

CHAPTER 1

Miss Flores...I mean, Mrs. Prescott.” Snips raised his hand but didn’t wait to be called on. “Do you mean we have to do homework while we’re on vacation?” He frowned. “That wouldn’t be fair.”

“Yes, Snips,” Mrs. Prescott said.

Her new wedding ring glistened in the sunlight streaming in from the window. Lucky saw the metal glimmer and blinked hard. It was tough getting used to the idea that her teacher was now also her stepmom. But not as tough as the idea that they had a homework assignment over spring break. She agreed with Snips. It wasn’t fair.

“You don’t have to do anything special for



this assignment,” Mrs. Prescott explained. “Just have a normal, fun spring break. But I don’t want your minds to be idle, so be prepared to share what you did with the class.”

A loud groan echoed through the room. It came from pretty much everyone, except Maricela.

She raised her hand but, unlike Snips, waited to be called on.

“I will recite a speech,” Maricela announced. “Would twenty pages be too many?” She smiled. “I have many important plans for the week. I’ll be working at my father’s office.” And then, as if no one knew who he was, she announced, “He’s the mayor.”

Mrs. Prescott nodded slowly. “We all know your father, Maricela, and that sounds like a very interesting spring break.” She considered the assignment. “Let’s do this...



The presentation doesn't need to be a speech. It can be anything you want it to be."

Maricela's hand went right back up. When she was called on, she asked, "But it could be a speech if someone wanted, right?"

"Of course, but a short speech," replied Mrs. Prescott.

Pru leaned in so Lucky and Abigail could hear her whisper. "Maricela wouldn't know a short speech if it hit her in the—"

"Pru," Mrs. Prescott interrupted. "Why don't you share your idea for the presentation with the class?"

Pru snapped back up in her seat. "I don't know what I'll do yet," she said. "My plans are pretty boring. I'm going to spend the break with my parents, helping out around the range." She looked over at Abigail. "It's not as if I get to go visit my cousins or anything."

"You could always come with Snips and



me,” Abigail said. She turned to Mrs. Prescott and the rest of her class. “We’re going to visit our mom’s sister’s brother’s brother’s sister and her husband in Dakota Springs.”

Lucky frowned. “Wouldn’t that be your aunt and uncle?”

“Maybe,” Abigail said. “Anyway, they have a daughter a little younger than me.”

“Your cousin?” Pru prompted.

“I suppose.” Abigail continued, undaunted in her storytelling, “We haven’t seen them in a couple of years. When we were little, my cousin Ariella and I used to get along pretty well. But her family is *very* fancy, and she and I are grown-up ladies now, so she’s probably become fancy, too! Snips and I are going to dress in our best clothes and use our best manners to show her how much we’ve matured.”

Snips groaned loud and long. “Pru, can I



stay here and help at the barn? Señor Carrots and me are good helpers.”

“Señor Carrots and I,” Mrs. Prescott corrected.

“What she said.” Snips pointed at their teacher. Then he put his palms together and begged, “Please, Pru. We’ll sleep in a stall. You won’t even know we’re there.”

Pru laughed and shook her head. “Sorry, Snips. My dad was pretty clear that there’s some sort of job I have to take care of.” She sighed. “I wish Lucky and Abigail could stay, though.”

“*Ugh,*” Snips said, pulling at the collar of his shirt as if he were wearing a necktie. “When I am fancied to death, you’ll be sorry.” He gave a dramatic performance of gasping and choking before flopping to the floor in a motionless heap.

“No one ever died from being too fancy,”



Abigail said, rolling her eyes at her brother's theatrics. She told Mrs. Prescott, "I've been taking manners classes from Lucky's aunt Cora for weeks. I'm ready to use my skills in the wild."

"That sounds like a lovely vacation," said Mrs. Prescott. "I'm sure the class is excited to hear all about it." She then went around the room and asked other students what they were doing over the vacation.

"I'm going to help build a barn," Turo said with a shrug. "Nothing too exciting."

"We're going to do nothing," Mary Pat said.

"Nothing," her twin sister, Bianca, echoed. "If you want to stay here in Miradero," she told Snips, fluttering her eyelashes, "we could spend the whole break together."

"*That* would be fun!" Mary Pat said sarcastically.

"Ugh." Snips groaned again, peeling himself



off the floor and sitting back at his desk. “I’ll take my chances with the fancy cousins.”

“Well then, class.” Mrs. Prescott began wrapping it up. School was over and vacation was about to begin. “When you get back, you can each show us what you did in a skit, a song”—she looked to Maricela—“a *short* speech, or however you choose to present your—”

“You didn’t ask Lucky,” Abigail blurted out, then slapped a hand over her own mouth. “Oh dear, shouting in class without being called on isn’t very fancy. Sorry, Mrs. Prescott.” She shrugged. “Miss Prescott would say holding my tongue is a growth area for me. She told me to concentrate really hard on not speaking until spoken to. *Argh!* I don’t know how anyone holds their thoughts in their head for so long without exploding. It makes my brain hurt. But,” Abigail went on, “Mrs. Prescott, you didn’t call on Lucky.”



“That’s because we’re going on vacation together,” Lucky explained. It still felt odd that it wouldn’t be just her dad and her going on adventures anymore.

“Yes, we are,” Mrs. Prescott said, coming to stand with Lucky. “We’re going out to Destiny Falls. It’s a bigger city than Miradero.” She looked at Lucky and smiled. “I have no doubt we’ll have a great adventure—the three of us together.”

Even though she wouldn’t see her friends for a whole week, Lucky was determined to have a good time. It would be exciting to see somewhere new...right? Throwing a smile on her face to mirror her stepmom’s, she agreed, “Yep. It’ll be great!”

“I’ll see you all back here in a week,” said Mrs. Prescott as the students stood to leave. “And don’t forget to do your homework!”

