



## Before Midnight: A Retelling of Cinderella

*Cameron Dokey*

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Etienne de Brabant is brokenhearted. His wife has died in childbirth, leaving him alone with an infant daughter he cannot bear to name. But before he abandons her for king and court, he brings a second child to be raised alongside her, a boy whose identity he does not reveal.

The girl, La Cendrillon, and the boy, Raoul, pass sixteen years in the servants' care until one day a very fine lady arrives with her two daughters. The lady has married La Cendrillon's father, and her arrival changes their lives.

When an invitation to a great ball reaches the family, La Cendrillon's new stepmother will make a decision with far-reaching effects. Her choice will lead La Cendrillon and Raoul toward their destiny -- a choice that will challenge their understanding of family, test their loyalty and courage, and, ultimately, teach them who they are.

## Before Midnight: A Retelling of Cinderella Details

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## From Reader Review Before Midnight: A Retelling of Cinderella for online ebook

### Kim says

Overall, the storyline was actually quite interesting. If only Dokey had written it better. It had an awkward writing style with several typos and a lack of conflict resolution distorted the tale too much (it seemed to me her step family warmed up to her too fast and were saying how much they loved her before there was really any falling out between them). Similarly, the ending was highly predictable and there was never any depth in the relationship she had with the prince (which I suppose never really existed in the original, so I can't complain about that too much).

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### Brooke says

There a millions of Cinderella retellings out there, most of them following the traditional Evil step mother and step sister's story. Usually with the dad having died or away somewhere. This story was not like that.

Cendrillion's (as she's called in this retelling) mother died giving birth to her, her father was away when she was born, and came back a few days later. He was devastated by his wife's death and blamed Cendrillion for the death of her mother. He went to where she'd been buried and to be blunt, threw a fit. He cried on her grave in the garden and (this is where it gets odd...) everything in the garden died off or acted weird (I'll expand on the weirdness later on.) He had with him another newborn, where he was from and who he was was a mystery. The father dropped of the boy and left, not returning for many years.

So Since the father (who was some duke, a favorite of the ~~evil~~ queen) didn't come back, the servants raised Cendrillion and the boy, Raoul as their equals. They helped out around the house and picked the crops in the garden. After the father's fit in the garden the crops grew weird, they would plant one type, and a diffrent kind all together would grow. They planted apples, and oranges grew. They planted watermelons and gigantic pumpkins grew. You get the picture. They didn't expect the father to come back, they didn't expect anyone to come. So it came as a suprise when they got news that the father had remarried, and that the wife and her two daughters where coming out to the house to live.

When they got there, they saw Cendrillion in her plain clothing, and since the father had never mentioned her, they thought she was a servant. And she didn't tell them any diffrent. Over time one of the step sisters broke into the father's office, which had been locked; in the office was a giant portrait of Cendrillion's mother, who ~~as luck has it~~ happened to look exactly like her. The step sister showed it to everyone and they all realized who she was. She became accepted into the family and everyone was relatively nice to her.

No that's not where the story ends, but that's where it starts to get more exciting. ~~And I was a bit tired of typing....~~ Who was Raoul? Where did the father get him? What happens to Cendrillion? The father? The step sister and step mother? If you're wondering any of this, or if the story I described above appeals to you in any way, this is the book for you.

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## Katherine says

*"And so the child of cinders went to the ball."*

A little pro-tip for authors: if you're going to write a fairy tale retelling (and make it a good one at that), **make sure it actually retells the tale you're trying to retell.** I know it seems like a 'duh' statement, but as observed by the atrocity that is this book, it's a tip that needs to be gone over from time to time. Because while I was expecting a Cinderella retelling, and I got...

Something that had the barest inklings of Cinderella but for the most part wasn't. **And it was absolutely abysmal.**

The story begins in France, where a nobleman by the name of Etienne de Brabant is devastated over the death of his wife after the birth of their daughter. He wants nothing to do with her, so he leaves her in the care of his estate and the various servants. But before he leaves, he brings a foundling boy to be raised alongside her, though he does not reveal the child's identity. The girl and the boy, now named Cendrillon and Raoul, are raised mainly by the head housekeeper in the countryside, passing the days riding horses and taking care of the household. Every year they wish for the same thing; to have a mother and to know who they are, respectively.

*"'You make it sound so simple when you know it's not,' I said, the words bitter in my mouth.  
'But since you request it, then this is what I wish. I wish for a mother to love me, a mother for me to love."*

But as the old saying goes, be careful what you wish for, because it just might come true.

Again, if you're going to retell a story, make sure it actually resembles the original piece of work. And from the outside, this book does; a girl named Cendrillon, a stepmother, two stepsisters, and ball, a glass slipper and a prince. Except make Cinderella have a stepbrother, have the stepmother not even be remotely dislikeable and the sisters change heart halfway through the book, a ball that's not grand, the slipper doesn't even make an appearance, and a prince who's plot line resembles more *The Man in the Iron Mask* than Cinderella.

### **SEE WHAT I MEAN? DOES THAT SOUND LIKE CINDERELLA TO YOU? I WAS ABOUT TO BURST A BLOOD VESSEL AFTER I FINISHED READING IT.**

Another thing I expect from retellings is for it to **add more depth and character development** to the original, and the book did the exact opposite. Of course that doesn't really say a lot for me in that I wanted to see a stepmother and stepsister who were evil, but they were the driving source of Cinderella's conflict. Here, I don't think the author knew what conflict she wanted Cinderella to have, other than Abandoned Father Syndrome. And don't even get me started on the stupid instalove that happened between Raoul and Anastasia.

*"They had been there in the tight silences between Raoul and Anastasia whenever they met, the compressed lips, the quick glances from the corners of their eyes. Love at first sight, I thought. I wondered why I hadn't recognized the signs for what they were before now."*

I MEAN, REALLY?? **Those two gave no hint whatsoever** that they liked each other beforehand, so either I'm just really dumb at reading emotional signs, or nothing was there to begin with and the author made it up

on a whim to please future readers.

But when the book really fell apart was the ball where she meets the prince and the ensuing aftermath. The story introduced a subplot that was so out there and absurd that it felt like it was supposed to be part of a different novel rather than this one. And while I won't give it away because you should probably read it for yourself, I will say that for fans of the original, they won't be pleased. **At all.**

That sentiment applies to the rest of the book. Instead of taking Cinderella and retelling it with the respect of the original, the author completely went YOLO on it and **trampled the story so it becomes unrecognizable.**

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### **Jackie says**

I enjoy all the various versions of Cinderella, and this version was just as enjoyable to me. I first saw this book several years ago in a large bookstore. I loved the cover. It just had part of the dress on the cover, but it was beautiful. For some reason, I did not end up buying it, but I wanted to read it, just because I liked the cover!

I might have guessed it was a Cinderella story, by the title, but by the time I actually started reading it, I forgot.

It is significantly different than most Cinderella story retellings, but that is what I liked most. There are new characters, characters that are different from the original writings, and characters that might be a bit of a surprise.

I am really glad I finally read this book. It was well done.

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### **Esmay says**

3,5 stars!

this was such a cute and easy read!!

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### **Jennifer (DigiWrit) says**

As far as retellings go, this one really sucks. It doesn't resemble the original Cinderella in the least. It would've been better if Dokey had penned an original tale of her own and said it was inspired by Cinderella. Here's a quick summary:

Cindrillon--Dokey's Cinderella MC--comes into the world on a stormy night, and her mother dies in childbirth. Cindi's father, a rich nobleman, returns from a journey, bringing a baby boy with him. He takes one look at Cindi and declares that he never wants to see her; he blames her for the loss of his wife. Regarding the boy he gives orders to bring him up as Cindi's equal, but he's forbidden to leave the estate. Then he goes off, leaving the children in the care of servants. Years roll by and finally Cindi's father remarries, sending his wife and two stepdaughters to the estate. Oddly, in time, they four females form a

bond. The Prince makes a brief appearance, and voila! Love at first sight.

The story is less a retelling, and more of an inspired spin-off, practically voiding the entire premise. Dokey flirts with the idea of magic, but its presence is hardly consequential; almost nothing magical happens despite Cindi being named for her odd talent of keeping fires burning at will. Cindi is only treated like a servant because she doesn't reveal her identity. The prince plays less of a role here than in other versions of Cinderella. And if you hate insta-love, look out, Cindi and the prince fall in love and kiss all in the space of two pages. Talk about ludicrous.

So, what gives with the 3 stars? The one thing Dokey does right is tell a meaningful story about the power of real love--not just romantic love, but the love of family and friends. The story also impresses the importance of releasing grief and pain in order to move on with your life. So often we drown in our own sorrow, blocking out and hurting those around us as we waste precious life nursing the wounds of our souls as time slips through our fingers. I enjoyed the message and appreciated it, despite the fact the story itself was very lackluster.

I would recommend this book to readers looking for a decent journey through a profound theme. One thing I found contradictory, though was a line where Cindi's stepmother says that true love comes with seeing someone for who they truly are (paraphrasing)--which is true, but then how did Cindi fall in love with a man she met 30 seconds ago? You can't truly see who a person is in 30 seconds, so how does one fall in love with someone they don't even know the first thing about? I DON'T believe in love at first sight! Still, at just over 200 pages, I think this book is worth checking into.

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### **Tirzah Eleora says**

I feel bad for this little book. I read it while I was horribly sick and needed a distraction. The writing wasn't half bad and I enjoyed reading it. I do have to admit that the three-star rating is a bit on the generous side however, for the faults of this book are many. The plot, an unoriginal retelling of Cinderella, was poorly executed, as was most of the character development. The first half of the book was pretty good in terms of pacing but towards the end of the book things felt rushed and forced. The author added a couple elements of the fairy tale, namely the glass slippers and pumpkin carriage, merely as props to reinforce the fact that it's a retelling, but both items were completely purposeless in terms of the plot and were superfluous.

Again, I liked it; mostly because of the writing style I think...it reminded me of something else, although I can't pinpoint what it is. But I wouldn't reread.

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### **Hannah says**

3.5 stars

Apart from the magical stuff, which I don't care so much for, and one "d--", this book was very clean. And it's not like spell kinds of magic, but wishes coming true, so pretty innocent there too. I found it delightfully unpredictable despite knowing that it's a Cinderella tale...which should have made it predictable. There were some really enjoyable twists on the original story, and I loved how it kept me thinking.

What brought the rating down to three for me is that the ebook was badly edited...not the words, but the

punctuation, which was a bad wreck. Very few apostrophes were in their places, and many commas and periods were missing, as well as random bits of italics in places that made no sense.

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### **Cara says**

*Extremely* wary was I of this one. There have been **tons** of Cinderella retellings and begs you to ask the question what could this little book have to offer? A substantial amount as it turns out.

Cendrillion is blamed for the death of her mother. Not by everyone mind you but by her father. He wishes to never to see her again until he can receive peace. When he comes to visit his dead wife's grave he brings another life with him. A little baby boy to be exact. His name would be Raoul and he and Cendrillion would grow up together. This was totally refreshing because Cinderella never grows up with a brother or any other siblings really. This book felt like a long novel which I was surprised by since it is fairly short. A feat I'm assuming is hard to achieve.

The stepmother and sisters are way more interesting in this story and aren't depicted as being dumb as most other retellings make them out to be. There are a lot more characters that make an appearance to add layers to the story as well. Everything from why she is named Cendrillion, to how the lost slipper comes to play was original. Wishes and love at first sight played big roles in the story. How we what wish may not always be what we thought it would be.

A couple of complaints though:

-How things worked out for her father. It felt like the easy way out. I wasn't expecting perfection but something more than what we are left with.

- **Why? Why? Whyyyyyyyyyyyy!!!** must the love of their lives come at the end of the story? They can make an appearance sooner! I do love the background work Dokey puts into it but I don't think it's too much to ask to put the guys earlier into the story.

Other than that though I'm totally happy and not regretful of giving this retelling a chance.

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### **Alice says**

What a pleasant surprise for any lover of retellings of fairy tales!

I feared this small book, one of the "Once Upon A Time" series, would be a poorly written disappointment. Instead, it was a well written twist on the Cindrella story. It achieved two ends: 1. The writing style captures the magic that fairy-tale readers long for; and 2. The intriguing analysis of the father, the first wife, and the step-mother adds the new dimension to the old tale.

I plan to read more of the series now!

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## Ruth says

I am an absolute sucker for retold fairy tales, and even though the Once Upon a Time series is targets teen readers, I look forward to see what new spin each installment brings to old familiar stories. Cameron Dokey is the most prolific and - in my opinion - best author contributing to the series. In order to craft her own version of the Cinderella story, Dokey went back to the Grimm and Perrault versions of the tale. In a nod to the Grimms, there is a tree planted on the grave of Cendrillon's mother, a symbol of her mother's love and influence even after her death. Dokey also retains the French setting & names found in Perrault's tale. And, as found in both versions, Cinderella's father is alive, and plays a much bigger role in her life than modern readers are accustomed to seeing. Dokey then asks two questions - one, what if the father lives and is a negative influence on Cinderella's life, and two, what if her stepmother and stepsisters were not the wicked ones? Dokey's writing has a lyrical style and rhythm that immediately makes me feel like I'm reading an original fairy tale, and in a nod to modern audiences her Cendrillon is smart, assured, compassionate, and not afraid to speak her mind. Before Midnight doesn't take top honors as my favorite retelling, but it's a solid & enjoyable entry in the series.

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## Valerie says

Maybe I should have read this book earlier; when I was 13 and a fresh book lover. I've read a few more Cinderella retellings since then so it's hard to give it any new twists or magic. Its got the basic framework of all the Cinderella retellings: mother dies (check), stepmother and sisters(check), and a happily-ever-after with the prince (check).

There is always something different about each retelling that I've read. In Ella Enchanted it was the curse, in Just Ella the prince isn't charming but stupid, and I could go on but that would take a while. This book goes for the dad and a war. Which sounds interesting in theory but you hardly get to see the dad and the war part isn't used as much as I would've liked. The relationship Cendrillon (Cinderella) has with her step family is different.

However, what bothered me the most was that it takes **forever** to get anything started. I know that Dokey writes about half the book before she gets the ball rolling but this one took so much longer. The stepmother and stepsisters don't ever appear until a quarter of the book is over and the ball takes even longer to even come up. The ball actually happens after page 150 and it lasts 2 pages, if that (the book is less than 200 pages by the way). The ball is what I looked forward to and was disappointed that it was basically nonexistent. Everything before that is basically to get everyone else to pair off (the stepsisters) and that just wasn't interesting to me. Also the words "true love" is on every other page. I'm usually okay with it and expect it from Dokey but it was a bit much for me.

This book was all right but I think there are better Cinderella retellings. I feel that I may be a bit harsh because it's such a well known story but after I finished I just thought it was...okay.

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## Abby says

As with Sisters Red (though this is definitely nothing like it), this was not my favorite retelling, but still a charming and solid read.

### 1. Smart and Sweet Heroine: CHECK

Cendrillon was a great version of the classic Cinderella. She gave life to a character that I always found somewhat too perfect in other classic versions. She had emotion and heartbreak and doubts, but she always loved others and return was loved.

### 2. Brave and Loveable Hero: CHECK

While Pascal was likeable enough but I was sad we only really got two scenes of him. So in his stead I am going to talk about Raoul. He was just rough enough to be intriguing and just sweet enough to be cute. I loved when he finally figured out even though he lost his mind for a second there. I think he deserved more than Anastasia, but she's the one he loved and you have to respect that.

### 3. Unique Plot and Original Story: NOPE

This was so very close to the Disney version of Cinderella. She added more politics which was interesting, but the rest of it was mostly the same.

### 4. Extraordinary Side Characters: CHECK

All the side characters added dimension and politics to the story. What with Raoul being who he was (if you know what I mean). I loved Old Mathilde and all her wisdom. I also loved that her stepmother was nice and loving when she needed someone to love. I loved Nicolo and Amelie and their blossoming love.

### 5. Plot Twists: CHECK

I actually did not see Raoul's little reveal coming at all. Of course, in hindsight it was obvious, but after all, isn't it always?

Recommended and enjoyable

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### **Maria Bikaki says**

Αν αντ? ταν retelling της Σταχτοπο?τας τ?τε εγ? σ?γουρα ?γινα κολοκ?θα που το δι?βασα  
#waste\_of\_time

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### **Clare Holman-Hobbs says**

I think that there was lots of padding in the first quarter of the novel, and I particularly struggled to get through the pages where the garden was described in intricate detail. It also took a quarter of the book for the wicked stepmother and stepsisters to be introduced, which was far too long in my opinion.

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