



AUTHOR PROFILE

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The first glitch.

Page 1 — The First Glitch

16-year-old Aria Collins never forgot the first time reality felt... edited. It was a normal Monday morning at Ridgeview High School. Students were dragging their backpacks, half-asleep, half-scrolling. The hallway was a river of TikTok sounds, whispers, perfume, and chaos.

Aria was unlocking her locker when her phone buzzed:

Mia: "We need to talk. Don't tell anyone."

Aria froze. Mia never sent messages like that. They had been best friends since 4th grade; Mia was the funny one, the calm one, the one who never panicked.

Aria replied instantly:

“What happened??”

But before she could even see if the message delivered, the notification vanished.

Gone.

No chat history.

No “Mia sent a message.”

No “deleted.”

Nothing.

Aria frowned and walked toward Mia, who was sitting on a bench with her orange headphones.

“Mia... did you text me?”

Mia looked confused. “No? I didn’t even open my phone yet.”

A cold shiver crawled up Aria's spine. Something wasn't right.

Page 2 — The Patterns

By Wednesday, Aria realized she wasn't the only one. At lunch, a group of juniors sat whispering nervously.

"My phone deleted my alarm."

"My reminder for my exam disappeared."

"I swear I wrote an entire paragraph last night and it wasn't there this morning."

Everyone joked at first, calling it "the Ridgeview Ghost," but Aria noticed a pattern.

All the missing notifications had two things in common:

1. They were high-stress, emotionally intense messages.
2. They disappeared only when connected to the school's Wi-Fi.

That night, unable to sleep, Aria dug deeper. She opened her laptop, connected to the school network remotely through a saved password Mia had given her last semester, and began scanning the traffic. There it

was. A device that shouldn't exist. A device with no name, no MAC address, no brand. Just a signal. A faint one. A frequency that flickered between 6.2 Hz and 8.4 Hz. Her heart dropped. Those weren't random numbers. That was the frequency range of brain wave entrainment — signals that affect attention, memory, and emotional response. Her school Wi-Fi was interfering with students' brains.

Page 3 — The Dream

The next day at school felt eerie. Groups of students were gathered in tight circles, whispering.

"Did you have the dream?"

"Me too... the screen dream."

Aria's stomach tightened.

"What dream?" she asked a classmate.

He swallowed, his voice shaky. "There was this... dark room. And a screen. It was showing us something."

"What was it showing?" Aria pressed.

"I don't remember," he said, rubbing his temples. "But I woke up scared."

That night, Aria had the same dream.

A pitch-black room. A glowing white screen. A single sentence:

"FOCUS IS CONTROL."

She woke up gasping for air, sweat dripping down her neck. The clock read 03:28. Her head felt strangely heavy. She looked at her phone. 1 new notification. From an unknown sender.

"You're getting close."

Aria's hands started shaking. She backed away from her phone as if it were alive.

Was someone watching her?

Tracking her?

Reading her messages?

Or worse... controlling her sleep? She wasn't paranoid. She was right.

Page 4 — The Investigation

The next morning, Aria pulled Mia into an empty classroom.

"We need to figure this out. Something is controlling the school network."

Mia didn't laugh. She didn't say Aria was crazy.

Instead, she whispered, "I know."

She opened her notebook and revealed something shocking, a map. A full blueprint of Ridgeview High School's Wi-Fi system, with a red blinking dot on the roof.

"Aria... that device? I've seen it."

“What?! When?”

“Last month. I thought it was a weather sensor.”

They stared at each other. Weather sensors don't delete notifications. Weather sensors don't send nightmares. Weather sensors don't text teenagers.

Aria tightened her ponytail. “We're going to the roof tonight.”

Page 5 — The Secret Device

The school rooftop was colder than Aria expected. Wind pushed against them, the city lights glowing like stars below. Mia pointed to a corner behind the ventilation units.

“There.”

The device was a small black cube, about the size of a shoebox, connected to nothing. No wires. No battery. No solar panel. Yet it hummed. A low, pulsing vibration that made Aria's skin prickle.

“What kind of machine works without power?” Aria whispered.

Mia stepped back. “It feels wrong.”

Aria reached out her hand to touch it. Her phone buzzed. A notification popped up without her touching anything.

“DO NOT TOUCH.”

Aria’s entire body froze. The device had detected her intention. Her hand trembled, but she touched it anyway.

And then—

A blinding white flash. A high-pitched ringing inside her skull. Mia screaming her name. The rooftop spinning in circles. Aria collapsed to her knees, gripping her head.

Images flickered behind her eyes:

students scrolling...

students staring blankly at screens...

students forgetting their own thoughts...

The device wasn't just reading them. It was training them. Conditioning them. Testing how easily teenagers' attention could be controlled. When the flash ended, Aria felt something wet on her face. She touched it. Blood. Her nose was bleeding.

Page 6 — The Truth

For the rest of the week, Aria and Mia investigated obsessively. Aria noticed that the students who spent the most time on their phones were the most affected—more forgetful, more moody, more distracted. It wasn't accidental. It was experimental.

Aria's theory was clear:

The device emitted low-frequency waves that altered emotional responses and erased stressful digital cues. By removing notifications that triggered anxiety, it was controlling reactions and behavior. Why? To study how easily teenagers could be manipulated.

Their fears. Their habits. Their minds. The project wasn't school-run. It wasn't government-run. It was something else. A private company.

A startup focused on “cognitive influence technologies.”

Their slogan?

“Shaping the attention of the next generation.”

Page 7 — The Final Signal

Aria decided enough was enough. She and Mia met on the rooftop one final time. Aria held a metal rod in her hand—the only thing she could think of to physically destroy the device. Her heart pounded so loudly she could hear it in her ears. She raised the rod. Her phone vibrated violently.

“STOP.”

Another vibration.

“YOU ARE NOT IN CONTROL.”

Aria screamed and smashed the rod down on the device. Sparks flew. A sharp, painful noise filled the air. Her phone glitched, screen flickering like it was melting. Then... silence. Real silence. The buzzing in her brain stopped. The pressure behind her eyes faded. The air felt clean again. The device was dead. But when Aria checked her phone one last time, she saw a new notification.

One she didn't delete.

One she didn't forget.

One that didn't disappear.

“This version has been terminated. A new update will begin soon.”

Aria stared at the message, her breath catching.

Some battles end.

Some battles restart.

And some battles—

Are just beginning.