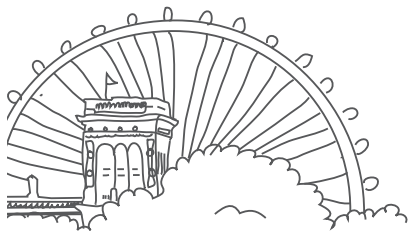


# Asking for Trouble

Sandra Byrd



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DEDICATED TO NINE *BRILLIANT*  
MANUSCRIPT READERS:

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AMERICAN GIRLS WHO LIVED IN ENGLAND:

*Sarah Austin and Brianna Tibbetts*

AMERICAN GIRLS:

*Abi Davis, Shannon Farmer, Miranda Marburger, and  
Savannah Marburger*

AND OUR RESIDENT AUSSIE,

*Erin Mollet*





# Chapter 1



I hung back at the doorway to the cafeteria of my new supercool British school, Wexburg Academy. Most of the lunch tables were already packed, and the room was buzzing with chatter. The populars, whom I'd secretly nicknamed the Aristocats, commanded an entire table right in the center of the room. Their good looks and posh accents made up the sun around which all other tables orbited. The normal kids were in the second circle, arranged by friends or clubs or activities. The drama table was on the outer edge of the room, and so were the geeks, the nerds, and the punk wannabes—way out there like Neptune, but still planets. Most everyone had a group. I didn't.

Okay, so there was *one* table with lots of room. The leftovers table. It might as well have been the dark side of the moon.

No way.

I skipped lunch—again—and headed to the library. One of the computers was available and I logged on, desperately hoping for an e-mail from Seattle.

There was an e-mail from my grandmother reminding me to floss because British dentists only cleaned adult teeth.

Spam from *Teen Vogue*.

An invitation to join the Prince Harry fan club—I opened it and gave it a quick scan. I'd consider it more later.

And . . . one from Jen!

I clicked open the e-mail from my best friend at home—well, it *had* been my home till a couple of months ago—hoping for a lunch full of juicy news served alongside tasty comments about how she missed me and was planning stuff for my next visit home. I craved something that would take me the whole lunch period to read and respond to and remind me that I did have a place somewhere in this universe.

From: Jen

To: Savannah

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Hey, Fortune Cookie, so how's it going? Met the Queen yet? LOL. Sorry I haven't written too much. It's been so busy. Samantha took the position you'd been promised on the newspaper staff. She's brand new, but then again you would have been too. It seemed strange without you at first, but I think she'll do okay—maybe even better than okay. And hey, life has changed for everyone, right? Things are crazy busy at school, home, and church. We hang out a lot more now that a bunch of us are driving. Will write again in a few weeks.

Miss you!

Jen

A few weeks! My lungs filled with air, and I let it out slowly, deflating like a balloon with a slow leak. I poised my hands over the keyboard to write a response but just . . . couldn't. What would I say? It had already *been* weeks since we'd last e-mailed. Most of my friends texted instead of e-mailing anyway, but texting across the Atlantic Ocean cost way too much. And the truth was . . .

I'd moved, and they'd moved on.

I logged off the computer and sat there for a minute, blinking back tears. Jen hadn't meant to forget me. I was simply out of her orbit now.

I pretended to read *Sugar* magazine online, but mostly I was staring at the clock, passing the time till I could respectably head to my next class.

Five minutes before class I swung my book bag onto my shoulder and headed down the hall. Someone was stapling flyers to the wall. "Hi, Hazelle."

"Hullo, Savannah." She breezed by me, stapling another pink flyer farther down the wall. We had math class together—oh yeah, *maths*, as the Brits called it—first period. I'd tried to make friends with her; I'd even asked her if she'd like to sit together in lunch, but she'd crisply informed me that she sat at the table with the other members of the newspaper staff.

She didn't bother with small talk now either, but went on stapling down the hall. I glanced at one of the flyers, and one sentence caught my eye right away: *Looking for one experienced journalist to join the newspaper staff.*

I yanked the flyer off the wall and jammed it into my bag. I was experienced. Wasn't I?



A nub of doubt rose inside me—the kind that popped up, unwelcome, anytime I tried to rationalize something that wasn't exactly true or right.

This time I swallowed it back. I thought back to Jen's e-mail that kind of felt like a polite dismissal. I lived in London now.

It was time to take matters into my own hands.

