Bullies

The text message said that Lucy Josephs was a failure. It said Lucy was ugly, had no style and the world hated her. At least that was what it said to Lucy. It said that and a whole lot more that Lucy was struggling to understand. The actual text of the note said that Lucy better not show up at the party tonight, because it was going to be bad enough already! Lucy, who had started receiving these messages a few weeks ago, tapped the mobile screen to make the message disappear from view. Lucy only wished it was as easy to tap her heart and erase the trace the message had left there. 'Was that another one of those messages?' Lucy’s mom asked, who was driving the car. Lucy confirmed her mother's suspicion was founded as she answered dejectedly, 'I'm sorry to say it was.' 'Haven't you reported it yet?' asked Jill, Lucy's older sister who was sitting in the passenger seat. 'Yes,' Lucy replied, lying through her teeth. That Lucy should not let the messages get to her and that the sender was only jealous were Lucy's mom's arguments, in an effort to comfort her daughter. Lucy's mom suddenly felt guilty, for she had been the one to buy the phone for Lucy just a couple of months ago. Lucy’s mom then admitted her regret about the phone was still bugging her out loud as she sighed, 'I never should have given you that phone Lucy.' 'No, it's fine. I love it,' said Lucy knowing that affording the phone had been no small thing for her mother. It had been nothing but trouble though. Lucy did not know who it was that was sending her the messages, and Lucy did not know how they had got her number, but whoever it was, he or she had slowly taken over Lucy's life. Lucy was getting several texts a day now, all of which were abusive and hurtful. Lucy wondered what the person who was messaging her might be thinking or trying to achieve with all of their hateful messages. As the car pulled up outside the school, which looked like a large shadow in the darkness of a November evening, Lucy felt a shiver run down her spine. Hastened by Jill, who did not want to be late to her own concert, Lucy hesitantly stepped out of the car and walked toward the school. It was Jill who in her final year of high school had become involved in helping organize this year's school talent show, and Jill took her position very seriously. Lucy hurried behind Jill, pulling on the worn, oversized coat that had originally belonged to Jill, in order to keep her dry as the raindrops fell all around them. As the sisters entered the hall where the show was to take place, Jill filled with excitement while Lucy regretted that she had promised her mother she would participate in the show. 'To waste your talent would be a real shame, for you have such a beautiful voice,' Lucy’s mother had argued two months back, when the concert was first announced. Lucy had been considering it, for Lucy did love to sing. That very night, the first text message had come through. 'How does it feel to be tall and lanky like a giraffe?' it had asked, taking Lucy by surprise. One of the popular girls, Lucy had always known she wasn't, but before the messages began, Lucy had always been quite proud of being a little different. But text by text, Lucy's self-confidence had deflated and, in the end, it had taken some doing to get Lucy to agree to perform in the show. Now, however, Lucy had no choice but to make her way towards the stage where Jill was beckoning encouragingly to her. Lucy was the first performer. Lucy, announced by her sister to the audience, was all nerves as she walked out onto the middle of the stage, where there was nothing but a microphone and her. Lucy heard the audience applaud and could feel a sense of anticipation emanate from the other side of the heavy curtain. As the curtains began to part, Lucy cast a worried look at Jill in the wings, who assured Lucy with a positive thumbs up. Lucy thought to herself that she could not go through with this and that she, unlike her older sister, was not confident enough to put herself before the judging audience. The crowd looked up at Lucy and Lucy was ready to run when the first notes of the music sounded out and a sudden calm settled over her. Lucy closed her eyes and shut everything out, including the audience, the nerves that threatened to take over, the text messages, and the way they made her feel. It was just Lucy and the music, and it was a love story that had been going on her whole life. Lucy began to sing, and all the pain and confusion that the messages had been causing inside Lucy just flowed out. The words were not important, for it was the feeling behind them that Lucy latched onto. Lucy was in the heart of the song with the rest of the world slipping away. When the song finished and the last note died away, Lucy opened her eyes. To see the whole audience on their feet and the hall filled with cheers and applause was not what Lucy had expected. Lucy allowed herself to enjoy the sense of achievement and belonging that she had not felt in a very long time. Then Lucy saw her mother, who was cheering the loudest of all in the crowd, and Jill, who was beaming at her with pride from the wings. Lucy knew she owed them big time for reminding her what she was capable of and who she really was. The next time Lucy’s phone bleeped Lucy would tap the message straight into oblivion where it belonged.