



Hung Up

By Kristen Tracy

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It all started with a wrong number. The voicemails Lucy left on James's phone were meant for someone else—someone who used to have James's digits. But then when James finally answers and the two start to talk, a unique bond forms between the two teens.

Gradually Lucy and James begin to understand each other on a deeper level than anyone else in their lives. But when James wants to meet in person, Lucy is strangely resistant. And when her secret is revealed, he'll understand why...

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Hung Up By Kristen Tracy Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #3423899 in Books
- Published on: 2015-03-03
- Released on: 2015-03-03
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.25" h x .80" w x 5.50" l, .0 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 304 pages

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Editorial Review

From [Booklist](#)

Lucy, in East Montpelier, Vermont, dials a number more than once, leaving increasingly angry messages about the lack of return calls acknowledging an order she had placed. James, almost an hour away in Burlington, finally answers, explaining he's not the business she was trying to reach. A conversation ensues, and the two 16-year-olds gradually become phone friends. Their cautious yet witty exchanges slowly include analytical and enlightening dialogue. Homework help often segues to love-life advice, but when James asks Lucy to a dance at his high school, she panics. Underneath the playful, comedic banter, they both are keeping something personally painful close to their chests, but little by little, their truths surface, revealing how lives cross paths that are closer than imagined. This story, told solely through voice mails and phone conversations, offers interesting impressions that rest solely on words unaccompanied by actions. *Hung Up* intriguingly looks at building, losing, and rebuilding trust while learning to respect personal boundaries.

Grades 8-11. --Jeanne Fredriksen

About the Author

Kristen Tracy is the author of *Lost It*, *Crimes of the Sarahs*, and *Hung Up*. She has received three Pushcart nominations and her poems and stories have appeared in various journals and reviews. She is the coeditor of *A Chorus for Peace: A Global Anthology of Poetry by Women*. Kristen lives in Rhode Island.

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Hung Up

March 1, 11:25 a.m.

This is Lucy calling to update my order BKE-184. Looks like I won't need the leather strap after all. So, just to be clear, keep the rest of my order as is, but cancel the strap. Thanks!

March 5, 3:11 p.m.

It's Lucy again calling about my order BKE-184. Is it too late to rethink materials? In the end, recycled aluminum just sounds cheap. I'd rather go with the slate. All the reviews I've read say that slate will endure both heat and snow better. Plus, it has more effective results for tree attachment. Thanks for working with me. Can you please call me so I know you got this order change? My number is 802-555-0129.

March 6, 4:10 p.m.

It's Lucy. I called yesterday about order BKE-184. Nobody has gotten back to me. Please let me know that my order has been updated. Natural slate plaque. No leather strap.

March 8, 10:04 a.m.

It's Lucy calling about order BKE-184. I'd like confirmation that you received my requests for an order change. I'm worried because you still haven't called me back. I'm not high maintenance, if that's what you're thinking. I'm not going to modify anything beyond this point. I understand that you have strict shipping dates. If you're upset about my leather strap cancellation, just go ahead and ignore it. I'm willing to eat the cost on that. I really want to know when you plan to ship my order. I'd also like to remind you that I've already paid in full. So I deserve a return phone call. I mean, I don't like threatening people. But I also

don't like being jerked around. My number is 802-555-0129. You better call it.

March 15, 11:38 a.m.

Lucy: This is the last message I'm going to leave before I call the Better Business Bureau—

James: I'm speaking. You're not leaving a message.

Lucy: When are you going to ship my order?

James: I'm not.

Lucy: You have to! I paid for it.

James: My name is James and you haven't paid me anything for anything.

Lucy: Not cool, James. I paid somebody in your company.

James: I don't own a company. You're about the thirtieth person who's—

Lucy: Do I have the wrong number?

James: Not exactly . . .

Lucy: This sounds like a total scumbag operation.

James: No. There is no operation. My name is James Rusher. I'm a senior at Burlington High School. I'm not connected to this plaque/trophy/crystal awards business in any way. It's my cell phone. I just got it. I took a recycled number. I guess I got a deadbeat trophy company. I'm sorry to tell you this, but I think they've gone out of business.

Lucy: That sucks. I mean, I can't believe this is happening.

James: Um . . . It's not exactly the end of the world.

Lucy: Easy for you to say. What are my options here? What am I supposed to do about my order?

James: I guess you order another slate plaque without a leather strap from a different company?

Lucy: You know, you could pretend to have some sympathy. I've been robbed.

James: You're right. I'm sorry. You sound nice. I feel bad you got taken. The guy who ran that business sounds terrible. He even ripped off people who'd ordered gravestones for their pets.

Lucy: Wow.

James: I hope somebody catches up with him and makes him pay all these people back.

Lucy: Yeah. Okay. Thanks. I'll let you go.

James: Lucy, I bet with enough effort you can find this guy. It's really hard for people to just totally disappear.

Lucy: Um. Yeah, I'm pretty busy, and I have zero interest in playing detective, James. I think I'm just going to accept that I got screwed.

James: Your call.

Lucy: Yeah. It is. Okay, good luck with midterms.

James: How do you know I've got midterms?

Lucy: You said you go to Burlington High.

James: Interesting. And do you go to Burlington High?

Lucy: No, I live in Montpelier. I have a friend who goes to Burlington High.

James: Who?

Lucy: I'm not going to tell you my friend's name. You're a stranger.

James: Is it your boyfriend?

Lucy: I'm going to hang up on you, James.

James: Don't hang up.

Lucy: Stop being obnoxious.

James: No promises there. It's how I'm built.

Lucy: Are you going to call back all the people who are leaving you messages about this company?

James: I don't have that kind of time.

Lucy: You don't feel obligated?

James: Why would I feel obligated?

Lucy: Well, they're calling you.

James: I've got midterms to study for, remember?

Lucy: Okay. I'll let you go, James.

James: You're fun to talk to. You can call me anytime.

Lucy: Thanks. But I'm probably not going to do that. Bye.

March 17, 4:18 p.m.

James: Hey, Lucy, it's James. You called me last week about your plaque and leather strap. I told my friend Jairo about your situation. He says he knows how to get that stuff wholesale. Shoot us the dimensions you want, and he thinks he can get you what you need. Let me know if this works for you.

March 19, 5:52 p.m.

James: Hey, Lucy, Jairo can't fill your order. He got hit in the head with a tree limb today. Don't worry. He'll be okay. We tried to start a company using the disgruntled client base of the deadbeat trophy company. Not the people with outstanding orders. Those people are out of luck. But we figured we'd take the new callers. And this woman needed us to measure her mailbox, because she wanted a new address plaque. And it was near a tree. And Jairo underestimated his strength. And he shoved her quaking aspen. And a limb fell and totally nailed him. Looks like we won't be taking that job. Anyway, I've been doing some sleuthing, and I think I have the home phone number of the now-defunct trophy company. I've been giving it out to people who call me with outstanding orders. It makes me feel like a cross between a private investigator and Robin Hood. Also, I feel a little bit like a bounty hunter. But don't worry—I don't own any weapons. Except for baseball bats, hockey sticks, stuff like that. And I only use those to play sports. Hey, this is a long message. And it's starting to sound weird. Sorry.

March 20, 3:30 p.m.

Lucy: Hi, James, that's too bad about your friend's head. From what I hear, quaking aspens can be very brittle and unpredictable. Mature ones can crush a bystander to death. It happens all the time. Well, maybe not all the time. Yes, give me the deadbeat plaque maker's home phone number. Also, it surprises me a great deal that you (a) consider a hockey stick to be a lethal weapon, and (b) feel a little bit like a bounty hunter. Have you ever seen a bounty hunter? I have, on TV. They're usually overly tattooed and pretty rough looking. Plus, they have mullets and violent tendencies. Is there something you should tell me?

March 21, sent 4:39 p.m.

James: What are you doing?

March 21, sent 4:41 p.m.

Lucy: I don't text. Ever.

March 21, sent 4:43 p.m.

James: Why not?

March 21, sent 4:44 p.m.

Lucy: I just don't and I'm serious. I will never respond to a text again.

March 21, sent 4:45 p.m.

James: That's weird. Texting would be fun.

March 22, 3:00 p.m.

Lucy: Hello?

James: It's James. Do you have a pen? I've got the number of the former owner of the scumbag operation. He lives in New Jersey now.

Lucy: That figures.

James: Are you ready?

Lucy: I have a pen.

James: I almost texted you this information.

Lucy: I don't text.

James: You mentioned that. Why not?

Lucy: I just don't.

James: Are you technophobic?

Lucy: No.

James: Do you have a crappy data plan?

Lucy: I'm not in a jokey mood, James. Just give me the number. Please.

James: Fine. Here it is. It's 201-555-0127.

Lucy: I'll call him tomorrow. I'm on my way out the door.

James: Where are you going?

Lucy: To the mall.

James: You're such a girl.

Lucy: I'm going to buy a knife.

James: For cooking?

Lucy: Camping.

James: Sweet. A woman who likes the wilderness and blades.

Lucy: I find that response alarming.

James: I'm probably going to call you later.

Lucy: I'll probably answer if you do.

March 24, 9:44 p.m.

Lucy: Is this James?

James: Yes, and I'm stuck.

Lucy: Inside of something?

James: Yes, a take-home essay. I can't find my way out.

Lucy: It's late. Maybe you should go to bed and work on it in the morning.

James: It's due in the morning.

Lucy: James, James, James. It's like my mother always tells me—extreme procrastination oft leads to excessive caffeineation.

James: Your mother uses the word “oft”?

Lucy: Not every day. If you'll be staying up all night, I suggest drinking coffee.

James: But I don't drink coffee.

Lucy: Religious reasons?

James: No, it messes up my stomach.

Lucy: Try tea.

James: I need answers. Can you help me?

Lucy: I'm not writing your essay for you.

James: I just want to talk about the topic. You can help me get my juices flowing.

Lucy: You are the first guy who's ever asked me point-blank to help him get his juices flowing.

James: I didn't mean it that way.

Lucy: Oh, I know. If I thought you meant it dirty, I would've hung up.

James: Don't hang up. Seriously, I need your help.

Lucy: You don't even know me. I could be an F student.

James: You're an A student. I can tell.

Lucy: How?

James: You know weird facts about aspen trees.

Lucy: Well, I have gotten some Bs in my life.

James: I bet they were math related.

Lucy: Wrong.

James: I can tell that you're smart. In addition to that, I'm desperate. Can I bounce a few things off you?

Lucy: Okay. What's your essay about?

James: I had my choice of writing about either Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" or Stephen Crane's "The Open Boat." I chose the latter.

Lucy: Yeah, that makes sense. It sounds more masculine. The Gilman piece is more about women's issues.

James: I wouldn't mind writing an essay about women's issues. I'm avoiding it for another reason altogether.

Lucy: What's that?

James: I hate the scene where the woman snaps. All that crawling around on the floor. When people lose their minds, even in literature, it creeps me out.

Lucy: Good to know. Hey, I've never read Crane's story. So don't say anything that will spoil the ending.

James: I promise not to tell you the order in which all the characters die.

Lucy: That wasn't funny.

James: It was to me.

Lucy: Then you're easy.

James: I'll take that as a compliment. But enough about my sex life. Let's get to the essay. Crane's story is about four men adrift at sea in a small boat: a cook, an oiler, a correspondent, and an injured captain. The basic theme is man versus nature. My teacher wants me to write an essay that examines the psychology of one of the characters, and explore how his choices determine his fate.

Lucy: That story sounds sexist. There are no women on the boat? What about the cook?

James: No, the cook is a dude. And the story is based on the writer's real life story. Crane was on a ship that wrecked off the coast of Florida. So it's not so much that the story is sexist, it's that seafaring is sexist in general.

Lucy: Okay. Which guy did you choose?

James: I think I'm going to choose the sea, and examine how its force deprives the characters of the opportunity to make choices.

Lucy: So you're avoiding the question altogether. Is this strategy born out of late-night panic or a long-standing desire to challenge authority?

James: Neither. I think the question assumes that the characters have power over their lives, and I think the story sort of suggests that these four guys bobbing in the ocean are at the mercy of something that doesn't give a shit about them. It doesn't matter what they do. The sea will determine their fates. It doesn't matter what they choose.

Lucy: Seems fatalistic.

James: It's naturalistic. It's what Crane and lots of other writers of his generation were all about.

Lucy: I guess. That's depressing.

James: I'm not saying that's what I think. But that's what Crane thought. Barring being adrift at sea or clobbered by an avalanche, I think people pretty much determine their fates. I think people choose their lives.

Lucy: I don't know. I think sometimes things happen to people that are beyond their control. Things that they don't want to happen.

James: I know what you're saying. Sometimes random shit happens, but for the most part, people are where they are in life because they chose to be there.

Lucy: That's not quite what I meant. It's late, James.

James: Yeah, but I think I'm going to write what I said about the sea. And I'm going to include your idea about things happening to people beyond their control. Is that okay?

Lucy: Sure. What you said about the story sounds good. It's thoughtful. You should write that down.

James: Shit. I should've been taking notes while we talked.

Lucy: Just write it down now. I'll let you go. Okay?

James: Yeah. Thanks, Lucy. I like talking to you. Hey, you can call me anytime.

Lucy: Okay. But I probably won't. Bye.

March 27, 5:45 p.m.

James: Lucy, you never told me how camping went. Did you really go camping in March? That's insane. I mean, I don't think that you're insane. Or your family. Don't take it that way. I usually go camping in June, July, or August. But it's always real buggy. I end up wearing a thick coat of Deet. I guess you don't have that problem when you camp in March. Do you sleep in yurts? Or snow caves? Just checking in with you.

March 28, 5:51 p.m.

James: Lucy, I feel a little bad about my message yesterday. I don't think that you're insane. I just wanted to reiterate that. Because we don't know each other. And tone can be misunderstood. You seem like a nice person. Who is totally sane. Okay. I think I need to stop talking.

March 28, 7:45 p.m.

Lucy: James, you certainly have a way with words. And tone. I actually had to look up the word "yurt" in a dictionary. No, I never went camping. Snow caves hold no appeal for me. As for sleeping in a yurt, no, I've never camped in a circular, domed, portable tent used by the nomadic Mongols of central Asia. A yurt. And you think I'm insane? My family and I are headed to Yellowstone in May. I'm the sort of girl who plans ahead.

March 28, 8:28 p.m.

James: Lucy, you just called. Where did you go? You're funny. Thanks for calling me. I'll be up late. You should call me back.

March 31, 3:32 p.m.

James: I got an A on my paper. I'm not calling to brag. Okay, I am calling to brag a little. But I wanted to tell you thanks. And if you're ever stuck, you should call me. Even if you're stuck in a car. Not stuck inside a car. I mean you should call me if you get a car stuck in something. Like mud. Or snow. Or a lake. Actually, if your car gets stuck in a lake, you should try to get out on your own right away and also dial 911. Why do my messages to you always sound weird?

March 31, 5:35 p.m.

Lucy: You must think I'm a lousy driver. Mud? Snow? A lake? I am an excellent driver. If I wanted, I bet I could be a long-haul trucker. A refrigerator rig and everything. Seriously. If I wanted. And the reason your messages sound weird is because they are weird.

March 31, 5:37 p.m.

James: Where did you go? You just called me. And what the hell is a refrigerator rig? Do you come from a family of truckers? Not that there's anything wrong with that. Just wondering.

March 31, 5:41 p.m.

Lucy: I think I'm in a dead zone. I'm on a walk. And where are you? You just called me. A refrigerator rig is pretty self-explanatory. It's a refrigerated semitruck. It's how perishable products get hauled across our great nation. No, I don't come from a family of truckers. No one in my family even owns a trucker hat. In fact, no one in my family owns a car that has more than four cylinders.

March 31, 5:44 p.m.

James: You just called me. How can you be in a dead zone? Where are you walking? The Swiss Alps? You are the only girl I've ever met who has said the word "cylinder." It makes me wonder what other automotive

verbiage you've got stuffed inside of you. Hey, when you get this, call me back.

March 31, 9:23 p.m.

James: You never called me back. Is this a sign of things to come? Lucy, Lucy, Lucy. Have you forgotten how to use your phone?

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Kim Townsend:

What do you think of book? It is just for students as they are still students or that for all people in the world, what the best subject for that? Simply you can be answered for that problem above. Every person has distinct personality and hobby for every other. Don't to be forced someone or something that they don't desire do that. You must know how great along with important the book Hung Up. All type of book are you able to see on many resources. You can look for the internet options or other social media.

Victor Elam:

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Sheila Foxworth:

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Manuel Arndt:

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