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PRU'S DIARY

By *New York Times* Bestselling Author
Stacia Deutsch

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Pru's Diary



STACIA DEUTSCH



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Diary Entry

Dear New Diary,

It's been almost four weeks that I've been on the road with Lucky and Abigail and El Circo Dos Grillos. The time has flown by. This is the most amazing adventure of my whole life. When Abigail and I went to Lucky's house and discovered that she'd run away to join the circus, I couldn't have imagined that I'd join the circus, too.





Who'd have guessed?! Me! A clown?! I used to have terrible stage fright, and now, it's pretty easy for me to perform with Boomerang. As Abigail says (over and over), "Who'd've thunk it?"

I know...all this clowning around should be impossible for someone like me, but Boomerang makes it easy. That horse has been a clown his whole life, even if he didn't know it. The first time we were in the ring together, the performance was an accident. He got away from me, I tried to



catch him...after a few bumps and falls...ta-da—we were a clown show. Now we're professionals, with costumes and decorations and a fan club, real live applauding and cheering fans. WOW!

Abigail and Lucky are so supportive that they gave me this book to write down my creative ideas for the show...but I think I'll use it for something more. I have a secret to share, and I figure a diary can't tell anyone else...right? I'm not complaining or anything. I mean, I really love it here, and being with Abigail and Lucky all





the time is the best thing in the world. The work is hard—setting up shows and breaking them down makes my muscles ache—but it's also really fun, and seeing the circus come together is amazing. The food off the chuck wagon is good. I love seeing new parts of the frontier and have been to beautiful places I never even imagined. Every day is new and exciting, but the thing is...

And this is hard to admit....

But...

I miss home. I mean, when Abigail and I discovered fluffy pillows, instead of Lucky, in





Lucky's bed, we left Miradero that very same day. We didn't pack our own clothes or say good-bye to anyone. I left some notes, but it's not the same as giving someone a big hug when you go away and saying, "See you later..."

My mom and dad know where I am, and we send letters, but it's not like being in Miradero, sleeping in my own room or working in the stable, mucking out Chica Linda's very own stall.

I have a letter from my dad that always cheers me up. Since this is the first entry in my new





diary, I am going to tape it here to read it whenever I want. The letter is a little torn and dirty, since I've read it a million times already, but it makes me super happy.





Pru,

Your mother and I understand that you're out on the range, helping your friends on an adventure. We were worried at first...and might have grounded you for a year, if we'd only known your plans. But since we didn't get that chance, we're satisfied with knowing we raised you well and trust that you know how to make it for a while on your own.

Thanks for letting us know you arrived safely at the circus. We want you to know how very proud we are of you.





Your mom and I agree that every foal needs to learn to walk on his own legs. You've seen how it happens in the stable or in the field. The newborn babe stumbles as he tries to stand for the first time. He takes a few wobbly steps. Then he rises to his full height and joins the herd.

You're not a babe anymore, but you're still like the foal. You may stumble, but know this, Pru—your friends and family are behind you to help steady your legs. Rise up, Pru Granger, and walk tall in that circus of yours.





We look forward to the day you come back home. We'll build a campfire and gather round to hear your wild stories from the frontier. Maybe you can show us your clown act? We'd all like that.

You should also know, Pru, that I hired Turo to do some of your chores while you're gone. He wants you and Abigail and Lucky to know he built you all a surprise in the horse stalls for when you get back.

That's all from Miradero.

Dad

PS: Your mom says, "Eat your vegetables."





My dad's not a super-emotional guy, but he sure does write a nice letter! And I wonder what Turo did in the horses' stalls. I'm sure Spirit, Boomerang, and Chica Linda will love it—whatever it is.

Okay, Diary, that's enough for today.

Lucky and Abigail are waiting for me. We gotta get ready for our next stop—Durango City! I can't wait to show off what Boomerang and I have planned. This show's going to be the best one yet.



CHAPTER 1

Durango City was a small town in a valley between two large mountains. Pru had seen mountains before; there were several high peaks around Miradero, but none as high as these. She had to shield her eyes against the sunlight to look up, and even then, she could barely see the snowcapped tops.

“Wow,” Pru said on a long breath. She was thrilled they’d have a few days in town. Sunset against those peaks might be a highlight of this whole trip. She could only imagine what kind of wild horses lived—

“Stop daydreaming, Pru.” Abigail’s voice jolted Pru back to reality.



“How did you know that I was daydreaming?” Pru asked, looking over at Abigail, who was loading boxes onto a small cart. Boomerang was tied to the cart, ready to pull the supplies.

Abigail laughed. “Glazed-over eyes. Blank expression. Bit of drool. I invented that face.” She pointed at the tall stacks of boxes sitting nearby. “I can’t wait to get these cartons delivered so I can stare at those mountains, too! Did you try to imagine what kind of horses lived on the peaks?”

Pru laughed. “You know me too well.”

“Mustangs, of course,” Lucky said, coming up to her friends and joining the conversation. She was riding bareback on Spirit. Looking down at her friends, she said, “Wild mustangs. Are there any other options?”

“I was thinking unicorns,” Abigail replied.



“I mean, if I were a unicorn and didn’t want anyone to see me, I’d find a home high up on a mountain where no one would ever catch me.” She added, “See the way the sun sparkles against the snow? You can see bright-colored flecks. Those are definitely the outlines of pink unicorns with purple horns. They’re flickering because they are playing.”

“Unicorns? I’m pretty sure they don’t exist, Abigail,” Pru said, moving closer to Boomerang to rub his nose.

“And if they did, are unicorns even horses?” Lucky asked.

“Of course they’re horses, silly.” Abigail put her hands on her hips. “Everyone knows they’re horses. Aren’t they, Boomerang?” she asked her own horse, who pulled back against the rope she was holding and seemed to nod his head.



“See?” Abigail told her friends. “Boomerang knows I’m right.” She pointed to the mountain. “I bet there is an amazing unicorn herd up there. We should explore—”

“Señoritas!” It was Fito. He owned *El Circo Dos Grillos* with his wife, Estrella. “Less chatting. More working.”

“I’ll help them,” Solana said. She was a circus performer and good friends with Pru, Abigail, and Lucky.

Pru sighed. She was certain there were no unicorns on the mountain, but still, she’d have liked an adventure. Unfortunately, there’d be no time to explore those beautiful mountains. Not on this trip. These few days in Durango City were packed with things to do: They had to set up for all the performances fast because the circus had its first show that very same night. The next day



there was an afternoon and an evening show. And the day after that, they'd pack it up to move on.

With one last look at the mountain peaks, Pru told Abigail, "If you lead Boomerang and the cart to the performance area, I'll get Chica Linda and meet you there. We'll unload."

"I'll stay here with Solana," Lucky suggested. "We can organize the boxes to reload the cart." She hopped off Spirit's back. "Spirit can help us move things around." The magnificent horse dipped his head to push a crate with his nose. It moved slowly toward Boomerang's cart.

Lucky grabbed the crate and looked inside. "Costumes for Solana's trapeze act," she reported. She lifted up a short red dress with sequins and a matching parasol.



“Oh, that’s my favorite dress,” Solana cooed. “Okay, Boomerang, take good care of the deliveries.”

Boomerang whinnied and started to move forward, dragging the cart, but without Solana’s box.

“Hang on!” Lucky called, running after the cart. She caught up and gave the box to Abigail, who put it on top of all the other boxes.

“Okay, Boomerang, let’s get to work!” Abigail took one last look up at the mountain peaks. “Oh, look, did you see that? It was a green unicorn! I’m sure of it. The sparkle in the snow was the same color as an avocado.”

“Are you sure?” Pru squinted into the distance as Lucky shook her head.

“Positive,” Abigail said while tightening her grip on Boomerang’s lead line. “Pru, Lucky, Solana—quick—make a wish! Green unicorns



are rare and kinda like genies. They make wishes come true!”

Pru and Lucky glanced at each other. Lucky shrugged.

“No harm in wishing,” Lucky said. She closed her eyes.

Solana took a turn.

Green unicorns? Wishes? Pru didn’t buy it, so she moved her lips a bit but didn’t make a wish.

“*Whew*,” Abigail said, heading toward the big white tent that was being built a short distance away. “We might never see a green unicorn again—that was lucky!” She glanced at her friend Lucky and laughed. “We have Lucky down here and more luck on the mountain. Things are looking fortunate for us in Durango City!” Whistling to herself, Abigail led Boomerang off.



Chica Linda was in the temporary corral the circus folks set up for the horses. Pru hurried to the tack wagon and grabbed a saddle blanket, a saddle, and reins. There wasn't time to groom Chica Linda now; she'd brush her down later.

"Hey, Chica Linda," Pru said while tossing the blanket over her horse's back. She rubbed Chica Linda's neck and explained, "Time to get set up for tonight's show. Abigail and Boomerang are going to leave the boxes for us to sort through." Chica Linda stood still while Pru tightened the saddle strap and made sure it was secure. "Are you sure you don't want to perform?" Pru always asked. The clown show was her act with Boomerang. Chica Linda didn't ever seem to want to be in the show.

Her horse shook her head and backed away.

"Okay," Pru said, "but let me know if you change your mind."



“Are you talking to that horse?” A tall girl approached the corral. She was about Pru’s age but looked a lot older. Her dark hair was tied back in a high, neat bun. Pru had never seen this girl before.

“Uh, yeah,” she said timidly. “We’re friends.”

The girl snorted. “Sure you are. Girls can’t be friends with horses.”

“Yes, they can,” Pru said. She looked around. There was no one else nearby. The girl was giving off a bad impression, but still, Pru was going to be polite. She cleared her throat and stood a little straighter. “Hi. I’m Pru.”

“Are you with this sorry excuse for a circus, Pru?” the girl asked, not introducing herself.

“It’s a really good circus,” Pru told her, staying positive. “Are you coming to the show tonight? You’d have a good time, I promise.”

“I saw it,” she said in a rude tone.

“What do you mean?” Pru asked while



buckling Chica Linda's bridle. She'd never seen this girl before.

"We're on the same circuit," she said. Then she added, "My family is in the other circus. We're leaving today." The girl turned her eyes toward a wide-open area on the other side of town.

Pru hadn't noticed it before, but there was a circus tent there. It was being taken down, while their circus was setting up.

"It's not the first time we've overlapped," the girl said. "Usually, though, we are ready to go when you arrive. In the last town, we were running late. I'm sure you didn't notice, but I hung around to watch your act."

Pru needed to go help Abigail. Boomerang's cart would be at the performance area already. She had the sinking feeling that the girl had nothing nice to say, but still, she couldn't help asking, "What did you think?"



“You’ll never be as good as we are,” the girl said as Pru slipped up onto Chica Linda’s back. “The audience won’t clap as loudly. Or cheer as enthusiastically. And I bet that no one will want your autograph.”

“Really?” Pru gave a long hard look at the girl, then climbed down from Chica Linda’s back. “What’s your name?”

“Catalina,” she replied, puffing out her chest, “from the *Circus Libre*.”

“I personally guarantee that our circus is just as good as yours,” Pru said, stepping forward. “Better even.”

“No chance,” Catalina said. “We’re the best circus on the frontier.”

“Let me tell you about the best circ—” Pru started, when suddenly Abigail and Lucky appeared, rushing to her.

“Pru, where were you?” Lucky asked, glancing from Pru to Catalina and back.



“We’ve been waiting for you,” Abigail said. “I need the cart for another load and Boom—” Abigail stopped herself. “Who’s your new friend?”

“She’s not my friend,” Pru said firmly. “This is Catalina, and she thinks her circus is better than ours.”

“You told her she’s wrong?” Lucky asked, eyeing Catalina warily.

Pru nodded.

“Great! Then let’s go.” Lucky grabbed Pru’s arm while Abigail took Chica Linda’s reins.

“There’s nothing more to say.”

“But—” Pru protested as they left Catalina standing alone by the horse corral. Catalina winked at Pru, and that made Pru even more determined to prove herself. She told Lucky and Abigail, “She said we were a ‘sorry excuse for a circus’! We have to show her how great our circus is. We have to prove we’re better.”



“How would we ever do that?” Lucky asked Pru. “They’re leaving. We’re here now. And we will never see that girl again.... So none of this even matters, really.”

“Plus, we aren’t going to have the best circus if we don’t help set up,” Abigail said. “Forget about her, Pru. There’s so much to do!” She shouted out toward the performance area, “We’re coming, Boomerang!”

“But—” Pru glanced over her shoulder. Catalina was gone. With a big sigh, Pru turned her attention to the bustling circus in front of her and said, “I don’t know how, but somehow I have to show that girl she’s wrong about us.”



After the evening show, Pru signed more autographs than she’d ever signed before. Her hand hurt from signing so many.

She had added a trick with Boomerang



that made the audience howl with laughter. Boomerang pushed a ball with his nose and knocked Pru down as if she were a bowling pin. Pru pretended to be mad at the horse, but it was an act. They did the same thing again and again and the audience cracked up every time. She loved the way the audience laughed with her.

“If only Catalina could have seen this crowd!” Pru said to herself as she waved good-bye to the last two boys in her autograph line.

“Come on,” Lucky said to Pru. “Let’s clean up fast, then go celebrate tonight’s great show.”

“I helped the cook make cupcakes in the camp oven,” Abigail said proudly. “Since Boomerang is helping you, I had Chica Linda help me. They’re extra delicious.”

Pru wondered what exactly Chica Linda



had done to help bake. Maybe Chica Linda had culinary skills she didn't know about. Did she wash her hooves before entering the kitchen?

Just before Pru went to organize costumes and props for the next show, two young girls came running up to her with blank paper in their hands.

“Can you sign this for me?” one girl asked. Her pigtails shook as she spoke. When Pru autographed the paper, she gasped. “You're the most famous clown I ever met!”

The other girl thrust her own blank paper into Pru's hand. “Sign this and I'll keep it safe all the way to Miradero.”

Pru began to sign the page, then her hand stalled. She wasn't sure she'd heard right. “Where are you going?” she asked.

“Miradero,” the girl said. “My family is visiting there next. We're on vacation and



people say it's the most beautiful town on the frontier."

Pru looked up at the mountains behind her, towering over the horizon, and thought about the girl's words for a long moment. "You're right," she said at last. There was a tinge of homesickness in her voice. "Miradero is the most beautiful town I've ever seen."

Pru brushed aside the feeling and finished the autograph. "Be sure to get some ice cream and say hi to Mr. Winthrop for us all! He owns the parlor." Pru added with a wink, "He can be a bit of a grump, but he'll give you extra sprinkles if you ask."

The two girls excitedly skipped off, holding their autographs close to their hearts.

Pru stared after them for a long moment, wondering if she should have made other suggestions, or maybe she could have asked



them to talk to her parents for her. It was too late. They were gone. She turned her attention back to her friends.

“So, Abigail,” Pru said, “tell me more about these cupcakes.”



Diary Entry

Dear Diary,

This morning, I had the most brilliant idea.

I think I should do a flip off a trampoline and land with flair on a horse's back.

The idea was so incredible that I hurried to the corral to ask Chica Linda if she wanted to be in the show. She's been refusing to be part of the circus, so I've been doing the clown act with Boomerang. I thought that maybe





this idea would get her excited. If she was willing, I could land on her back. The crowd would love it.

Of course, when I asked, Chica Linda gave me a look as if I were crazy. There was no way I was going to flip and land on her back.

I told her I was sure that Boomerang would be into the idea. In fact, Boomerang would probably love jumping on a trampoline himself, if there were one big enough.

Chica Linda snorted.

I told her to let me know if she changed her mind.





If the trampoline idea doesn't work out, I have a few other ideas up my clown sleeve that are all for Boomerang. Maybe I could pretend I don't know anything about horses and try to put a saddle on Boomerang while he's moving. Or teach Boomerang to throw a baseball. Or...

Hang on, Lucky, Solana, and Abigail are here to report big news. Be right back....



Well, Diary, it turns out the caravan is making a surprise stop





on the way to our next show in Triple Creek.

Fito and Estrella have been sneaking around and whispering a lot lately, so we all knew something was up, but we thought it was something small—like changing the ticket colors or adding food coloring to the popcorn.

But Solana heard from the lion tamer, who heard from an acrobat, who heard from the fire-eater, who overheard Fito and Estrella saying that we are going to Low Shores.





Before I could ask why that was important, Solana blurted out that there is going to be a gathering and exhibition festival for all the traveling circuses!

WOW!

Abigail claimed it was her unicorn wish come true, that she'd wished we could go to a festival, and now we were!

Can you believe that Abigail spent her lucky unicorn wish on the idea of a festival? Sounds silly to me...especially since unicorn wishes aren't a thing. But since she seems sure that the unicorn wish is the reason





we are heading to a festival, it kind of made me wonder...

However it happened, this was great news. I mean, I've been in riding exhibitions before, so a circus one must be similar, right? At an exhibition, riders get to show off their skills, not in competition, but for fun. Since we haven't seen other circus acts yet, I'm excited to see what the other clowns will be doing.

The pressure is on. If I'm going to the exhibition, then it's gotta be the most amazing clown act I've ever done. I don't know what it is going to be yet, but my amazing





friends offered some new ideas for the show. They suggested:

- I could ride while juggling pies (that was Abigail's idea).
- Boomerang could ride a bike (also Abigail's idea).
- I could teach Boomerang a dance (Solana's idea).
- I could teach Boomerang to play a musical instrument (Lucky's idea).

Of everything we thought of so far, Lucky's might be my favorite idea, but what instrument? And how would I teach a horse to





play? I have to think more about that.

If Durango City was the best show I've done so far, this one is going to be even better than that!



CHAPTER 2

*E*l Circo Dos Grillos was one of the last circuses to arrive at Low Shores. The broad meadow was nestled between two large lakes that glistened in the evening sun.

The caravan pulled into a wide-open space that had a small sign in the center, welcoming them. Each circus had its own well-marked area.

Judging by the tents and the flags, Pru could see that there were twelve circuses there. Her heart began to race. She was excited to see the other acts but, at the same time, nervous about her own! The billowing performance tents stretched out in all directions. Smaller tents for sleeping



or practice dotted the fields in bright, mismatched colors. Even though *El Circo Dos Grillos* didn't have a big tent—they performed in the open air—once they were done setting up their sleeping and practice tents, the last patch of grass would be covered.

The sounds of chatter and music, the howls and brays and neighs of performing animals, and the smells of a thousand different foods filled the air.

“This is the most incredible place I’ve ever seen! We gotta explore,” Lucky said.

“We can’t,” Pru said. There was always so much work to do when the caravan first pulled into a town.

Pru had no doubt that before the night was over, she’d be even more tired than she already was. She’d been staying up late, writing show ideas in her journal, thinking of ways to improve her act for the



exhibition. There were a few good ideas in her notebook but nothing amazing, and she wanted this performance to be *amazing*. Her own performance was on the last day of the three-day festival, so Pru still had some time. But if an idea didn't come to her soon, she'd never have time to practice with Boomerang.

"Pru's right," Abigail told Lucky. "Work comes first. We can go look around tomorrow." Abigail gazed over Lucky's shoulder at a spot where someone had set off small fireworks, and sighed. "Sometimes it's hard being mature and very grown-up."

Lucky stared out at the fireworks and pinched her lips together.

"Lucky...don't even think about it," Pru warned. "We have to stay with the circus."

"Come, girls." Estrella called them to gather near the marker sign.



“Buenas tardes, amigos.” Fito stood on a small ladder so he could address the entire circus staff. He had to shout over the sounds coming from the other circuses in the meadow. “It’s late, and I know you are all tired after the long days of travel. Leave the supplies for now,” Fito told them all. “We’ll set up the main performance area and a smaller practice tent tomorrow. Relax. Estrella and I will set up the corral and feed the horses. No one works. Tonight, you all should have fun and explore.”

There was a cheer from the circus performers. It seemed that everyone wanted to find out more about the gathering.

“My unicorn wish just came true,” Lucky told Pru and Abigail with a laugh.

“What did you wish for?” Abigail asked, clearly excited that the unicorn wishes were working.



“Adventure!” Lucky cheered, taking her friends’ arms and dragging them to where Solana was standing. “Come on, Solana, we’re off!”

As they headed toward the loudest music and the brightest tent, Abigail asked Pru, “What was your unicorn wish?”

Pru shook her head playfully. “I can’t tell you or it won’t come true.” Truth was, Pru hadn’t made one, but she didn’t want to make Abigail feel bad.

It was as if Abigail read her mind. “Don’t be a doubter, Pru. A wish will come true for you, you’ll see.” With that, and before Pru could protest, Abigail skipped ahead, linking arms with Lucky and Solana.

“Come on, Pru,” Solana called over her shoulder. “Catch up.”

“Yeah, Pru, catch up.” A mocking voice came from somewhere behind her.



“Huh?” Pru stopped and turned around. There, in the rising moonlight, stood a girl. She was alone in the field. Her hair was wild. Her jeans and T-shirt were loose fitting and well worn. Pru almost didn’t recognize her, but then—she winked.

“Catalina,” Pru muttered under her breath. Louder she asked, “What are you doing here?”

“It’s a circus gathering.” Catalina stated the obvious. “I’m here to perform, just like you.”

Pru knew that Abigail, Lucky, and Solana were getting farther away. Eventually they’d notice she wasn’t with them.

“What exactly do you do in this amazing circus of yours?” Pru asked, squinting hard at Catalina.

“I’m a clown,” Catalina told her.

Pru was surprised. Catalina didn’t seem the goofing-around type. Then again, maybe Pru didn’t seem that type, either.



“Me too,” Pru responded. “Are you performing?”

Catalina huffed. “Of course. Are you?”

Pru imitated her huff and repeated, “Of course.”

“You might as well not show up,” Catalina said. “I already warned you that we’re the best circus on the frontier.”

Pru knew if Lucky and Abigail were there, they’d tell her to forget about Catalina and come explore instead. There was no real way to prove *El Circo Dos Grillos* was better than *Circus Libre*, so why bother? The exhibition was all about sharing shows and having fun. There were no awards or trophies, so why was Pru feeling so feisty?

“It’s not a competition,” Pru declared, though she was feeling awfully competitive.

“It sort of is,” Catalina countered.



That caught Pru's attention. "What do you mean?"

"Lydia Sebastian is coming," Catalina said, in a tone that seemed to expect that Pru knew who that was already. At Pru's confused look, Catalina offered, "She's a newspaper reporter."

Pru shrugged. She still didn't know the name.

"Ugh." Catalina exhaled, as if telling Pru about Lydia Sebastian was the last thing on Earth she wanted to do. "She's going to write an article that will showcase only the *best acts*," Catalina explained. "I've always been chosen." She added, "And I always get a photo, too."

Catalina was getting under Pru's skin.

"Maybe this year I'll get my picture in the newspaper," Pru suggested. "It could happen."



“No way,” Catalina said. “Not only is my act the best clown act, but I’ve known *Lydia*, the writer, for years. We’re both from Copper Springs. Her youngest sister was in my class at school; that makes us practically friends.” Catalina gave a small laugh and declared, “I’m going to prove to you that I’m the better clown, right here in front of every. Single. Circus. My name will be in the paper!”

Pru’s blood was boiling. Now the exhibition *was* a competition, and she was going to do whatever she had to in order to be the one in the newspaper!

“You’re on!” Pru told Catalina. “See you in the big tent!”

Pru turned and stormed away, leaving Catalina in the field. But stomping off wasn’t satisfying. By the time she reached her friends, Pru’s face was on fire and her blood was hot.



She told them what happened.

“Pru, don’t let Catalina get under your skin,” Lucky said.

“Yeah, that would be terrible,” said Abigail. “I mean, skin is stretchy and everything, but two people can’t fit in one body.”

Lucky snapped her head to Abigail with a grossed-out look.

“Oh, that wasn’t literal?” Abigail shrugged. “I’ll get it next time.”

“It’s too late,” Pru said. “Now I have to show Catalina that I’m a great clown, too.” She groaned. “But how? You know, I was already planning to do something special, but I don’t have an idea yet.”

“I’ve been thinking that you should do your usual show,” Lucky said. “It gets a million laughs, and everyone loves it.”

“You can do the new bowling-ball part, too,” Solana said. “The crowd in Durango City



thought it was hysterical. I swear I saw a little boy laugh so hard that he cried.”

“Oh, that was because I spilled his popcorn,” Abigail started, then corrected herself. “And because he was laughing really hard.”

“I don’t know,” Pru said, staring out at the endless rows of tents spread all around them. “Tonight’s my last night of fun. Tomorrow, the work begins. Boomerang and I are going to practice until our routine is a winner.”

“Well, then,” Lucky said, clear that she couldn’t talk Pru out of her determination. “We better get started! We have to make tonight the best adventure ever!”

They began the night by going into the nearest circus encampment, where a band was playing and people were dancing.

Pru danced with her friends until her feet couldn’t dance a step more.

