

INTERMEDIATE FICTION



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Meet the Beacon Street Girls ... they're real, they're fun—they're just like you!

Yikes! As if being the new girl isn't bad enough ... Charlotte just made the biggest cafeteria blunder in the history of Abigail Adams Junior High. There's no way that Katani, Avery and Maeve will want anything to do with her now ... or will they?

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~Natalie, 13

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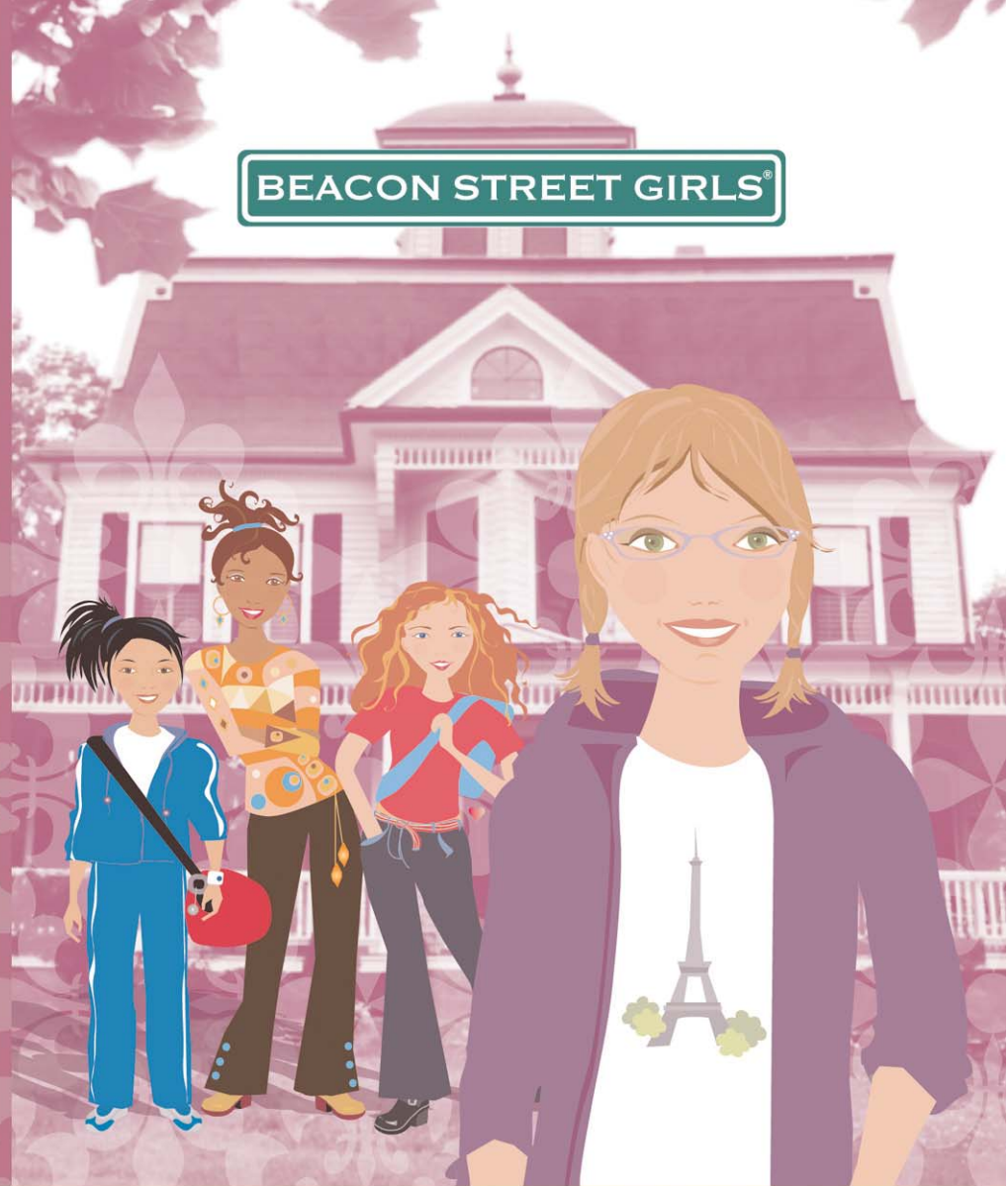


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worst enemies/best friends
by annie bryant

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CHAPTER 1*Charlotte***STARS OVER BEACON STREET**

STARS AND BOOKS have always been my best friends. My books go with me wherever we move. And the stars, they are always there when we get there. The first stars I look for are the three in Orion's belt because they're the brightest. Close friends are harder to find. Well, actually, *keeping* them is the hard part. Every time I find a best friend, we move.

The night before starting Abigail Adams Junior High, I pulled my fleece blanket around me and snuggled deep into the beanbag chair I had dragged out on the balcony of my new bedroom. I missed Sophie and Paris, but I was excited, too. This year was going to be different. Dad's a writer and likes to live wherever his book in progress is based. We've moved every two or three years since I was four. For the first time ever, I was the one who had chosen where Dad and I would live: Brookline, Massachusetts, U.S.A. I was born here, and even though I could barely remember it, this was where we were a family before my mother died. I hoped we'd be here for a long, long time ...

"Charlotte? Why is your light out?"



"It's easier to see the stars. I'm outside, Dad."

"Of course. How could I forget!" he said. "Isn't that a great balcony?"

"It's just perfect! Come see!"

Dad came through my bedroom and the outside door to kneel beside me, as he had many times over the years. "Remember the first time I showed you Orion?"

"Sure, Dad ... Africa."

"Little different here, isn't it?" he said, putting his arm around me.

"Yeah ... in the southern hemisphere, Orion's upside down. But you can still see him from here. I like that."

"How are you feeling about school tomorrow?"

"You mean, like in Africa, surrounded by laughing hyenas? Don't worry, Dad. The kids will not be laughing at me tomorrow. No more first-day disasters."

"I'm almost sorry to hear that," said Dad. "It's become kind of a first-night tradition to hear how you shake things up." He smiled. "Which story is my favorite? Port Douglas? No—Paris! Sure I won't be getting a phone call about my daughter spying in the boys' bathroom?"

"Dad, they speak English in this country. How was I supposed to know that 'Garçon' meant boy? I couldn't escape once all those garçons were in there. Tomorrow will be different, you'll see. What about you? How are you feeling about *your* first day of school tomorrow, *Professor Ramsey*?"

"Well, it's been awhile, but I dragged out the old lesson plans, and they're not looking too shabby."

"Lesson plans? Come on, Dad. What are you wearing? That's what they're going to notice." I dragged him inside. "I've been studying kids for a week here to figure out how to fit in. I've got the Brookline camouflage look all figured out ...

hooded sweatshirt, jeans, and flip-flops."

"Charlotte, do you honestly think they're going to care about my clothes after I enchant them with my fascinating thoughts on creative writing? I have gems to share about character development that ..."

"Dad, I hate to tell you this, but kids notice teachers' clothes much more than what they say, especially the first day. I think you should wear jeans. Are you riding your bike?"

"Sure." He nodded.

"Then, whatever you do, don't leave your pants tucked into your socks."

"My daughter, the nerd police," he laughed.

He leaned against the doorway and checked out my room.

"This looks great, Charlotte. That photo you took from the top of the Eiffel Tower is one of my favorites."

He walked over to the desk, which was perfectly arranged with my pens, journals, laptop, and picture of me and Mom on the swan boats in Boston when I was a baby.

"I'm glad you like the desk," he said. "Your mother spent a lot of hours at it, grading papers."

"It's the best!" I said, giving him a hug. "I've always wanted a writing desk with a cool view."

"Are you about ready for bed?"

"I want to send Sophie an email."

"Well, don't stay up too late. Goodnight, sweetheart."

"Night, Dad," I said, giving him a kiss.



To: Sophie
 From: Charlotte
 Subject: school!

Hey sophie. Tomorrow's the 1st day of school and i'm starting all over again. i miss you so much. Sooooo glad you got the pics of our house. i knew you would love the room on top with all the windows. fantastique, magnifique, merveilleux, n'est-ce pas? i call it the Tower. dad says it's just a decoration. I'm hoping there's a passageway to a real room. glad you approve of my new bedroom with the balcony. a little different than swinging from a hammock in the houseboat. speaking of the houseboat, will you check if Orangina by any chance came home? Au revoir, charlotte

I didn't want to think anymore about school, so I began to write an idea for my best-seller book file. If I write fast enough, I can usually chase away the butterflies zooming around in my stomach.

New Kid Survival Guide

About the Author: Charlotte Elizabeth Ramsey has been new three times in five years in three different countries. She is the world's leading expert on embarrassing school moments and writes completely from her own experience as a disaster magnet. Someday she

hopes to master the art of fitting in. Charlotte lives with her father, Richard, author of Serengeti Summer ... or How I Survived an Elephant Stampede and Lessons on a Coral Reef ... or The Great White Shark Is Not Your Friend. She used to live with her cat, Orangina, but she ran away the day before Charlotte left Paris.

Chapter One: Top Ten Things NOT to Do the First Day of School

By Someone Who Has Done Them All

1. *Wear a long African skirt while riding your bike to school in Australia.*
2. *Wear underwear with purple pigs on them in case your skirt gets pulled off and eaten by your bike chain.*
3. *Wear shorts if you have hairy legs.*
4. *Introduce yourself in a loud, friendly voice to a group of girls applying eye makeup.*
5. *Bring anything in a Thermos.*
6. *Go to lunch by yourself.*
7. *Eat school porridge.*
8. *Join a conversation about a movie you've never seen.*
9. *Throw up on a cute boy's shoe.*
10. *Eat anything with poppy seeds in it and then smile without checking your teeth in a mirror.*

Even though I was still nervous, I saved the file, shut down my computer, and climbed into bed. After twenty minutes of tossing and turning like a beached codfish, I flipped the light back on. Time for desperate measures. I hopped out of bed and got my oldest stuffed animal, Truffles





the Pig, down from the shelf. I also took my Mom's old denim jacket off the back of my desk chair and put it on over my pajamas. I wear it for inspiration when I'm writing, but that night, I needed it for comfort. I pulled it around me and got back into bed, fingering the charm bracelet in the pocket. The bracelet was a baby present from Mom, and while I outgrew it ages ago, I've always kept it. With Truffles beside me and my fleece blanket all snug around me, I began to feel cozy. There was just one last thing I needed to do. I reached for the worn copy of *Charlotte's Web* that was my mother's when she was little. I turned to the last page and read the line Mom had underlined:



"It is not often that someone comes along who is a true friend and a good writer. Charlotte was both."

Then I began reading the story I've read a hundred times since I was little, and in the comfort of the story I knew so well, I fell asleep.