

INTRODUCTION

Drama . . . trauma . . . and making chocolate in my pajamas—that about sums up the last few years of my life in a truffle shell. Creating an artisan chocolate business is not all *chocolat* and roses, I assure you (although the movie *Chocolat* still inspires me!).

Through all the professional and personal pain and trials I've experienced, one thing remains constant—the importance of friendship. As I look back, I see in my mind the faces of hundreds of friends who stand at each marker of my journey. Their warm smiles, kind eyes, and encouraging words still sustain me. These friends bring life to my story and meaning to my heartache.

Over the years my friends have been my champions. They have wiped my tears, clothed my children, fed my family, and rubbed my aching shoulders. They have comforted my newborn, and they have held my husband as he cried. Without each act of kindness that they have so graciously extended, I would not be the person I am today. Bethany:Chocolatier, my beloved chocolate business, would still be just a dream.

Because I am so indebted to friendship, I will joyfully and willingly be a friend to those who are hurting, hungry, and broken. I will share with them the treasures that I have been so fortunate to enjoy in the hope that these precious souls will know what it feels like to be loved.

You see, gratitude carves a grand canyon in a heart made tender by pain. The depth can't be adequately described. It is something that has to be experienced. Who can explain how it feels to be handed hope when you were sure your chance had passed? Who can describe what it is like to look into the eyes of the giver and see a glimmer of understanding and not a hint of judgment? That is friendship.

And now I'd like to introduce you to a friend of mine. She's honest and giving, good and true. She's stimulating, inspiring, and, oh, a little bit messy too. As a matter of fact, you might be very well acquainted with her. She is Chocolate.

I often describe chocolate as being a woman. And I want you to know her—her origins, her processes, her temperament, her wisdom—the way that I know her.

Friendship and chocolate are so intertwined for me that I name each and every truffle I create after a friend of mine who shares specific qualities with that truffle. As I introduce you to those friends in this book, I'll also talk about the characteristics of both the chocolate and the friendship that make them a necessary and addictive part of life.

Above all else, as you join in my story, I want you to see the evidence that God designed all these things. He delights in our pleasure. Chocolate is proof enough of that! ✨