An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

By

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Rationale

I have always dreamed of writing a novel. As my college years were coming to a close, I realized that now was the perfect time to undertake such a project. Writing has been one of my favorite hobbies for years, but I did not fully realize how much I enjoyed it until I became a part of the Honors College and had an opportunity to write more creatively. This project has pulled on all my writing and critical thinking experience gained while at Ball State.

I did some research for my book by reading adolescent novels that are well known. I read parts of Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone by J.K. Rowling, Double Fudge by Judy Blume, and Fifteen by Beverly Cleary. Reading these books gave me an idea of the language level and style that have worked in the past for writers of adolescent literature.

The inspiration for my novel came from personal experience. Growing up, I was always searching for challenging reading material with topics that would interest me. Hopefully, the book I have written will contribute to such material. The idea for the storyline came from dealing with my own obstacles in junior and senior high school. Many challenges face youth growing up, and the decisions they will face can become difficult because of peer pressure.

My goal with this novel is that students will enjoy reading my story while it inspires deeper thinking and discussion about decision making. I have learned how to write effective dialogue and create a story from my imagination. I feel I have accomplished one of my life goals and truly capped my learning experience at Ball State University.
Abstract

This is a story with two endings. Before reading the endings, the reader is asked to choose the decision the main character should make. Then the reader, along with the main character, must deal with the consequences of that choice. The development of this novel was based on personal experience and will hopefully inspire critical thinking and discussion among young adults and adolescents.
JOURNEY TO EVERAFTER

a story of decision and challenge by

Shannon Weiss

“A truly inspiring novel for young people." --USA Today
JOURNEY TO EVERAFTER

Shannon Weiss

Scholastic Books
Also Available from Shannon Weiss:

Chains Can’t Hold Me Down

Rain, Sun, and the Clouds in Between

The Alpha, the Omega, and the Frogs?

And Don’t Miss these Romantic Thrillers by Shannon Weiss writing as Marie Campbell:

The Allen Sisters

The Allens: Benton and Julianna

The Allens: Carter and Serena
Acclaim for *Journey to Everafter*

“Witty and engaging.”
*The Plain Dealer*

“A great book for young teens making tough decisions.”
*Lara Weiss*

“Engrossing. You’ll feel like you’re there.”
*New York Times*

“A break-through in adolescent literature.”
*Publishers Weekly*

“A wonderful lesson that sneaks up on you.”
*Library Journal*

“A great read with a wonderful, moral message.”
*Ben Weiss*

“I never realized before reading this book what a difference one choice can make.”
*Jewell Weiss*
For my Tomato

“May you always remember to smile, never forget who loves you, and hold on to your dreams with all your might.”
Contents

Chapter One—Friends 1
Chapter Two—The Boyfriend 3
Chapter Three—An Opportunity 5
Chapter Four—Pondering 7
Letter From the Author
Ending One 9
Questions to Ponder
Ending Two 25
Questions to Ponder
Ending Thoughts
Chapter 1—Friends

“Oh, my gosh!!! Did you guys see what that girl was wearing?? Those pants were so last season, and she couldn’t have gotten them any tighter if she’d painted ‘em on!” exclaimed Victoria.

“I totally know what you mean. She’s in my biology class, and she wears the same outfit at least every other week. How lame!” Emma agreed.

Jessica attempted to get into the conversation with her two best friends, but found her heart just wasn’t in it.

“Why do I sit here and listen to them everyday?” Jessica thought to herself. “Why do my two best friends feel they need to pick apart everyone who walks by our table? I wonder what they say about me behind my back?” All at once, she felt a jolt from behind.

“Chad! What are you doing? You almost made me choke!” Then, with a smile, she thought, “Well, what do I expect? I am dating a 17-year-old boy, and it’s hard to stay mad at the cutest boy at North Wellington High.”

“Sorry, I just couldn’t help it. A girl with beautiful, long brown hair is bound to get surprised every now and then. So, are we still on for tomorrow night?”

“What do you mean tomorrow night!? Jessica! You said you were going to go to the game with us!!” interrupted Victoria.

“Yeah, all you do anymore is spend time with Chad,” Emma accused.

“Okay, okay. I know I said I would go with you guys, but I haven’t seen Chad all week. How ‘bout I go to the game with you guys, we meet Chad there, and then we all go out together afterwards?”

“All right, but only if he brings Joe with him. I know he wants to ask out the most beautiful girl in our school, so this’ll just make it easier for him!” laughed Victoria.

“Oh, yeah, I know what you mean. He like stares at you every day in study hall!” said Emma adoringly.

The bell rang for the next period, and off they went in their separate directions—Chad and Jessica one way and Victoria and Emma the other.

Jessica felt perturbed all during the next period.

“Now, I just want to spend a little time talking about your term papers. . . .” As Mr. Smith droned on, Jessica’s mind was on her two best friends. They always had a way of making her feel like she wasn’t a part of the group. She felt like she had to spend every moment with them, or they’d stop liking her. “. . . and you need to be sure to double-space your papers because I’m not going to. . . .” Her thoughts flowed to Chad. Gosh, she loved spending time with him. But lately it seemed like he wanted her to spend every moment with him. Did no one understand that sometimes a girl just needs a little time to herself? Space, that’s what she needed. Just a little room to catch her breath. “Don’t forget, those papers are to be on my desk no later than three p.m. next Friday!”

Finally they were saved from Mr. Smith’s tirade when the bell rang, signaling that the day was over. As Jessica walked out the door, she saw Chad up ahead on his way to the parking lot.

“Hey, Chad! Wait up!” Jessica shouted.

“Hey, I waited for you by your locker, but you weren’t there.”
"I know. Mr. Smith was giving out instructions for the term paper."
"Well, that explains it!"
"So can you still give me a ride home?"
"I can take you home later. But remember, you promised to come to dinner at my house tonight."
"Oh, right. Sorry, I forgot."

As they got into Chad’s black convertible, Jessica thought to herself, “It should be an interesting night since his mother practically hates the mere sight of me. Oh well, the things we do for love.”

So she pushed those negative thoughts out of her head and tried to focus on Chad as they drove off towards his house.
Chapter 2—The Boyfriend

“So, what are you two up to tomorrow night? There’s a home game, isn’t there? Or, Jessica, are you going to be too busy spending time with your friends to even see Chad?” asked his mother pointedly.

Jessica felt herself shrink into her seat as she did every time she was asked to one of the “lovely” family dinners at the Reynolds household. Why did she get the idea that Chad’s mom wanted her to spend every waking minute with her adorable son? Sure, he was adorable, but “every waking minute”?

However, Jessica politely replied, “No, Mrs. Reynolds. Chad and I are going to meet at the game and do something afterwards. That way we can both spend time with our friends and still see each other.”

“Well, what exactly were you planning for after the game? You are aware that Chad has an 11 o’clock curfew, correct?”

But before Jessica even had a chance to answer, Chad took over the conversation. “Yes, Mother. We are all well aware what time I have to be home.”

Jessica finished the rest of her meal, fearful of further questioning. She tried to eat as quietly as possible, hoping Mrs. Reynolds would forget she was present.

As Chad drove her home that night, she couldn’t help wondering how Chad put up with his mother all the time. Her home life was so opposite. Her parents were both caring and really nice to Chad. They were happy she had a boyfriend but still understood that a young girl didn’t need to spend every moment of every day with him. She just couldn’t wait to get home and tell her mom all about the evening. Their late-night talks were one of Jessica’s favorite parts of every day. No matter how late Jessica came home, her mom was always there waiting to hear more funny stories of Mrs. Reynolds, and Jessica always had them.

Chad must have been talking during the drive, but as was more and more frequent lately, Jessica’s mind was somewhere else. She was in Germany. Ever since she was a little girl and heard about her great-grandparents coming over from Germany, the country had intrigued her. But her interest had grown since she started taking German in high school. Not only was she learning to speak the language, but in class they also talked a lot about the culture and the people. They saw slides and videos. Now every time she had a chance to daydream, her dreams were full of the misty mountains and busy streets of Germany. She’d love to go there one day, but knew it was a far-off dream. But she refused to believe it would never happen as Chad always told her. He told her that ordinary people like them didn’t just go off to Europe. Inside, Jessica didn’t feel all that ordinary. But maybe she seemed that way to everyone else, so it must just all be in her head.

“Have you heard anything I said in the last ten minutes?” exclaimed Chad. “Oh, sorry, I was just thinking about that huge geometry exam we have tomorrow.”

“Well, we’re to your house now, so you can go and study.”

He walked her to the door and leaned in for a goodnight kiss as he did every time he dropped her off. Jessica kissed him and thought how lucky she was to have a boyfriend that cared about her. Now if she could just find guys for Victoria and Emma, so they’d get off her back a little, she’d be set. But Chad was working on that, and if all
went well tomorrow night, Victoria at least should be hooked up with a date for Homecoming.

“Goodnight, Chad,” whispered Jessica, as she walked up the steps into the warm, inviting house with her mom waiting to hear about dinner.
The next day, as soon as Jessica woke up, she knew it was going to be a good day. She felt totally prepared for her math test. She wasn’t tired at all, which was surprising since she’d stayed up talking to her parents until midnight the night before. Plus, the game that night was bound to be fun. So she left home on time, for a change, and made it to her first class with minutes to spare.

She’d just taken out her calculator and pencil when there was a knock at the door. Then came that feeling you get when you just know that you’re the one they’ve come for. Mr. Kaiser, annoyed, opened the classroom door, and sure enough there it was—a pass requesting Jessica to go to the office. As she walked down the hall, she knew in her heart that she hadn’t done anything wrong, yet it was difficult not to worry as she made her way to the office, especially having been pulled out of a test. As she neared the door, she saw that several people were already in there. Well, she thought, at least I’m not the only one in trouble for whatever this is.

She entered the room, and as soon as she got just within the door, everyone in the room broke into huge smiles and started cheering. Now she felt like she was in the twilight zone.

“What’s going on?” she asked.

“Well, Mr. Goode, you go ahead and tell her.”

“No, no, Mrs. Kart, you tell her. You’re the one who made it possible.”

“Will someone just please tell me what’s going on?”

“Jessica, you know that scholarship I had all the students apply for? For that study abroad trip to Germany? Well, you’ve been selected by the German-American Society to receive the highest scholarship. They’ll pay for the entire three months!”

“Oh, my gosh! I really need to sit down. This is incredible. I had completely forgotten we applied for that. Because, I mean, no one actually wins those things—it’s just something you do. You mean they actually picked me?”

“Yes, they picked you, and we feel they did a wonderful job picking a fine American to represent all of us on the trip. So what do you say?”

“Well, I don’t know. This is all just happening so quickly. I mean, of course I want to go, but I guess I need to talk to my parents about it.”

“That’s fine. I’d be worried if you didn’t want to think it over, but we do have to let them know for sure by Monday. So you can have the weekend, but if you turn it down, they’ll send someone else in your place.”

Jessica walked back to her class dazed. How was she supposed to concentrate on a stupid geometry test when she had just been offered a chance at one of her life goals? She couldn’t wait to tell everyone about it at lunch. They’d be completely pumped. They all knew how much she daydreamed about Germany. Somehow she made it through the test and the rest of her morning classes and got to lunch. She was about to burst by the time she got to the table and saw Victoria and Emma already there.

“You guys, I have the biggest news ever!!”

“Lemme guess!” exclaimed Victoria. “Your mom let you get that red prom dress you were dying for!”

Jessica just shook her head.
“Okay, okay, I’ve got it,” interjected Emma. “You and Chad are going on the school ski trip together!”

Jessica shook her head once more.

“Well, are you gonna tell us, or just stand there and grin at us?” asked Victoria.

“I’ll tell you in just a minute, but we have to wait for Chad. Oh! Here he comes!”

“Hey, Jess, what’s going on? Why are you smiling like that?”

“Okay, here it is. The most amazing thing happened to me during first period today! I found out I’ve been offered a scholarship paying for a complete study abroad trip to Germany for this summer! Isn’t that the most amazing thing?!”

As they all stared at her blankly, Jessica started to get the feeling that everyone wasn’t going to share in her joy.

“What do you mean three months? You’d really leave me for three months?” exclaimed Chad.

“Leave you? She’d be so out of the social loop after three months, no one’d even remember who she is. There’s no way you can go, Jessica. You’d just miss out on too much this summer. I mean, come on, it’s the summer before our senior year. You’d miss going to Cedar Point, going on our class camping trip, hanging out at the pool, and you’d miss cheerleading tryouts!” interrupted Victoria.

“Yeah, she’s right, Jessica. You wouldn’t even be part of the group after being gone that long,” Emma agreed.

“Well, I guess, but…”

“Anyway, that’s enough talk of crazy things. Let’s eat before the lines get too long,” said Chad dismissively.

The rest of lunch was a fog for Jessica. She guessed she hadn’t really thought about the negatives of being gone for three months. She’d just been too excited about all the positives. She’d thought that her friends would understand, but she now realized that that was stupid of her. If they couldn’t understand her going to a football game with her boyfriend, they certainly wouldn’t understand her going to another country without them. But she had been really surprised by Chad. She’d always imagined that he would be supportive of her dreams, but today he’d proved that he just thought about himself. Oh well, surely her parents would be excited. But the sad thing was, she wasn’t really all that excited herself anymore. Her friends had really made her think. And they were right. She’d miss out on a lot of things during the summer, and it would be really difficult to go that long without seeing Chad. She’d never felt so confused in all her life. But hopefully her parents would have some words of wisdom as they so often did.
Chapter 4—Pondering

Somehow she managed to drive home after school. How, she wasn’t sure. She was so deep in thought, she didn’t even realize she was home until she heard the dogs barking and found herself sitting in her own driveway. She slowly made her way into the house and let her book bag drop to the floor. Her mom, hearing her come in, walked into the living room to say “hi.” The instant she saw Jessica’s sunken face, she knew something was wrong—mother’s instinct.

“Jessica, what’s wrong? Didn’t your test go well?”
“No, Mom, the test was fine. Although I did have to hurry to finish it.”
“Why was that?”
“Well, I got called down to the principal’s office this morning.”
“Surely you didn’t do anything wrong. What was it about?”
“Well, you know that scholarship my German class applied for a couple months ago?”
“Yeah.”
“Well, the results came back in today.”
“I’m sorry, honey. There will be other scholarships.”
“No, Mom. I won the largest scholarship. The one that pays for the entire three months in Germany for the summer.”
“What? Now you’ve lost me. You found out you just won a scholarship to the place of your dreams, and you’re not ecstatic? Are you the same daughter that left our house this morning?”

Jessica proceeded to tell her mother of Chad and her friends’ reactions to her news and how they’d really made her think about the negatives of going.

“So, Mom, now I just don’t know what to do, and the horrible thing is, I have to let them know by Monday because if I don’t take it, they’ll give it to the runner-up.”
“Well, honey, I know your friends have presented some negatives that have really made you think, and it’s good to always think a big decision through and see it from all angles. But don’t forget about your dreams. It’s okay every once in a while to be a little selfish. If they really are your friends, and I think they are, they’ll understand and support any decision you make. I think you should talk to your dad, but the only other advice I can give you is to follow your heart. It will lead you to the right decision.”

At the game, she tried to get Emma alone and talk to her about the trip. A lot of times, Emma was a completely different person away from Victoria. But Victoria must have already gotten to her because Emma wouldn’t even talk about it. She said she’d already told Jessica how she felt about it and that now the decision was up to her. On the way home, she tried to talk to Chad too, but he just acted like she wasn’t talking at all and changed the subject. As he told her goodnight, he said he was sure she would make the smart choice and stay home this summer with him because they were going to have an awesome time getting ready to rule the school.

Jessica talked with her dad that night.
“So, Dad, what do I do?”
“Jessica, you know I’m not going to tell you what to do. You’re mature enough to make this decision on your own.”
“Okay, fair enough. But what would you do in my situation?”
“That’s a tough question to answer because I’m not in your position. But I do know that it is a wonderful opportunity. You’re young and energetic and now’s a great time to explore the world. But I’m sure it would be hard to leave your friends, too.”

“You’re right, Dad. This isn’t a black and white decision. But you’ve given me something to think about. Thanks.”

“Anytime. And, Jessica, remember that no matter what you decide, your mom and I are proud of you.”

“Night, Dad.”

As she lay in bed that night, Jessica didn’t feel at all like she knew what the right decision was. On the one hand, she had the opportunity to explore a land that had always intrigued her, but on the other, she desperately wanted to be with her friends and boyfriend and enjoy their last summer together before everyone went their separate ways. She really didn’t know what she would say on Monday morning. As she fell asleep praying, she figured she would just walk in and say whatever came out of her mouth.

“It is in our moments of decision that our destiny is shaped.”
Dear Reader,

I hope that you have gotten to know Jessica and understand her conflict. There are two endings to this book, one for each possible decision. Now, I ask you to make this tough decision along with Jessica. Most likely, you will be faced with a similar decision sometime in your own life. Not the same one, but one in which the outcome could greatly affect your future. Just think--what you would do in Jessica’s situation?

I invite you to read both endings, but first, make the decision you think is more appropriate and think about its consequences.

I hope you enjoy reading about Jessica as much as I enjoyed writing about her. I look forward to meeting you again in another book and at another time.

Your Friend,

Shannon Weiss
It was Monday morning, and Jessica didn’t think she’d ever been this nervous or as sick to her stomach in her life. She couldn’t even touch her breakfast because she knew as soon as she got to school, her life would be different. As soon as Victoria and Emma and Chad found out her decision, they would look at her and act towards her in a whole different way. She would be the outcast. Well, at least she knew that and could prepare herself somewhat. Her mom and dad told her good luck and that they were incredibly proud of her for making a very mature decision.

Once at school, Jessica had to go report at the principal’s office. It seemed like the longest walk of her life! She finally got to the door and just froze. She started to second guess herself, but then forced herself to walk through the door so there would be no turning back.

“Good morning, Jessica. I hope you’ve come to tell me you’ve made a decision about Germany.”

“Yes, sir, I have.”

“Well, what have you decided?”

“I... well, I... I want to go.”

“Wonderful!! We knew that you would make the right decision, and we’re so glad that you’ll be representing us in another country. Mrs. Kart will be so proud! We’ll get all the information to you later this week—you know, your flight schedule and activities, things like that.”

“Okay, great. Well, I guess I’ll just talk to you later this week then.”

Jessica walked stonily down the corridor. In her heart, she knew she’d made the right decision, but now she was on her way to face her friends. And she knew they wouldn’t agree.

She entered her first period math class and took her usual seat between Victoria and Emma.

“I mean, can you believe it, Emma?! He just walked right past me like nothing had happened!”

“Gosh, I can’t believe that. At the game you two seemed really into each other. I thought for sure he’d ask you to Homecoming today!”

“Well, it’s fine with me if he wants to ruin his reputation and take Courtney Smith.”

“That’s right, Victoria. He’ll suffer from his decision later!”

“Hey, guys. What’s with you two? I’ve been sitting here in between you for like five minutes and neither of you have even said hi.”

“Well, we were like in the middle of a really important discussion,” retorted Victoria.

“Yeah, maybe if you were around a little more, you’d know what we were talking about!” agreed Emma.

“I’m sorry. I’ve just been really busy lately. So, what’s the new scoop on you and Mark, Victoria?”

The rest of first period went by as usual, and neither of them even mentioned Germany. Jessica thought they probably had already forgotten because they had been so discouraging about it. Thank goodness, no real repercussions as of yet.
The next period, she saw Chad, and he also acted like everything was fine and nothing had changed. Then came lunch. Everyone was sitting at their usual table.

"Hey, you guys, have you heard about that awesome rafting trip the school is taking this summer?" asked Victoria.

"Yeah, I heard something about it. It sounds like a lot of fun. Only a couple chaperones are going!" replied Emma.

"I know, it does sound great. We all should go. It would be a great way to kick off the summer. But you have to sign up today."

"That’s okay. I’ll go sign us up after lunch when I work in the office," said Emma.

"Oh, that sounds great. You guys will have so much fun!" responded Jessica.

"What do you mean us guys will have so much fun? You’re going, too, aren’t you?" asked Chad.

"Well, no one’s asked, but I’ll be in Germany during the canoe trip."

"You decided to go?!"

"Yes, it’s a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and it’s only for three months. I’ll be back before you guys know it, and I’ll have a week before school starts to enjoy some summer with you!"

"Jessica, do you really think you’ll even fit in by the time you get back?" asked Victoria.

"Yeah, you’re going to miss out on everything. You won’t even know what we’re talking about when you get back," agreed Emma.

"Well, I guess you guys’ll just have to catch me up on everything because there’s not much I can do about it. I already told Mr. Goode my decision this morning."

The rest of lunch was a little strained. All Victoria could do was talk about how much fun canoeing was going to be, and of course Emma chimed in and looked at Jessica as if she had betrayed them. And all Chad could do was stare off into space and grunt when addressed. This was going to be even worse than Jessica had thought.

On the way home from school, Jessica finally got Chad to talk.

"What’s wrong? It’s not like you to be so quiet. What are you thinking about?"

"I’m just worried that you’ll come back from Germany, and you won’t need me anymore. Plus, what am I going to do without you for THREE months? We do everything together, especially in the summer!"

"Chad, it’ll be great for you to have some time with your friends just hanging out. And I will always need you. You’re a very important part of my life, and we’ll talk tons while I am gone. You know, they do have telephones in Germany!"

"I know we’ll make it work. I love you too much for it not to. I just hate thinking of a whole summer without you in it."

That night Chad stayed over for supper to celebrate Jessica’s trip to Germany. Her parents were ecstatic that he was being supportive of her because they knew how worried she had been.

Over the next few weeks, Jessica began to feel what being an outsider was like. Victoria and Emma didn’t even ask her to go out with them anymore, and anytime Jessica suggested doing something, they had something else going on. So she and Chad started spending a lot more time together, which was just what he wanted. But the closer they got to one another, the more Jessica dreaded her departure date.
“Chad, I’m just not sure anymore that I made the right decision.”
“Why do you feel that way?”
“Well, we’ve gotten so much closer the past couple months that I just can’t imagine going three whole months without seeing you. And I’m beginning to think Victoria and Emma were right. I’m going to be completely out of the loop by the end of the summer.”
“Jess, you may be out of the loop with them, but I will always be here for you. I’ll write you all the time and make sure you stay up to date on all the gossip.”
“You’re right. As long as I have you, everything’ll work out fine. This’ll be a great way to work on our communication skills.”
“Well, that’s one way to look at it,” laughed Chad.
That night, it was difficult to say goodbye. Each night it was getting increasingly difficult to leave each other. Knowing they had only two more days almost broke Jessica’s heart.
“Hey, Mom?”
“I’m up here, Jess. Did Chad leave?”
“Yeah, he’s gone.”
“Why the mopey voice?”
“I just can’t believe that I have to leave in two days! I really don’t think I can be away from home for that long.”
“Jessica, you’re growing up, and this is a great opportunity for you to explore another country. Just think how easy going to college will be after this!”
“No kidding! That’ll be a breeze! Well, I better get to bed. I have a full day of packing tomorrow! Oh, Mom? Could you please pick up some more phone cards from Wal-Mart tomorrow? I want to make sure I can call you whenever I get the chance.”
“Sure, honey. Now get to bed and stop worrying yourself so much!”

But Jessica couldn’t stop worrying, and to make it even worse, the day came finally that she had to tell Chad goodbye. They had agreed that it would be best if he didn’t go to the airport with her family because it was going to be hard enough to say goodbye to her parents.
“Chad, I don’t want you to leave. As soon as you leave, that means I have to go to the airport!”
“Jess, I have to go. I have practice in five minutes. I’m already gonna be late. I don’t want to leave either, but me staying isn’t going to keep you from going.”
“Okay, but make sure you don’t forget about me.”
“Jess, stop crying. Come on, sweetheart, everything will be fine. I could never forget about you. You know that.”
“I know. I just feel like everything is changing, and nothing will be the same when I get back.”
“You’re just nervous about your trip. Everything will be fine, but you do have to let go of me, unless you think I can fit in your suitcase!”
“Okay, okay, go on to practice. I miss you already.”
“I miss you, too. Make sure you call me once you get to Washington!”
“I will. Bye!”
“Bye, Jess!”

Jessica said goodbye to her family at the airport and tried to hold herself together. But as soon as she boarded the plane, she burst into tears. She felt so alone and abandoned. She was certain she would never make any friends in Germany and wouldn’t have any left in the U.S. The plane ride seemed to take an eternity. When she finally reached Washington, D.C., she was greeted by one of the counselors for the trip.

“Hi, are you Jessica?”
“Yup, that’s me.”
“My name’s John. How was your flight?”
“It was okay, but a little bumpy.”
“Yeah, I know how that goes. But we’re going to be traveling so much over the next few months that you’ll be completely used to it by the end.”
“Really? I didn’t know we were going to fly that much.”
“Yeah, we fly almost once a week! Anyway, if you just follow me, I’ll take you to the hotel shuttle so you can go meet up with the rest of the kids. We’ll have your luggage delivered to your room later tonight.”

And so Jessica followed John and took the shuttle to the hotel. There weren’t any other students on the ride with her, and she began to doubt her decision once again. Upon reaching the hotel, she was greeted once again by a chaperone.

“Hi.”
“Hi, my name’s Jessica Walton. Do you know where I need to go?”
“Sure. Just get your name tag from the front desk and your room number. You’re free to go freshen up and then meet everyone downstairs for refreshments and orientation in about an hour.”
“Okay, thanks.”

Jessica trudged over to the front desk, retrieved her name tag and room key, and made her way to the elevator. She felt immense relief when she reached her room and found a note waiting for her from her roommate. She glanced at the note and noticed that Dawn was her name.

Jessica,

_I am sooooo excited to be in Washington, D.C.! Can you believe we’re actually going to Germany!!?? I can’t wait to meet you. I rushed downstairs to meet everyone else as soon as I got here. Come on down as soon as you can, so we can meet people together._

_We’re going to have sooo much fun being roomies!!!_

See Ya Soon,

Dawn

This note encouraged Jessica but made her wonder if she could put up with such enthusiasm for an entire summer. However, she began to feel at least a little better about
the situation. So she unpacked her suitcase and decided she should go downstairs. The sooner she met everyone, the sooner she could decide to turn around and go home.

Once everyone had become acquainted, they broke the students into color groups to better keep track of them on tours and things like that. Jessica was in the red group and wasn’t sure how she felt about her group, but at least Dawn was in it so she knew someone. The other members were Miranda from Alabama, Dan from Oklahoma, Andrew from Nebraska, and Justin from California. Sigrid, who was a couple years older, was their group leader.

“So you will all be walking around together and are responsible for looking out for one another,” said Sigrid.

“I thought you would be the one responsible for us,” smarted Andrew.

“Well, Andrew, you are all young adults, and I don’t expect to have to keep track of each and every one of you. I would prefer to be someone you come to with questions or concerns rather than a babysitter. But, if you like, I could be sure and keep track of you.”

“That’s okay. I was just jokin’ with ya, Sig.”

“Anyway, as I was saying, I would like you to look out for one another. You will be spending a lot of time together, so everyone needs to try to get along. Now we have a long day ahead of us tomorrow, so everyone needs to go get a good night’s rest.”

Jessica had been in Washington for two days now and felt like a prisoner. She’d been run ragged rushing from one meeting to another. Each day, in the morning, speakers oriented the students to Germany, but they were typically boring and just served to prevent them from talking to each other and meeting new people. Then, after the meetings, they would rush to get ready for a dinner at an embassy or an important association that no one knew anything about just to be rushed home and hurriedly put in bed to sleep so they could have a chance at not falling asleep through the speakers for the next day.

This never-ending cycle was beginning to take its toll on Jessica.

“I can’t believe we aren’t allowed to use the phones in our room!” exclaimed Jessica.

“Why is it such a big deal? Aren’t you having fun?” asked Dawn.

“It’s okay. But I feel really homesick, and it’s not helping that I can’t seem to ever call home! By the time we get back here, they tell us we have to go to bed, and when we get up in the morning, it’s too early to call.”

“Well, I tell you what. If you still haven’t been able to call home tomorrow, I’ll sneak downstairs with you at night so you can call before we leave for Germany.”

“Thanks, Dawn. Now maybe I’ll be able to sleep better tonight. I just miss them so much. I didn’t realize how long we were really going to be away from home.”

“Well, one way or another, you can call tomorrow. Now can we please go to bed?”

“Okay, night.”

The next day was a whirlwind. They were touring Washington before they took off for Germany the next day, so they tried to cram the entire city into one day. First, a
tour of the museums, then off to the Capitol building, then a rush to meet with state representatives. Jessica entered the office tentatively, having never been around government offices before.

“Hi, my name is Jessica Walton. I had an appointment to meet with Representative Oxley.”

“Oh, I’m sorry, Ms. Walton. Your appointment was for half an hour ago, and Mr. Oxley is in a meeting right now. If you wouldn’t mind waiting, you can probably see him briefly when he returns.”

“Oh, okay. Thanks.” Jessica sat in the overcrowded office feeling more stupid than ever in her life. I mean, really, who is late for a meeting with her state representative? She thought this day would never end, and she still hadn’t been able to talk to her parents or Chad. She was sure they had all just forgotten about her, or else they thought she had forgotten about them.

“Hello. Are you Jessica?”

“Umm, yes, I am.”

“Hi. I’m Representative Oxley.”

“Oh! Hello, sir. It’s so nice to finally meet you. I’m so sorry that I was late for our meeting earlier.”

“Oh, don’t worry about it. Those things happen. Would you like to get a picture taken? I’m sorry, but that’s about all I have time for. I’m expected in the House in about ten minutes for voting.”

“Yes, a picture would be great. I understand that you’re very busy.”

Jessica left the office feeling even worse. Her one chance to meet with someone of influence, and all she got was a lousy picture. Plus, she had had to wear high heels to go with her outfit for the meeting, and now her feet were bleeding from all the stupid tours earlier that day.

Finally they got back to the hotel and were told to change for a casual dinner and pack so they could leave their suitcases outside their doors to be put on the bus to go to the airport the following morning. Jessica and Dawn discussed the terrible day while packing in their room.

“Have you seen my feet?!” exclaimed Jessica.

“I know. I think you’re gonna have scars for life,” Dawn laughed.

“It’s not funny! I think this may have been one of the worst days of my life.”

“Well, then, look on the bright side. Tomorrow is bound to be better!”

After dinner, they were once again told “lights out” because they were leaving very early for the airport the next morning. But, according to plan, Dawn and Jessica snuck downstairs.

“I feel so horrible doing this. If we get caught, we’re sure to get in trouble,” whispered Jessica.

“Hey, I’m doing this all for you. If you don’t want to go, we should just turn around right now.”

“No, no. I want to go. I have to talk to them before we leave tomorrow. If this is how busy we’re always gonna be, who knows when the next time I’ll get to talk to them will be?”

“Okay, then. Just shut up and follow me.”
They successfully made it to the lobby, and Jessica finally connected with her parents.

"Hi, Mom!"

"Jessica! We've been wondering when we would hear from you. You must be having a wonderful time. We thought you'd call sooner."

"No, Mom. I'm hating every minute of it. But they won't let us use the phones in our rooms, and they hardly ever give us time to use the pay phones. I feel like I'm trapped here!"

"Oh, honey, it can't be that bad. Besides, tomorrow you leave for Germany and that will be great!"

"I hope so. If it's as bad as this has been so far, you may see me before you thought you would."

After a few more words of encouragement, Jessica felt better and decided she should call Chad before it got any later.

"Hello?"

"Hi, Mrs. Reynolds. This is Jessica. May I please speak to Chad?"

"What are you doing calling my house at this time of night? Chad is in bed."

"I'm very sorry, but this is the only opportunity I've had to call, and tomorrow we leave for Germany, so I'd really like to talk to him."

"Oh, fine. But you better not call here again at this hour."

"Hello, Jessica?"

"Hey, Chad. It's me."

"Oh! It's so good to hear your voice. I never thought you'd call!"

"I've missed you so much! They never let us get to the phones. In fact, I snuck downstairs tonight, just to call you before I leave for Germany tomorrow."

"I'm glad you did. I've been worried about you. It's so lonely here without you to talk to."

"It's lonely here, too. I can't wait to come back home and see you. I miss you so much!"

They continued talking, but soon Dawn was telling Jessica it was time to go. After all, they did have to get up early the next morning.

"Thank you so much for sneaking down there with me! I feel so much better now."

"You're welcome. Now go to sleep," grumbled Dawn.

Flying to Germany was definitely an experience. Neither Jessica nor any of the other students had ever been on a plane that long before. And flying coach is not the way to go when you have to sit for eleven hours. Close quarters were not Jessica's thing to begin with, much less with a stranger on one side of her who snored and one on the other that wouldn't shut up.

Finally they landed in Germany just to be rushed to their new hotel. Once there, they were instructed to change and meet back downstairs in an hour for a bus tour of Berlin. Jessica was beginning to feel a little sick from lack of sleep and airplane food. She was definitely feeling the jet lag. But she had no choice but to go on. After enjoying the tour, Dawn and Jessica finally got to flop onto their beds.
“Can you believe this hotel?!” asked Dawn.
“I know. It’s really amazing. I think it’s the nicest hotel I’ve ever stayed in!”
“Oh, my gosh! Feel this comforter and pillow. They’re down!!”
“If I lie down here, I may not get up for a few days.”
“Well, a little nap couldn’t hurt. After all, we’ve been traveling for the better part of a day.”
“Okay, a little nap. But make sure you set our alarm.”

The next thing Jessica knew, there was pounding on the door and she was totally and completely disoriented. Dawn stumbled up and was immediately greeted by Sigrid, telling them they had exactly five minutes to get downstairs and that the bus was waiting for the two of them.

Jessica glared at Dawn as they entered the bus and everyone stared them down.

“Okay, so maybe it wasn’t the best idea to take a nap.” retorted Dawn.

Although they had gotten off to a rocky start in Berlin, the evening turned out to be one of their more enjoyable ones. After a night-time tour of the city, they went to the Hard Rock Café. That night, Jessica began her diary. There were some things she didn’t want to forget.

June 14, 2001
Dear Diary,

Today was a blast. I feel like I’m finally getting to know more people. It’s almost like they’re becoming my family here. Today we went to the Adtranz plant and watched how Mercedes are put together. On the way back, Maranda (one of my new friends) and I put together information for the trip website, so our parents can go online and see what we’re up to. Then we got into our color groups and took a tour of Berlin with a student from the city. The tour was great, but what was even better was the ice cream at the end of the tour! They have the best ice cream on the planet here!

For dinner, we went to a Mexican restaurant. I sat by Andrew, and we spent the entire night laughing. We have so much fun together. A lady even asked if she could take our picture because she thought we were cute! After dinner, I went to my first ever disco. It was a blast! We all danced like crazy. They’d rented the whole place out just for us.

June 19, 2001
Dear Diary,

Today I woke up with a call from Chad. It was kind of a depressing way to start my day. I’m so excited about all the fun stuff we’re doing here, and I want to share it all with him, but all he does is talk about how depressed he is without me, and he always cuts me off when I try to tell him about anything I’m doing. I think it may just be best if I try not to talk to him too much. I just don’t want anything to ruin this opportunity. But anyway, we’re off to Potsdam today to take a tour of the palace. I sat with Andrew again. We just have so much fun together. But then we had to pack up because we’re off to
Stuttgart tomorrow. I don’t know what to think about Andrew because it seems like he flirts with everyone. But at least I’m having fun, though today wasn’t as fun as usual because we all knew we had to go to our host families at the end of it. It’s amazing how close we’ve all become in such a short time. I feel like I’ve known everyone forever. We’re staying with the families for a month. That’s the time we’ll go to school and do the studying. Then for the rest of our stay in Germany, we’ll get to travel around and see more of this beautiful country.

June 26, 2001
Dear Diary,

Today I went to school with Katharine, the sixteen-year-old in my host family, for the first time. Now I’m someone who always gets nervous for the first day of school, and that’s in my native country! So you can imagine how on edge I was to be going to school in Germany. As if my nervousness weren’t enough, we walk outside, and I assume we’re walking to school. But, oh no. We’re riding bikes. In fact, I get to ride Katharine’s mother’s bike. She’s 5’8”- need I say more? So, I’m dealing with the idea of bikes and then … I run straight into the fence in the back yard. At this point, I’m thinking to myself how in the hell am I supposed to ride on a street with this thing?

We eventually reached the school, how I’m not quite sure. Then I realized what people mean by cultural differences. I, thinking it was summer, had packed mostly shorts for the trip. I mean, I was only allowed one suitcase, and one must be selective in her wardrobe. So I was wearing shorts and my favorite Birkenstock sandals. Well, until this point, I had thought Katharine was a kind creature who would help me along on this new journey. Apparently I was wrong! I walked into class behind Katharine, and the entire class burst into laughter. You know that feeling when you feel like there’s a booger hanging out of your nose? Well, that’s about what I felt like. But I thought I would just ignore it and went ahead and took my seat next to Katharine.

Now, at my school, if there’s a guest in the classroom, the teacher takes the time to introduce them and learn a little about them. However, this must not be the case in Germany. As I sat there, I kept waiting for an introduction, but the teacher just went on preparing for class. Katharine started conversation with a friend. I know German, but I don’t understand all the slang and fast talking. They kept laughing and looking at me, but I told myself once again that I was just being paranoid because I was so nervous.

Well, the day progressed in much the same way as my morning, and by the end of it, the idea of riding a bike home seemed like a blessing. Once there, finally in what I thought was a safe haven, I asked Katharine what she and the others had been laughing about during class. She said they were laughing at my clothes and really laughing because I had worn Birkenstocks to class. Apparently in Germany they only wear those sandals as house shoes. So, it wasn’t paranoia after all. They really were laughing at me. I’m afraid a month of similar days doesn’t sound very appealing.

I’m really missing everyone from the trip, but I guess tomorrow will have to be better than today. At least I’ve gotten the hang of the bike!
July 10, 2001
Dear Diary,

Well, it’s been two weeks now, and I have somewhat adjusted to the German way of life. I’ve met more of Katharine’s friends, and they think it’s fun to learn about America, so I’m not ridiculed for my out-of-style shoes any more. I really do like it here, but it’s a lot different than what I’m used to. It’s kind of cool because I don’t get regular grades since I obviously don’t have great skills in German. I just get graded on the basis of if I do the work or not. So life is pretty good because my stress level is much lower.

I actually got to see Andrew today. He and his host brother came over because his host brother knows Katharine. We had a cookout, and then all went to a bar. It was so cool because at home you can’t go to a bar until you’re 18, but here they don’t care at all! We had a great time just getting to catch up on what each other has been doing. I can’t wait until we’re all together again. I miss everyone! It’s just amazing how here, among our group, it doesn’t matter what you wear or how you talk, everyone is accepting and we’re just one big group. No cliques or places to be left out of, and everyone is always welcome anywhere. I just love it. It’s so different from high school.

Chad called tonight when I got home from the bar. He was not too happy to hear that I had been at a bar, and I didn’t even tell him that Andrew went, too. Chad just brings me down so much anymore. I was feeling great, but then he’s just all depressed. All he does is tell me what he’s doing with all our friends and then makes me feel guilty for not being there with him. So I did something really weird for me. I stood up to him and went against him. I told him I thought it would be best if we didn’t talk as often anymore because I was really busy, and he was just bringing me down. He was obviously upset, but his initial reaction then turned to anger as I had suspected, and he ended up hanging up on me. I hate that it had to come to that. But I think everything will work out, and we’ll be fine once I get home. It’s just too hard to have a life here when I feel connected to a life at home. For now I just need to explore things here.

July 24, 2001
Dear Diary,

Well, two more weeks have gone by, and I’ve finally been reunited with the rest of the group. We’ve all vowed to make the most of the rest of the trip and to let sleep take a back burner and spend more time just being together. These people really are like the best friends I’ve ever had, and it’s weird because I’ve known them for such a short period of time. We took off for the train station as soon as everyone was on the bus. I sat with Maranda, Andrew, and Jenn. Maranda had a hangover from the night before, so she was sleeping, and Jenn wasn’t feeling well either. So Andrew and I just talked and talked like we always do. I’ve never met someone that I could talk to like that before. It’s just amazing how we can make conversation out of nothing at all.

Once we got to the train station, we all made a mad dash to claim our cars. Andrew, Maranda, Justin, Dawn, Jenn, and I were in one car. Because it would be a six-hour train ride, we decided, as we so often do, that it would be a great time to catch some sleep since we knew it would be non-stop once we reached Bremen. I slept by Andrew and laid my head on his shoulder. He just feels right. It’s weird, but I haven’t thought about Chad in days! My friends here just seem perfect. Once everyone woke
up, we had a great time talking and joking around. We all realized how much we had missed each other.

Once in Bremen, we went to another Mercedes factory. But this time we got to ride an SLK sports car around the test track with a professional test driver. It was like being on a roller coaster! I rode with Andrew and screamed the whole time. Then we got to go on a scavenger hunt around the city. It was so much fun because it was the first time we had been allowed to wander about without our chaperones. Andrew, Jenn, and I did the scavenger hunt. It took us about two hours, but we had a great time. We met a German lady who was celebrating her 100th birthday, and we took our picture with her. I think we made her day! One of the items we had to find for the scavenger hunt was a famous statue in the center of the city. The legend is that if you touch the statue and wish to come back to Bremen, your wish will come true. So Andrew and I held hands, touched the statue, and wished we could come back together someday.

After our scavenger hunt, we returned to the hotel, and John told us that we were having a pirate party that night on a cruise boat. He said we should all go to the third floor because there was a surprise. The surprise was that they had hired makeup artists to make us look like real pirates! So I ended up with a beard and one huge eyebrow! It was fun but not something I would probably do again. It took five times of washing my face to get the makeup to come off!! The cruise was great. They had music, and we all danced. Then Andrew and I went out and watched the sunset on the deck of the boat. It was absolutely beautiful. He talked to me about his family and how important they are to him. I just love a guy who values family. But I just don’t know what to think of what’s going on between us. We have so much fun together, and we spend time together everyday. But when he talks to other girls, it seems like he flirts just as much with them as he does with me. I guess this really shouldn’t be a concern of mine considering I have a boyfriend back home.

August 2, 2001
Dear Diary,

Today, once again, I was punished for my stupid packing. We took off for the island of Wangeroo. I’m thinking, okay, island, warm, beach, sun—I’ll wear shorts. Well, this was not an island like we think of. It was even colder on the island than it was on the mainland. And once the boat took us out to the island, we had to walk three miles to get to the only town because they don’t allow motorized cars on the island. Andrew, at least, was nice enough to let me borrow his fleece. We had a great time on the island. Andrew, Mariska, Dawn, Jenn, Justin, Tim, and I all walked around and explored together. We had great pizza for lunch, which by the way is difficult to find in Germany. They seem to think that tuna and corn go great with pizza sauce! Then we spent the day exploring the little shops and ended up talking in a park. We got to take the train back to the dock to get the boat which everyone was thankful for. That night I talked to Andrew on the phone for about two hours. Dawn was so mad at me because she wanted to sleep. I swear sometimes she can be annoying. When she wants to be on the phone, it’s fine. But whenever I want to talk, she needs to sleep! Oh well, I got to bond more with Andrew, so I really didn’t care that she was mad. Later than night my family called, too.
It was great to talk to them. They’re so glad I’m having such a great time. I miss them a lot, but I can’t dwell on it.

August 5, 2001
Dear Diary,

Today we’re off to the airport again. Our stay in Bremen has come to an end. We go to Munich next.

August 12, 2001
Dear Diary,

Munich was a beautiful city. First thing we did, as we usually do, was go on a walking tour. We were all so tired from the night before, though, that I’m not sure anyone really absorbed any of what we saw. Then that night we got ready for the opera. I wore the dress I had found when shopping with Katharine and borrowed a necklace from Mariska. Heather did my hair. We had so much fun with all the girls getting ready together. Then we all met downstairs and boarded the bus. Andrew told me I looked very nice, and we sat together on the way. Later, I found out he had traded with someone so we could have seats at the opera next to each other! The opera was an experience. There’s nothing like watching an Italian opera when you’re in Germany—talk about confused!

When we got home from the opera, Andrew snuck down to our room. Dawn was already asleep, so the two of us just ended up talking. It got to the point where I was so tired, I wasn’t even making sense anymore, so we decided to call it a night. Then, I don’t know how, but we ended up kissing! It was just a peck, and I can hardly even remember it because I was so tired, but it definitely happened. It’ll be interesting to see how this changes our relationship since we’ve just been friends so far. I feel incredibly guilty because of Chad. I really should call him and tell him, but since I can’t see him, I hate to just dump something like this on him over the phone. He means more to me than that.

August 14, 2001
Dear Diary,

Today was a little awkward with Andrew. We didn’t really talk about what had happened between us, but something was definitely different. We still hung out together, though Andrew, Jenn, Maranda, Tim, and I all walked around downtown Munich and bought souvenirs for our families. I feel much better now that I have something for everyone.

August 17, 2001
Dear Diary,

We had our farewell party tonight. We don’t actually leave for another day, but this was the only way it fit into our schedule. I sat with Andrew, Jenn, Tim, and Mariska. Andrew bought me a rose at dinner—he was so sweet. We had a great meal, and then men in lederhosen came in and did a traditional German dance for us. After the entertainment, there was music, and everyone started dancing. I was talking with Dawn.
and then went to find Andrew to dance. But he was with Samantha, the one that’s been all over everyone for the entire trip. I was absolutely crushed. I thought that Andrew and I really had something, but apparently I was just another girl to him. I boarded the bus to go back to our hotel in a horrible mood. Andrew found me as soon as he got on and sat next to me. He immediately apologized for dancing with Samantha and said that she had asked him, and when he tried to get away, she would just keep dancing. He also wanted to know how I felt about him and what I wanted us to be. I said I thought we had something special, and I really had a lot of fun with him. He told me that I was his dream girl, and he definitely did not want to lose touch once we were finished with the trip.

August 18, 2001
Dear Diary,

Today is the last full day of this wonderful trip. I’m excited to go home and see my family, but I just don’t want to have to leave the family that I’ve found with the members of the trip. Also I’m really scared about what’s going to happen with Chad and me. I haven’t talked to him in a couple of weeks now, and I just don’t know what things will be like. I know they’ll be different.

Andrew and I spent the whole day together and started holding hands. I just can’t imagine not seeing him every single day after this. That night a bunch of people came to our room. It ended up that Andrew, Tim, Liz, Maranda, and J all slept in our bed together. Andrew and I kissed a couple more times. I just don’t know what to think about the whole situation.

August 19, 2001
Dear Diary,

Today was the final and worst day of the entire trip. We woke up early and boarded the bus for the airport. Andrew and I worked it out so we could sit together on the plane. Everyone else was sleeping, but we didn’t want to waste any time, so we talked with each other and with Jenn, who was sitting with us. On the way to Germany, it had seemed like such a long flight, but on the way back to the U.S., it couldn’t have been long enough. Once we reached Washington, D.C., we went to a lounge, and then everyone got the tickets for their connecting flights. It was the hardest thing I’ve ever had to do to watch member after member of our group leave one by one and know that I would probably never see them again! My flight was before Tim and Andrew’s—they were lucky and were on the same flight. They walked with me to the shuttle that would take me to my gate. I sobbed the entire time. I hugged Tim goodbye and kissed Andrew for the last time and was homeward bound.

So now not only am I extremely upset because I’ve just left my best friends in the entire world, but I go to board my “plane” to take me to Cleveland and discover that it is a 16-seater. There’s only one seat on each side of the aisle! So there I sat, bawling my eyes out, and not even one person asked if I was okay.

Seeing my family at the airport definitely brightened my mood, and it was great to be reunited with them. I had forgotten how long I had been gone. They were all excited to hear about everything, and I talked the entire way home. When we got there, I thought
about calling Chad but decided against it because I was so emotionally and physically drained from the events of the past 24 hours. He could wait until the next day if he’d already waited three months.

August 29, 2001
Dear Diary,

Well, I’ve been home for about two weeks now, and no one will return my phone calls. I’ve called Chad, Victoria, and Emma every day since I returned, and they all seem to have fallen off the face of the earth. I even went over to Chad’s once, but his mom said he was really busy, and I could just see him at school. Tomorrow is the first day of my senior year, and I feel so alone. I talk to everyone from the trip on instant messenger almost every night, and Andrew and I have been talking on the phone at least twice a week. We’ve grown even closer over the past couple weeks, and he’s planning on coming out here over Thanksgiving. I can’t wait!

September 4, 2001
Dear Diary,

Today is the first day of my senior year, and although I have a few butterflies, this seems like nothing after going to school in Germany. I can’t wait to see everyone and tell them all about my trip. I’m also looking forward to hearing about their summers. I thought Chad and I would ride to school together today, but since I couldn’t get hold of him, it looks like it’s just me. Oh, well, I’m sure I’ll be able to catch up with him at school. I think it’s time for me to stop writing anyway. Everything’s going to get busy with school, Chad, and hanging out with my friends. I’ll try to write every once in a while, but I’m signing off for now.

As Jessica walked into school, she felt strangely as she did in Germany on the first day. People’s conversations stopped, and they stared at her. She really wasn’t sure what was going on, but she was determined to find out. Just as she was walking to her second class of the day, she saw Chad up ahead of her. She ran forward excited to see him and find out where he had been. Suddenly, she stopped short. She saw that Chad wasn’t alone. In fact, he was holding hands with another girl.

“Hey, Chad,” said Jessica.

Chad whirled around and was stunned. But not nearly as stunned as Jessica. Emma was Chad’s new girlfriend!
"I, uh, I didn’t realize you were home yet," stammered Chad. "That’s weird because I’ve called your house at least two times every day since I got back."

“Well, I’ve been really busy, and sometimes I don’t get my messages. Plus, I just didn’t worry too much about you because I assumed it was over between us since you don’t need me anymore. I’ve moved on, and I think you should, too."

At that, Jessica turned and walked blindly to her first class.

Jessica spent the rest of the day in a daze. She just couldn’t believe that her best friend and her boyfriend were seeing each other behind her back. But the day got even worse. At lunch, Victoria made sure that there was no room for Jessica at their usual table, so she sat with some people from band that she usually didn’t talk to outside of class. But her perspective on friendship had changed drastically over the summer.

“Hey, guys. Would you mind if I sat with you today?” asked Jessica.

“No, Jessica, go right ahead,” answered Carrie.

“How have you guys been? Did you have good summers?” asked Jessica.

“Yeah, it was pretty good. We sure missed you at camp, though.”

“Hey, Jessica. I have a question for you. I don’t believe it at all, but I heard something I think you should know about,” interjected Amy.

“Well, in first period today, I heard some girls talking about you doing drugs while you were in Germany. They said that you’re addicted and are going to have to go to a clinic.”

Jessica was shocked speechless for a few minutes. When she could finally respond, she said as calmly as she could manage, “Thanks for telling me, and you were right, it is not true. Who did you hear talking about it?”

“Well, I hate to tell you this, too, but it was Victoria,” answered Amy.

“That figures. She does it to everyone else, so I should’ve expected it. I hope you guys don’t think bad of me.”

“Oh, don’t worry about it. At this lunch table, we don’t worry about what Victoria Smalley has to say,” replied Carrie.

The next few weeks were quite an adjustment for Jessica. She had to deal with at least one new rumor about herself circulating the school on a weekly basis, and she had to watch Chad date one of her former best friends. But those weeks were also very eye-opening. She realized how her group of friends came across to the rest of the school and was suddenly glad that she was not a part of that clique. She and her band friends started hanging out on the weekends, and she realized that these people were more genuine and really cared about her.

However, just as things were beginning to get better, prom week came. And with prom week came nominations for senior prom queen. Of course, Victoria was campaigning like crazy, and the rumors about Jessica definitely increased in frequency. But luckily the school was so used to the obscene rumors by now that no one really paid attention. And Victoria’s exclusion of Jessica further confirmed the school’s view of Victoria as a cold-hearted person. However, because some people were too weak to stand up to someone like that, Victoria was nominated for prom queen unsurprisingly.
What was surprising was that Jessica was nominated as well. Victoria thought she’d done a great job of making Jessica look horrible over the past couple weeks, plus since she wasn’t friends with her anymore, she didn’t even know who would vote for Jessica.

Jessica was stunned herself, but her new friends backed her one hundred percent. However, she was going to her first dance without Chad and was a little nervous. But Andrew was flying in to take her to the most important dance of all, and he always had a way of making her feel safe.

After an entire day of primping and preparation, Jessica and Andrew finally set off for a wonderful dinner with all her new friends and their dates before the prom. Andrew loved Jessica’s dress and said he felt like he was dating a fairy-tale princess. Andrew got along great with all of Jessica’s friends. Once at the dance, there came the part of the night that Jessica had been so nervous about. Mr. Goode asked the queen candidates to come up on stage because he was ready to announce the winner. The whole school was there, and Jessica was nervous as could be just to get on stage. She was sure she wouldn’t win and consequently didn’t see why she needed to even go up there. But she went anyway because it was her “duty.”

While on stage, she tried to stay focused on Andrew, and he kept smiling back at her. She could get such strength from that smile! Mr. Goode then began announcing the winners.


Everyone started clapping wildly, and Jessica could hardly believe it. She had actually beaten Victoria at something. She felt so liberated because she had finally made it on her own. She didn’t need to depend on Victoria’s influence for anything.

Shortly after the queen announcement, Victoria and her date left, and of course then Emma and Chad had to leave also.

As Jessica twirled across the dance floor in Andrew’s arms, she thought she’d never been this happy in her entire life. And she couldn’t wait to spend the rest of it even happier.
Questions to Ponder

1. Do you think Jessica made the right decision about going to Germany?
2. Why or why not?
3. What did Jessica learn about herself?
4. What did Jessica learn about her friends at home?
5. What things do you consider when you have to make a tough decision?
It was Monday morning, and Jessica didn’t think she’d ever been this nervous or sick to her stomach in her life. She couldn’t even touch her breakfast because she knew as soon as her parents, Mr. Goode, and Mrs. Kart found out her decision, her life would be different. She would be a disgrace. Being known as a teacher’s pet was about to come to a screeching halt.

“Good morning, Jessica,” said her mom.

“Morning, Mom,” Jessica hastily replied.

“So, have you made your decision?”

“Yes, I think so.”

“Well, are we going to be buying luggage?” asked her mom excitedly.

“No, I’m really sorry, Mom. I just don’t think it’s the right thing for me right now. I’d miss out on too much, and we only get to live life once. I don’t want to regret not having this summer.”

“That’s understandable, I guess. I just hope that you don’t regret not fulfilling one of your life’s dreams.”

“I won’t, Mom. This summer is going to be so fun--there’s no way I could ever regret it!”

Jessica left for school. And although she thought she would feel relieved after making her decision, her queasiness increased the closer she got to the high school. She was about to face Mr. Goode and Mrs. Kart. She finally got to school and walked to the principal’s office. Reaching the door, she started to turn around but then forced herself to get her humiliation over with. There was no turning back--Mr. Goode and Mrs. Kart were already there, waiting for her.

“Hello, Jessica. Have you reached a decision?” inquired Mr. Goode.

“Yes, sir, I have,” answered Jessica tentatively.

“Well, what is it?” asked an anxious Mrs. Kart.

“I...um...well...I have decided not to go,” blurted Jessica.

“You decided not to go? Jessica, I don’t think you understand. This is an opportunity of a lifetime you may never have again.”

“I know it’s an amazing opportunity, Mrs. Kart. But high school is an opportunity, too, and I just don’t feel ready to be away from my family and friends for that long.”

“So, there’s no way we can change your mind?” asked Mr. Goode.

“No, I’m sorry there isn’t.”

“Well, then, I guess we had better call down our runner-up and tell him the good news,” said Mrs. Kart.

Jessica walked stonily down the corridor. She just felt so empty inside. She hated disappointing people, especially people she respected. But, she thought, the day should get better because her friends were going to be ecstatic that she was staying. She entered her first period math class and took her usual seat between Victoria and Emma.

“I mean, can you believe it, Emma? He just walked right past me like nothing had happened!”
“Gosh, I can’t believe that. At the game, you two seemed really into each other. I thought for sure he’d ask you to Homecoming today!”
“Well, it’s fine with me if he wants to ruin his reputation and take Courtney Smith.”
“That’s right, Victoria. He’ll suffer later!”
“Hey, guys. What’s with you two? I’ve been sitting here for like five minutes, and neither of you have even said hi.”
“Well, we were, like, in the middle of a really important discussion,” retorted Victoria.
“Yeah, maybe if you were around a little more, you’d know what we were talking about!” agreed Emma.
“I’m sorry. I’ve just been really busy lately. So what’s the new scoop on you and Mark, Victoria?”
But before she could answer, Mr. Smith started in about the test next week and, the rest of first period went by as usual. Neither of them even mentioned Germany. Jessica thought they probably had already forgotten because they’d been so discouraging about it. At least Chad would want to know.
The next period, she saw Chad, and he also acted like it was a normal day and didn’t say anything about what she had decided. Then came lunch. Everyone was sitting at their usual table.
“Hey, you guys, have you heard about that awesome rafting trip the school is taking this summer?” asked Victoria.
“Yeah, I heard something about it. It sounds like a lot of fun. Only a couple chaperones are going!” replied Emma.
“I know, it does sound great. We all should go. It would be a great way to kick off the summer. But you have to sign up today,” responded Victoria.
“That’s okay. I’ll go sign us up after lunch when I work in the office,” said Emma.
“That does sound like a great idea! I can’t wait for all the fun stuff we’re gonna do this summer!” exclaimed Jessica.
“What do you mean we?” asked Victoria. “Aren’t you ditching your friends to go off to Ireland or something this summer?”
“No, I’m not going to Germany. I decided that it was more important for me to stay here and experience our last summer before graduation with you guys,” answered Jessica.
“Jess, that’s great! I knew you would make the right decision. Now we can spend the whole summer together. It’s gonna be awesome!” responded Chad.
Emma then leaned over to Victoria.
“Yeah, right, she wants to spend time with us. She just wants to make sure Chad doesn’t come after me. You’ve seen the way he looks at me,” whispered Emma.
“No kidding. I’ll be surprised if she can even remember our phone numbers at the end of the summer!” answered Victoria.
Jessica finally interrupted their gossip.
“Well, since you guys are busy, I guess we’ll catch up with you later. Chad and I have to go study a little for our Trig test next period.”
“Yeah, okay,” answered Victoria.
“See ya,” responded Emma.
But little did Jessica know that once she and Chad were gone, Victoria turned to Emma and said, “See, it’s starting already. Jessica only has time for Chad. We’re not good enough for her anymore. You know what I think we should do?”
“What? You always have the best ideas? What?”
“We should start rumors about Jessica, since she doesn’t seem to care about us anymore. Then we should stop talking to her and not let her sit with us.”
“That’s a great idea! Then maybe she’ll regret always choosing Chad over us!”

Over the next few weeks, Jessica started to feel what it was like to be an outsider. Victoria and Emma wouldn’t even return her phone calls, and lately, she’d been hearing rumors that she was addicted to drugs. She was sure that it was Victoria who was behind it all. But, at least she had Chad, and they were getting to spend a lot more time together.

Her parents had been disappointed with her at first about not accepting the trip, but now they were beginning to understand her feelings about being left out. However, she was feeling pretty left out as it was, and her mom was starting to get worried.

“Jessica, are you feeling all right, sweetie?”
“Yeah, Mom. Why?”
“You just don’t seem like yourself lately. You never laugh or act goofy. I kinda even miss hearing you talk on the phone for hours. Are you sure everything is okay?”
Jessica finally broke down.
“Oh, Mom! Everything is a mess. I mean, I feel like I should be happy, but lately I just feel miserable. School is going fine and everything. It’s just that my friends have been completely ignoring me, and now Victoria is even spreading rumors that I do drugs!”
“That explains the lack of three certain girls running around my house lately. Why do you think they’re acting like that? I thought they’d be happy that you decided to stay here this summer.”
“I have no idea. I try to talk to them. I call them. They won’t even let Chad and me sit with them at lunch anymore. It’s like Chad is the only one I have now.”
“Oh, I see. Now I know what’s going on.”
“What? Please tell me! I’ve been trying to figure it out for the past two weeks!”
“Do Victoria or Emma have boyfriends?”
“No.”
“Do they ever really get asked out on dates?”
“Well, I guess not really.”
“So...”
“So, what? I still don’t get it.”
“They’re jealous, Jessica. It’s plain and simple jealousy. You have a boyfriend who cares about you, and you do a lot of things with him. They don’t have anyone like that, so they don’t want you to either. Their way of getting back at you, for what they feel is a betrayal, is by talking about you behind your back and making you feel like you’re missing out by not getting to hang out with them all the time.”
“You really think they’re jealous of me?”
“Definitely. You have so much going for you. I’ve seen it many times. You forget, I was once in high school myself.”
“So, do you think I should go over and try to talk to them about it?”
“Well, I guess you have to ask yourself if you really want to be friends with people that are willing to talk about you behind your back.”
“Well, when you put it that way, it doesn’t really seem like I’ve lost that much.”

From that point on, Jessica decided she wasn’t going to let Victoria and Emma control her life or her emotions. Sure, the rumors continued, but when people saw that the rumors didn’t really bother Jessica, they died down. Although she was trying not to let her former friends get to her, and everything with Chad was better than ever, she still felt like something was missing. But it wasn’t something she could dwell on because Chad was so upbeat all the time.
“Hey, Jess! Are you ready to go?”
“Yeah, just a minute. Let me grab my coat.”
“It’s so nice just to be able to go out to dinner with you alone. Before, it seemed like we always had to take Emma and Victoria with us or else I had to coerce two friends to come with us.”
“That’s true. Plus, you were beginning to run out of friends who could stand Victoria’s primping all the time!”
“I just love being with you. It’s like you’re the only person in the world that I need.”
“Oh, that’s sweet, Chad. But we both need other people, too. That’s what makes our lives interesting and full—being with a variety of people.”
“I don’t think that makes it interesting. Only you make it interesting.”
“Thanks, Chad.”

All through dinner, Jessica couldn’t stop thinking about what Chad had said in the car. She loved him, but sometimes she just felt so smothered by him. He was a wonderful person, but she needed contact with others and was really beginning to miss hanging out with other girls. She was sure she’d get used to it eventually, but it was going to be an adjustment.

Six months passed, and Jessica couldn’t believe it was actually their graduation day. She had always imagined that she and Victoria and Emma would all get ready together and sit together. But the reality of it was that all she had was Chad. She had always thought that graduation would be great and exciting, the culmination of twelve years of school. But as she got ready, she realized she felt nothing. She wasn’t sure what she was going to do after graduation, and she was kind of tired of going out with Chad every night. But whenever she thought about breaking up with him, she talked herself out of it because then she would be utterly and completely alone. Her thoughts were suddenly cut short.
“Jessica! Come on. We’re going to be late!” yelled her father.
“I’m coming! Just meet me in the car.”
Graduation went by without a hitch, but the gym was hot and stuffy, and Jessica just wanted to escape. As she sat there listening to her classmates talk about the next stage in their young lives, she couldn’t wait until it was over. Then she remembered that her parents were throwing her a party afterwards, and she was going to be swarmed by well-wishing relatives. The day just wasn’t going to get any better.

Once home, she changed out of the uncomfortable dress her mother had insisted she have for the big day and began making her rounds with the relatives. Luckily her boring conversation with Aunt Ethel was cut short when her mom made an announcement.

“If everyone could come into the dining room, we’ll cut the cake.”

Everyone made their way rapidly at the sound of food. Jessica went to the front and prepared to cut the first slice. Suddenly Chad appeared out of nowhere. She had even forgotten he was there.

“Before you cut the cake, Jessica, I have a question for you.”

“Okay, ask it. These people are getting restless for cake!”

“Okay. You know I love you, right?”

“Yes, I know you love me.”

“Well, then....” Chad got down on one knee. “Will you marry me?”

Jessica was too stunned for words and just stared at what Chad apparently called a ring that he was holding up to her. She suddenly felt dizzy, and everyone in the room was staring at her waiting for her to say “yes.” So even though she didn’t feel it in her heart...

“Yes. Yes, Chad, I’ll marry you.”

Chad picked her up off the ground and twirled her around.

“I knew you’d say yes!”

They spent the rest of the party celebrating the engagement. But Jessica just didn’t feel how she’d always dreamed she would on her engagement day. Neither of her best friends was there, and she just felt like everything was speeding by. She was standing still.

Months had gone by since the engagement, and almost all of the wedding plans were final. They were still arguing about what to do about college, though it was just a few weeks before the wedding date.

“But, Jess, I want you to be able to stay home with our kids, so you don’t really need to go to college right now,” said Chad.

“I want to get an education. What if something would happen to you and I was left with small children and no education and had to get a job?”

“Can’t you go to school later once I’ve finished and have a good job?”

“I guess I could.”

“I really think you should look into that job at the clothing store downtown. You’re so smart—I know you could make manager before long. And remember, it’s just until I get finished with college.”

“Okay. I’ll go for the interview, but I’m still not making any promises.”

“Thanks. All I’m asking is that you give it a try. We really need to think of each other as partners and learn to give and take a little.”
Jessica wondered to herself if they were both supposed to give, why did she feel like she was the only one giving? Chad seemed to have everything going for him, just as he wanted it.

The wedding went well, but Jessica was so nervous, she threw up three times before the ceremony. Everyone tried to tell her it was just pre-wedding jitters, but she knew in her heart something just wasn’t right. There should be more out there for her than endless days at The Limited clothing store. She often went to her mom with concerns over her new job.

“Mom, I just don’t know how I’m going to continue like this. It’s like every day is the same, and I never ever feel challenged.”

“Well, Jessica, we really wanted you to go to college, but you and Chad got married, and now you don’t really have a choice because someone has to support the two of you.”

“I guess I just feel like sometimes Chad uses me just for making money.”

“What do you mean?”

“We haven’t really been talking lately, and he’s been coming home later and later from school each day. I feel so left out. It’s like I’m some old lady, and everyone else my age is enjoying college life.”

“Jessica, life is all about decisions, and sometimes we have to pick ourselves up and learn from our mistakes. I think you should talk to Chad about how you’re feeling and talk to him about you going to college part time or taking some night classes.”

“That’s a good idea, Mom. I’ll talk to him tonight--if he comes home before I’m asleep.”

Chad came home late as usual, but Jessica was up, feeling extra agitated by his lack of attention to her.

“Hi,” she said.

“Oh, hey. I thought you’d already be in bed by now.”

“I was waiting up for my husband. Where were you?”

“There was a party at the apartments over by school. I went with some guys from my night class.”

“Why didn’t you call to tell me what you were doing? I’ve been worried about you.”

“Sorry, I didn’t realize you were my mom.”

“Chad, I think we really need to talk.”

“Can’t it wait until tomorrow? I’m really tired.”

“NO. It cannot wait until tomorrow. I’ve stayed up half the night waiting for you to get home so we could talk, and we’re going to talk NOW!”

“Okay. What is it, and can you make it fast, please?”

“I’m feeling really neglected right now, and I’d like to start taking some night classes at the college.”

“Why? You have a perfectly good job.”

“My job doesn’t challenge me, and I want to experience college, too.”

“Jess, it’s just not possible. We can’t afford for both of us to go to college right now.”
"How is it that you get to make all the financial decisions when you don’t make any money?"

"Whatever! This discussion is over. I’m sleeping on the couch."

After the “great” discussion with Chad, Jessica once again felt discouraged and reached out for more of her mom’s advice.

“So, Jessica, how have things been going with you and Chad? Did you get a chance to talk to him about school?” asked Jessica’s mom hopefully.

“Yeah. I tried a couple times. But every time I bring it up, he gets really mad and won’t really talk to me about it.”

“So what are you going to do?”

“I really don’t know, Mom. Our relationship is deteriorating right now. He stays out all hours, even on weekdays now, and then when he does finally come home, he’s so drunk you can smell him from a mile away.”

“Oh, Jess, I’m so sorry.”

“It’s not your fault. I just never saw any of this coming. It’s like he’s a different person now.”

“Things are bound to get better, honey. Just try to keep a positive attitude.”

Chad continued coming home late and then started not coming home at all several nights a week. Jessica decided she had had enough.

“Chad! Where have you been? You don’t even come home anymore, and when you do, you’re too drunk to even have a conversation with.”

“I don’t come home ‘cause then I get yelled at by my new mom!”

“Chad, I’m your wife. I just want to spend some time with you.”

“You’re boring now. Sorry, I need to be around people who like to have fun.”

“Then I’ll be at Mom and Dad’s if you need me.”

“I’m sure I won’t, but thanks for telling me anyway.”

Jessica spent the next few days in the comfort of her childhood home trying to get things straight in her mind and figure out what to do. Her mom and dad were the only people keeping her going. Without them, she’d be completely alone in the world. That morning, Jessica threw up... again. She’d been throwing up every morning since she got to her parents’ house.

“Jessica, do you think you’re okay? Maybe I should take you to the doctor,” said Jessica’s mom.

“No, Mom, I’m sure I’m fine. I think I’m just upset, and I probably have some sort of stomach virus.”

“Okay, but if you’re not better in two more days, I’m making an appointment with Dr. Boggs.”

Another week went by, and Jessica was still throwing up---only now it was at least three times a day, not just in the morning. She was trying to keep it from her parents, but moms can be pretty perceptive.
“Jessica, I wanted to let you know I made an appointment with Dr. Boggs for three today. I’ll go with you.”
“Mom, I told you I was fine.”
“Jessica, people who are fine do not throw up multiple times each day. You’re going to the doctor.”

So according to her mother’s plan, Jessica and her mom saw Dr. Boggs.
“Hi, Jessica. What seems to be the problem?” asked the kindly, elderly doctor.
“I’ve been throwing up a little,” answered Jessica.
“She’s been throwing up at least three times a day—not just a little,” interrupted Mrs. Wallace.
“Well, let’s just check out the common things first. Are you concerned with your weight?”
“No, I never really worried about it much.”
“Okay, so you drink excessively?”
“No, I don’t really drink at all.”
“Are you sexually active?”
“Well, I’m married, but haven’t really been active for about a month.”
“Do you use a form of birth control?”
“What are you trying to say? Do you think I’m pregnant??”
“Well, it would be consistent with the problems you’re having. Let’s just run a test and see what we find.”
“O...okay.”

The days leading up to her next meeting with Dr. Boggs were like torture. Jessica had been trying to reach Chad but could never seem to catch him, and he was choosing not to return her messages. But the day had finally come to go find out the results of her pregnancy test. At least one worry would be laid to rest.
“It’s good to see you again, Jessica. How are you feeling?” asked Dr. Boggs.
“Well, I still throw up, if that’s what you mean,” answered Jessica.
“I think I can tell you why that’s happening and help it get at least a little better.”
“What, what is it?”
“Well, I’m happy to be the one to inform you that you are two months pregnant!”
“What? You have to be kidding me! There’s no way!”
“Oh, there is a way, and you are definitely pregnant. I’d like to see you again in one month to monitor your progress. You can just make an appointment with the receptionist. Congratulations on being a mom!”
Jessica walked out dazed and walked right past her mom.
“Jessica! Wait up! What did he say?”
“What?”
“What did the doctor say was wrong?”
“I’m...I’m...he said...I’m pregnant.”
“Oh, sweetie! How exciting!”
“Yeah, exciting. Can we please just go?”
Jessica didn't say a single word the whole way home. Her mom tried talking to her, but it was like she was in another world. She just couldn't believe that this could actually be happening to her. This wasn't the way her life was supposed to turn out! She tried to reach Chad to let him know he was going to be a dad now but couldn't get hold of him. She decided she'd just go to their apartment and stay there until he came home.

After waiting in the almost empty apartment for eight hours, Jessica was contemplating leaving and going home when she heard the key turn in the lock.

"Jess! What are you doing here?" exclaimed Chad.
"You must've forgotten. I live here."
"You haven't been here for so long; I thought you lived with your parents now."
"I went there because I was tired of always being alone here. Anyway, I have something I need to tell you."
"What?"
"You may want to sit down."
"I'm fine. Just tell me."
"I'm pregnant."
"You're what?"
"You heard me. You're going to be a dad."
"You've got to be kidding me. Have you been sleeping around?"
"How could you ask me something like that?! You know I've only been with you."
"But we haven't been together in a month."
"Well, I'm two months along, so it must have happened when you still liked me."
"Jess, it's not that I don't like you. I'm just not ready for all of this."
"Then you shouldn't have married me."
"I guess you're right. I'll call a lawyer tomorrow. Since we haven't been married that long, we may be able to get it annulled."
"What do you mean? You're not even going to try to make it work with us?"
"I've been meaning to tell you. I've been seeing someone else recently, and I really think she's who I need to be with right now."
"You've been seeing someone? Your wife's telling you she's pregnant, and you need to go be with some floozie!"
"She's not a floozy! She was your friend!"
"What? Who is it?"
"You don't want to know. Forget I said anything."
"Oh, yes. I want to know!"
"Fine. It's Emma."
"I can't believe you! I never would have thought you could be like this. You and Emma deserve each other! Let me know about the lawyer--I'll be contacting mine, too."

The next few months were the hardest Jessica had ever endured. Jessica and Chad finally got the marriage annulled. It was nice to have that behind her, but it was harder to let go of the feelings of hurt and betrayal that riddled her day and night. She just didn't understand how she had gotten that way. Her life had been so full of promise
just a year ago, and now things had changed so much, she didn’t even recognize herself. At least her parents had been willing to take her in, but she really didn’t know what she would do once the baby was born. She felt so alone and helpless. Without an education, she was pretty much qualified to be a waitress. Some life for her unborn child.

Jessica thought to herself, “I guess all decisions in life are important after all, even the ones that seem small. I suppose I’ve learned from this experience, and that’s good. I know I’ll never settle for anything again in life, and I’ll always wonder . . . what would have happened if I’d accepted that trip to Germany??”
Questions to Ponder

1. What did you see happening to Jessica throughout this ending?
2. Were Emma and Victoria real friends to Jessica?
3. What did they do to make you think that?
4. Was Chad supportive of Jessica?
5. Do you think Jessica respected herself?
Ending Thoughts

Dear Reader,

I hope you enjoyed your journey with Jessica and learned from her story. Never forget to hold onto your own dreams. Thanks for joining Jessica on her voyage!

Your Friend,

Shannon Weiss

Shannon Weiss
Acknowledgments

Nothing great can be accomplished without the help of those around you. My thesis advisor, Mrs. Jean Amman, followed me through every step of this process. Without her help and guidance this work would not have been possible. Immense gratitude to my wonderful parents for always helping me believe I could do anything. Many thanks to my sister for reading my work and helping me be "hip" with the latest slang. And last but certainly not least, my thanks to my incredible fiancé for being supportive of anything I decide to put my mind to.
Shannon Weiss attends Ball State University majoring in Telecommunications-Sales. She will graduate in May of 2003 and is getting married June 28. She will then move to Davenport, Iowa to be with her husband, Casey Boggs. Shannon’s interest in adolescent novels stems from her desire when she was younger to read novels that would make her think about and reflect on her own life. She hopes her novel will inspire conversation and thought and help young people realize they shouldn’t let anyone take away their dreams.

“Never be afraid to shoot for the moon. If you miss, you’ll be among the stars!”
Bibliography

