



RIVERDALE

THE DAY BEFORE

A prequel novel by Micol Ostow

SCHOLASTIC INC.

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From: DDoiley1@AdventureScouts.net

To: [list: All_Scout_Mailing]

Re: Overnight supplies list

To all Riverdale Adventure Scouts:

Hopefully, you're all prepared for tonight's campout. (You wouldn't be my Scouts if you didn't know to prepare for any and all eventualities!) Please see below for a comprehensive list of supplies:

- *external frame backpack

- *tent

(Don't forget stakes, guylines, and your tent footprint! The ground in Sweetwater Woods can get very muddy.

- *sleeping bag (with optional liner)

- *multitool—*no pocketknives* per Scoutmaster's regulations

- *flashlights (and extra batteries)

- *swimsuit

- *waterproof sandals

- *long underwear, pajamas, and socks for sleeping

- *water bottle

- *energy bars or other small snacks

- *sunscreen

- *lip balm

- *toilet paper

*insect repellent

*toothbrush/toiletry kit as needed

I'll bring the **first aid kit**. You may also want to bring a **camera**, your **binoculars**, and the attached **field guide to Sweetwater Woods** (though you should all be familiar with its topography by now).

You should also be prepared for two vigorous hikes: first, to camp this evening, and tomorrow morning at sunrise. Badges will be distributed to those who can correctly identify select species of flora and fauna on either or both hikes.

I look forward to spending the holiday with such capable Scouts-in-Training as yourselves! Let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Scoutmaster Dilton

Cheryl:

Jay-Jay, FYI, Daddy's looking for u. Warpath.
Lay low, but you'll have to face music eventually.

Jason:

Thanks, I'm on it. See you soon?

Cheryl:

En route. Just dodged Daddy Dearest obvi. xo

CHAPTER ONE

BETTY

Dear Diary:

I can't believe it's the Fourth of July already! It's super weird to be celebrating it here in LA, away from Polly and Archie and Jughead. I can't remember the last time we missed the Riverdale Summerfest. I guess it must have been that one summer, when Archie broke his arm building a tree house with Jughead, and we stayed indoors all day reading comics and eating red-white-and-blue ice pops. Everyone's tongues turned bright purple, and Juggie ate three ice pops for every one of Archie's and mine. But that was years ago.

I miss Riverdale, of course, and my friends. But LA is AMAZING. Aunt Gertrude's house may smell a little funny (whatever it is, I seriously think the odor's been absorbed

into the walls. It's like a weird mix of garlic and old-lady soap), but she lives right on the edge of Runyon Canyon. So every day I get to hike Runyon Canyon before work. The view is insane. It's exhilarating. There's nothing like it in Riverdale.

The weather's amazing, the barista at Blackwood Coffee knows my order by now (pour over, milk, and two sugars) . . . Oh, and one other thing . . .

Yeah, I miss Polly. But being away from Mom for the first time?

Um, it's not bad.

Obviously, I love her and I know she loves me, but she's so controlling. For once, I feel like I have some independence. And it doesn't suck.

I love working at *Hello Giggles*, too. Even if I have yet to win over my boss, aka the features editor, Rebecca Santos. I don't know if she thinks I'm some small-town hick or what, but she is just not impressed by me.

I know I'm the new girl, and I'm from out of town, and I'm probably the one on staff with the least experience, but so far, Rebecca just has me running errands, fetching coffee, coordinating meetings, mailing packages—girl Friday kind of stuff.

I mean, I still totally love it. But the closest I've come to actual writing is labeling files. Rebecca makes me write the

labels in pencil first, and then go over the pencil with Sharpie. She *may* have some OCD issues. In any case, it's not exactly Pulitzer-track material.

Rebecca keeps me busy, though. Which is good. For a lot of reasons. If nothing else, it means I won't be able to dwell on the one real bummer about spending my summer here in LA—being away from my friends on the Fourth of July.

Ugh, who am I kidding, diary? The bummer is being away from *Archie*.

Polly:

Hey, sis. You around? I wanna catch up. Also need more details about this 'Rad Brad' of yours. Sounds very . . . Not-Archie. Can't be a bad thing. Miss you.

Betty:

You too! But you can just call him "Brad." PLEASE.:) Totally not Archie. In a good way. But also not Archie. In a bad way.

"Rad Brad." That's how he introduced himself. It was so deliberately cheesy that I had to laugh, which I'm guessing was the point.

I met him my second week out here. I was finally starting to get used to the energy in LA—the insane traffic, having to sit on the freeway for hours of the day, every day, how the

weather is always the same (seriously, no one here knows what to do on the rare chance that it rains. They would FREAK if they had to live through a winter in Riverdale, even if we do have enough maple syrup to keep the whole city on an infinite Master Cleanse) . . . The fact that even the regular people kind of look like celebrities, and maybe they are just celebrities-in-waiting, after all. I still felt like the small-town girl in the big city, because how could I not? Literally *all* my clothes had some kind of flowery pink print on them. It was like wearing a sign on my forehead that said TOURIST . . . or ALIEN. But I was starting to adjust to the city's rhythms, and even though I felt foreign, I also felt comfortable.

Polly kept texting, asking about the guys in LA, and I kept telling her: Guys don't usually notice me. I'm the "sweet" one. The girl next door. And the one guy I've wanted to notice me for ages definitely loves me . . . but probably not in the way that I want. For him, I *am* the girl next door.

(I don't know for sure how he feels. I've always been too afraid to ask.)

So it was a summer Friday, and Rebecca had me picking up sushi for the office (rock shrimp tempura rolls, brown rice, extra-spicy mayo on the side, and a hijiki salad—I knew Rebecca's order by heart, already). But even though I'd called in advance, the host told me it would be a while, so I grabbed my book (*The Bluest Eye*, favorite reread, of course)

and settled on the grass at Maguire Gardens, which always has great people-watching.

It was one of those days that even smells like summer: everything green and in bloom, the sky the kind of blue you only ever see in professional photographs. But this was actual, real life. Hashtag no filter.

Suddenly, there was a shadow over the page. “Doing some light reading, huh?”

I looked up. It was a guy who looked about my age, casual in a T-shirt and cargo pants, with sandy blond surfer hair. He was smiling a toothpaste-commercial smile at me.

I flushed. “I guess it’s not exactly summer escapist reading, but she’s my favorite,” I said. Understatement of the century. Toni Morrison is my IDOL. *Hello Giggles* is setting up a signing for her this summer and I’m dying to be a part of it. I’ve been dropping “subtle” hints—like carrying one of her books on me at all times—since I found out.

“If that’s your summer escapist reading, you’re going to need another escape,” he said. When he smiled, his eyes crinkled up at the corners.

“What do you suggest?” I asked. Was I flirting? Maybe LA Betty could flirt. Maybe Riverdale Betty could learn a thing or two from her.

His eyes crinkled again. “I was hoping you’d ask that. My number-one suggestion is this: You let me take over as your recreational director.” I must have looked surprised, because

he added, “Or, you know, just a dinner. Low-key. I swear I’m not a psycho killer weirdo. Promise.”

“Hmm.” I pretended to think about it. “I mean, as long as you’re not a psycho killer weirdo. I do like low-key.”

“See? We’re soul mates.”

Soul mates. I had a flash of Archie’s mop of red hair, his freckles, and those deep green eyes. But even though Archie and I eat at Pop’s together on the regular, those meals could never be mistaken for dates.

“Here’s my phone. Can I get your number?” He passed it to me. Then he frowned. “Oh. Also, your name would be nice. I guess I got a little ahead of myself.”

I laughed. “It’s Betty. Betty Cooper.” I took the phone from him, then gasped as I realized the time. Rebecca’s rock shrimp tempura would be cold by now. Crap. I punched in my phone number as quickly as I could, grabbed my stuff, and turned to leave. “I’m sorry to rush away, but I have—my internship . . .”

“No problem. You can tell me all about it. At dinner.”

I smiled, wondering if my own eyes were crinkling up at the corners, too. “At dinner.”

“Oh! And by the way, I’m Brad. Or—since I’m guessing you’re new to that SoCal lifestyle—you can call me Rad Brad.”

I looked at him. “Okay, but can I also not call you that?” Flirty, LA Betty again! Shocking. And kinda fun.

“Betty Cooper, you can call me anything you want. But you should probably get back to work before your boss catches you picking up surfer dudes on your lunch break.”