

DREAMWORKS

Spirit

RIDING FREE



LUCKY'S DIARY

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Lucky's Diary



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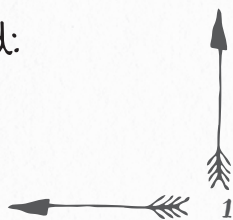
★ Diary Entry ★



Today was the worst best day ever.

First, the best part. School is out for the summer! I mean, what's better than that? Nothing that I can think of. Nothing! And nothing is the whole point of summer. Not a thing. No school books. No packed lunches. No homework. Nowhere to be when the rooster crows. Nothing. Doesn't that sound wonderful?

Doing nothing was my perfect summer vacation plan until the best day turned into the worst.

This is exactly what happened:





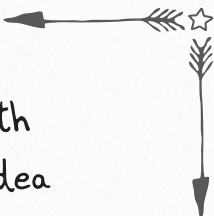
After shouting, "Meet you at the barn!" I left my friends in front of school. Spirit was already waiting for me by the old oak tree.

I wrapped my arms around tightly my wild stallion's neck and gave him a big smooch on the smooth caramel-colored hair just above his warm black nose. He snorted at me, so I kissed him again, when I really knew he wanted the apple in my book bag.

"I'm just teasing you," I told him, and gave up the red delicious treat. Spirit gobbled it in one big bite, and we were off.

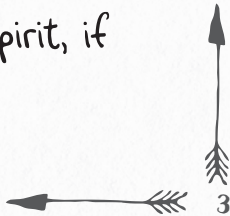
We took a quick stop home to drop off my schoolbag. Adiós, books and pencils and notebooks! See ya next year.



Abigail had this big idea to start the Summer of Spirit (which she is



calling Summer of Boomerang) with a horse spa day. Pru loved that idea and thought her horse, Chica Linda, could use some grooming. For Pru's last birthday, her dad gave her this amazing grooming kit. It had a curry brush, two soft brushes, a hoof pick, and special mane and tail brushes in a beautiful carved wooden box. Pru wanted us all to share the first time she used it, so she saved it for today!

Abigail had used her allowance to buy some rainbow-colored ribbons for her horse, Boomerang, but she could never decide which color matched Boomerang's tail the best, so she decided to wait to use them until today, too. There were plenty for all our horses. Even Spirit, if he wanted ribbons.






I was the only one who didn't have something special to contribute to spa day, and I really wanted to share something, too. So after I shoved my book bag into a corner by the door, I started looking around the house.


I could take more apples for a snack. But that didn't seem very special.

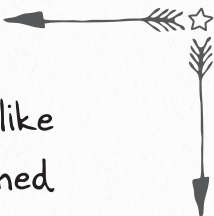
With a final glance around the kitchen, I shouted out to Spirit through the window, "Be right back!" and went upstairs. There had to be something good that we all could use.

Fluffy towels for drying off after the horses' wash? My dad might not like it when I brought back soggy towels covered in horse hair.





In my desk drawer, I had a mud mask that Abigail's brother, Snips,





gave me for Christmas. It looked like black gunk in a jar. I'd never opened it, so I thought maybe it would be a good addition to spa day. We could do mud masks for the horses! I unscrewed the lid. Ack! It smelled horrible. When I looked closer at the glass container, I could see bits of rotten food stuck in the mud. He had obviously filled the jar with mud from the pig pen! Yick. I sealed the lid and dropped the whole thing in the trash.

I'd never make Spirit do a stinky mud mask on spa day. Besides, he was already covered in mud from his night with the herd. (I sometimes wonder what they do when they are together.) Seriously, Spirit could use a walk through the river, or maybe a bath....



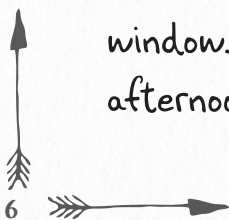



Oh, that gave me an idea.

Aunt Cora had moved out of the house and into the inn, but there were a few of her things left in a box downstairs. I knew exactly what I needed.

Skipping two stairs at a time, I returned to the kitchen. In the back of the pantry was Cora's box. I bet she'd even forgotten about it. I dragged the box into the light and dug down deep. There were a couple of frilly aprons, a pair of silver candlesticks, a photo of her and my dad when they were young, and there...at the bottom...was a crystal bottle filled with a light-purple liquid.

I held up the bottle toward the window. The crystal glittered in the afternoon sunlight, casting rainbows on



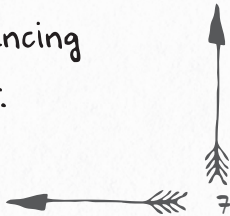




the kitchen walls. It was the prettiest bottle I'd ever seen. For as long as I could recall, I'd seen it on her dressing table by her hairbrush and hand mirror. I knew when it was empty, Aunt Cora could refill the beautiful bottle at the general store in town.

I looked, and now the bottle was full to the top. I slowly pulled out the stopper, careful not to spill even a drop of the precious purple liquid inside. Raising the bottle to my nose, I took a deep breath.

The most amazing scent filled the room: lavender flowers with a hint of lemon.

I held the bottle toward the window and let the crystal cast more dancing rainbows on the ceiling and floor.





"Hey, Spirit," I called out to where he stood, waiting for me in the shady spot of the yard. "How would you like a bubble bath?"

Spirit whinnied.

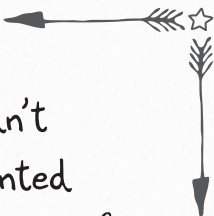
"Sounds great, right?"

I knew this was the perfect thing I could add to the PALS' Horse Spa Day. We could wash Chica Linda, Boomerang, and Spirit with Aunt Cora's bubble bath. Groom them with Pru's brushes. Then, tie Abigail's ribbons in their manes and tails.

When I jumped on Spirit's back to ride over to the barn, I smiled. The Summer of Spirit was off to the perfect start.

And then everything went totally wrong.





Turned out that Boomerang didn't like the smell of the lavender-scented bubble bath. When Abigail put a little of the purple soap in her hand, he backed away from her.

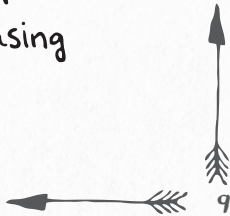
"Try it again," I encouraged as I poured some into my hand, then passed the bottle to Pru.



I reached up to slather Spirit. He caught one whiff of the lavender and protested loudly as well, huffing and moving back away from my hand.

"Oh, come on, Spirit," I cooed. "You'll smell like Aunt Cora."

I guess Spirit wasn't into smelling like Aunt Cora.

Abigail was still struggling to put the soap on Boomerang. She was chasing






him in and out of barn stalls with her hand held high.

"Maybe the horses would have liked the smell of Snips's stinky mud better?" she suggested. Abigail admitted she'd tried the mud mask. She said it made her eyes water for a week. No matter how much she scrubbed, she couldn't get the smell off!

I remembered that after Christmas, she'd worn a garlic necklace around her neck. She told me and Pru it was to keep away vampires in the new year. I should have guessed it was because garlic smelled better than the mud!

So, here's how the day went from good to bad to worse:

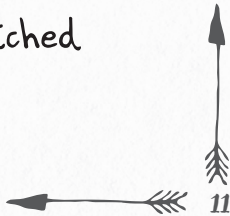
Chica Linda was the only one willing to take a bubble bath. She got all



soapy and slippery. She was loving it, but then, just as Pru was handing me back the crystal bottle, Boomerang reared up, once again backing away from Abigail.

Pru's hands were slippery from the bubbles. Since Spirit wouldn't let me put soap on him, my hands still had the soap dollop I'd intended to use. That meant my hands were slippery, too.

When Boomerang bumped Abigail, she bumped Spirit. Spirit bumped me, and I dropped the crystal bubble bath bottle. The good news was that before it crashed down, I reached out and caught it again by throwing myself over a barrel of oats with an outstretched hand.





But just as I was about to celebrate, I heard the distinct clatter of crystal on the barn floor.

What was that? I wondered.

It was the lid. I hadn't caught the bottle and the stopper. Just the bottle.

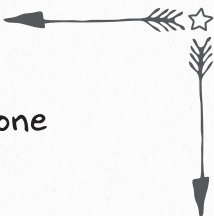
Abigail shouted when she saw the diamond-shaped stopper on the floor near me. It was casting rainbows of light on the barn walls, which was pretty, but made it hard to see exactly where the stopper was.... We searched through wet bubbles and around horses until...

CRACK.

Boomerang stepped on it.

It wasn't Boomerang's fault, or Spirit's for bumping me. Or Pru's for having slippery hands. Or even Chica





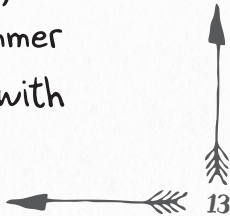
Linda's fault. She had been the one who loved the bath.

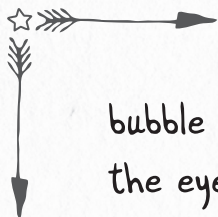
Later, when I went to see Aunt Cora, I had to explain that the broken crystal stopper was all my fault. The truth was hard, but I told it. I'd taken the bubble bath from her box. I'd brought the crystal bottle to the barn.

Aunt Cora was pretty nice about it all. She didn't yell at me. Or ground me for life, which is what I expected. She didn't even tell my father. She sat calmly on her sofa, looking at the empty bottle and the broken stopper.

And then she said the words that ruined my summer vacation.

"Lucky," Aunt Cora told me, "you will need to earn money this summer to replace the bottle and fill it with

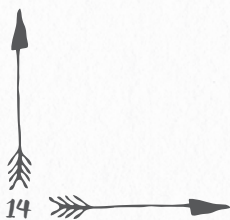




bubble bath." She looked me straight in the eye. "I like lavender."

The Summer of Spirit was over before it had even started. I won't be doing nothing all summer after all. The best day turned into the worst because...

I need a job.



CHAPTER 1

Mr. Winthrop!”

The instant the ice cream shop opened, Lucky flew through the door. “Mr. Winthrop!” she called again. When he didn’t reply, her first instinct was to check behind the counter. That’s where she’d found him that time his back went out.

He wasn’t there. She called again. “Mr. Winthrop! Where are you?”

Lucky looked around the parlor. There was a long counter for ice cream and some tables with chairs. She’d worked there for a few weeks while Mr. Winthrop’s back healed. It was after Spirit got hurt and he was healing, too. Lucky had liked working there



and hoped he might need some help for the summer.

“Hello, Lucky.” Mr. Winthrop stuck his head out from the back room. He was wearing his work apron. “How can I help you this fine day? I was just whipping up some new butter pecan. Would you like some?”

“Oh, I’m not here for ice cream,” Lucky said, though butter pecan sounded delicious. “I was hoping for a summer position.” She rolled up on her tiptoes to look older and more mature since the last time she’d worked there.

“Ah,” Mr. Winthrop said, studying Lucky closely. “Yes, you were very helpful.”

Lucky smiled. “I know! Who would have guessed it was so difficult to serve ice cream?” In fact, she’d given the customers some confusing advice along with their cones, but it all turned out okay in the end. “I’d like to take another try at the job, if I can.”



“I’m sorry, Lucky,” Mr. Winthrop told her.
“We just can’t afford a worker this summer.”
“But who will give advice with the cones?”
Lucky lamented.

“I suppose,” Mr. Winthrop said thoughtfully, then finished with a smile, “that will have to be me.”

“Are you sure?” Lucky asked, getting desperate. “What about at your general store? Do you need help there?”

“Same answer, Lucky,” answered Mr. Winthrop.

Lucky felt her frustration rising. “Are you absolutely sure I can’t have a job? I really need one, and I already asked at the bank and the library.” Ice cream scooping had been Lucky’s first choice, but when she’d arrived in town, the parlor was closed. She’d gone around town asking other places while waiting for it to open.

“Sorry,” Mr. Winthrop told her. “Perhaps you can come up with a unique idea, something the town needs but no one has thought of yet...” He returned to the back room.

Feeling sad and uncertain about what to do next, Lucky left the shop.

Spirit was waiting in the square.

“What am I going to do?” she asked him, putting a hand on his nose and giving him a soft scratch. Spirit dipped to make it easier for her to climb on, but she didn’t want to ride yet. They walked a bit together. “I’m out of ideas,” she groaned.

Moving slowly down the sidewalk, Lucky dragged her feet while Spirit tried to lift her mood by nudging her playfully. When they reached the general store, Lucky stopped. A crystal bottle in the window caught Lucky’s eye. She was drawn to it, watching the way the cut glass sparkled. It was not exactly like



the one she'd broken, but very close. It wasn't as if Lucky could buy only a new stopper for Cora's bottle; she had to buy the whole thing. And she was certain that Aunt Cora would like this one very much. She went inside, raised the glass, and looked at the tag. It was so expensive...and she knew it would cost even more to refill the bubble bath.

She sighed and asked Spirit, "How will I ever earn enough money? It's hopeless! No one will hire me!"

At that, Spirit neighed and Lucky followed the way he was gazing. In the distance, she could see a puff of smoke from a passing train.

"You think I should ask my dad?" Lucky stopped walking to watch the black poof of smoke dissipate into the blue sky. "He isn't going to want me working the trains or pounding rail spikes." She considered it.



“Perhaps I could sell tickets or drinks at the station?” That was a good idea.

Spirit whinnied.

“Thanks, Spirit.” She put a hand up and rubbed his back. “If Dad says yes, I’ll get you an extra apple.”

Spirit whinnied again.

“Ten apples,” she corrected, and climbed onto his back for the short ride home.



“Aggh,” Lucky complained to her friends when they went for an afternoon ride. “Dad said he didn’t have any jobs at the railroad. Seriously, that was my last, last, last idea. I need to buy Cora a new bottle, but I don’t know how.” She squeezed her legs around Spirit a bit tighter. The horse responded by quickening his pace to keep up with the others.

“You can help me babysit Snips,” Abigail suggested, keeping her eyes on the horizon



as Boomerang sped across the green valley. "Maybe if two of us watched him together, he'd act like a normal kid."

Pru laughed as Chica Linda pulled up next to Spirit. "Wishful thinking," she said. "Your little brother doesn't even know what *normal* means."

Abigail scratched her head. "What if he was the normal one, and we were all weird?"

Pru laughed even harder, and Lucky joined in, chuckling.

"It's true. He's a strange little brother," Abigail said. She glanced at Lucky. "But you can still help me babysit."

Lucky considered it for a moment. "What does babysitting Snips pay?"

"Oh, I should have told you that," Abigail said with a frown. "Nothing. It's more like a chore than a job. I guess that's not very helpful, huh?"



“Nothing won’t buy a new glass bottle at the store.” Lucky sighed. “Thanks anyway.” With that idea out, she turned to Pru. “What are you doing this summer?” Then she quickly added, “And can I help?”

“Not unless you want to go to Rancho El Paseo,” Pru said. “My dad is sending me there for the summer to help his cousin Raymond with his new ranch.”

Lucky gasped. “You’re not going to be here all summer?”

“But that’s too long,” Abigail moaned. “You can’t go away all summer! What will we do without you? Don’t go, Pru.” She pouted. “You have to stay in Miradero. It will be a terrible summer if we aren’t all together.”

“I know!” Pru lamented. “That’s what I told my dad, but he just said, ‘You can’t sit around all day.’”

Lucky wrinkled her nose and groaned.



“Looks as if we’ll all be busy this summer.” She slowed Spirit down near a small grove of trees and climbed from his back. Spirit immediately began to eat the grass. Pru and Abigail dismounted as well, and Boomerang and Chica Linda wandered off to be with Spirit.

Abigail flopped back in the grass, staring up at the sky. “It makes me sad that we can’t spend our summer with the horses. The PALs, out riding the range, searching for adventure.” PAL was a combination of the three girls’ names: Pru, Abigail, and Lucky.

Abigail watched the clouds roll by. “That one looks like a little girl,” she said, pointing to a thick cloud with a puffy top. “She’s wearing a fancy hat.”

“I don’t see a girl,” Pru said, lying back next to Abigail and squinting into the afternoon light. “Sort of looks like a boy to me. He’s got a big head, not a hat.”



“Oh, that’s the one next to the girl,” Abigail said. “Now it looks like the boy is chasing the girl. They’re playing cloud tag.”

Lucky joined them on the grass.

“I still don’t see it,” Pru said.

“They’re having so much fun,” Abigail said, pointing. The clouds had shifted, and the two fluffy children were floating in different directions. “They’re getting ready to play a new game!” she exclaimed.

Lucky and Pru exchanged a baffled look. Neither of them saw what Abigail saw.

“It’s like Red Rover,” Abigail told them. “Only it’s Prancing Ponies. Do you see the other cloud kids galloping like horses? It’s so fun, everyone wants to join in!”

“That’s it!” Lucky suddenly sat up and pointed at the clouds. “We can make a day camp!”

“For cloud children?” Abigail asked, staring at her. “Why do fluffy cloud children need a camp?”



“Not cloud children,” Pru said, also sitting up as she caught on. “For-real children. The kids of Miradero!”

“Oh,” Abigail said. “You’re right, cloud kids don’t need a camp. They can just have fun playing games in the sky.”

“Exactly,” Lucky said with a giggle. “But Miradero children would love a camp. Parents could send the kids to us and we could take care of them all day. We could play games....”

“Like Prancing Ponies!” Abigail put in.

“Yes!” Pru said.

“This is the best idea ever!” Abigail cheered. “I’ll get my mom and dad to sign up Snips! He’ll be our first camper.”

“As long as he pays,” Lucky said. “PALs Adventure Camp can’t be free.” She started to figure out the details. “We can charge one dollar for each child for the whole summer. Then, we can split up everything we make



three ways. By the end of summer, I'll have plenty of money to buy a bottle, bottle top, and bubble bath for Aunt Cora, and I bet I can even afford something extra to decorate the barn. Do you think Spirit would like a pinwheel above his stall?"

"I know what I'll do with my earnings: I'm going to buy more ribbons," Abigail said. "Boomerang wants a new set of rainbow ones. Last night, Señor Carrots ate the orange ones from the package." Señor Carrots was Snips's donkey.

"I hope he's okay," Pru said. "Donkeys shouldn't eat ribbons."

"He burped them back up later," Abigail said, then squished up her face and said, "Eww."

"Boomerang deserves new ribbons," Lucky agreed. She turned to Pru. "What are you going to do with the money we earn at camp?"



“I’m going to—wait...” Pru paused, then looked down. She began to pick at the grass.

“What’s wrong?” Lucky asked her.

“I’m committed to Rancho El Paseo,” she said. “I can’t help with the camp.”

“I think we should ask your dad,” Lucky said. “Maybe if we tell him all about our plans, he’d agree to let you stay. PALs Camp wouldn’t be nearly as much fun without you.”

“It won’t be the PALs Camp if we’re not all here! If it’s just Lucky and Abigail, it would be...the LA camp. That doesn’t even make any sense!”

Pru stood to get Chica Linda. “Come on. Let’s go ask him right now!” She climbed up, ready for the ride back to town.

Spirit came for Lucky. She pulled herself onto his back and wrapped her arms around his neck. “We’re going to make a camp!” she told Spirit.



Spirit raised his head and broke into a trot.

“Wahoo!” Abigail shouted, as the PALs began the ride back to Miradero. “Race you home!”

The three horses sped across the valley, back toward town.

The best summer ever was back on track.

