

Beatrice's

Fortune

Abby Richmond

Other books by Abby Richmond

Very Berry

Starring Eliza

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To all my friends and family.
Thanks for supporting me!

One

*All you need is love. But a little chocolate
now and then doesn't hurt.
- Charles M. Schulz*

My alarm clock starts beeping in my ear.

I roll over to turn it off. Ugh. I forgot I needed to wake up earlier today. I have a customer who needs what they ordered by later today, and I didn't have time to make it last night.

I scan the note my customer left me that instructs me on how the fortune-teller should look. My customer this time is Addison Parker, one of my friends from school. Her note informs me she wants the fortune-teller to be jumbo size (she promised she'd pay me the next day) and needs to be blue, which is her mom's favorite color. It's her mom's birthday tomorrow, and Addison needs a quick, inexpensive present.

I cut a piece of light blue paper into a perfect square. I fold and crease, fold and crease, until the paper forms into what I've made a million times before. I inspect my neat row of metallic pens and choose one of the nicest, the one that writes in deep sapphire ink. While I make the fortune-teller, my

dog, Ivy, licks my toes.

Yes, my business is making and selling fortune-tellers. I know it sounds really, incredibly stupid, but it's a lot of fun for me, and people love buying them. I even have business cards that I got for my birthday one year. I stick one of them in the fortune-teller as I finish. I make fortune-tellers so often now that I can whip one up in less than two minutes.

New fortunes to use are always running through my mind. I've never run out of little messages to write in my fortune-tellers. Ever.

I cap the blue pen and put it back with my fortune-teller supplies. I get dressed, brush my teeth, wash my face, and eat breakfast in a hurry. The bus will be here soon, and even though I woke up earlier this morning, I know I'll just barely make it. I always just barely make the bus, no matter how hard I try to be on time. It's sort of, almost, a part of me.

My older sister, Nell, grins at me as she walks out the door before I do. I stick my tongue out at her. Most of my friends don't get along well with their siblings, but Nell and I are only a year apart and we almost never fight.

I don't fight much with Cody, either, my brother in kindergarten. He's just too sweet. Cody's really shy and quiet. Today, his light brownish hair

is sticking up in the back and his green-gray eyes are droopy. He always looks like that right after he wakes up. Cody gives me a hug before I leave. “Love you, Cody,” I say, shout goodbye to my parents, and fly out the door.

When I am on the bus, I sit down next to one of my best friends, Quinn Walters.

“Hey,” she says as I slide in next to her. “What’s up?”

“Not much. What about you?”

Quinn frowns. “My morning started out okay. I had a really good cinnamon bun for breakfast, fresh from Emeline’s. But then it was all ruined.”

Did I mention my best friend is a little bit melodramatic?

“Ashlie said she thought my shoes looked tacky.” Quinn glances down at her bright pink sneakers with the neon yellow laces. “I told her she should mind her own beeswax.”

“Good for you. And by the way, I love your sneakers. Don’t listen to dumb Ashlie Cheese, remember?”

The reason why we call Ashlie Simmons Ashlie Cheese is a long story that begins at the first day of seventh grade.

The two us, Ashlie and me, were sitting next to each other in Ms. Paulsen’s class because her last name started with *S*, and mine started with *T*.

I smiled wide at the new girl when Ms. Paulsen stepped out of the classroom. “Hi,” I said. “What’s your name? I’m Bea—”

“My name is Ashlie Bree Simmons.” The new girl said each syllable slowly, as if I were a three-year-old and couldn’t comprehend what she was saying.

She cut me off! If I were new, I would never act like that to someone who was trying to be friendly.

I tried again. “Well, hi. Um, I’m Beatrice Taylor.”

“Your name is *Beatrice*?” Ashlie asked, incredulous. “That’s so old-fashioned.”

I winced. *She’s new*, I reminded myself. *I should be kind and welcoming, even if she insults my name. She’s probably just upset she had to leave her old school.*

“Yeah, well,” I said breezily. “Anyways, welcome to Jefferson Middle.”

“Do you have a middle name?” Ashlie frowned.

“Uh, no?” I didn’t like where this was going.

Her forehead wrinkled in disgust. “If I had a name as ugly as Beatrice, I would definitely want a middle name to cover up at least some of the shame.”

Excuse me?

I struggled for something to talk about with this girl. “Well, um, I have a fortune-teller business. You know, those cute paper things? I make them and sell them to people. This is my business card— isn’t it pretty? I got them for my birthday one year.”

I handed her the little white card imprinted with smooth turquoise letters.

Beatrice Taylor’s Fortune-tellers
Email Beatrice @
beataylor@jeffersonmail.com

Ashlie smirked. “Fortune-tellers? Those dumb things that were popular in second grade? Who would buy one of *those*?”

Okay. She insults my name and insults my business. She is NOT just upset that she had to switch schools! This girl is plain mean.

I opened my mouth indignantly to reply, but Ms. Paulsen walked in right at that moment. “People, stop talking!” she said loudly, and we all fell silent. I glared at Ashlie. She glared back.

Later that day, I went to Quinn and told her how horrible the new girl had been to me.

“Bree?” Quinn said after I told her Ashlie’s middle name. “Isn’t that a type of cheese?”

“No.” My breath shuddered a little, holding

suppressed tears. “I think it’s spelled with an *I*.”

“Whatever! Ashlie Cheese!”

She started to giggle, and then I started to giggle too.

So, yeah. Ashlie Cheese.

“I guess,” Quinn says now. “I just wish she wouldn’t be so awful sometimes.”

“I know what you mean.”

The bus slows to a stop in front of our school. Jefferson, the town we all live in, is right outside of Chicago, and the streets closest to the city can be really busy and traffic-y. On the bus, it takes around forty minutes to get to school.

Five minutes later, I’m in the halls of my middle school, stuffing my backpack into my locker. Except now I can’t find my math book. Ugh. I have a tendency to lose things.

“Hey, Bea,” Addison calls when she sees me.

Addison is really pretty. She’s taller than me, with wavy strawberry-blond hair and blue eyes that always sparkle. She has a sparkly personality, too.

“Hi, Beatrice,” she repeats. Addison grins at me. “Do you have my fortune-teller?”

“Yup.” I hand it to her. “What do we have first today?”

Addison checks her schedule on her binder. “Double English.”

“Oh, I thought it was math. Well, I’m glad it’s

English instead.” I really like my English class. We do lots of fun things that only enhance my love for language arts, especially writing and reading. Oh, and Shakespeare? Can someone spell out A-W-E-S-O-M-E-N-E-T-H? Har har. I’m named for a character in a Shakespeare play, *Much Ado About Nothing*.

Everyone makes little comments about my name that make me feel uncomfortable every once in a while. I’m sure no one really means to make me feel self-conscious (well, except for Ashlie), but still...I love my name, and really hate it when kids tease me.

“Yeah, well, luckily it isn’t math class. Ugh, we got so much homework yesterday from that stupid class! I completely skipped an entire section because I didn’t understand what the heck they were saying.” Addison replies, and I finally find my math book and throw it in my locker. Addison loves math and is the sweetest person ever, but even she can’t stand the teacher, Mrs. Hamilton. I stand up and adjust my binder and multicolored composition notebook in my arms. I tuck some paper and my purple metallic pen in my notebook, just in case I want to make a fortune-teller.

We walk together, dodging the rowdy sixth-grade boys. They are getting a talking-to by, speak of the devil, Mrs. Hamilton, the ancient, creepy,

number-obsessed math teacher. Her freaky yellow eyes are narrowed, and she is wagging her finger at the poor sixth-graders while giving her lecture. I catch Addison's eye and we try not to giggle.

We arrive at our English class just in time. I hate being late. I've had really, really bad experiences with being late before, and they all involve Mrs. Hamilton. The skin around my fingernails turns pale, then turns red, as I clutch my binder and notebook tightly, remembering the times when I was late to Mrs. Hamilton's class. Let's just say that I never ever want something like that to happen again in my life.

I sit down at my assigned seat next to Erik Talley and Ashlie Simmons.

"Hello, people," Ms. Paulsen says. She grins at us. Ms. Paulsen is really nice, and she always has smiles for everyone in class, even the troublemakers. If I were a teacher, I would be stressed out of my mind, what with the hooligans in my class.

"Okay, everybody. Today I'm going to give you all a chance to start the project that I assigned yesterday. Take a laptop from the cart and start working. Remember, I expect you to write a paragraph about advice you would give to a kid who's being bullied. Go!"

Our school just got wind of this huge anti-

bullying thing, and they're making the most out of it. This paragraph should come easily to me, since Ashlie is still bullying my friends and me, and it's completely unnoticed by the teachers, but right now I am brain-dead. I tap my pencil on my desk, racking my brain for ideas.

"Stop that," Ashlie says irritably.

I know what I'll write about!

Ashlie. Well, disguised of course, because I don't think it would go over too well with the teachers if I wrote about how mean Ashlie is to my friends and me.

"Sorry," I reply, glaring at her. I'm pleased to see she has typed nothing, because I just started my first sentence. Ha! It must be hard for her to give advice to a bullied victim, since she's never been a victim in her life. She's only been the bully.

I continue to type. What I'm writing is pretty good advice. I think. I mean, I hope.

It can be hard knowing that my group of friends is Ashlie's punching bag. Not literally, of course. She hurts us with her words instead of her fists. However, it's November now, and I'm used to Ashlie being snobby and rude and treating us like we're dirt. I won't accept any of Ashlie's insults anymore. I know how to stand up for myself and my friends. So, don't think of me as one of those wimpy characters you read about in books and see

on TV. I used to flinch every time she walked past me, but now, I always either A, ignore her, or B, retort back. I know B isn't the best solution, but sometimes, I can't stop myself.

I continue writing my report.

After I've written about a page or so, the bell rings. I shove any loose papers into my shiny lavender binder. I skim the color-coded schedule that resides in the clear plastic pocket on the front of my binder and set off to go to...math class! I scramble out of the classroom.



At 3:07, I'm back on the bus. School is out, and Quinn and I are sitting in the same seats we sat on in the morning. Quinn is coming over to my house today, and I really feel like going to Emeline's to get some hot chocolate. It's a chilly November day today, and Emeline's cocoa is the perfect thing to go with that crisp pre-winter feeling.

Quinn and I unlock the door to my house. "Hi!" we both shout.

Cody comes to give me a hug, and he shyly waves to Quinn. I doubt there was ever a sweeter brother than Cody. He gives us a present—a miniature, gap-toothed grin—before he goes back to the kitchen to eat a snack. It's really a treat when

Cody smiles that wide, because even though he is mostly cheerful, Cody is serious and quiet on the outside. On the inside, though, Cody is a little boy, and little boys deserve to have fun. He must have had a good day of school today.

“Mom?” I yell up the stairs.

Mom works from home. She is in charge of this complicated website thing business. And when I say complicated, I mean reaaaaaallllllly hard to comprehend. When I was younger, whenever someone asked what my mom did for a living, I would be at a loss for words. Heck, I *still* have a bit of trouble explaining her job.

“Hi, honey” is the distant answer that floats down the stairs.

“Mom, Quinn is here. Can we go to Emeline’s?”

“Okay, but bring your cell phones with you.”

“Beeeeeatrice!” I hear a squeal, and suddenly Sasha Reynolds is right next to me. Sasha is Cody’s best friend, and she’s, well, kinda obsessed with me. In a cute way, though. I didn’t know Sasha was going to be at our house today.

I stifle a laugh when I think back to when we all first met Sasha at the local playground. It was a year or two ago. Sasha, a tiny, grinning, olive-skinned girl with long cinnamon-colored curls and a white and pink butterfly outfit, came right up to

Cody and me, who were on the swings. She watched us for a while.

“Hi,” I said, smiling at the teeny kid and nudging Cody.

And then she started chattering. And once little Sasha started chattering, there was no getting her to stop. “Hi, I’m Sasha. What’s your name? Can I play your game? What game *are* you playing?”

I elbowed my brother, and shy Cody gave a small wave, his eyes on the woodchips below him.

“I’m sorry,” I said. “Cody is a little shy, but he’d love to play with you, right, Cody?”

“Oh, I’m *never* shy,” Sasha informed me.

“I can tell,” I muttered under my breath, smiling.

“Huh?” questioned Sasha and Cody.

“Nothing.” I couldn’t hide my grin then.

Cody and Sasha are complete opposites—Cody is the most timid creature on the planet, whereas Sasha is really bold and outgoing for a little girl—but I guess opposites attract.

Now Cody wanders back into the foyer, looking slightly confused. I bet he was wondering where his friend had gone.

“Ohhh,” he says, seeing Sasha, realizing that she’s here. Cody comes over to stand with Sasha, Quinn and me.

“Can Cody and I come to Emeline’s with you,

Trixie?” Sasha asks me excitedly, and the two kindergartners exchange eager glances.

Sometimes I think the name Beatrice has too many nicknames: Bea, Trix, Tris, and occasionally even Trixie. Okay, *that* one is really annoying.

“Another time, guys,” I say.

Cody and Sasha retreat back to the kitchen. Cody walks the way he always does: the daydream-y half-walk, half-skip that is just so *Cody*, and Sasha strolls energetically, her long, thick curls bouncing on her back.

Quinn and I look at each other and start laughing.

I’m sort of wishing that I’d gotten my fleece hat from my bedroom once we get outside. I already have on my scarf and gloves, and of course my silver puffy vest, but the wind is way sharper than I thought it was before, and I know my ears are turning bright pink from the cold. Fortunately, Quinn and I get to Emeline’s before I freeze to death.

Emeline’s is my favorite shop in all of Jefferson. Emeline Smith, a woman who’s in her, I don’t know, mid-thirties, is the nicest person ever, and she always has great cocoa and great advice. She is tall and slender, with a sleek dark blond bob cut and long fingernails that have a gold manicure. Emeline told me that once she got an offer from a

fashion company to be a model in Chicago, but she turned it down because what she really loves best is being a successful *entrepreneur*, as she calls it.

“Hello, girls!” Emeline greets us as we walk inside.

“Hi, Em,” I reply, and Quinn says her greetings beside me.

“The usual?” She grins at us, her hands drifting automatically over to the cocoa machine.

“Oh yeah.” We beam back at her.

Emeline starts to make my usual peppermint hot chocolate and Quinn’s pumpkin spice cocoa. We sit at the counter so we can talk to her while she works.

“Hi, Cleo!” I say, spotting Emeline’s assistant wrapping a slab of coffee cake in brown paper for a customer.

Cleo Brinks, an African-American girl who’s at the University of Chicago, works here a few times a week. She waves at me and brushes some of her curly dark hair out of her eyes. She always wears really cool earrings, and today she’s wearing dangly ones that are shaped like apples and oranges.

“Beatrice, Quinn, how are you girls today?” Cleo calls.

“Fine, thank you,” we call politely back.

“So, girls, talk to me,” Emeline says, adding an extra pinch of sugar to Quinn’s and my favorite

polka-dot mugs. Emeline is always really environmentally friendly, and she rarely gives out Styrofoam cups if she can help it. She always asks customers if they need their cup of hot chocolate to go, and if they say no, she gives them hot chocolate in one of her pretty patterned mugs.

Emeline gives Quinn her cocoa, but she holds back mine. “I’ll trade you for that fortune-teller you promised to make me,” she slyly says to me.

“Of course!” I say, whisking it out of my puffy vest’s pocket. In pink paper, with dark violet ink, is the fortune-teller I did indeed promise her a few days ago. She hands me seventy-five cents for the small piece of origami I made for her, and pushes the steaming mug toward me.

“This fortune-teller is for Margaret,” Emeline tells us, her glossy hair swishing as she turns to put it in her purse.

“Ooh!” exclaims Quinn. “How is she?”

Margaret is Emeline’s baby. Meg is seven months old now, and loves when Quinn and I babysit for her.

“She’s good. She recently realized that Ross lives in the house too, and honestly, she crawls after him all day, trying to grab onto his fur. I suspect that she wants to ride on him like a horse.”

We all laugh, picturing plump little Meg riding on Emeline’s basset hound, Ross, like a princess on

a pony.

This is what I like about Emeline. She has the best stories.

I slurp on the end of the striped stick of candy that is lolling in my hot chocolate. I take a sip of the cocoa, but cautiously, because it is still steaming.

“The hot chocolate is awesome as always, Emeline,” I praise, and Quinn nods vigorously.

Emeline’s voice takes on a more gentle tone. “Now, while we’re on the topic of pets, how is Aladdin doing?”

I can’t look at her. “He’s lonely. He misses Jasmine. I can’t say I don’t know the feeling.” I really hope the two of them don’t notice the way my voice cracks as I say the last part.

Jasmine was my cat, and her brother is Aladdin. Jasmine and Aladdin were the best cats ever... and beautiful, too, both really furry with soft gray stripes. Jasmine went missing five months ago, and Aladdin and I miss her dearly. At first, I put up signs all over town, saying that my cat was missing, and what name she responds to, and my dad’s email address. I even printed pictures of her. But after more than a month, when nobody emailed or called, my parents told me it was time to stop looking, and just pray that wherever Jasmine was, she was happy.

Emeline places her hand on my shoulder soothingly and hastily changes the subject, not wanting me to be miserable anymore.

“Did I tell you gals I got a new hot chocolate type? Imported from Switzerland. Mmm, Swiss cocoa is just truly scrumptious. Would you ladies care to be my first taste-testers? Free for my best customers,” Emeline coaxes.

I look up. There is nothing I like better than when Emeline trusts Quinn and me enough to let us try new hot chocolate before anyone else.

Quinn looks at me and a grin splits her round face. Quinn shares the love of mine.

“What flavor is it?” she asks, wiggling and tapping her fingers on the spotless cobalt blue granite countertop.

“I’ll surprise you girls,” says Emeline, returning the grin. Quinn and I groan.

“Oh, Emeline...”

“Nope. But I think you’ll like it.” As Emeline turns to go to the storage room, her sparkly gold and blue bangle bracelets jangle.

She returns a moment later, nothing in her hands. “Close your eyes, and I’ll bring you two the cocoa.” We do as she says, eager to try the new inventory.

We hear the clatter of the mugs as she sets them down before us. “Okay, open them now.”

Our eyelids flutter open. “Oooh!”

Emeline smiles. “I call it—*Bright and Early Cocoa*.”

I fix my eyes at my mug with interest. There is a half of a mini-waffle perched on the edge of the mug, the way they perch lime or lemon slices on the edge of a fancy glass at a froufrou restaurant. There are also multi-colored marshmallows from Lucky Charms cereal bobbing up in the hot chocolate.

“Oh, wow, this looks really good,” Quinn says sincerely.

After we have finished our Bright and Early Coconos, Quinn and I decide it’s time to get moving. It’s going to get dark soon, and the rule in both of our households is that if you’re going out, you have to be back by dinner or else.

I push out my stool and Quinn does the same. “Thanks for the hot chocolate, Emeline,” we chorus.

“No problem,” Emeline twinkles down at us.

“See you!” we call as we exit the shop.

“Goodbye, Quinndle, and goodbye, Fair Beatrice,” she calls back. I feel my mouth lift up into a smile. Emeline loves to call Quinn *Quinndle* because it sounds like the word Kindle, and Emeline owns a Kindle that she sometimes brings in to her store if business is slow that day. Emeline likes calling me *Fair Beatrice* because the character named Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing* gets

called Fair Beatrice. Emeline's read tons of Shakespeare. She's very smart.

I wrap my bright multi-colored scarf around my head so my ears don't get that frostbitey feeling they were getting on the way here. Quinn giggles. "You look like a dork," she informs me.

"And *you* look like Kermit the Frog."

"What?!"

"I have no idea."

We start cracking up at my randomness, since Quinn isn't even wearing any green, and by the time we get to the road where Quinn and I have to go in opposite directions to get to our houses, we're doubled over in laughter.

"I'll see you tomorrow," Quinn yells as she walks the other way than me.

"Bye, Kermit!" I shout, the wind whipping my hair over my nose and mouth. Whether Quinn hears me, I don't know. We're probably too far away from each other at this point. I still holler it in her direction anyway.