

“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.



“*Agghh*,” 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. “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 would 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 can 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 stalls?"

"I know what I'll do with my earnings: I'm going to buy more ribbon," 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.

