

Scandals, Rumors, Lies (Canterwood Crest)

By Jessica Burkhart



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In the next two installments of the four-book arc that began with City Secrets, the tide has turned at the elite Canterwood Crest Academy....Will Sasha Silver dethrone Heather Fox and become the school's Queen Bee? Packed with BFF scandal, lying roommates, secrets between teammates, and more, these are two of the most dramatic Canterwood books ever!





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Scandals, Rumors, Lies (Canterwood Crest) By Jessica Burkhart Bibliography

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Jessica Burkhart (a.k.a. Jessica Ashley) is the author of the Unicorn Magic and Canterwood Crest series, which you can learn more about at CanterwoodCrest.com. She is a former equestrian who writes from her apartment in Tennessee. (It's not the size of Crystal Castle, but Jess tries to decorate like a princess!) Jess's aura would be hot pink and she loves glittery things. If she had a unicorn, it would be named Sparkle. Visit Jess at JessicaBurkhart.com.

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1 DECISIONS, DECISIONS

ONE BOX TO GO.

I kneeled in front of a cardboard box that I'd shoved in the corner of Brit's—well, *our*—room. It was the only box left to open after I'd moved into Orchard Hall two weeks ago. I stared at the scissors in my hand, clenching them and waiting for the chest crush to come when I thought about how I'd moved out of my old room. The space I'd shared with my ex(?)—best friend and roommate, Paige Parker.

But, instead, the sadness was only a twinge. Fourteen days wasn't enough for us to even begin to reevaluate our friendship, but it *was* enough to allow me to realize that I liked living with Brit.

And I was ready to unpack the last box and make this room completely mine, too.

I slid the scissors along the tape at the top of the box and pulled out summer clothes that I hadn't needed to unpack right away since it was mid-October. The tank tops, shorts, and T-shirts fit into the top drawer that Brit had cleared out for me in our dark wooden dresser. I slid the drawer closed and stood back, hands on my hips, surveying the room as *mine* for the first time since I'd moved in.

The room was bigger than my old one and had glossy hardwood floors, a whiteboard with notes written in neon-colored markers, and soft cream-colored eyelet curtains that swayed gently in the breeze through the slightly open windows. Above the window panes, Brit had twinkly star-shaped lights that made the coziest shadows at night. My feet sank into the pink plush carpet and I sat down on my desk chair.

A key turned in the doorknob and Brit, carrying a FedEx box, stepped inside. She looked every inch runway-ready in her tall black boots with skinny jeans tucked into them and a ribbed, plum-colored V-neck sweater. She may have looked it, but Brit wasn't from New York City like many of the students at Canterwood Crest—she was a small-town girl like me. A fact that had definitely fast-tracked our bond.

"Hey, Sash," she said. Her smile brightened her almond-shaped eyes when she looked at me. Her glossy, long black hair was in a side braid.

"Hey, looks like you got the box you were waiting for," I said.

"Yep!" Brit put the box on the floor, nodding. "My parents got us Halloween decorations for our room. Stephanie had them in her office and I almost ripped the box out of her hands."

I laughed, pulling my light brown hair into a loose ponytail. "Halloween is our favorite holiday."

"And hello—it's in two weeks!" Brit brushed her bangs out of her eyes. "Since it is a Sunday and all of our homework is done, want to decorate?"

"Hmmm ..." I pretended to think about it. "Yes!"

Brit and I kneeled on the floor beside the box and she sliced it open. She pulled out a layer of black and orange tissue paper. Plastic spider confetti sprinkled onto the carpet and we giggled. A note was under the layer of paper.

Brit—Happy Halloween! Dad and I hope you and your new roommate like the decorations. We miss you! Xoxo, Mom and Dad

"Let's see what we've got," Brit said. She reached into the box and started handing me items. There was a giant cardboard cutout skeleton to hang on our door, a set of plastic tombstones with funny names like "Barry A. Live," "Reed N. Weep," and "Otta B. Alive." There were two pairs of fake wax fangs and a giant bagful of mixed gum and candy bars. I wanted to dive into the orange M&M's immediately.

Brit handed me a giant rubber spider with an orange sticker that said SQUEEZE ME! on its stomach. I did, making it squeak. Brit and I laughed. I looked at the spider, unable to either stop the flashbacks to last Halloween or stop thinking about how different things were now. Last year, Callie, my ex-BFF, and I had been dressing miniature horses up in costumes for a charity auction. Paige, my other BFF, and I had spent days leading up to Halloween watching funny-slash-scaryish (read: *no* blood!) Halloween movies and eating a ton of candy corn. This year, well, Callie hadn't been a part of my life for a while and that had been painful enough. But now, with the possibility of losing Paige completely, there were moments when I didn't know what to do. But having Brit definitely made things easier.

"Sash, isn't this cool?" Brit handed me a sheet of vinyl window decals. They had jack-o'-lanterns with different faces—some creepy, some silly—plus bats, ghosts, black cats, and a few stars.

"These are so fun. They're going to look great."

Brit got up and plugged in a pumpkin that looked real. She pushed a button on the cord and a warm glow came out of its eyes, mouth, and nose. It looked perfect on our small end table.

"Love it," I said. "I'm going to start the window clings."

I took a sheet from Brit and pulled up the blinds, letting sunshine filter through the glass. Standing back, I stared at the window, deciding where to place each cling. This was obviously *very* serious. A laughing ghost fit at the corner of the window, angled and looking just right.

Brit and I spent another hour arranging the decorations exactly as we wanted them. We laughed and chatted the entire time as if we'd been BFFs our whole lives. Some days, I'd questioned the decision to move out of my room with Paige and there had been nights that I'd been awake for hours wondering if I'd made the right decision. But now, looking over at Brit and feeling comfortable and stress-free in my own space, I *knew* I'd made the right decision.

"And I think we're done," Brit said. She stepped back and surveyed the room, hands on her hips.

"I think you're right!"

The room was spectacularly spooky with orange, black, and silver in every corner.

I stood, a slight chill making me shiver, and thought about how different this Halloween was going to be from last year.

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