called.

Then I understood that Cuddly was not on the line, so she couldn't call. I put phone between two branches a little lower down and climbed back for Cuddly and Phone for Cuddly. When I had gotten up again, I reached down for Phone. I grasped it, but just at that moment, I lost my balance, and giving out a little yell, I fell, headfirst.

I woke up, and I saw lights, and a white ceiling. I also saw a face with shiny things around his eyes. I realized that the shiny things were spectacles. Grandma sometimes wore spectacles for reading. But that face was not Grandma's. Could it be the President? Did he finally manage to call? I didn't remember him calling, I just remembered falling.

"Oh look! The little chap's waking up!" The President said.

More faces clustered around me. Now I recognized Mom and Dad, and Grandma and Grandpa.

"Are you ok honey?" Mom asked, almost whispering.

I nodded.

"Are you the President? Why didn't you call earlier?" I asked the man with the spectacles.

"No, I am not the President, though I share his first name. I am John, by the way." The man answered.

"So the President didn't call?" I asked, hoping for the answer that didn't come.

"No... I am afraid not, my dear boy." The man John answered.

"Where are we then?"

"We're in the hospital dear. You were climbing on the line, and you fell and hit your head. You have a concussion." Mom told me.

"I was trying to get up on the line so that the President could call, but he didn't know I was online, so I tried to make Cuddly call at least, but before she could, I fell." I explained.

"We were so scared. Before we got you to a hospital, it was terrible. We were lucky the nearest farm had a phone..." Grandma whispered.

"Yes, a phone would be useful in such circumstances, you are very isolated down there. The concussion might have been much worse though. But the boy will have to stay here for a few days anyways," the doctor said.

And so, after a little more talking, they all left, and I fell asleep.

Some days later, the doctor checked me with some interesting things, and then he proclaimed me good and healthy, and said that I could go home. A little while later, my parents came again, and Dad told me that they have a little surprise for me at home. Then, Mom held a whispered conversation with the doctor, and we went.

As we came home, I looked all around the garden, but could see nothing new. But as we came into the living room, Grandpa swiveled me around, and showed me a black shiny thing with a twisted string.

"Look, it's a phone. Just for us," he whispered in my ear.

"A phone?" I asked, not believing my own ears.

"Well, yes. If something does happen, we need to call help quickly. And the doctor gave us the hospital's number, if needed. He also said that he will be near the hospital's phone right now, so that you can call him..." Mom explained.

"Thank you so much! Can I call him now? Please?" I pleaded.

"Why, I think you can, I'll help you with the number." Dad handed me a funny thing in the shape of a cucumber and helped me spin out the separate numbers on a circle with numbers on the phone.

I looked at the phone, it didn't look like a stick, or like my Phone, or Phone for Cuddly, but that didn't matter. I was so excited. Everyone was staring at the phone. Then, suddenly, I heard ringing inside of the cucumber. Like a bell. And then, the ringing stopped. Someone had answered the phone call. I put the phone near my face.

"Hello?"