

MeMe and Me

by Renata Hopkins

A few months ago, I got my first smartphone. Actually my first phone ever, of any kind. Result! At least, that's what I thought – until I met MeMe. I'll get to her, but first, here's why the phone felt like such a big deal.

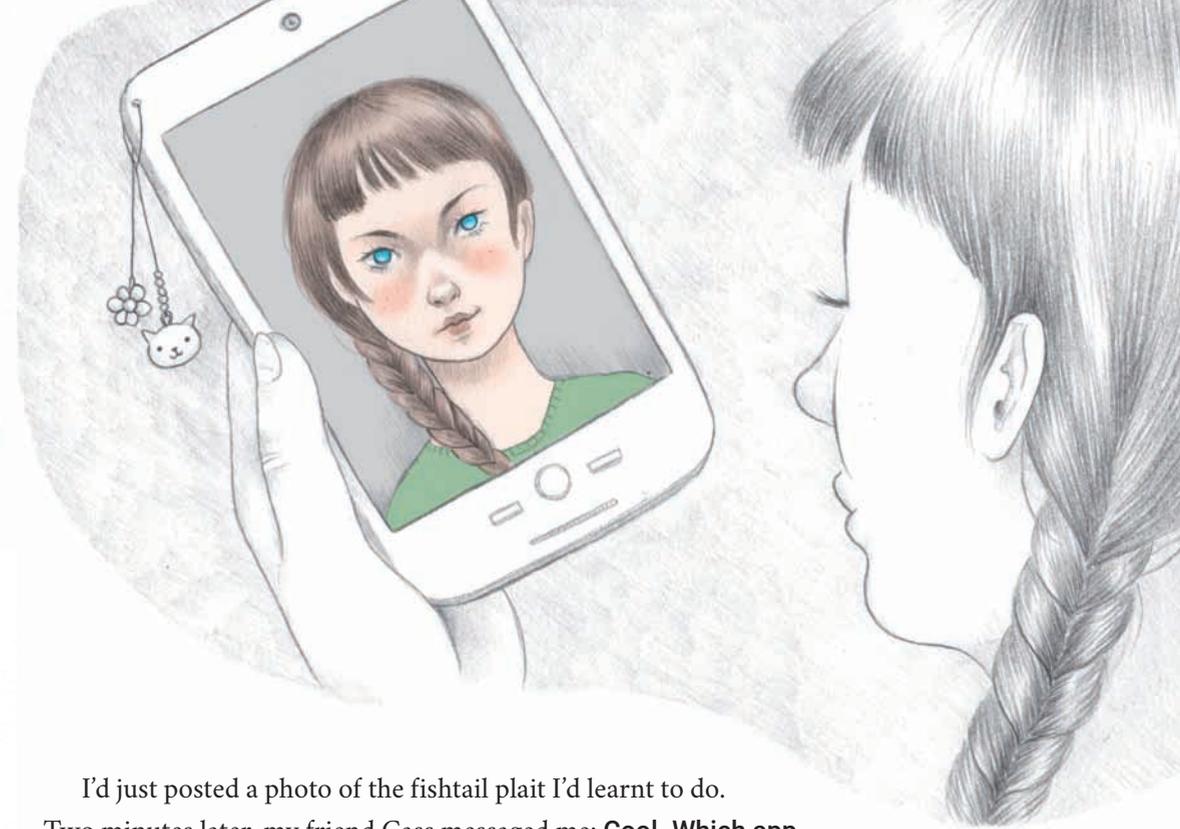
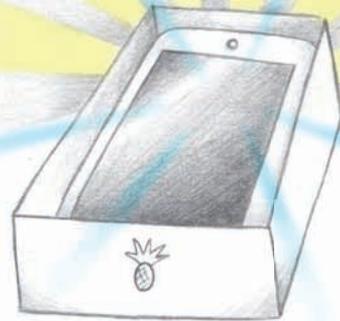
I was the fourth-to-last person in my class to get one. I was super-tired of hearing about some cool new app or how many "likes" someone's photo got. I wasn't interested in new ringtones. I may as well have been one of those people who wear headscarves and ride round in carts.

Wait, they're called Amish. I just looked that up on my phone.

Mum and Dad said they wouldn't buy me one. They said, "There's a big difference between wanting something and needing something." If they thought that would stop me from asking, they were wrong. I asked and asked and asked until I made them see that I would never stop asking. Finally they said I could have one if I earned the money myself. They thought that might stop me, but they were wrong – again!

I saved the money by vacuuming my gran's house and cleaning her windows for the next four months. If you've ever spent time up a ladder, scrubbing at baked-on bird poo, you will know that I earned that phone. But it was so worth it. I loved my phone's smooth, sleek shape. I loved its weight in my palm. I loved everything about it.

And then I met MeMe.



I'd just posted a photo of the fishtail plait I'd learnt to do. Two minutes later, my friend Cass messaged me: **Cool. Which app did u use to change your eyes?**

I texted: **?? I didn't.**

She texted: **Got softball practice. L8R.**

I opened my last post, and guess what? My eyes were a different colour. They're brown, but in the photo, they were an electric blue. It looked kind of cool, but mostly freaky. I didn't have time to work it out because I had to go to Gran's. (Yes, Mum and Dad were making me pay for my top-ups too. I know, right?)

I didn't hear my text alert over the noise of the vacuum cleaner. It wasn't until I'd finished that I saw the message. The ID read "MeMe".

Mum and Dad had given me the phone-safety talk. I wasn't supposed to reply to messages from names I didn't know, so I opened the call log to see if I recognised the number. That's when it got weirder. It was my number. I'd sent myself a text. I tapped it. The message read: **Hi, Nina.**

I texted: **Who is this?**

The reply was super fast: **I told u. It's MeMe.**

I texted: **Do I know u?**

This time the reply included a photo. I opened it and saw the selfie of me with the blue eyes. Underneath it said: **We're almost twins!**

Gran was outside in the garden, but somehow the house didn't feel empty. It felt like someone was standing behind the door, waiting to scream "Boo!" so they could LOL when I jumped. I switched my phone onto silent and grabbed my things. It was time to go anyway.

At home, I didn't look at my phone for three hours – a record! I wasn't going to look before bed, either, but I couldn't help it. My palm actually felt itchy from not holding it. When I woke the phone up, I saw that I'd missed three messages from MeMe. In order, they read:

I don't like the silent treatment.

I'm sorry if I freaked u out.

I just want 2 B friends. Please?

I don't know if you've noticed this, but your texting finger can move faster than your brain. And then your message is sent, and you can't get it back. The one I sent said: **I want 2 B friends 2**. Because that's nice, right, when someone wants to be your friend? What could possibly go wrong?

Ha. Ha. Ha.

For the first few weeks, MeMe and I had so much fun. We made up a "Spot the Difference" game, where I would take a selfie and she would change one tiny detail, like the shape of a button on my shirt or the spelling on a poster on my bedroom wall. When I was nervous about my judo exam, MeMe texted me a grinning ninja emoticon. When Cass invited Rahera and Maddie to her birthday but not me, MeMe texted that I didn't need them because I had her.

Maybe you're wondering why I didn't tell anyone. Hello! Would you admit that you had a cyber twin living in your phone and they sometimes changed your ringtone for a joke? Didn't think so.



The day I let my battery go flat – that's when I first saw MeMe's bad side.

As soon as it was charging, I got a video call. "Where did you go?" she hissed the second I answered. The screen seemed to glow brighter than usual. And finally talking face to face with a twisted version of myself was beyond weird.

"Sorry," I told her. "My battery went flat."

"And you were so busy with your exciting real life that you forgot me?"

"I only went to the supermarket with Mum," I told her.

"What makes you think you can go anywhere without me?" She was screeching so loudly I had to turn the volume down.

"Do you seriously expect me to take you everywhere?" I asked.

"Yes," she yelled. The volume control didn't seem to be working. "And text that so I've got it in writing."

"No," I said. "I don't need friends who scream at me. My real friends don't do that."

After I said that, my phone felt different. Not smooth, but slippery. And cold.

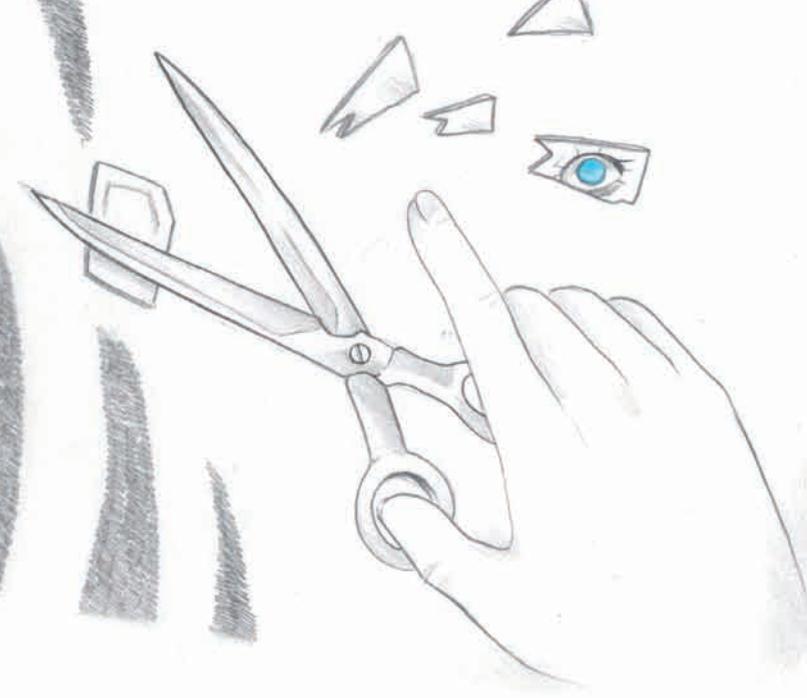
"I'm not your friend anymore," MeMe said. Then she ended the call.

I actually believed I'd heard the last of her. Then the bad texts started.

Cass didn't invite you to her party because nobody likes you.

You only have 2 "likes" on your last post. Epic fail.

I H8 U.



If MeMe had known what to say to make me feel good, she also knew how to make me feel terrible. The more I ignored her, the more messages she sent. It got so bad I began to think I could hear my text alert going off even when I knew the phone was on silent or in another room. I didn't know how to stop her.

Then I had the dream. In it, MeMe came out of the phone. She became a real talking person. And when she came out, I went in. I was stuck in the phone instead of her. In my dream, she picked the phone up and laughed to see me trapped behind the screen. She whispered, "Now you're MeMe. And I'm you."

I woke with my heart racing. It was still super early, but I got out of bed, found the phone, and video-called her. She answered immediately, as if she'd been waiting.

As soon as I saw her, I blurted, "You're not me. You're nothing like me!"

She smirked. "Wrong," she said. "I'm a part of you. I'm the part of you that only thinks about me, me, me ..."

"Stop it," I shouted, but she kept on going "me, me, me" until she was just shrill, metallic static. The phone felt so cold it burned.

"Stop!" I shouted again.

"Make me."

I did it without thinking. I took a hairclip from my dressing table, flicked the back of the phone open, and slid out the SIM card. Then I crossed to my desk and grabbed some scissors. "Bye, MeMe," I said, and I cut the card in half.

I swear I heard a scream. Then silence, like when your signal drops out. I knew she was gone.

It was still an hour before I usually got up. I opened my curtains and watched the light creep into the sky, turning the clouds into candyfloss. It would have made a great photo, but I didn't care that my phone was dead. I was happy just watching the light come back.

What happened next? Well, I sold my phone and decided I'd never get another one. As if! I got a new SIM card the next day. I've been nervous ever since, especially when I hear my text alert, but so far I haven't heard from you-know-who.

I guess I should thank her for reminding me what makes a real friend – like Ruby. She shares a phone with her brother and sister, but it's always out of credit. Whatever. She makes me LOL.



illustrations by Devon Smith

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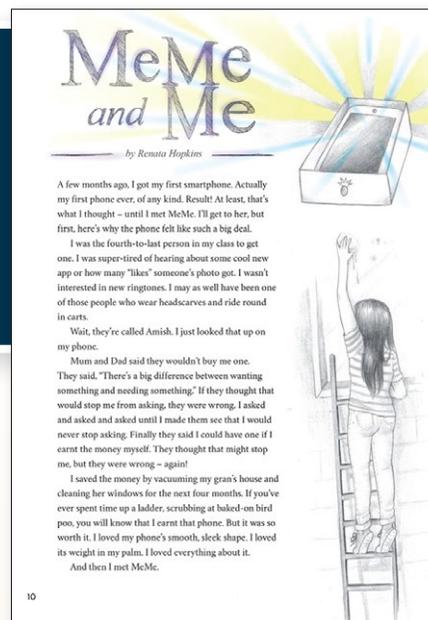
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