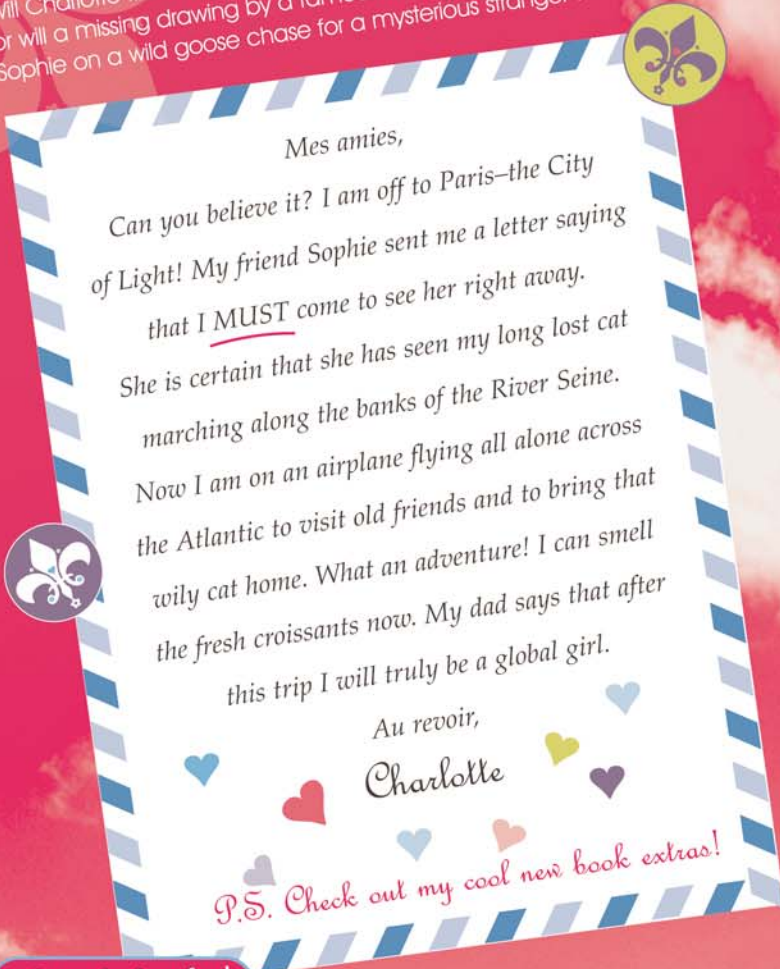


INTERMEDIATE FICTION

Will Charlotte find Orangina and reunite with her Paris friends, or will a missing drawing by a famous artist send Charlotte and Sophie on a wild goose chase for a mysterious stranger ...

A BEACON STREET GIRLS® ADVENTURE

Don't miss this brand new Beacon Street Girls Special Adventure!



Mes amies,

Can you believe it? I am off to Paris—the City of Light! My friend Sophie sent me a letter saying that I MUST come to see her right away. She is certain that she has seen my long lost cat marching along the banks of the River Seine. Now I am on an airplane flying all alone across the Atlantic to visit old friends and to bring that wily cat home. What an adventure! I can smell the fresh croissants now. My dad says that after this trip I will truly be a global girl.

Au revoir,

Charlotte

P.S. Check out my cool new book extras!

Charlotte in Paris

by annie bryant

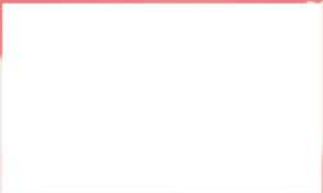


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BEACON STREET GIRLS

Charlotte
in
Paris



La Meilleure Nouvelle

THE BEST NEWS EVER

To: Charlotte
From: Sophie
Subject: Orangina

i have seen Orangina!
it was him
i'm so sure ... he was wandering by the
Seine
i call his name and he turn around
i took only 1 step in his direction and
he ran away
you must come. he would come to you if
you called him
i worry about him ... alone with no
charming houseboat to return to at
night
i have a few days off from school



because of teacher meetings next week
i'll talk to *maman*. you talk to your
father
you must come to Paris!
Orangina needs you
And you have been away much too long!

bisous,
Sophie

IT TOOK ME HOURS to fall asleep that night. Too many visions of a sugar plum Orangina were dancing in my head. The next morning, I jumped out of bed as soon as my alarm went off, and I rushed to the kitchen to tell Dad about the email. When I got to the part about Sophie begging me to come to Paris, I began to talk faster and faster. It was like I was on *fast forward*.

"I know—it's short notice, but Dad, it's such good timing. I don't have any tests next week, and I miss Sophie so much! It feels like forever since I've seen her! Can you believe she found Orangina? I looked online last night at flights, and they're actually really cheap right now, and we don't have school next Friday because it's a professional day, *and* I haven't missed a day of school yet this year *and* ..." I had to stop and take a deep breath. I was trying to stay calm, but it wasn't easy.

"So?" I asked tentatively. My dad is pretty laid back as far as dads go, but still ... I knew it was a real long shot.

I mean, who sends their daughter to Paris to find a missing cat?

"Are you *really* asking me if you can jet off to Paris next week ... alone?" Dad looked amused.

"Well ... uhh ... uhh ... actually ... yes." I crossed my fingers behind my back and tapped my foot on the floor. It's what I do when I want something really, really badly.

Dad stirred his cinnamon oatmeal around and around and looked thoughtful. "I don't know, Charlotte. I'd love to be able to just say yes and send you off on a great adventure. I know Orangina means a lot to you, and how much you miss Sophie. But there are a lot of things to think about. It's a big deal to miss a week of school." My dad teaches creative writing at Boston University, so school is very important to him. He continued, "I know *I* hate to see my students miss a class ... it's hard to catch up. Even if tickets are cheap, it's still a significant amount of money. And to be honest, I don't know how I feel about sending you off on a plane all by yourself. We've always traveled together."

I took a deep breath and launched into the responses I had rehearsed before falling asleep the night before. "I can talk to my teachers before I leave, and I know the BSG will collect all of my assignments. I'm doing really well in school, and I'll work extra hard before I leave and even harder when I get back. Besides, I still have some money saved from my birthday last year that I could put toward the ticket. And I know I've never traveled by myself before, but plenty of kids my age do it. Avery's flown by



herself to see her dad in Colorado a couple of times. And I'm sure the Morels would meet me as soon as I got off the plane. Besides," I paused to catch my breath, "Traveling is *very* educational."

Dad laughed out loud. I knew that last comment would crack him up. It's something he was *always* telling me.

"Well, Charlotte, you've presented a good case for yourself, that's for sure. Maybe you should think about becoming a lawyer. Did you memorize your speech, or was that a spur of the moment thing?" he asked with a smile.

"A little bit of both," I admitted.

"Charlotte, I know how much a trip back to Paris would mean to you, but I need to think about this. This is not trivial. We can talk about it later tonight."

"OK," I agreed. Suddenly, I felt a little bit optimistic. At least it wasn't an outright "NO."

Just as I was pouring myself a glass of orange juice, the phone rang. Dad picked it up, and I froze in my tracks. "Oh, *bonjour*, Jacqueline." It was Madame Morel—Sophie's mom. Dad motioned me out of the room. I sighed and took my orange juice and oatmeal into the hallway, but I lurked at the door. I just *had* to hear what my dad was saying.

Marty trotted down the hallway and sat on my foot, begging for oatmeal. I peered around the doorway and tried to get a sense of how the conversation was going. Dad mostly listened. I chuckled to myself. Madame Morel was a real talker. Marty's little doggie ears perked up every time Dad said anything, but Marty never took his eyes off



"When I first moved to Brookline, Maeve, Katani, Avery, Isabel, and I formed a club called the Beacon Street Girls." ~ pg. 7



the oatmeal. The little dude loves his snacks.

"*Oui*, yes, I know ... I agree ... I hope so too ... thanks for calling, it was nice to hear your voice again ... I'm sure you understand what's going on here ... Talk to you soon, Jacqueline. *Au revoir*." My father hung up the phone.

"Charlotte!"

I waited a few seconds before walking back into the kitchen, even though I knew that Dad knew I had been listening. "Yes?"

"You need to give me time to think this whole thing over. As I said, I'm not making a decision right now. Not even a phone call from Paris will change that. OK?"

"OK."

"And try not to get your hopes up either."

"I'll try."

That would be easier said than done. It was hard not to hope. Madame Morel could be a very convincing woman. I had a feeling that whatever she had just said may have tipped the scales in my favor!



When I arrived that morning at Ms. Rodriguez' homeroom, Maeve was sitting on the edge of her desk, chatting a mile a minute with Katani and Isabel.

"Char!" Maeve exclaimed as I dropped my bag on my desk. "There's a substitute in for Mr. Sherman today. Isn't that great?" Mr. Sherman, the math teacher nicknamed "the Crow," was Maeve's least favorite teacher.

Maeve could make anyone excited about anything. She was dramatic and bubbly, and just an all around fun person to be around. Most importantly, she was one of my best friends. When I first moved to Brookline, Maeve, Katani, Avery, and I formed a club called the Beacon Street Girls. Then Isabel moved to Brookline a few weeks into the school year, and now the five of us are best friends.

Before I had a chance to answer Maeve, Avery came barreling through the door. She dropped her duffle bag and quickly gathered her hair up in her favorite soccer ball hair tie. "I thought I was going to be late! I couldn't find my math book—somehow it ended up next to Walter's tank in my closet." Avery's pet snake, Walter, was actually kind of cute. A total pet lover, it's her dream to get a dog of her own someday, but her mom's allergy to furry pets makes that impossible. That's why Marty has lived with me ever since we found him in a garbage can. The BSG all love Marty, but Avery has a real soft spot for him.

Maeve shuddered. "Eeeew ... I don't know which is worse ... math or snakes." Maeve's learning problems sometimes made school hard for her. Nothing could stop that girl's talent on stage, though. She was headed straight for Hollywood!

"Snakes. Definitely snakes." Katani shuddered as she smoothed her newly cut bangs over her forehead. She was looking stylish as usual that morning, wearing a knee-length skirt that she had designed and sewn herself.

I couldn't hold it in any longer. "I ... I might be going



to Paris," I blurted out.

"What?!" Maeve exclaimed.

"Are you serious, Char?" Isabel asked.

"I'm completely serious. But I'm not sure if it'll actually happen yet." I filled the BSG in on the whole story, starting with the email from Sophie and ending with Dad's warning not to get my hopes up.

"Parents always say that. I bet he'll let you go. He would've said no already if he was against it," Avery speculated.

"I hope you're right, Ave ... but sometimes when my mom says don't get your hopes up, she still ends up saying no. It's the worst," Katani concluded.

"My Aunt Lourdes does that too. But I think it'll be impossible for you *not* to get your hopes up, Char. So let's just talk about Paris ... you'll be thinking about it all day anyway." Isabel's eyes sparkled as she listed the Paris museums and art galleries she wanted to visit someday. "Oh, and the Musée d'Orsay! I think that would be my absolute favorite. *Cézanne's Apples and Oranges*, Van Gogh's *The Siesta* ... Did you guys know that the museum was built in an old train station?"

As the bell rang and the last stragglers raced into homeroom, I listened to my friends' excited chatter about Paris and wondered what the day would bring. Isabel was right ... it was impossible *not* to get my hopes up. I crossed my fingers ... for Orangina, for Sophie, for Paris, and for a new adventure.

THE WAITING GAME

I usually paid close attention in school and always took detailed notes, but by last period social studies class on Wednesday afternoon, I couldn't control my nervous energy. I tried to sit still, but it was hopeless ... my foot began tapping spontaneously. It just wouldn't stop. Travel was in my bones and Sophie's invitation to visit Paris had gotten me so excited that sitting still was not an option. As soon as the bell rang, I raced out the door, quickly catching up to Avery.

"Hey Char, basketball practice was cancelled today ... want to take Marty for a run with me?" asked Avery, jogging backward toward the seventh-grade lockers.

"That sounds good, Ave ... I won't be able to start my homework right now anyway ... I'm too nervous about this whole Paris thing."

"Want me to see if I can convince your dad? My mom tells me I'm very persistent," Avery offered with a grin.

"That's probably not a good idea, Ave. You know how my dad doesn't react very well to nagging, and he already got a phone call from Madame Morel encouraging him to say yes." I hoped Avery wouldn't get some crazy scheme into her head to try and help ... that could be disastrous.

"Hey, Charlotte!" Chelsea Briggs called out, hurrying down the hall toward Avery and me.

"Hi Chelsea," I said. "What's going on?"

"Maeve told me you're going to Paris!" she said. "That's awesome."



"*Might* be going to Paris," I corrected her. "My dad hasn't given me permission yet. It's still up in the air." I suddenly wished I hadn't said anything about the trip. Soon the rumor would be all over school, and I'd feel really silly if it was all for nothing.

"Well, if you do end up going, you can borrow my digital camera," Chelsea offered. "Maybe you could take a few pics for *The Sentinel*." As the newspaper's official photographer, Chelsea was always looking for exciting photo opportunities.

"Thanks, Chels. That's really nice of you. My digital broke a few weeks ago."

"No prob. Just let me know, and I can drop it off at your house. See you guys later." Chelsea waved good-bye and jogged off in the other direction.

When Avery and I reached the seventh-grade lockers, I quickly loaded up my bag and grabbed my jacket.

"Race you!" Avery shouted as soon as we got to the outside doors. Usually when she said that, I didn't take her up on the challenge, but that day I felt like a run might actually calm me down. I made it to the doorstep of our yellow Victorian house only about 10 seconds behind Avery.

"Wow, Char ... you're totally on fire today!" Avery was impressed.

I caught my breath as I unlocked the door and held it open for Avery. We both ran up the stairs to the upper part of the house where Dad and I live.

"Rufffff! Woof, woooooof!" Marty barked happily

when he heard our voices.

"Hey buddy, did ya miss me?" Avery sat on the floor in the hallway and Marty hopped into her lap.

"Hi girls." My dad walked out of the kitchen to greet Avery and me.

"Hi Mr. Ramsey," Avery replied with a huge smile.

"Hey Dad." I searched his face for clues, wondering if he had made his decision yet. *Nothing*. "We're going to take Marty for a W-A-L-K." (We have to spell out the word "walk" so Marty doesn't go nuts.)

"Good idea. The little guy's got even more energy than usual today. Charlotte, can I talk to you in the kitchen for a minute before you go?"

I looked back at Avery as I followed my dad through the hallway. She was holding Marty's front paws up ... crossed for good luck.

Dad sat down at the kitchen table and motioned for me to do the same.

"Here's the deal, Charlotte. I spent the entire day thinking about Paris. I made a list of the pros and cons. I even asked the opinions of a couple of other professors that have kids your age. I finally decided that one pro outweighed all the cons ... you've moved around much more than most kids your age, and I know it hasn't always been easy. You've had to leave friends behind, and you've always been a good sport about it. So ... I want you to go on this trip and have the time of your life. But ... there's one condition. It will be the most cautious, responsible,



CAREFUL time of your life, understand?"

"Really? I can go?! I can go?! Wooooohoooo!" I whooped, jumping up to hug Dad. "Thank you, Dad! You're the best! A trip to Paris ... this is unbelievable!"

"Wooooohooooo!" Avery echoed from the hallway and raced in to give me a high five.

"Woooof!" barked Marty in agreement.

PARTY TIME

Late Saturday morning, Dad and I were doing the dishes from our yummy blueberry pancake breakfast when the phone rang.

"Hello? Yes, she is. Hold on just a second. ... It's Maeve," he motioned, handing the phone to me.

"It's all set," she chirped. "A going-away party for you at Montoya's at 4 o'clock ... BSG style fabulous!" Maeve, the self-pronounced social director of the Beacon Street Girls, announced breathlessly.

I covered the receiver and told Dad what Maeve had said. He raised an eyebrow doubtfully ... I knew exactly what he was thinking. He wasn't crazy about the idea of a last-minute party. Ever since he gave me permission to go to Paris, Dad had been a nervous wreck, running around and making phone calls back and forth with the airlines and the Morels as he chaotically tried to help me get ready.

"But I still have to buy a present for the Morels. I bet they'd like something from a local place ... like one of Montoya's gift baskets," I suggested to Dad before he

could veto the party. "I promise I'll only stay for an hour ... just long enough to say good-bye to the BSG and buy the gift. Please, Dad? Please ... ?"

Dad nodded reluctantly. "All right. I have to run some errands, so I'll drop you off and pick you up. Make sure you get all of your packing finished before you go ... we're leaving for the airport at 5 o'clock sharp."

I raced upstairs to my room to put all the clothes I'd laid out into my suitcase and double-check my list. I still couldn't believe it was happening. It was a dream come true ... my very own adventure back to Paris!

From all my traveling with Dad, I've learned that the best way to pack is to make a list and check off each thing as you put it in the suitcase ... that way you don't end up with sneakers and no socks, or socks and no sneakers, or one T-shirt and four pairs of jeans.

Just as I was about to zip up my suitcase, Marty hopped inside and poked his head over the rim.

"Sorry, little dude, I wish you could come to Paris, but you have to stay here and keep Dad company, OK? And that's a really important job, just so you know."

"Ruuuuuffff!" Marty leapt onto the floor and pitter-pattered to the kitchen, where I could hear Dad talking to him. I think people talk to their dogs because dogs really seem to understand what they're saying ... sometimes even better than other humans.





Dad dropped me off in front of Montoya’s Bakery at precisely 4 o’clock. “I’ll be back in an hour to pick you up,” he reminded me.

I waved as Dad pulled away from the curb. When I looked over my shoulder, I could see all four of them—Maeve, Avery, Katani, and Isabel—through the bakery window, waiting for me at a table. Avery waved.

I jogged to the door and pulled it open. The air was filled with the sweet aroma of freshly made cookies, hot chocolate, and cinnamon. *Mmmm!* I stopped at the counter first to order the gift basket for the Morels so I wouldn’t forget.

“Are you all packed and ready?” Maeve asked when I made it to the table.

“I’m ready,” I declared with a smile.

“*Paris*. I’ve always wanted to go to Paris,” Maeve sighed. “The City of Light. The City of Love! So many of the great romantic movies were set there. It’s where Audrey Hepburn and Cary Grant felt the magic spell of love in *Charade*. And, oh, who could ever forget *An American in Paris*? It was so dreamy.”

Avery made a face. “What are you talking about, Maeve? You act like Charlotte is going to Paris for romance. She’s going there to find Orangina and visit Sophie. Hey, Char, make sure you tell Miss Pierce I’ll come over every day and take Marty for a run.”

“OK, but I think she’s excited about playing with him, too,” I replied.

Even though Marty lived with me, he really belonged to all of us—after all, he was the official BSG mascot. We found the “little dude” abandoned in the park during the first week of school. We didn’t know if we’d be able to keep him because Miss Pierce, my landlady, used to have a NO PETS rule. But it all worked out, and now Miss Pierce loved Marty like the rest of us. How could she not? He was irresistibly adorable! When she heard I was going to Paris, Miss Pierce said she would be glad to watch after the little guy whenever Dad’s not around.

“You’ll have time to do some shopping, won’t you, Charlotte?” Katani asked.

“Shopping?” I was confused.

Katani was clearly horrified by my reaction. “Listen to me, Miss Charlotte Ramsey. Paris is one of the world’s major fashion hotspots! I mean, as you’re looking for Orangina, maybe you could check out the store windows on the Champs-Élysées for just a minute?” Of course, Katani, the fashion diva of our group, knew about the famous fashion streets of Paris. By what she was wearing—a rose-colored shirt with a drape neck, jeans, and tall black boots—it looked like she’d gone to Paris to pick out her outfit that very morning.

“Katani has a point. I mean, I know you’re going to look for Orangina, but you’ll have time to visit the museums, won’t you?” Isabel asked. “Have you ever been to the Picasso Museum?”

“No,” I admitted, a little embarrassed that I had lived



in Paris for so long and never visited one of its most famous museums. “But I did see some of Picasso’s work at the Louvre. Maybe I’ll have time to visit a museum or two, but I’m mostly excited to get Orangina back and see Sophie again.”

“Picasso has lots of art in the Louvre, but the Picasso Museum has even more,” Isabel said. “He spent a lot of time in Paris studying the works of other famous artists and working on his own pieces. His work is still influencing artists today.” Isabel was usually pretty quiet, but she always lit up when she talked about something she loved. And art was definitely that something. I had a feeling that someday we’d see one of her paintings hanging in a museum. It would be so wonderful to walk around with my family and say, “Yes, that famous, world-renowned artist Isabel Martinez is one of my best friends.”

“So you’re really going to Paris?” Nick asked as he brought a tray of hot chocolate and muffins to the table. Nick Montoya was in our seventh-grade class. His parents owned Montoya’s and Nick helped out. I really liked Nick, and he was always nice to me and the BSG. He was the only guy I knew who was really interested in all the places I had been in the world. Nick would be a great world traveler someday. Maybe he and I could hike the Himalayas together when we grew up!

I nodded. “Only for a week. I’m leaving tonight and I’ll be back next Saturday afternoon. I’m going to visit Sophie and look for Orangina. Sophie said she saw him

near our old houseboat. If I find Orangina, I’m going to bring him back home with me.” I knew Nick would understand how important this trip was ... I’d told him all about Sophie and Orangina before.

“Do you think Marty likes cats?” Avery wondered.

“Even if he doesn’t, he’ll love Orangina,” I assured her. Although secretly I wasn’t quite certain that Marty could love any cat, even one as cool as Orangina.

“Time for presents!” Maeve announced as soon as Nick left the table.

“Presents? Are you serious? You didn’t have to do that!” I exclaimed.

“What would a *bon voyage* party be without *bon voyage* presents?” Maeve reasoned.

“We couldn’t let you leave without something to remember us by,” Isabel said.

“But I’ll only be gone a week,” I protested.

“Me first!” Maeve insisted, pushing a small pink bag overflowing with hot pink tissue paper toward me.

I reached in. It was a pen on a cord, decorated Maeve-style with tiny gold and silver stars. Maeve knew how much I loved stargazing.

“This is so cool!” I exclaimed.

“Writers should never go anywhere without a pen! You know, you are going to write on your barf bag, but you need something to write *with*,” Maeve said. “Besides, you might be inspired to start your first novel while walking along the Seine. You never know!”



"Thanks, Maeve," I said. "That was really thoughtful of you. Maybe when I publish my first novel, *Barf Bag Memories*, I'll dedicate it to you."

Maeve grimaced. Barf bags weren't exactly to her liking, but I liked to write a note on them every time I traveled on a plane.

"Me next," Avery said impatiently, pushing a crumpled brown paper bag in my direction. "Sorry, I didn't have time to wrap it." The presentation was so Avery.

I took a small notebook out of the bag.

"It'll fit in your back pocket. I didn't think you'd want to lug your journal through the streets of Paris. If you turn to the back pages, there's a little map of Paris there that I got off the Internet. I don't agree with Maeve ... I think you'll need a pen AND something to write on."

"Thanks, Avery. I'm going to try to fill the whole thing up in one week."

Katani pushed a lemon-colored bag forward. The top of the bag had been double-folded. Katani had punched two large holes in the double-fold, threaded a gauzy orange ribbon through the holes, tied the bag closed with a perfect bow, and included a card to match. I untied the ribbon, opened the bag, and found a knitted hat in a rich, royal purple ... my favorite color.

"Oh, Katani. It's beautiful ... and very stylish!" I exclaimed, pressing it to my cheek. It was the softest yarn I'd ever felt.

"Isn't it the coolest shade of purple? The bright color

will make your eyes pop and seem even more green than usual," she remarked.

"Did you make it?"

Katani nodded. "I'd already started it for you before I was sure about the Paris trip, but I worked faster these past couple of days and got it done just in time."

"Wow—it's wonderful. Thank you so much, Katani!" I remembered back to how Katani and I first met, and how she didn't want to be my friend. And now we were such good friends. Life was just so surprising sometimes.

"Last but not least ..." Isabel said, holding up the gift bag on her lap. She peeked inside. "It seems kind of silly now, but I thought it was perfect when I found it at the Book Nook. I really wanted to get you the book *The Ultimate Picasso*, but it was way too expensive. So I got you this instead. I hope you like it!"

"A Picasso coloring book?" Avery asked when I pulled the book from the bag. "Isabel, coloring books are for babies, not 12 year olds," she blurted out in her typical abrupt manner.

Isabel blushed. "It *is* a coloring book, but it's for kids our age, Avery. I thought Charlotte would want something to do on the plane. There's a set of colored pencils in there. It has all sorts of cool facts about Picasso too."

"I love it, Isabel. Thanks so much. I was looking for something to do on the plane, and this will be perfect." I was not a great artist, but I still liked to color. It could be super relaxing.



We barely had time to finish our hot chocolate and one of Montoya's famous muffins before Avery announced that she had seen my dad drive by the window.

"I better go ... my dad wants to head to the airport early in case there's traffic."

I gave them each a hug and they stacked the *bon voyage* gifts in my arms.

"Email us!" Maeve called as I hurried out the door.

I turned back to wave at the girls and nearly crashed into a man walking down the sidewalk.

"Wait! Wait!" Katani called as she rushed out the door toward me. "I forgot to ask you something."

"Sure, what is it?"

"OK, it's a big favor. I was wondering ... if it's not too much trouble," Katani started to say, suddenly seeming shy for a change. She thrust a small box into one of the gift bags in my arms. "It's a disposable camera. Would you take a few pictures of the clothes in Paris? I'm looking for some European inspiration for my Kgirl designs."

I promised Katani that I would take as many pictures as I could. Then the man in the car behind Dad blew his horn impatiently for the second time, so I hopped into our car and waved out the window as we drove down Harvard Street. Just as Dad was turning the corner onto Beacon, I suddenly remembered something. "Oops! Dad, can you pull over?"

"What's the matter? Are you OK?" he asked as he pulled into a parking spot, looking concerned.

"Yeah ... I just forgot the Morels' gift basket." I jumped out onto the sidewalk and jogged back toward Montoya's Bakery.

Nick must have seen me coming, because he was waiting at the door of the bakery with the gift basket in his hands.

"Have a great trip, Charlotte. I want to hear all about Paris when you get back ... especially the bakeries. Paris is supposed to be famous for its pastries, but are they any match for Montoya's?" Nick asked with grin.

"No, no of course not!" I laughed, taking the basket from him. "Thanks, Nick. There is no way I'm leaving Paris without at least one incredible story. I hope!"