



# THE LAST WORD

by  
Alessa

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by Alessa

"This is stupid," I said simply with a smirk, shaking my head at my friends. "What purpose is there in doing this? How on earth do you expect to find your soul mate like this? It's ridiculous!"

"Look, just do it before I throw your English essay out the window," Megan warned me, narrowing her eyes at me. Emma, who was sitting beside her, mirrored the glare.

"I can't believe I fell for the whole '*come over and help us with our homework*' line you guys dropped the first time you asked," I objected, flicking the papers in front of me and letting the phone numbers dance around in my mind.

"With good reason," Emma spluttered, sending me a look. "Do you need me to recall the events? Have you forgotten our completely plausible reason for never accepting your offers of help, like, ever again?"

Ok, so maybe I went a little crazy when I saw the texting-talk on the English assignment before me. I am a spelling freak, and well, just about every other kind of freak you could be, at least academically.

"If you put texting in your writing, how am I supposed to know whether you can spell the word in reality or not?" I sniffed in my own defence.

"The word was 'forgotten', Lindsay. All I did was put a '4' instead of 'for'," she said flatly. "I can spell that, f-o-a-r, see?"

"Alright," Megan clapped her hands. "Come on, Lindsay, get a move on already."

"I don't see why I have to do it first," I said, finally deciding on a number. "I didn't even want to be part of this insanity in the first place."

She sent me a look, and I rolled my eyes. I picked up the receiver and dialled the number.

After a few rings, while I tapped my foot on the floor, annoyed at my friends, someone finally answered the phone. It sounded like a little girl's voice laced with boredom. At least that confirmed my worries about Megan and Emma trying to convince me how they only got boys phone numbers. What the girl was saying wasn't very reassuring either; it was actually quite rude.

"Who the hell is this?" she wanted to know, and I blinked, looking quizzically at the duo in front of me, who stared blankly back at me. Very helpful girls; I appreciate it. I mean, what was I *supposed* to tell her? I decided on remaining anonymous for my reputation's sake. I didn't want rumours spreading around about me.

"Well," I said, refraining from saying 'um' and furrowing my brow in thought before coming up with an answer. "I want to talk to your brother. Could you get him for me, please?"

In front of me, Megan and Emma giggled like two five-year-olds. I wanted to drown them in a bucket of water.

"Ha, like he wants to talk to some nameless stawker," she paused, her voice a sardonic tone. "Why don't you go and stawk someone else?"

"Listen, kid," I said into the phone. "You better get him for me or I'll report you to your kindergarten teacher. I'll tell her you..." What the hell was I going to say? My brain went blank. "Uh... I'll tell her you missed your nap time."

"I pwesume you are mentally challenged, so I won't get mad at you. I'm all for the integvation of disabled people into society," she sighed, as if being bored out of her wits.

"Wherever did you get that idea?" I refrained from smiling. This girl had a cute lisp that made her sound like a three-year-old, yet she was making me want to strangle her with my bare hands.

It was a rhetorical question, but she decided to answer it anyway. "Fow one thing, you wefer to me as a pweschooler when I'm obviously not. And then you twy to blackmail me over the phone with some widiculous thweat."

"I see," I said mock-thoughtfully. "Very observant there, Miss...?" Trailing off, I waited for her response, and of course I got one, albeit a satiric one.

"Nice twy, but I don't see any weason for me to tell you my name when you wefrain from telling me youws," she replied nonchalantly.

"So, in the case that I tell you my name, you would tell me yours in return?" I inquired, smirking into the receiver.

"I might," she said. "So, will you tell me youw name?"

"I'd rather go to the dentist every day for the rest of my life than tell you my name," I said with a grin, and she snorted from the other end.

"Well, whatever youw name is," she said, clucking her tongue, "Listening to your dwibble has indeed been a waste of time. Why don't you dwop dead!"

And then she hung up on me.

Frowning into the receiver, I found myself feeling rather indignant. I had always hated not having the last word. No matter what the discussion was about, even if it was a piteous one such as the one I had every time my Mom demanded I clean my room, I would always shout out something childish and run off before she could say anything else on the subject.

"What's wrong?" Megan asked, quirkling an eyebrow at my frown. "Did you speak to him? Did he say some kind of sick innuendo?"

"I hate it when they do that," Emma said, shaking her head and pouting. "You always have to end up being nasty to them, either that or risk losing your dignity and womanly pride. It's especially loathsome when the guy is really cute."

Megan nodded her head enthusiastically in agreement.

"Nothing like that," I rolled my eyes at them, my mouth a thin line. "It was his little sister. She hung up on me! I can't believe it."

"Oh no!" Megan giggled, sharing a look with Emma. "Someone hurt Lindsay's pride. Do you want a kiss better, Lynn timer?"

"Please do not call me that," I said flatly, picking up the phone and dialling the number again. They exchanged looks between each other and widened their eyes at me, mouthing in unison, '*what are you doing?*'

"Hello, this is the Koizumi Residence; we are not home right now, but please leave a message!" A friendly, middle-aged sounding woman chirped into the receiver before it beeped. The jerk had put on the answering machine, damn it!

"I hate not having the last word, so I'm just going to leave you, sending you my ill will," I chirped like a parakeet to the answering machine. "At least satisfied that I had that. Thank you, and have an *awful* day!"

Slamming down the receiver, I clapped my hands together. "That settles it."

Grinning, I turned my head to find Emma and Megan staring at me. "What? Guys, what are you looking at?"

"I don't know if we should have done this, Megan," Emma shook her head in disbelief. I blinked at her confusedly. "We shouldn't have made her."

Megan clucked her tongue. "One phone call to a guy, and she's been reduced to acting like a kindergartener..."

Sniffing indignantly, I shook my head at them, collecting my stuff and putting it in my bags. "Don't be so melodramatic; it wasn't even a guy but his kid sister. I have played my part; now I'm going home to do some *real* studying."

"But wait!" Emma cried out, scampering after me as I made my way to the front door, tying my shoelaces and pulling on my shoes.

"Yeah," Megan soon followed her, hands on hips. "We haven't made our calls yet; this is only one-third over."

"For you guys, maybe," I rolled my eyes, tying up the last shoe and standing to my feet. "But for me, I have had enough conversation about boys for one night. I can already sense my IQ dropping a couple of levels."

"Have a nice night, girls." I walked out the door and, before shutting it, added, "Tell me if you have any luck."

It was idiocy to think you could find any sort of pleasant boy by choosing a phone number at random and punching the numbers into a phone, or any other way for that matter. Guys are like maths homework; difficult, and when you finally find one, it's the wrong number.



"I... don't... understand..." Megan puffed as she jogged around the field. "My doctor says, 'Megan, you're a thirteen-year-old girl. If you can't run now, you never will.' Why is running such *work*?"

I laughed at her, dragging her along by the hand and running easily along. "What he means is..." I stuck my tongue out, "You're young and healthy. But maybe you need to do a bit more exercise."

"I agree with you, Megan," Emma puffed, only moving forward because of the fact I had hold of her hand. "Sports... should be ...illegal!"

"Come on guys, one more lap, and we can go home," I laughed. "Maybe remember to bring your sport clothes next time? Then we wouldn't be in this mess."

"Easy for you to say. Those shorts are so unflattering to us," Megan whined, gesturing to her legs. "We're the short and average-weight kind; you are tall as the sky is blue and as skinny as a stick."

"Well then," I dropped their hands and sped up, running backwards just to tease them. "I must not be very tall at all because the sky is grey and white with all the clouds right now—"

Tripping backwards, I realised I had fallen over someone's foot, landing on my butt with a groan.

"Hey, watch where you put your feet!" I shook a fist at the little girl retreating back, then jumping to my feet and continuing my run. "Stupid kid, they're *all* stupid!"

"Watch it yourself!" She called back with a snort and stuck her tongue out at me.

Spinning around, I went to retort, but the girl had already walked off on her own merry little way. Another time someone has stolen the last word, which was rightfully mine. Next time, they will certainly not be so lucky.

Crossing the line, I sat down and waited for Emma and Megan, who came puffing up about half a minute later.

"Who... was... that??" Megan asked, looking back over her shoulder, trying to catch sight of the girl, but she had since disappeared from the school grounds and presumably gone home.

Emma collapsed on the ground next to me and nodded with interest. "Yes, that is a good question, dear Megan. Do you have an answer, Miss Lindsay?"

"How would I know?" I inquired, shrugging my shoulders. "All I know is she tripped me over, so I'm not really worried about who she is. I don't want to converse with such a deplorable creature."

"Ever the cynic, Lindsay," Megan sat down, wrapping her arms around her knees. "Speaking of which, remember last night's events?"

"Oh," I said mock-sweetly. "How could I forget? The night of my life, honestly."

Megan rolled her eyes. "Well, I could believe that—" I shot her a look, and she grinned. "Ours, however, bummed."

Lifting an eyebrow, I whistled mockingly. "Oh, and why am I not surprised? I hate to say it, but—"

"Don't," Emma said, holding up a hand, gesturing me a *stop* sign.

"I told you so," I smiled, and they both groaned. "So, what exactly bummed about it?"

"Mine was incredibly boring; he is in the *chess* club." I sent her a look, and she shrugged. "No offence meant, Linnie, but this guy was awful; he was lording his so-called *intelligence* over me."

"He was not as bad as mine. Mine found out who I was right away."

"Oh, really?" I enquired, pretending to care.

"He was my next-door neighbour, see? And he kind of got me mad, so I screamed at him, and he rolled down his window, and he saw me throw the phone out into the garden."

I laughed; her neighbour was *never* going to live that down. Her neighbour loved pulling practical jokes on the people in his street and had yet to pull one on her, seeing as she kept herself well away from him in fear of getting pranked—until now.

"I went out searching through the geraniums later on at night because Mom would kill me if I wrecked the phone, and he had put a heap of stinging nettles in there!"

I whistled. "Ouch, Meg."

"Though we did, however," Emma simpered sweetly with a wicked grin, "Get a message back from *your* arch enemy."

"Lucky she wrote it down too," Megan snickered. "Otherwise she would have forgotten."

Emma stuck her tongue out and handed me a note she pulled from her pocket.

"Anyway," Emma and Megan jumped to their feet and darted off. "We'll meet you back at your place tonight; make sure to have ice cream in stock! We have the new Anna Hathaway."

Rolling my eyes at their retreating forms, I opened the paper, feeling somewhat intrigued and trying to keep myself from opening the note too quickly. I mean, it was just a stupid note from a stupid girl, after all. Why I am feeling excited over such a trivial thing is beyond me.

Finally, the note folded open, and I looked down at it eagerly.

*Don't like not having the last word?*

*Nor do I. But of course I had an awful day; I got a phone call from you, didn't I?*

*I believe you'll want to call me back to protest, so I advise you to call the number below this message.*

*You see, it is my private line. It would be much more preferable for you to ring that, because otherwise my mother will think I am friends with people alike your own disposition and upbringing.*

*And, might I add, I couldn't bear the shame of it!*

Snorting at the note, I crumpled it up and threw it to the ground indignantly. Then I picked it up again, sliding it in my pocket—for reminder's sake, of course.

Never trust kids to leave nice messages on the answering machine. Then again, I wouldn't trust me either.



The movie Megan and Emma had brought over was great; it was on the life of Jane Austin, a brilliant fiction romance writer. It was beautiful, but the ending was quite sad.

"So," Megan asked between gulps of ice cream and handfuls of popcorn, "Would you agree to go off with him and elope?"

"If he is anything like his little sister, I would rather jump off the bridge. But even if he was a better human being than her," I tapped a finger on my chin thoughtfully, "I don't think I would have said yes in the first place. Running off on my family, my friends... for a boy? I could never."

"I'm glad we mean so much to you," Emma smiled, squeezing my hand, but then dropped it, giving a guilty laugh. "But I would have left you guys the second he said anything about it. Sorry."

"Well, don't feel too bad," Megan grinned. "I would have jumped my guy as soon as I saw him. Did you catch a look of that guy? Damn..."

Emma nodded enthusiastically in agreement, eating a handful of popcorn she shoved in her mouth—or, more like, inhaled.

I couldn't help but roll my eyes. "Really, are food, boys, and ways to skip sports all you two ever think about?"

Megan and Emma shared a look and giggled, shrugging. "So sue us; you need to be more social. I mean, look at your lovely hair; you could bring on those boys like honey to a bee."

"Hah!" I rolled my eyes, waving their compliments away with my hand. "You do tell such sweet lies, ladies, but if I am to go to school not looking like a zombie, I have to catch some beauty sleep."

Megan and Emma rolled their eyes and stood to their feet. "Please, like anyone goes to bed at nine or earlier unless they are, like, five or something."

But they left anyway, saying goodbye to my parents on the way out and freaking out my little brother, squeezing his cheeks and whatnot.

As soon as they left, I found myself staring at the phone that lay on the desk. I, too, had my own private line, my mother hoping I would be swarmed with calls from boys as soon as I hit my teens. Sadly for her, this has not happened, though *I* looked upon it as a quite fortunate event.

But now it was bugging me, it was just right there, and on the other side of the desk was her number. Coincidence? I knew I shouldn't call her. I mean, I couldn't give her the satisfaction of knowing she got to me. But also, I didn't want her to have the satisfaction of having the last word.

I stepped to my feet, and started pacing around the room, weighing my options. I could ignore it and have it on my mind, or I could just give her one short call and get it out of my system.

Before I could stop myself, I was punching the numbers into the phone and holding the receiver to my ear. When I heard her familiar rude greeting, I immediately regretted it.

"Hello, and this is?" She grunted into the phone like a small animal awoken from hibernation. Had she been sleeping? *Already?*

"I woke you up," I scoffed in disbelief and then hurried to find some way to hang up. "Woops, I mean? I called the wrong number. Goodbye—"

I went to hang up, but her next words halted me from doing so.

"How can you possibly have called the wong number?" she inquired coolly, and I felt myself flushing as I thought of a response. "Unless you memowised my number..."

"Fine," I said, throwing a hand up in the air, even though she couldn't see it. "You caught me; feel better? But I did not, in any way, memorise your stupid phone number! Got it?"

"The lady doth pwotest too much, methinks," the kid murmured into the phone, and I scowled. "So did you just call me to hear my voice or...?"

"I called you because," I paused, because I couldn't resist? That doesn't sound too good. "Because you are an annoying brat, and I don't think you should get away with it. Being annoying, I mean. And a brat."

"A-ha," she said, amusement creeping into her voice along with her sarcasm. "I believe you; thousands wouldn't."

"The others can be convinced, I assure you," I cracked my knuckles into the phone to reinforce my point.



"Ah, violent, are we?" she inquired, tapping her fingers on the receiver.

"Well," I started, furrowing my brow in thought. "Really, I'd be doing them a favour, considering if they do not believe me, the great Lin—ahem— Then they obviously need a wake-up call."

Nearly slapping myself in the face, I cursed inwardly. I had nearly given her my name. Well, at least my first name. I guess I had her last name, but...

"Oh, your name stawts with 'Lin', does it now? Lina, Linda, Lindsay, Linnet..." she started, but I interrupted her.

"No!" I said, horrified. What if she found out who I was?

"Not going to tell me, huh? I'll just call you 'monster' then, because when my bwother heawd your message, he was so disgusted, he almost puked," she informed me, sounding close to laughter, then stopped when I let out an indignant snort.

"Your brother said no such thing! You," I said, frowning, "are a *liar*!"

Then I slammed the receiver down, unplugging my answering machine, and felt rather satisfied at finally getting the last word. The annoying thing was, I couldn't keep my answering machine unhooked forever.

So I walked out into the kitchen, heading to ask Mom for alternatives. It was her I got the brains from, after all.

"Mom, can you, like, block people's numbers with the answering machine?" I asked, and she looked at me with the look that says, *'What have you done now, Lindsay?'*

"I honestly do not know, dear," she shrugged. "Technology is progressing so fast these days, I wouldn't be surprised if you could, but, either way, I cannot help you there."

She went back to experimenting with the microwave, and I chewed my lip in thought, wandering over to the lounge to ask my Dad for help.

He asked me what he could do for me, and when I explained it all, he quirked an eyebrow and told me to just answer the phone and how it wouldn't kill me or otherwise it would just keep ringing.

Then I went so far as to look for my little brother for help, but then I spotted him chasing his guinea pig around his room with a red texter in hand, the guinea pig sporting drawn glasses. I decided my brother was definitely not the best person to ask for help on such things, and I think his guinea pig would agree with me.

So I went back to my room to, of course, find the phone ringing. I frowned at it and picked it up, hoping it wasn't her.

"Yes?"

"Decided to answer the phone?" she snickered, and I glowered at the receiver, coming to know the feeling Megan felt when she threw the phone into the garden beds. Actually, I was feeling rather tempted myself.

"Well," I snapped, and then swore inwardly at myself again. I had let her know she was bothering me. "I can't ignore the phone forever, can I? What if I get an important call? Also, I would like to have the use of my answering machine back."

"Well, you gwab the plug to it—that's the little bit at the end of the cowl—and then you—"

I interrupted her. "If I were near you right now, you would be in a lot of pain," I said flatly, and I could just feel her smirk through the phone, though she didn't say anything else.

"And why do you talk like that, anyway? You sound like a three-year-old," I smirked, proud of my jab. "No, wait. Don't tell me. You *are* a three-year-old. Ha!"

"I have a lisp, ok?" she said it flatly. "And thank you for not making fun of me." For the first time I noticed a trace of sadness in her voice.

"So," I said, feeling guilty over my criticism. I went over to the corner and sunk down into my bean bag. "Do you really go to sleep that early?"

"Didn't have much sleep this mowning and," she paused for dramatics. "Had to do a pwoject on a kind of flower in English class, go figuwe."

She said flower like it was some kind of dirty word, and I accidentally let out a chuckle.

"I managed to make her laugh," she said, in an attempt at being charming. "I should congwatulate myself."

"If you're trying to charm me," I clucked my tongue, "It isn't going to work."

"Whatever would I want to do that fow?" She wanted to know, and I shook my head at her, trying hard not to grin.

"Well," I said. "I need to get my beauty sleep, night."

"You certainly do. Good night, Lindsay."

And then she hung up on me.



"This is scary, Emma!" Megan cried out in horror. "Look at her; she's steamed!"

Emma nodded. "Hey, aren't you supposed to be doing that slime project, Lindsay? You know, for chemistry class? Not searching up phone numbers on the internet."

"Yeah, yeah, slime this, slime that," I said, and stuffed the slime ingredients into my bag. Stupid chemistry project. "Happy now?"

"Lindsay, I really don't think—" Emma started but was cut off.

"Found it! Her name is Hinata," I snapped my fingers. "Hinata Koizumi, of Japanese descent. Brilliant, I am absolutely brilliant."

"Um Linds—" Emma was once again cut off, this time by the bell.

"Yes, later, guys," I said, picking up my backpack and speeding off. "Log off for me!"

"Be careful with your chem project! Don't count on us to rescue you from the slime monster." Megan called out after me, and Emma sighed.

I ignored them both.

"She's going to be a mad scientist some day."

"Yeah, literally."



I don't know how she found out my name, but all I know is that I'm going to get her for knowing it.

As soon as I finished punching in the numbers, my kid brother came in, demanding to feed his pet guinea pig.

"Oh, snap! You're old enough to do it yourself."

"Old enough to do what?" a voice on the other end said, sounding confused.

"Oh," I should really just jump off a building and get it over with. "I wasn't talking to you."

My face burning red, I walked over to the guinea pig's cage and shoved a handful of seeds inside.

"There, are you happy now?"

My little brother stuck his tongue at me.

"What are you doing?" she asked, sounding amused.

"Nothing, but arigato for asking," There was silence on the other end. I smirked. "What's the matter, Hinata-chan? Too much for your big idioto brain to comprehend?"

I tossed a pillow at my annoying little brother, who was still making faces at me. "Ungrateful little baby."

"You go from insulting me to calling me a baby? Really now, Lindsay, make up your mind," she said, obviously enjoying herself.

"Like I said before, I wasn't talking to you, but to my kid brother. You two are very much alike, actually," I said, ushering my brother out of the room. "And stop pestering me, would you?"

Now, back to annoying Hinata—why wasn't she taking the bait? She completely ignored everything I said, well apart from all the insults.

"Well," I tapped my chin expectantly. "Aren't you going to ask me how I found out?"

"Fine then, how did you find out?" she obliged dryly, giving me the impression she was probably rolling her eyes at me.

"Hah," I said, grinning. "I'm not telling you, because honestly, you probably won't tell me either, will you?"

"Nope," she said, and I harrumphed, kicking my backpack, which sent the slime bottle inside it bouncing out and spilling all over the floor. "What is that?"

"Agh," I said, glaring at the slime, then trying to scoop it up from the floor and getting covered in it. Just perfect! "It's my chemistry project."

"Fun," she said. "Well, as much as I like talking to you, I have better things to do. See you."

Click.

What a stupid jerk-crud! The slime was now devouring my room!



A couple of weeks have passed since I first started talking to Hinata, and the funny thing is, I haven't stopped.

"Are you going to tell me how you got my mobile number?" I grinned into the phone, and she responded by telling me her lips were sealed.

"I see," I said, opening up my test results we were just handed out and then screeching.

"Ouch," she muttered. "Mind warning me before you do that next time? I'd like my perfect heaving to stay that way, thanks. What's up?"

"On my chemistry test, I got a D, a *D*!" I hissed, blinking in disbelief. Though I guess I should have been expecting it, but I mean, a D? Yes, I ruined the slime, but I still managed to save some of it. I had never gotten a D on a test in my entire life.

"And?" she wanted to know before realising. "Oh, that's right I'm talking to little Miss Perfect here, of course you're screaming."

"My chemistry teacher must have made a mistake, I mean; my written work must have made it up at least a little," I said, chewing my lower lip.

"You must have done weal bad on the pwactical test," she said, and I frowned.

"It wasn't that bad," I lied, pacing along, wondering how I would explain this to my parents. Though, really, they probably wouldn't care too much; they'd just laugh at me for freaking out over it.

"Yeah, listen, I've got to go, ok?" she said and I frowned, feeling somewhat disappointed.

"Oh, ok," I said, twirling a piece of hair around my finger. "Bye."

"See ya," she said, and I rounded the corner, spotting a little girl who had just put her phone into her pocket. I widened my eyes. It couldn't be, could it? Hey, wait a second! That was the girl whose feet I tripped over. Damn her!

Following her quietly, I saw her walking up to some guy, who looked at her guiltily. "Hey Hinata, what's up? Heh..."

It *was* her! And he must be her—her BOYFRIEND!?

"I towd you not to," she lectured the boy, and he shifted his weight. "But did you listen to me? Youw always so naïve. I can't believe you fell fow her stupid twicks—"

The girl pursed her lips in anger, and the guy laughed and ruffled her hair. "Just don't do it again, ok?"

He must have cheated on her. The little bratty, lisping prissy—Oh no, I have been spotted.

"Hey," Hinata turned around, narrowing her eyes. "What do you twhink you're—"

I looked down in panic, she had obviously spotted my school badge that had my name on it, and the wheels were quickly turning in her head.

"Uhm," I said dumbly, my stomach twisting and my lip about to burst, I was biting down on it that hard. "I'm s—sorry for interrupting you and your—" I gulped, "boyfriend..."

Spinning on my heels, I began running away, blinking back tears, though I am not sure why they were there. They weren't supposed to be there, damn it. And I can't forget the little break in my voice when I uttered the word *boyfriend*. What is *wrong* with me?

I had to get to Megan and Emma—and fast.

Hearing swift footsteps behind me, my heart pounded. I saw the bus that takes my route about to leave, so instead of walking, I bounded up the stairs and took a seat. Now I'm safe, knock on wood.

I turned in my seat, horrified to look the other way, but not helping to sneak a glance. She was standing at the school entrance, panting, her eyes darting around the bus and finally catching mine for a second.

I gulped and slid down the seat, turning my head away again.

This was going to be a long ride home, well, figuratively speaking.



"I think you like her," Emma said, point-blank, and I frowned at her, refraining from blushing.

Shaking my head furiously in denial, I pointed to a diagram I had drawn, and Emma and Megan looked up at it, puzzled.

"This," I pointed to it again, "is a guy. This," I pointed to the part I had coloured in blue, "is the percentage of my interest in guys."

I pointed at something I had written.

*Percentage: 99.999999999999*

"This," I pointed to the pink part of the diagram, "is my interest in girls."

*Percentage: 0.000000000001*

"That's a lot of zeros," Emma breathed, and Megan nodded in agreement.

"So you see," I tapped the diagram with a fingernail, "girls are uninteresting and definitely not deserving of my time."

"Nice colours; how long did it take you to make it?" Megan commented, shovelling ice cream into her mouth.

"Oh, well—" I was going to explain, but Emma interrupted.

"I think she's trying to keep her mind off her," Emma said, biting into a rather large cupcake. "Oh, and trying to prove to herself that she doesn't care that she has a bo—"

Megan clapped a hand over Emma's mouth, "Bonsai! Of course she doesn't have a bonsai, Em; how could you think such a thing? Only botanical gardens have bonsai trees; they aren't native here."

Emma screwed up her face and slapped Megan's hand away. "Will ya quit it?"

"I do not have a crush on her, now get out, the both of you! Out!" I yelled at them and accidentally bumped into the answering machine next to me. The recorded message echoed throughout the room:

*"Listen, I don't know why you're so mad at me, but I really—"*

I quickly pressed the stop button, and as bright as a tomato, I gestured towards the door. "That was my cousin; she stepped on my favourite hat last time she came over," I lied, and Emma muttered something that sounded like *'I don't believe you'* before Megan shoved her out the door, smiling meekly before shutting it and going about their usual annoying habits.

Glaring at the phone I pressed the delete button on all the messages—all of which I hadn't listened to—and rang her phone, deciding to end it once and for all and, thankfully, getting her answering machine.

"I do not know what you're playing at, but can you please, please stop leaving messages on my answering machine? I really don't need it, ok? I have better things to do than..." I paused, thinking up insults.

"Darling, you have a friend here for you!" my Mom called, sounding excited.

"Mom, not now! Tell them to go home," I yelled back and continued my rant. "Ahem, than to listen to a stupid jerk who's annoying and a, a—" I paused, screwing my nose up in thought of one of the Japanese insults I had seen in anime. "Baka!"

My door busted open, and I dropped the phone in shock. A tiny girl who couldn't be more than twelve, with jet-black hair, stood at my door, fuming at me.

"You," Hinata said, smirking humorlessly, "just called me an idiot."

Remaining silent, I backed up a little, but she only stormed up to me.

"You know what? Never mind that; that wasn't what I came here fow," she said, and then sent me an angry look. "Now, why are you ignowing my calls? It's been a week and you haven't answered my calls!"

I started biting my lip again and turned my head in another direction, ignoring her question. "May I ask, how did you get my address?"

"That's for me to know, and you to find out," she said and then reached out, her fingers reaching for my hand and saying in a gentler tone. "Now, why aren't you answeving my calls?"

"Why do you even care?" I said childishly, smacking her hand away. "I am not some guy who's going to ruffle your hair, so why do you even want me to?"

"Just a second, I've got to call someone," she said, and I glowered at her.

Oh, and I suppose it's that boyfriend of yours?" I retorted, hands on my hips, when my pocket started to buzz. I jumped and cautiously picked up the phone.

"H- hello?" I said nervously.

"That wasn't my boyfwend; it was my bwother if you wanted to know." I heard her voice coming through the line and blushed. "And I suppose you were a bit, let's say, *jealous*?"

"What?" I spluttered. "I was not! Not jealous, nu-uh, I'm the least jealous girl you'll ever meet. Jealousy is bad for your health, and if you're unwell, you give jealousy germs to other people. Then it will be the start of a whole epidemic; there will be sick people everywhere; all the hospital beds will be filled; soon all the nurses would get sick; and then the whole world will be a giant mess, all because one girl had a moment of jealousy. I, Hinata-chan, am not that girl."

"Oh yeah?" She drew even closer. "Could you help me out with a pwoblem then?"

Yeah, sure, helpful is my middle name," I said, a hand on my hip. "Go ahead, name your problem."

Well, there's this girl, and she doesn't seem to realise that I like her," she started and paused for a bit. "So what is your advice?"

My stomach lurched, and I frowned at her, blinking back tears and choking out. "My advice? You should already know what you have to do or want to do. Don't rely on other people for answers."

"Ok," she said. "Will do."

And then she hung up on me.

But you want to know what else she did? She tossed her phone down, letting it bounce safely onto my bed. But that's not really important because the next moment she rushed towards me, taking two steps for every one I stepped back until I had no space to step back into.

"What are you doing?" I asked weakly, my voice shaking. "What are you trying to do to me?"

Her face was barely a centimetre away from mine. "You stawted this; I'm going to end it. I don't want to just call you anymowe; I'm hung up on *you*."

"That," I said half-heartedly, trying to turn my head and not being able to help the small smile that escaped across my face, "Is a lousy pun."

She didn't reply this time, at least not with words. Instead, she rose on her tiptoes, pressed her lips against mine, and entangled her hands in my hair.

I groaned and wrapped my arms around her back, leaning into the kiss. Maybe studying isn't everything in life after all.

Oh, God, I am letting this girl mess me up—and I'm liking it.

She stopped in the middle of kissing me and pulled completely away, murmuring a teasing '*sowwy for chapping your lips*' and walking out the door after picking up her phone.

I dialled her number on my mobile, and she answered with a "Why, hello thewe."

"Get back in here and kiss me again."

She hung up on me again. That little...

But you know what? I didn't care this time because she came back and did as she was told.

The End