

**Starring**

**Eliza**

**Abby Richmond**

Other Books by Abby Richmond

*Very Berry*

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To all my friends and family.  
You inspire me every day!



# Prologue

I refused to move. My parents absolutely couldn't make me. Hello? I was *not* going to move. Not if I could help it.

My name is Eliza Hawthorne and I am eleven and three-quarters years old. I like friendship bracelets, being a playwright, cushy beanbag chairs, gardening, going on nature walks, and s'mores. I currently live in San Francisco, in a stylish apartment where I can look out the big windows and see the fog rolling in over the Golden Gate Bridge. It is amazing.

Now, normally I am an agreeable person, but I couldn't agree to this idea. I didn't like it one bit. Why move? I was happy here. Why were my parents going crazy?

Why were they making me move?

"What?" Sydney asked, dropping her box of crayons.

"Wow!" Poppy squealed.

But unlike me, they actually looked excited about the whole we're-moving-to-a-place-that-is-across-the-entire-country idea. Poppy did a slightly messy cartwheel, while Sydney twirled around the room, humming under her breath. Thankfully, I

knew they wouldn't be so thrilled on the plane. Probably.

Four-year-old twin sisters can be such a pain sometimes.

"No! Are you serious? But we've lived here forever," I moaned. "I won't go!"

"But, Eliza, you're going to love it," Dad said. "You lived there when you were little, only in a different town, remember?"

"I lived there up until I was five! I don't even remember it! You just *can't* make me leave San Francisco!" Oh my gosh, this was not happening!

"Come on, Eliza, it's beautiful! Wilderness surrounding you. You know you love that," my mom coaxed.

"There are no redwood trees in the Berkshires," I said.

"That's true," my dad admitted, defeated.

"But there's nature everywhere," Mom said.

"You already said that!" I snapped. I walked stiffly to my room, slamming the door. I collapsed onto my purple fuzzy beanbag. I told myself not to cry. I'm not a crybaby.

To distract myself, I decided I would make a friendship bracelet for each of my closest friends at the Golden Gate Bridge School. I picked out three colors for each person.

*Cross over, make a knot. Repeat. Cross over,*

*make a knot. Repeat. Cross over, make a knot. Repeat. Move on to the next color.*

*I'm moving, too,* I thought sadly. These were my farewell presents. Tears slipped down my cheeks.

So much for not crying.



It was lunchtime at the Golden Gate Bridge School, which normally should have been a buzzing time when I sat with my friends Jordi, Karynn, and Angela. But today we sat in dead silence. I hate silence.

“Well, I made friendship bracelets for all of you...um...so we can remember the good times that we had...” I started lamely.

Jordi glared at me, her eyes hurt and unfriendly. Karynn raised her eyebrows. Angela smiled at me, but half-heartedly. I bit my lip. I felt so stupid!

“Here,” I tossed the first one at Jordi. Neon green, hot pink, and white stripes. She snatched hers and didn’t say thank you. Neither did Karynn. Angela was the only one who took hers politely. She put it in her pocket.

“Guys, I don’t want to move,” I explained. I wanted them to say that they knew, they would

write letters, they would keep in touch. Jordi, my best friend. *She* would.

But somehow, deep inside, I knew she wouldn't. Because sometimes, she could be pretty mean to others when she was upset.

And Jordi narrowed her eyes at me. "You're moving to the BERKSHIRES, Eliza. What a dumb place to move to. And we all know that you actually *do* want to move away, because you think you're too good for us."

The unkindness and unfairness of this felt as though Jordi had slapped me on my face.

Or on my heart.

And when I got up and ran from the table, out of the corner of my eye, I saw Jordi throw her bracelet deep down into the bottom of her backpack.



# Chapter One

I opened my eyes to find my twin sisters hovering over my face.

“Wake up, wake up!” Poppy and Sydney said. “We’re almost here!”

I groaned and stretched. The pilot was blabbering over the loudspeaker about what temperature and time it was in the Berkshires, and how long it took us to get here. I massaged my neck. It hurt. I felt extremely cramped. I shut my eyes again as if it were all just a dream.

“Eliza, we’re in Massachusetts!” Mom exclaimed. Dad squeezed my hand.

“We’re in Mathachuset, we’re in Mathachuset!”

“Mass-a-chu-setts,” Dad corrected. “Pop, can you fold up the trays? We’re going to land soon.”

But Poppy couldn’t because she had started crying. So had Sydney. Their ears hurt. My ears hurt listening to them. Unfortunately, about five more little kids started wailing too. I looked at my parents accusingly.

“Hey, it isn’t my fault,” Dad replied.

“We’ll be off this plane soon,” Mom said.

Even though I was really annoyed, I helped comfort my sisters. Although they got on my nerves, I felt bad for them. I remembered when I was four and my ears would kill when we landed in a plane. I braided Sydney's blond locks and played a hand game with Poppy. They both quieted down.

"Thank you for flying with our airlines," an automated voice said on the loudspeaker after we landed. "We hope you have a nice trip."

*Yeah, I thought. Only ours isn't a trip. We're staying here.*

As we walked into the quiet airport, I felt both sadness and a thrill of excitement. Back in San Francisco, Jordi and Karynn didn't even care that I was gone. It was silly of me to think they would understand. I suddenly remembered what they had done when Izzi Gardner left. I realized with a pang that probably only Angela, the kindest girl in our class, but not as close to me as Jordi, would write to me. But the Berkshires held a whole new opportunity for me. I would make new friends, go to a new school, and live in a scenic place. Sure, San Francisco was scenic with all the redwood trees, but the nature was kind of far away from the apartment. Whereas here I'd practically be living in the wilderness, like Mom kept telling us. But I would miss San Fran a ton.

When I snapped out of my little daydream, I

saw Sydney looking up at me curiously. “Whatcha doing?” she asked.

“Nothing,” I told her, a bit wistfully.

Sydney slipped her little hand into mine and smiled. Poppy caught sight of that and hurried over to me. That girl loves attention.

When Mom and Dad left to go pick up the luggage, they left me in charge.

“E-wiza,” Poppy said, “are you gonna miss San Francisco?”

“Yeah, I will,” I said. “But the Berkshires are going to be great.” I tried to muster a lot of enthusiasm, for the twins’ sake.

“You promise?” Sydney asked. She gripped my hand tightly. She looked up at me, her Hawthorne-trademark blue eyes worried. We all had those eyes, except for Poppy, who had brown eyes.

“Yes,” I said seriously.

Mom and Dad hurried through the crowd, carrying most of our belongings (in suitcases, of course!). All our other stuff would be shipped from California. Mom thrust our jackets at us.

“Put them on. It’s cold in the Berkshires at night,” she said, pulling on her blue coat. I put on my own tan corduroy jacket. Dad helped Sydney and Poppy zip theirs up.

We left the airport and caught a taxi. While we were in the taxi, my parents reminded us that we

were moving to a town in the Berkshires called Sparrow.

“Sparrow is such an amazing place,” my mom said. “It has neighborhoods that are like the neighborhoods you write about in your plays, Eliza, with pretty houses and beautiful views.”

“The school you’re going to go to in the fall is called Sparrow Middle School. It’s highly recommended. It’s supposed to be great, even though it’s small,” Dad continued.

I looked over at the twins. They were already asleep.

“You know, there’s a girl your age on the block...what’s her name again?”

I couldn’t help it – I fell asleep.



I woke up on a strange air mattress, hearing a strange noise. The doorbell!

I quickly jumped off the mattress I was laying on top on. I looked around the room, thinking I was in San Francisco. Nope. I was in a plain, white room. There was no carpeting on the floor. But I didn’t have time to look around right now. Mom and Dad weren’t awake yet, so I hurried to get dressed. I peeked for any boxes that held my clothing. But I guessed Dad hadn’t brought the

boxes upstairs yet. At least I was still actually wearing my clothes from yesterday. Scowling, I slowly found my way to the front door. I didn't stop to check out what everything looked like. I opened the door and poked my head out. The girl was just about to turn around and leave, I'd taken so long.

"Hey!" I yelled. *Great*, I thought. *Mom and Dad are definitely awake now.*

"Hi!" The girl rushed back to the door. She was holding a plate covered in tinfoil in her arms. Whatever it was, it smelled good. She looked over at me with concern. I knew I looked like a mess. "Oh no, is this a bad time?"

I winced. "It's fine." I rubbed at my eyes sleepily. The girl was a little smaller than me, with blond hair worn in a headband. She had ice blue eyes, like me, framed in green glasses. She wore a sweatshirt with SPARROW stitched onto the side, and jeans. Her sneakers had seen better days. They were scuffed up but the girl didn't seem to care.

The Sneaker Girl said, "My name is Olympia Barnes. But call me Ollie. Olympia is much too long. Anyway, I live down the block. Welcome to Sparrow. My mom made these and told me to give them to you. She says, quote un-quote, that 'the morning you've moved in is the hardest of 'em all, so there is absolutely no time to make your own breakfast.' In case you were wondering, they're

blueberry pancakes.”

So this was the kid who lived on the block that Mom and Dad were jabbering about in the taxi!

“Thanks,” I mumbled. “My name is Eliza Hawthorne.” The stairs creaked and the next thing I, Eliza Hawthorne, knew, my parents were right beside me.

“Hello,” Mom said warmly. “You must be Olympia.”

Ollie nodded. “Yes, ma’am. Only I prefer Ollie.”

“Ollie brought pancakes for our breakfast,” I said.

“How kind of you,” my dad said. He patted his stomach. “They smell good! Thanks.”

Ollie laughed. “You’re welcome. I better get going. See ya around, Eliza.” She placed the tinfoil-wrapped plate in my arms and walked away.

“She seems like a nice girl,” Mom commented after she had closed the door.

“Okay, sure,” I replied. “But right now can you show me the way back up to my room? I want to get a bit more time to snooze. I’m exhausted.”