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The Ask Amy Green series
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Boy Trouble
Summer Secrets
Bridesmaid Blitz
Love and Other Drama-Ramas
Dancing Daze
Wedding Belles

WEDDING
BELLES

Sarah Webb



WALKER
BOOKS

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For Mags Walsh with love and respect.
A true champion of children's books.



Dear Reader,

When my sister, Emma, got married, I was one of her bridesmaids. I wore a turquoise lace dress and, over my shoulders, a little white cardigan with sky-blue flowers embroidered around the neck.

It was a wonderful day, full of joy and laughter. At the reception me and my two sisters (Emma, and Kate, who was also a bridesmaid) sang into champagne bottles along with the ABBA tribute band and then danced till our feet hurt. Weddings are very special events and it has been so much fun writing about Sylvie and Dave's wedding (Amy's mum and stepdad).

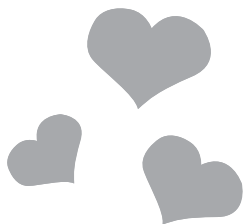
This is the very last book about Amy and all her friends and family. I've loved every minute of writing her story, and I'll treasure Amy and Clover in my heart for ever. It's hard to say goodbye to characters that you love, but it's time for me to invent some new characters and to bring *them* alive.

Thank you for reading Amy and Clover's adventures. I hope you have enjoyed reading them as much as I have enjoyed writing them. Thank you to everyone who has written to me over the past few years. I treasure all your letters and emails. And look out for my brand-new series in the future.



Best always,
Sarah XXX

Chapter 1



“What about white doves?” Clover taps her pink gel pen against her teeth. “No, I’ve got it – butterflies! When Dave and Sylvie are saying their vows, we open a box and *voilà!* Out flutter hundreds of real, live butterflies. I saw it in a movie once.” Sylvie is my mum and Dave is her fiancé, soon-to-be husband, if we ever manage to get through our mega-long wedding to-do list.

We’re sitting on the small red sofa in my crazy aunt Clover’s “office”, which is basically a glorified shed at the bottom of her garden. Clover’s waving her hands in the air and getting completely carried away with this whole wedding-planning thing. Her large pink notebook is jogging up and down on her knee.

“Clover, that’s really cruel,” I say. “And where would we get butterflies in April exactly?” Mum and Dave’s wedding is on Tuesday 30th April, my fourteenth

birthday. Mum asked whether I minded them hijacking my special day, as it was the only day between April and June that the hotel was available, and I said of course not. I mean what else could I say? At least I'll never forget their wedding anniversary!

"The Internet, of course," Clover says simply, as if it's perfectly normal to buy insects online. "But maybe you're right – it is a bit cruel. And doves might poop on the guests' heads." She pauses, her eyes twinkling. "I wonder if you can train birds to do droppings on particular people's heads. Can you imagine Shelly's face?" She acts out Shelly being pooped on, her eyes popping wide, her mouth pulled into a dramatic wail. "My hair," she squeals, taking off Shelly's high-pitched, slightly breathy voice perfectly. "Art, I'm being attacked. Save me!" She clutches my arm.

Clover was dead set against Mum inviting Art, my dad, and Shelly, his new-ish wife, to the wedding, but Mum said that in the "spirit of reconciliation" they both had to be there. Dave just shrugged and said whatever Sylvie wanted was fine by him.

I agreed with Mum. Shelly isn't that bad these days and my little sis, Gracie, just has to be there. Shelly has already bought Gracie's outfit, and I can't wait to see her in the adorable teeny-tiny pink taffeta dress.

"Dad's terrified of birds," I remind Clover. "He'd be straight out of the church screaming as soon as he spotted one."

Clover grins. "Doves it is, then." She's never had much time for Dad. I know he can be a bit self-obsessed

sometimes, but he's still my dad. I frown at her.

"Only kidding, Beanie. Settle your tights." She gives a raggedy sigh. "This whole wedding business is tougher than I ever imagined. Who knew there were so many pernicky details to decide on?" She stares down gloomily at her notebook.

"I hear you," I say. "But at least Mum moved the date forwards. I know the olds keep saying we can't possibly arrange everything in two months, but are they crazy? Eight weeks is for ever."

"True, but after everything that's happened, I want it to be practically perfect in every way. She is my only sis, after all."

Mum and Dave were supposed to be getting married in February, on Valentine's Day, but the date crept nearer and nearer, and Mum still hadn't organized her dress, the food, the invitations, the flowers, the cake... The list was endless. When Clover finally confronted her about it, Mum broke down and admitted that she was freaking out about the wedding plans (not for the first time either) and needed more time to get everything sorted. So Clover offered to help, and dragged me in as her matrimonial assistant. Now Mum is leaving everything, except choosing her wedding dress, to us. And Clover has cake and pink champagne on the brain. I'm well used to Clover's madcap schemes, though.

As well as attending college to study English and History of Art, she works as an agony aunt for *The Goss* magazine, solving all the problem letters that readers

send in, sometimes in person. We've helped readers with boy dilemmas (Wendy), parental problems (Romie), brother worries (Dominique) and bullying (Alanna). It feels good to be able to help people and I love spending time with Clover. Mum says that Clover is a force of nature, and I know exactly what she means. Life is never boring with Clover around.

"There's only one thing for it, if we want to get this wedding organized soon," Clover says, sitting up a little. "I was hoping to avoid dragging you into this, but desperate times call for desperate measures. Bean Machine, what are you doing on Saturday?"

I narrow my eyes. What's she up to now?

"It depends," I say carefully.

"Coola boola! Bridal Heaven, here we come."

"Bridal Heaven? What's that?"

"Only the biggest wedding fair in the country. Nuptial nirvana, Beanie, old girl. I have free tickets through a contact at *The Goss*. We'll blitz the place and get the final details of this wedding schmedding sorted once and for all, including Dave's groom's outfit."

I put my head in my hands and groan. "A wedding fair sounds appalling, Clover."

"You could always drag Seth along for the ride."

"Are you bonkers?"

"Frightened he might propose, Love Bean?"

"No! He's fourteen. As if."

"You're right. Seth's too young to be of any use – and he's not Dave's size. But don't worry. I have a dastardly plan, Batman."

“Why does that make me very, very nervous?”

She hoots with laughter. “You love my dastardly plans, Beanie, admit it.”

I sigh, then smile. She’s right. Even though her plans sometimes hit elephant-sized glitches, largely they rock. As I said, life’s a lot more interesting with Clover around!

Chapter 2



On Wednesday, the sun is shining, for a change, so it's warm enough to hang out by the hockey-pitch steps, our usual haunt, during break. I head outside to catch the gang as they come out of class.

My best friend, Mills, is waiting for me by the door, but there's no sign of our boyfriends, Seth or Bailey, yet. They're also best friends, although being boys, they'd never admit it. Mills looks a little glum. Her mouth is turned down, and her eyes are dull and lifeless.

"Hey, Mills, you OK?" I ask her.

She shrugs. "I guess."

It's not at all like Mills to be down. She's usually annoyingly chirpy in school. She's one of those strange people who actually get a kick out of learning random stuff about volcanoes, etc.

"Come on, what's up, Jelly Tot?" I ask.

She shrugs again. "Nothing."

"Tell me right now or I'll tickle it out of you." I poke her in the side. She's ultra-ticklish. You only have to wiggle a finger and say the word "Tickle" for her to wince and squirm.

She swats my hand away, scowling. "Stop! I'm not in the mood, Amy."

"Sounds serious. Is it Bailey?"

"No."

"Something at home?"

She shakes her head. I'm not really surprised that nothing's wrong at home. Mills has the calmest, most settled home life of anyone I've ever met, although her sister, Claire, did have some ups and downs recently. She's a ballerina, based in Budapest in Hungary. She's had some problems with bullying, but I thought that was all sorted out.

"Is it Claire?" I ask.

"No, Claire's great. Madly in love with Péter and getting all the best solo parts."

"What, then?"

Before Mills can answer, Annabelle Hamilton and her D4 gang pour out of the door in a waft of sickly sweet perfume and grind to a halt beside us. The D4s are the mean girls in our school, all dyed-blond hair ironed into submission, orange Fake Bake flesh, and super-superior attitudes. And Annabelle's their Queen Bee.

"Loser alert." Annabelle sniffs the air around Mills. "And, like, what is that horrible stench? Smells like a kid who's wet her knickers. I know – it's fear. Is it because

of the Full-up Liberty practice today? Mills, you'd better not wobble and fall off again like you did last week." She gives a nasty sneering laugh right in Mills's face.

Annabelle and Mills are both on the All Saints, the school cheerleading squad. They're supposed to be teammates. There used to be a dozen or so All Saints, but now there are only five – the D4s, Mills and Nora-May Yang, an American girl who's quite new to the school. Annabelle and her cronies have driven everyone else off the squad. No wonder.

"So much for cheerleader solidarity," I snap at Annabelle, even though I have no idea what a Full-up Liberty is. How dare she be cruel to Mills?

Annabelle wrinkles her nose. "Cheerleader *what*?"

"Look it up, Mensa-meltdown," I say. "It means sticking together."

"Don't mess with me, Green," Annabelle says with a scowl. "You'll regret it." She flounces off with her groupies tittering behind her before I get the chance to say anything else.

When I turn back to Mills, her face is pale and she looks a bit shaken. "Thanks for sticking up for me, Ames," she says. "But you shouldn't cross Annabelle at the moment. She's been a nightmare since Hugo dumped her last week. Bailey said Hugo gave her the flick to concentrate on his game. Apparently she was a big distraction." Hugo Hoffman is the captain of the school rugby team and Bailey plays left wing. One of the reasons that Mills likes being an All Saint is that she gets to cheer Bailey on when he's playing.

"Being dumped for a rugby ball has got to hurt," I say. "Is this what's worrying you? Annabelle and the abominable All Saints? Why don't you try something different instead? Basketball or cricket. And what on earth is a Full-up Liberty?"

Mills smiles. "It's an American cheerleading stunt that Miss Mallard has adapted for our five-person squad. One girl is back stop. Then three girls – the base – lift another girl up in the air. The girl on top, me, is called the flyer. I'm supposed to balance on one leg on their hands, giving a High V."

"A High V?"

She demonstrates: head up, arms stretching into the air in a "V" shape, fists clenched. She actually looks impressive. Strong and majestic, like the Statue of Liberty.

"I've got really good balance," she continues, "and I know I could nail it if Nina and Sophie kept steady. I wobbled and fell backwards last week. It was lucky Miss Mallard caught me on the way down. I could have broken something. Annabelle is back stop, which means she's supposed to stand behind the base and catch me if I fall. She must have taken her eyes off me. And I'm sure she told Nina and Sophie to unbalance the stunt."

"Annabelle's determined to be flyer instead of me. She's been picking on me all week. I think she's trying to get me to leave the squad. It's not fair. I'm a much better cheerleader than she is and I don't want to give up now. I love the actual cheering and I really want to win Nationals. It's all the politics that goes on behind the scenes that I hate."

I smile. "I'm liking this sparky, competitive side, Mills. Who knew?"

"It's not funny. I could have been seriously hurt last week."

"Sorry, you're right. So what are you going to do about it? You can't let Annabelle win, but you can't injure yourself either."

She gives a noisy sigh. "I don't know. Nora-May was the only one who stood up to Annabelle and she had a bad landing after a Full-up Liberty a few weeks ago and sprained her ankle. She's out of action for a while, so not only do I have to face the D4s alone but we're also a girl down. Miss Mallard is looking for a replacement, but so far she hasn't had any luck. It's terrible timing. We have the trials for the Nationals in a few weeks. All that work for nothing."

I think for a second, then ask, "How hard is a Full-up Liberty?"

"Honestly? Easy-peasy. Especially Nora-May's bit. She just has to push me into the air with Nina and Sophie's help. I reckon even Alex could do it if he was a bit taller." Alex is my two-year-old brother.

Right, I know what I have to do. I take a deep breath and resign myself to my fate. "Mills, I'll replace Nora-May," I say, trying not to sound too gloomy about it. "As a feminist in training, cheerleading is against my religion. However, I'm prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice for my best buddy."

"Seriously? You'd really do that for me?"

"If it stops you breaking your neck and gets you

through to Nationals, then, yes. But only until Nora-May's ankle is better. Then I'll happily give her back her slot."

Mills squeals and jumps up and down on the spot. Then she gives me a hug. "You're amazing, Ames, do you know that? You can come to training with me today after school. Miss Mallard will be thrilled I've found a replacement. But you know you'll have to wear a flippy skirt and shake pompoms, right?"

I bury my head in my hands. "Don't mention the dreaded pompoms."

"What's this about pompoms?" Seth asks.

I peel my hands off my face and smile at him. He's walking towards us with Bailey.

"Hi, Seth. How was maths?" I ask.

He tips his head to one side. "Why are you trying to change the subject, Amy?"

"Might as well tell them. They'll find out soon enough," Mills says. "Boys, we have rather interesting news. Amy's going to join the All Saints!"

"But you think cheerleading is ridiculous," Seth says. Then he adds quickly, "Sorry, Mills."

Mills smiles. "That's OK. I know she thinks it's daft – which is why she's the most incredible friend in the whole entire universe!"

"I'm only joining to protect Mills from the other pompom poodles." I explain to Seth and Bailey what's been happening at cheerleading practice.

Bailey's face darkens. "You should have said something, Mills," he says, brushing Mills's hair back off

her face so that he can see into her eyes.

After giving Mills a hug, Bailey presses his forehead gently against hers. He whispers something in her ear and she smiles. They're locked in their own little world while Seth and I stand beside them awkwardly.

We're not like Mills and Bailey, you see. We don't hold hands walking down the school corridor. We don't have to sit beside each other in shared classes. We don't finish each other's sentences or text each other incessantly. And we don't spend every waking minute with each other.

Bailey often goes back to Mills's house after school for dinner. His dad, Finn Hunter – yes, *that* Finn Hunter, the celebrity chef – is away a lot. His grampa, Mac, is a chef too (but not a celebrity one) and so works evenings. They all live together in Mac's house in Bray. It is a bit of an unusual arrangement as Finn is not Mac's son, but Bailey seems to love it. Mills goes round there a lot too. Way more than I go to Seth's house.

Don't get me wrong, I love Seth – he's amazing – but I think seeing him all the time would be suffocating. I'm more like Clover than Mills, in that I need my space. Clover adores her rock-star boyfriend, Brains, but is also happy to fly solo, which is just as well as he's away touring a lot.

I think giving each other space suits Seth too. He and Polly, his mum, spend a lot of time together. There's only the two of them and they're pretty close. Polly was really sick last year – she had breast cancer – and for a while Seth was really scared he was going to lose her.

She's better now, thank goodness. She's back working too. She's a photographer, and Seth goes on jobs with her sometimes to help with the equipment, which is actually pretty heavy.

Yet, despite all this, as I watch Mills and Bailey, sealed in their own little bubble of love, something claws at the pit of my stomach. They start kissing and my shoulders tense up and my hands screw into balls. *You're jealous, Amy*, a little voice inside my head tells me. *Admit it!*

"Amy?" Seth pulls at my arm. "Why are you staring at Mills and Bailey with that weird look on your face? You've got to be used to their PDAs by now, surely?"

"Sorry, I was miles away. In cheerleading land." I give a theatrical groan.

"Having second thoughts?" he asks. "It's not too late to back down."

"Mills is no match for Annabelle Hamilton, Seth, you know that. The mandarin-faced one will chew her up and spit her out. Mills needs me, if only to catch her when she falls. And from what Mills was saying about the All Saints' shenanigans, I may mean that literally."

Seth smiles at me. "Which is why you're worth millions of a girl like Hammy Hamilton." It's his nickname for her. He blows his cheeks out like a hamster, making me laugh. "But let's forget about the D4s. They're not worth our time. Hockey-pitch steps? I have some new tunes on my iPod. Want a listen?"

"Absolument. Anything to stop me thinking about the pompoms."

"Hey, lovebirds," Seth says loudly to Mills and

Bailey, who are still stuck to each other like limpets.
“Stop smooching. We’re out of here.”

I wait for Seth to take my hand or put his arm around my shoulders, but he doesn’t, and we walk towards the steps side by side, bumping shoulders like old friends.