

Texte n°1

(Henry has just come home from school.)

"Henry," she gasped, "you've got to help me."

"What! What's the matter?" Was the FBI upstairs? Was she bleeding internally? There'd been gunfire! We were going to scream down the street in an ambulance while she told me her dying wish, while she expired in my arms. "What!"

She was doing the difficult job of holding still, so that the skin on her hands, those lily white ones, were stretched to the thinnest translucence around my big wrists. "I can't," she said, "get on line."

I looked hard and I looked long into those beseeching blue eyes of hers. Right then there was nothing not jewels or a cruise ship or money [...] that she wanted more than the machinery to be up and running I could see this in her fierce little pupils. "Oh, no!" I finally whispered. "Oh, God!"

"What? What do you think it is?"

It hadn't taken me much time, more than a second really, to understand the possibilities in the situation.

[...]

"I've... I've got to get on," she said. "I've just, just got to get on."

"Okay," I said. "Sure."

I set my backpack on the floor, squatted, took out a pencil, in case I needed to do some complicated algorithms to get the dolly 1 in working order. Computations that might take, oh, a week or two. I ambled 2 up the stairs after her, sat in the office chair, adjusted the setting for height and back support. Stood and fixed my belt. Sat down. Made a fine tuning with the smaller black knob 3 under the chair. Tweaked the larger one.

[...]

She would have liked to scream at me. I could tell, to shriek for all she was worth. Get me on Henry. I could feel the urgency, the desperation, in the way she clutched the back of my chair and breathed as if she were running and running and not simply standing still. [...]

Up in the office, when she could no longer control herself over the computer's malfunction, when she started to tremble, and when her breathing down my neck became irregular, I said, "Wait a minute. Let's try something." I made elaborate motions, pressing the various keys and finally hitting the one under the desk that shut the machine down. "Hold the phone," I said, starting it up again. "Here we go."

My mother sank into a hard wooden chair, put her hands into her face, and said, "Oh Jesus. Thank you!"

Adapted from Disobedience, by Jane Hamilton, Anchor Books, 2001

Texte n° 2

A generational difference shows up in the emergence of the "family tech guru", who these days is far more likely to be a teenager than the father of the house. A Carnegie Mellon study of home computer use found that "those with the least seniority claimed the most authority," with calls to technical support ⁴ (generally a sign of the household "power user") coming predominantly from children, not adults. Southwest Airlines recently ran a television ad showing a self important boomer ⁵ dictating his travel requirements to an unseen associate. The camera pulls back to show his seven-year old son, who is typing it all into a website.

Children have always been more expert than their parents at something, but usually a game or a fad, not the era's most important business tool. "For the first time in history, children are more comfortable, knowledgeable and literate than their parents about an innovation central to society," says Mr Tapscott (the author of *Growing Up Digital*). For kids today, technology is the defining event of their generation, much as wars or depression were for previous generations. Television opened the boomers' eyes to the global village, but the Internet goes one better. It operates 24 hours a day, and it does not just offer you a window on the world, but a way of playing a part wherever you are.

Extracted and adapted from "The Young", a survey published in The Economist, December 23rd 2000

1 dolly: (ici) machine
round handle or control button

2 to amble: to walk nonchalantly

3 a knob: a

4 calls to technical support: phone calls to hotlines
the baby boom

5 a boomer: a baby boomer, i.e. a person born at the time of