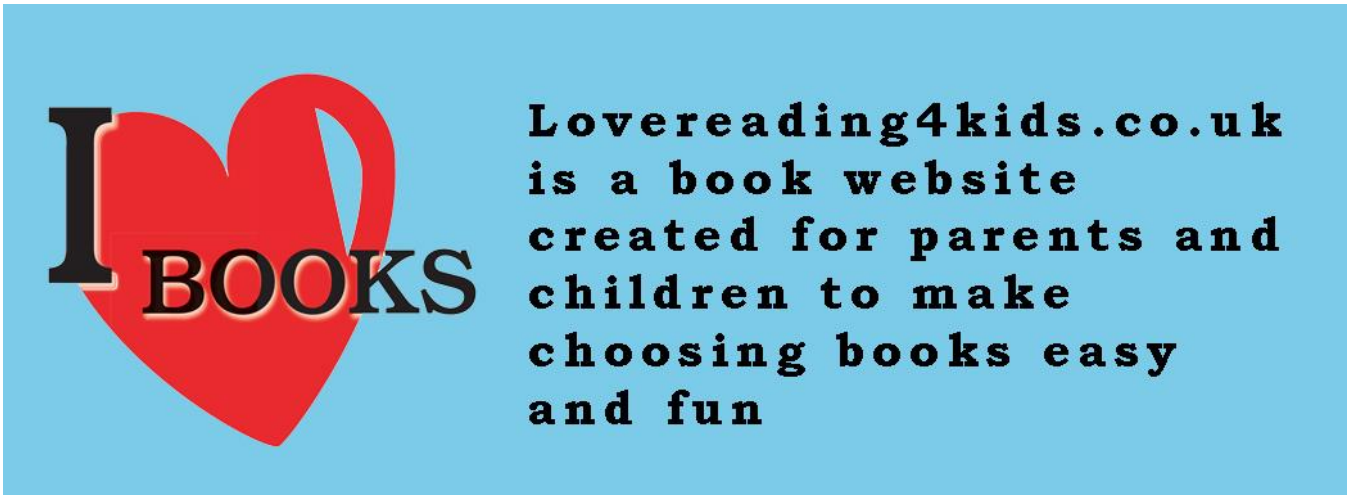


Opening extract from

Lucy Locket: Online Disaster

Written by

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Chapter One

To: morgan_lives_here@hotmail.com

From: lucylocket@freemail.co.uk

Hey, Morgan!

How are you? I miss you SO MUCH, especially as today has been the absolute WORST day of my life. Ready – grab some jelly beans, a huge handful – because here comes a reallllly long email. Please read it carefully – you need to hear EVERY DETAIL and then give me some advice on how I am supposed to survive this year!

☹☹☹

So, today was my first day at school since we moved back to England, and I wish it had been my last. Seriously, I WISH I WERE NEVER GOING BACK TO THAT AWFUL PLACE. You'll think I'm exaggerating, but I'm totally not. Let me talk you through the nightmare, step by step. Ready? OK, so Mom dropped me off at school and I felt super nervous. We have to wear these really gross uniforms: a weird gold blouse (can you imagine? Gold!), navy blue skirt and blazer, and worst of all these clumpy black lace-up shoes. All of which really helped my nerves – not. How can you wear your confidence on your sleeve when your sleeve is made of scratchy navy polyester? Ew!

In the school office I met a girl from my class called Hermione, who is supposed to be my 'guardian angel'. It's her job to show me around and help settle me in. She's pretty nice, though very quiet. Chinese with this amazingly shiny black hair and super-straight bangs (fringe here!). And, yes, she LOVES Harry Potter. Like, A LOT. The school looks like a museum – dark staircases and corridors, old wooden desks and furniture, grotty bathrooms (oops! Loos or toilets over here), no water fountains

or vending machines. I'm telling you, it's like something out of Downton Abbey.

We have a really nice English and form teacher called Miss Piercy. You would love her: she's young and kind of ditzy – she was wearing bright yellow tights (I'm talking fluorescent). The bad news from her was that we are going to have to do a lot of public speaking – e.g. book reports and debating. The idea of this makes me feel sick to my stomach, and you know why that is! At break-time Hermione gave me the rundown on the others in our class, including some girl named Dakota, who is apparently the queen bee in our year, and Dakota's friends. Dakota is annoyingly gorgeous – she looks a bit like Kate Middleton with long, swoopy brunette hair to die for.

SO WHY IS THIS THE WORST DAY OF YOUR LIFE? you are asking. *It doesn't sound so bad.*

Just wait for it, my Yankee friend! After lunch Hermione had gone to get something from her locker and I was desperate to

use the bathroom so I rushed right at the door without really checking and a BOY walked out.

'Just where do you think you're going?' he sneered at me.

'I-I-I . . .' I stammered, and dashed into the Girls' room instead.

Awkward! When I finally came out, the bell had rung and I had to race to get to my next class. I was half jogging, half looking at the map Hermione had drawn for me when suddenly I tripped on a bucket and mop standing in the corridor, slipped in the water and fell – *KERSPLATT!* – right on my butt – or bum as they call it over here. It was just outside the classroom and everyone stared at me. I wanted to melt into the floor but eventually I got up and hobbled into class . . . with a big wet patch on the back of my skirt. Morgan, we're talking ENORMOUS. And enormously DAMP.

'Look! She's wet herself!' cackled the Dakota girl. 'New girl makes a splash!' and everyone laughed.

This made me SUPER angry and without thinking I opened my mouth to yell, 'I fell and it really hurt, actually, but thanks for the sympathy.' Instead – three guesses what happens next? Yep . . . my little problem kicked in, worse than I've had it in ages.

'I fell and it r-r-r-r-r-r, rr-r-r-r-r-r,' I stammered. I took a breath and tried again. 'It r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r. R-r-r-r-r-r –' I couldn't get the word out, and at that point I gave up.

There was a shocked silence and I just stood there going bright red. Everyone was staring at me, and Dakota even had her phone out, probably texting everyone who hadn't seen it with their own eyes. I don't know which was worse, the major stammering incident or the epic dampness. Either way, I will never live this down! Hermione tried to make me feel better by saying the stain had dried out and you could hardly notice it. But I could tell that even she was shocked by how bad my stammer had gotten and basically I gave up trying to talk to anyone for the rest of the day.

Now I'm hiding in my room feeling sorry for myself – told Dad I had lots of homework but I think he knows something is wrong.

☹☹☹

Loads of love from your miserable, embarrassed bestie,

Lucy XoX

❤❤❤

Lucy pressed 'send' and stared blankly at the screen for a couple of minutes. She wanted Morgan to reply immediately and say something to make her feel better, but because of the time difference between England and America she knew that was unlikely.

'Lucy! Dinner!' called her mum from downstairs.

Lucy sighed, shut down her computer and gave her fluffy blue-grey cat, Foghorn, a despondent pat on the head. Just then her phone buzzed on her bedside table. Yes! A message from Morgan!



Morgan: Wait. You had to wear a GOLD shirt????????

Lucy giggled – Morgan was probably messaging her from under her desk at school – and tapped out a reply.

Lucy: UNFORTUNATELY YES.

Morgan: No wonder you're stressed 😖



Lucy: Lol

Morgan: Sorry bout your terrible day.

Lucy: Thanks, M

Morgan: Hey, do u know what would make u feel SO much better?

Lucy: Um, eating a hundred Krispy Kremes? 😊



Morgan: Sure . . . until you puked! You know what else?

Lucy: I know what you're thinking . . . and I disagree!

'Dinner! Is Now. Served!'

Lucy: Mom calling me 4 dinner. Gotta go but spk in abit if u can?

Morgan: Sure! We can continue to talk about u know what ☺

Lucy rolled her eyes with a smile at the last message – she knew what her friend was thinking and it WAS NOT going to happen – then chucked her phone on her bed and trudged down the stairs and into the kitchen.

'There she is! I hardly saw you after school,' said her dad. 'You just zoomed up straight to your room.'

'Was everything OK today, sweetie?' asked Lucy's mum gently. 'I had such a busy day at work, but I was

thinking about you the whole time.'

'Like I told Dad, it w-was . . . it was fine,' Lucy said, pouring herself a glass of squash and avoiding her mum's eye. Her good mood was evaporating fast. 'Hey, Maggie, want some juice?' she said, trying to change the conversation. Her little sister nodded eagerly and banged her plastic *Frozen* cup on the table.



'Well, we look forward to hearing about everything,' said her mum, her concerned voice starting to get on Lucy's nerves. 'I'm not saying you *did* have a bad day but if, you know, it wasn't great, don't worry – we've all been there.'

'I D-D-DIDN'T HAVE A B-B-BAD DAY!' yelled Lucy, suddenly exploding. 'Why is everyone so interested in my life anyway? C-c-can we just eat this l-l-l-lasagne please?'

She caught her mum giving her dad an anxious glance, and she knew what THAT was about. Her stammer. It only got really bad when she was feeling stressed out or anxious, and, while Lucy was trying to brush the day's

events under the carpet, her stammer was telling the whole family loud and clear that something awful had happened. She wished she could go back upstairs and continue messaging Morgan – at least her best friend made her laugh.

Her dad seemed to understand that she didn't want to talk, and helpfully started a monologue about which *Toy Story* film was the best one, and as soon as Lucy could escape she raced back upstairs.

Lucy: I'm back!



Morgan: Hey girl, just in the lunch room having those curly fries you luv

Lucy: DO NOT TEASE, M. I don't think they have curly fries here ☹

Morgan: How was dinner?



Lucy: Still in bad mood and Mom making it worse

Morgan: That sucks. You need cheering up . . . time for u know what!

Lucy: Ha ha. Not happening!

Morgan: Go on . . . Make a vlog, put it online and I can watch with the rest of the gang 😄

Lucy: TOO SHY

Morgan: You could at least try . . . COME ON, LUCE ☺

Lucy: Sorry, just not in the mood ☹



Morgan: You were great that time you guested on my vlog

Lucy: I didn't exactly do much, M! We were just fooling around making pancakes, remember?

Morgan: U were a natural!

Lucy: You make amazing vlogs, M, but I'd be awful on my own ☹

Morgan: TOTALLY DISAGREE. Anyway I gotta go . . . Speak soon?

Lucy: Yeah. Wish me luck for tmrw 😵



Morgan: SENDING EXTRA-CURLY CURLY FRIES OF LUCK XOX

Lucy sat cross-legged on her bed, staring into space. She felt tired and a bit annoyed – Morgan was such a great friend, but why did she think that making a stupid vlog would fix everything? Lucy had already

embarrassed herself enough for one day!

No, she decided, the only way she would survive the term at Downton Abbey would be to keep her head down, walk slowly to prevent herself from slipping in giant puddles and avoid speaking completely. Foghorn stepped into her lap and gave her a pitying look. He was right – her plan wasn't exactly a recipe for fun and popularity – but it was safe and, Lucy figured, it was her only option. She went to brush her teeth, walking past the unused digital camera Morgan had given her as a goodbye present. She patted it fondly. She missed her crazy friend! But vlogging wasn't going to help her get through school again tomorrow. Mission Invisible commenced here.

