



Flirting with Disaster



★ Sandra Byrd



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Published in association with the literary agency of Browne & Miller Literary Associates, LLC, 410 Michigan Avenue, Suite 460, Chicago, IL 60605.

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For manufacturing information regarding this product, please call 1-800-323-9400.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Byrd, Sandra.

Flirting with disaster / Sandra Byrd.

p. cm. — (London confidential ; #4)

Summary: When forwarding a text message gets fifteen-year-old Savvy Smith in big trouble, she begins wondering if there is such a thing as luck and, if so, how it relates to God, but to find out she must put her advice column, her ministry, and her friendships at risk.

ISBN 978-1-4143-2600-9 (sc)

1. Schools—Fiction. 2. Advice columns—Fiction. 3. Text messages (Telephone systems)—Fiction. 4. Luck—Fiction. 5. Christian life—Fiction. 6. Americans—England—London—Fiction. 7. London (England)—Fiction. 8. England—Fiction.] I. Title.

PZ7.B9898Fli 2010

[Fic]—dc22

2010026062

Printed in the United States of America

16 15 14 13 12 11 10

7 6 5 4 3 2 1



FOR ELIZABETH BYRD,

my beautiful, smart, and funny daughter.

I'm glad we're thisclose. Happy sweet sixteen!



Chapter 1



Forward this to 10 friends within 2 hours & something good will happen in your life 2day and 2morrow. But if you don't then something bad will happen 2day and 2morrow. This is real and not a joke!

I rolled my eyes. *Hazelle, really?* She seemed so no-nonsense, I could hardly believe she'd fall for that kind of thing.

The text came in on Sunday night, just as I was getting ready to throw a load of clothes into the washing machine. I was surprised to get a forward from Hazelle—she hardly ever texted me.

I shut the washing machine lid and didn't give it another thought.

Mostly.

I went upstairs and strummed my guitar for a while, then texted with Penny, my bestie, and Gwennie and Jill and some of my other friends. In spite of myself, I kept glancing at the clock to see if the two hours had gone by. Then I reminded myself how stupid that was and went back to texting. After a while my in-box was full, so I erased everything in there.

With a start, I realized that I'd gotten rid of the forward from Hazelle. So now I *couldn't* send it on.

What does it matter? I asked myself. *I don't believe in that kind of stuff anyway.*

I brought down a second load of clothes, tossed the first one in the dryer, and threw a heaping scoop of snowy white laundry powder into the machine with the dirties. I shut the door, and the machine began to shake its hips and swirl my clothes back and forth like a hula skirt.

Later that night I headed downstairs to pull my wet clothes out of the washer. I untwisted them as I pulled them out.

"Oh no!" I shouted loudly enough that my mother could hear me over the telly she was watching in the next room with my father.

She came running into the laundry room.
“What?”

I held up my jeans, my favorite jeans, the only jeans that fit me perfectly and helped me look effortlessly fashionable on no-uniform Fridays. Big white streaks ran through each leg like badly healed scars. I handed them to Mom and pulled out one of my favorite hoodies, one that my cousin in Seattle had given me just before we moved to London last year. Ruined. My bright pink Juicy jacket looked like it had permanent stains all over it.

“What happened?” Mom held up the jeans and clucked. “What did you put in here?”

I tapped the plastic tub of laundry detergent.
“This.”

“Ahhh, that’s bleach powder, Savvy.” Mom pointed to the larger tub in the laundry cubby. “This is the detergent. I’m sorry.” She looked genuinely sorry, too—she knew the worst part of all was my jeans. They were the first expensive piece of clothing I’d bought with my own money. “At least your socks are really bright.” She held up my white anklets.

“Big comfort,” I said, wondering how I could have made such a mistake when I’d done the first

load right. I gathered up the ruined wet clothes and tossed them into the dustbin.

As I went to bed that night, I lay there wondering how I was going to get the money to buy new jeans. I knew things were tight for my parents too—so tight that we weren't even going to leave London to visit Seattle this coming summer. My mom would buy me some Levi's, but I knew she wouldn't fork over the money for designer jeans.

I mourned the loss and thought how close the word *denim* was to the word *demon*. One last time I glanced at my phone, which was sitting on top of my closed Bible, to see if Tommy had texted (he hadn't) and then tried to push away fears about Hazelle's forward and future impending disasters.





Chapter 2



Even though we normally had our school newspaper staff meetings on Tuesdays, Jack had called one on Monday morning for some reason. Officially, I was only the paper delivery girl. Unofficially, secretly, I also wrote the popular advice column, *Asking for Trouble*. I was eager to get my own byline—soon, Jack had promised—but for now I was glad to be writing . . . and helping people. And as I was learning, deeds done in secret often had more power than the ones everyone saw. The plan had worked out well so far.

So far.

As Jack called the meeting to order, I stood as far as possible from Natalie, my evil nemesis. She gave me the dead fish eye, and I lobbed it back at

her. Well, really. She could have Rhys, my former May Day Ball date who ended up going with her instead. They deserved each other. I didn't know why she disliked me, but the feeling was definitely mutual.

"Now that the end of the school year is approaching, we need to turn our minds to some serious business," Jack began. I still hadn't gotten used to the idea that summer break didn't start until July here. "As you know, next year I will be moving up to sixth form, and so will Melissa. That means the paper will need a new editor. By tradition, anyone who has been on the paper staff for a year or more is eligible for the position." Jack looked around the room, but his gaze lingered just a second longer on Hazelle and then on Rodney, the sportswriter.

"We'll be having elections sometime in June, date to be announced. As far as I can see, the election will be open to Hazelle, Rodney, and Alex, should they desire to have it. However, if you feel I've overlooked you and you'd like to be considered, please let me know right away."

He clapped shut his notebook. "With that, let's get back to business as usual so the next edition of the Wexburg Academy *Times* can go out on Thursday."

Everyone dispersed, and I noted that I had only about three minutes before the first bell. I'd been planning to talk to Jack about the article he'd promised I could write. I needed a deadline and a topic. I was so excited—the first article I'd be writing for the paper with my own byline. But Natalie cut me off and buzzed into his office, firmly closing the door in my face. I took a deep breath and bit back the words on my tongue. My question for Jack would have to wait.

I walked to maths with Hazelle.

"This has been an absolutely fabbo day already," she said. "My grandmother sent me a cheque for a hundred pounds, and my mum gave it to me at brekkers this morning. Brian sent me some great snaps of us at the ball. And now the editor election. I doubt if Rodney and Alex even want it."

I hoped today would be fabbo for me, too.

