New Novel 'Everything We Deleted' Imagines the Day Every Deleted Message, Photo, and File Comes Back

Michael K. Bender's new novel imagines a tech firm's secret archive of everything users deleted spilling online, echoing a real 2024 iPhone glitch.



Everything We Deleted

CAIRO, NY, UNITED STATES, September 29, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Most people believe that pressing “delete” makes something disappear. A new novel by Michael K. Bender, a former U.S. Foreign Commercial Officer and corporate executive, asks what would happen if it never did. Everything We Deleted: A Novel is now available in paperback and Kindle editions on Amazon and Barnes and Noble.

In the novel, one of the world’s largest technology companies has installed its app on more than a billion phones and computers, with users’ permission to “access your files and photos to keep them safe.” Behind that permission sits a hidden system its engineers call the Reservoir. For three years it quietly keeps every unsent message, every draft, every deleted photograph, and every file emptied from the trash. Then a routine software update fails, and the Reservoir spills onto the open internet all at once.

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>
> *Michael Bender*

The story follows eight people whose most private words and images surface in the leak: a man who never sent an apology to his estranged brother, a woman who typed a breakup message at 2:14 in the morning, a mother struggling in silence, a combat veteran, a widow after her first date in three years, a teenager, a newly promoted employee afraid he is not good enough, and the chief executive of the company itself. Behind them are the engineer who

discovered the flaw and tried to warn her employer, and the executives who chose to wait.

While the Reservoir is fictional, the novel draws on documented events. In November 2017, researchers at Princeton University's Center for Information Technology Policy reported that "session replay" scripts on 482 of the top 50,000 websites collected text typed into forms before users submitted them [1]. In May 2024, some iPhone owners who installed Apple's iOS 17.5 update found previously deleted photos reappearing in their libraries; Apple attributed the problem to a corrupted database entry on affected devices and released iOS 17.5.1 on May 20, 2024, to address "a rare issue where photos that experienced database corruption could reappear in the Photos library even if they were deleted" [2][3]. And on October 22, 2025, the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine, which preserves copies of public web pages, reached one trillion archived pages [4].

"Almost everyone has a draft folder, whether they think of it that way or not," said Bender. "An apology we never sent, a photo we deleted at two in the morning, the thing we almost said to someone we love. I wanted to write about what happens when those things come back. After what happened with those iPhone photos in 2024, I think of it as the novel readers will hope stays fiction."

Written for general readers and book clubs rather than technical audiences, Everything We Deleted explores the cost of silence, the risks of forced exposure, and how families, marriages, and friendships change when private truths become public. A reading-group discussion guide is available from the author.

Bender served at U.S. embassies in Saudi Arabia, Nigeria, and Kuwait as a Foreign Commercial Officer and worked in business in the United Kingdom, China, and many other countries. After retiring, he taught English literary skills in after-school enrichment programs and English as a second language to employees of international organizations in Washington, D.C. He writes full-time from Cairo, New York.

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