

# Beatrix

by Molly Littman

Characters:

Beatrix- A spirited young princess, 20-25 years old.

Narrator- A 20-25 year old woman who works narrating storybooks.

“Beatrix”

*Scene 1: Center stage is a set piece of a carriage. Downstage right is a writing desk and lamp.*

*(Quiet, pleasant music is playing in the background. Gradual lights up on the NARRATOR, a young woman in a pencil skirt and blazer, sitting at the desk holding a large script. BEATRIX is hidden inside the carriage and unable to be seen, but is still heard.)*

NARRATOR

Once upon a time, in a far off kingdom lived a beautiful princess who was about to be married. Now, this princess, Princess Beatrix, had never met her betrothed Prince Montgomery, but she was very excited to start her new life far away!

*(BEATRIX sighs loudly from inside the carriage)*

BEATRIX

I've just never met him is all, you know? And I'm scared, Daddy. I'm scared.

NARRATOR

She couldn't believe how lucky she was...

BEATRIX

It's not fair to send me all the way to France where I don't know anyone, not even my husband.

NARRATOR

She had always dreamed of marrying a handsome prince...

BEATRIX

I always dreamed there would be more to my life than getting married off. There has to be another way!

NARRATOR

And although she would miss her father, she couldn't wait.

BEATRIX

Please, Daddy? Just... please. Don't make me go. I don't want this life.

NARRATOR

However, a long way from home and a long way from their destination something terrible happened.

*(Lights dim. Sound effects: thunder. A bright light flashes mimicking lightning and is followed by sound effects of rain. Lighting effects of rain pour down over the carriage without affecting the desk and lamp stage right.)*

NARRATOR

A storm raged on and on until the dirt road grew thick and muddy. Eventually the carriage could not move any further and they had no choice but to stop. Beatrix's father, the king, was old and sick and naturally could not leave the carriage, so Princess Beatrix left to go find help.

*(Beatrix enters cautiously from inside the carriage dressed in an Elizabethan gown and traveling coat holding an ornate brass lantern)*

BEATRIX

Hello? Is anyone there?

NARRATOR

The princess searched and searched to no avail crying out into the night. Right as the clock struck midnight Beatrix sighed to herself and said...

BEATRIX

Who said that?

*(NARRATOR searches through the script, perplexed)*

NARRATOR

...Beatrix said...

BEATRIX

*(Louder)*

Who said that?!

*(NARRATOR rifles through script unable to find what BEATRIX is saying)*

BEATRIX

I know someone's out there, I can hear a voice, now just please answer me! Who said that?!

*(BEATRIX blindly looks around past NARRATOR and the audience until she wanders to the edge of the stage and stops, staring until she takes one final step and falls into the pit. BEATRIX screams. The rain effects stop suddenly and lights come back up.)*

BEATRIX

*(panicked, to audience)*

What is this?! Where am I?! Stop looking at me stop, stop who are all of you? Where did you come from?

*(NARRATOR crosses to the edge of the stage still holding script)*

NARRATOR

Shhh... Shhh, honey it's okay. You're safe, you're fine; you just broke the fourth wall. It happens. You're gonna be okay, I promise.

*(NARRATOR helps Beatrix up and onto the edge of the stage where they sit down on the edge of the stage with feet dangling in the pit.)*

BEATRIX

*(somewhat calmer)*

Wall? What wall? Who are you? Where am I? ...and why are you dressed like that?

*(BEATRIX sets her lantern down at the edge of the stage)*

NARRATOR

I'm the narrator, I'm here to tell your story to the world.

NARRATOR

*(Gesturing to audience)*

This is the audience, they're here to listen. In the world we live in there are no kingdoms, no knights in shining armor, no princesses. Not anymore. So we have to tell their stories for them to be real again. You fell out of your story, you can just go right back into it as soon as you're ready to.

BEATRIX

*(defiantly, then worried)*

I'm real, though. I'm... I'm real, right?

NARRATOR

You're as real as I am, you just weren't part of the same world. But right now you're here and I'm here and we're just as real as one another.

BEATRIX

Do you know what's going to happen to me?

NARRATOR

...We should really work on getting you back home.

BEATRIX

What about your home? Do you live here?

*(NARRATOR laughs)*

NARRATOR

God, no. I just work here, I live in my own apartment nearby. Sometimes I wish I did though... Did live here, that is. It's where I'm happiest. The closer I am to daring sword fights and dragons and knights in shining armor, the better.

BEATRIX

You said there are no kingdoms anymore, no princesses. What about the bad things from my world, are they gone too? The plague? Arranged marriages?

NARRATOR

Yeah, actually... yeah they're all gone.

*(BEATRIX smiles)*

BEATRIX

So then what is it like?

NARRATOR

Well... instead of kings and queens, the people get to choose who rules the land. *(As the narrator speaks she slowly begins to realize how truly wonderful her world is)* Every one of us can vote for them, even women. We get to marry for love, and even if we choose wrong we can divorce and try to find love again... There are people who live to be eighty or even a hundred years old, and they can watch their children's children grow up. There are machines you can talk into and someone can hear your voice halfway around the world, and there are... steel carriages that can travel twice as fast as a horse ever could. There's so many incredible new things you wouldn't believe.

BEATRIX

*(rapt)*

Then why would you ever want to leave?

*(A long pause)*

NARRATOR

Because I'm lonely here... And I was too caught up in my loneliness to realize how lucky I was. All the tales from your world seemed so, perfect. So happy. So much... better than my life.

BEATRIX

My world isn't better, you know. You just think it's better because you live somewhere else. My mother died when I was born.

NARRATOR

I'm so sorry.

BEATRIX

No, don't be. It happens to so many people. It happens to so many people, try to understand. There are doctors and they can try to help but it's never enough. I have the money that comes with my title but no amount of money can stop the disease or stop the hurt. And now I'm getting married off to someone I've never even met and it could just as easily be me who dies next for all I know. My world is dark and scary and just as lonely as yours, and I don't know what's going to happen to me. Believe me when I try to tell you that my world is not better than yours. I would much rather be on your side of my story.

NARRATOR

*(ashamed)*

I'm so sorry, I didn't know.

BEATRIX

It's fine... I just... I'm scared, that's all.

*(NARRATOR reaches over to comfort BEATRIX)*

NARRATOR

Everything's gonna be okay.

*(BEATRIX hollowly chuckles)*

BEATRIX

Oh yeah? How would you know?

NARRATOR

I'm the narrator, why wouldn't I know how the story goes?

BEATRIX

...You mean that you know what's going to happen to me?

NARRATOR

Of course.

BEATRIX

....And?!

*(NARRATOR laughs)*

NARRATOR

And I'm not allowed to tell you!

*(NARRATOR holds the script tighter and BEATRIX leans in close studying her face)*

BEATRIX

It's in that book, isn't it?

*(NARRATOR smiles back at her. A long pause, and then NARRATOR holds the script and sprints further upstage. BEATRIX follows her, both laughing.)*

BEATRIX: Hey, wait up!

*(BEATRIX tackles NARRATOR and grabs onto the script while NARRATOR is still holding onto it. They stand like this for a moment facing each other and laughing. BEATRIX kisses the NARRATOR. Beat. NARRATOR gives BEATRIX a quick kiss on the cheek before crossing in front of her and turning away. A very long beat.)*

NARRATOR

You live happily ever after.

BEATRIX

What?

NARRATOR

That's how your story ends... you deserve to know that. You marry the prince, and he's as kind as he is handsome and the two of you live happily ever after. You live a long life. Free of disease. A peasant finds your stuck carriage and gets you to your husband's kingdom safe and sound. You never see your father after your wedding but you're too busy to even mind. Or at least the script says you don't mind. You're never hungry again, you want for nothing. Everything turns out perfect for you. Don't worry.

BEATRIX

Oh... I... oh.

*(Overwhelmed by all of this, BEATRIX crosses stage right and sits on the edge of the narrator's desk, leaving NARRATOR alone center stage. NARRATOR turns to face BEATRIX as she moves)*

NARRATOR

*(sad and hurt)*

Isn't that what you wanted to hear, Beatrix? Two princes as sons, a garden view, servants that answer to your beck and call? You would have power over a kingdom that has power over the world. Anything you could possibly want, you'd have.

BEATRIX

*(whispered)*

No.

NARRATOR

What?

*(BEATRIX stands)*

BEATRIX

*(louder now)*

I said 'no'.

NARRATOR

*(pained, not angry)*

What do you mean? Isn't that everything you want, Beatrix?

BEATRIX

That's not everything I want. That's not anything I want. All I want is to be happy. And I don't think I'm going to get that from my "happily ever after".

NARRATOR

Then what do you want me to tell you, Princess?

*(A long pause as BEATRIX decides)*

BEATRIX

Tell me I can stay. Tell me I can listen to stories instead of living in one. Tell me I can take medicine when I get sick and know that I can get better. Tell me I can ride in a steel carriage faster than a horse. Tell me you'll let me stay. Here. With you.

NARRATOR

It's not in the script.

BEATRIX

Well, we can fix that, can't we?

NARRATOR

What do you mean?

BEATRIX

If the script won't let me choose my life, if it won't let me make my own decisions, then I'm getting rid of the script.

*(BEATRIX crosses to NARRATOR and takes the script from her. )*



NARRATOR

Are you sure about this?

*(BEATRICE smiles at her and takes a deep breath. And then she rips out the first page and throws it onto the stage)*

BEATRICE

Goodbye to my 'Once upon a time'. *(she rips another page and throws it)* And to... the plague! *(rips another page)* And corsets! *(rip)* And embroidery! *(rip)* And goodbye to servants! *(rip)* And to knights in shining armor. *(rip)* And to big *(rip)* cold *(rip)* drafty castles! *(rip)* To carriages *(rip)* that get stuck in the mud *(rip)* And arranged marriages *(rip)* to princes *(rip)* who think a wedding ring makes you theirs. *(rip)*

*(BEATRICE rips out the remaining pages in a celebration of her new freedom leaving them scattered on the stage until she's left with one last page. Her joy fades into seriousness. A long pause as they both realize the significance of this last page.)*

NARRATOR

There it is.

BEATRICE

My happily ever after.

NARRATOR

There's forty years in that one sentence. Everything after your wedding from your two sons, to ruling your kingdom, to the day you die.

*(BEATRICE hands the page to the NARRATOR so they're both holding onto it)*

BEATRICE

We'll rip it together, on the count of three.

NARRATOR

One...

BEATRICE

Two...

NARRATOR

Wait!

*(NARRATOR lets go of the page)*

NARRATOR

I can't promise you money, I can't tell you what will happen if you stay. It's not too late to put the script back together. You can pick up where you left off and live out the rest of your life in peace knowing what's going to happen. If you go back I know you'll be safe, I have no idea what will happen if you don't. All I can give you is a place to stay and the freedom to make your own choices.

BEATRIX

And you.

NARRATOR

...And me.

BEATRIX

*(quietly)*

Three.

*(They rip the last page in half and leave it lying on the floor. NARRATOR and BEATRIX join hands and walk down the aisle exiting the theater through the back)*