I was visiting Los Angeles with my brother in January 2023, about 2 months ago. We flew in Wednesday morning and flew back Thursday night for a quick one-night stay. On Thursday morning, we wanted to drive into downtown LA and drive through Hollywood after that. We checked out of our motel, ate breakfast at a gas station McDonald’s, and drove to downtown LA. We had to use Google Maps to get there because we didn’t know the area very well. I did all of the driving that day while my brother rode shotgun.

Almost immediately when we got into downtown LA, I noticed that my phone battery was already low, somewhere between 25% and 35%. My phone wasn’t fully charged before we left the motel, but I knew I had well over 70%, maybe even over 80% before we checked out. Somehow, Google Maps had drained most of my battery, and it wasn’t even noon yet. My brother and I had a good time in downtown LA and Hollywood, but I could not stop thinking about my low phone battery. And to make matters worse, my brother’s phone was also running low on battery. We didn’t have a car charger in our rental car, so I was trying to find a store that sold one. We went to 2 gas stations, but neither one sold car chargers.

It was about 2:00 in the afternoon now, and suddenly we were in crunch time. We had to return our rental car by 4:00 in Inglewood, and we had to board our flight at LAX Airport at 6:30. My phone was below 15%, and my brother’s phone had already died. I kept thinking, “What will we do if both of our phones are dead in the middle of Hollywood?” I didn’t know my way around the city. We couldn’t contact anyone if our phones died. We couldn’t go back to the motel to charge our phones. I’m not a very stressful person; my brother is more anxious than I am. But when I don’t fully see the path to solving my problem, I get more anxious. In that moment, I did not fully see the path to solving my problem. My brother and I were making sporadic decisions and hoping for the best. We weren’t feeling overwhelmingly stressed; we were actually having some good conversations throughout the day. But we were definitely more anxious than before. We felt the pressure. It’s like when water is flowing through a pipe and the pipe's diameter shrinks. It starts flowing faster under the increased pressure. There was no time to waste; we had to move fast under the increased pressure.

We went to a Target in Hollywood to buy a car charger. We were in a dilemma in the car charger section. Should we buy 2 chargers? Should we buy the best charger or the budget charger? And we had to make a quick decision because I parked in a “5-minute free parking” spot and didn’t want a parking ticket. We settled for a $6 charger to save money, but it barely helped us at all. My brother’s dead phone took 40 minutes to get 2-3% of charge. In those 40 minutes while I was driving, we were frantically trying to get back to Inglewood. I couldn’t leave Google Maps running, so I would drive for a bit and then periodically look at Google Maps when we got to a red light to make sure we were heading the right direction.

My phone finally died while we were driving, and my brother was not getting much help from our $6 charger. We were brainstorming solutions to our problem, and I suddenly had what felt like a stroke of genius at the time. I remembered a Target that we went to the previous day on Century Boulevard in Inglewood, the same street that our motel and car rental place were located. That specific Target had a free phone charging station, so we decided to go there. I knew we were getting close to Inglewood, so I kept driving the way I was going. Before we knew it, we came across Century Boulevard, and we were both so excited to be on the right track. We had less than an hour to return the car, but we were glad to be back in familiar territory.

We went to the Inglewood Target, and my brother was able to use the station to charge his phone. Unfortunately, I was unable to use it because you can’t access the station with a dead phone. The chargers were also slow, so we weren’t in the clear yet. But I knew that as long as one of us had a partially charged phone, we’d be fine. My brother got his phone to about 15% with about 15 minutes to return the car.

After topping off the gas tank, we arrived at the rental car place at 4:10. While waiting for our shuttle to the airport, we used our wall chargers to charge our phones at the rental car place. Everything just got better from there. We easily got through airport security and were finally able to rest. We had plenty of time to eat dinner and shop for souvenirs at the airport before we boarded our flight. My brother had Chick-Fil-A for dinner, and I had Panda Express for dinner. I remember sitting in the dining area with my brother and feeling so relieved that we made it through all that. We were just sitting there eating our dinner, letting our phones charge, and relaxing until we had to board our flight home.

This experience taught me a lot about myself. It showed me how heavily I rely on my phone in my life. In today’s society our phones are so important to our lives that they can become a crutch in some ways. This experience gave me a rare opportunity to rely on my own wits and knowledge rather than falling back on my phone.

I divided my story into 7 scenes, which are the first 7 paragraphs of this document. The 8th paragraph is a summary of my thoughts looking back on my story. I feel that the biggest change in my story was when I realized that I had less than 35% battery before noon. That changed my entire mindset throughout the day.