

## **Circle C Beginnings #1**

# **Andi's Circle C Christmas**

## **Chapter 1 Excerpt**

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#### *A Peek into the Past*

## **Andi's Circle C Christmas—excerpt**

### **New Words**

<b>carpetbag</b>	an old-fashioned suitcase; a travel bag made out of carpet
<b>company</b>	a guest in someone's home
<b>fort</b>	an army base where soldiers live and work
<b>knit</b>	to use yarn to make things like a sweater or a scarf
<b>hankie</b>	a square piece of cloth used for wiping the eyes or nose; a handkerchief
<b>harness</b>	the straps and other gear that hold a horse to the buggy
<b>hitch</b>	to connect a horse to a buggy so the horse can pull it
<b>rose water</b>	perfume that smells like roses
<b>San Francisco</b>	a big city in California near the Pacific Ocean
<b>spoil</b>	to let a child have his or her own way

## Andi's Circle C Christmas—excerpt

### Chapter 1

#### A Fly on a Leash

“Hold still, Andi,” Riley said. “Hold really, really still.”

Andi sat frozen. She stopped writing. She tried to stop breathing.

But that was hard to do.

“Do you see a rat?” she whispered.

A shiver went down her neck. Riley had seen a rat before. Right up here in the hayloft of the big barn.

*Rats are disgusting*, Andi thought.

“Shhh!” Riley said.

Then *thump!* Riley’s hand came down on Andi’s back.

“Gotcha!” he yelled.

Andi twisted around to see what her friend had.

Riley held up a fly.

“It’s for your lizard,” he said. “Pickles is probably tired of eating spiders.”

“Are you going to hold it until we go inside?” Andi asked. “You can’t write a Christmas list. Not with a fly in your hand.”

“I know,” Riley said. “Give me a piece of your hair.”

Andi wrinkled her eyebrows. What was Riley up to now?

## Andi's Circle C Christmas—excerpt

Most of the time Andi liked Riley's ideas. But he had never asked her for a piece of hair before.

“What for?” she asked slowly.

“Never mind what for,” Riley said. “Just give me one.”

Andi didn't want to do what Riley told her. When Mother brushed Andi's hair, she sometimes yanked too hard by accident. That hurt. Andi sure didn't want to pull out any hair on purpose.

Not even one *teensy* piece of hair.

“Hurry up,” Riley said. “I have to help Cook get supper. He'll skin me alive if I'm late.”

Riley was right about that.

The ranch cook acted grumpy whenever Riley showed up late to help. Or forgot to do his chores. Or made a mess in the cookhouse.

“Oh, all right,” Andi said at last.

She found a long hair that had come loose from her braids. Then she squeezed her eyes shut and yanked. “Ouch!”

Riley laughed. “Such a fuss over a tiny piece of hair. Now hold the fly and I'll tie it up.”

Andi made a face and took the fly.

Riley worked fast. Soon the fly was tied to one end of Andi's hair.

Just like a dog on a leash.

## Andi's Circle C Christmas—excerpt

Andi's eyes got big. She had never seen a fly on a leash before. It was buzzing around in circles, trying to get away.

But it could not get away. Andi's hair was stronger than the fly.

"Hold out your finger," Riley said. "I'll tie up the fly. Then you won't lose it."

Quick as a wink, he tied the hair around Andi's finger.

"When you feed Pickles, just break off the hair," Riley said.

"Then toss the fly in."

"I bet nobody in my whole family has seen a fly tied up before," Andi said. "Where did you get this idea?"

Riley reached for his Christmas list. He picked up a pencil.

"One of the soldiers at the fort showed me," he said. "When I lived there before Mama got sick. Before I had to come here and live with Uncle Sid."



## **Andi's Circle C Christmas—excerpt**

*What if Mother got sick? Andi thought. What if I had to go to the city and live with Aunt Rebecca?*

Andi shivered at that scary idea. She remembered seeing her aunt one time. It was right after Father died.

One time was enough.

Aunt Rebecca was old and grumpy. Andi did not want to live with her.

Not ever.

“Maybe you can visit your mother for Christmas,” Andi said. “You can tell her about Cook. And how you do tricks on Midnight. And how we lasso the dogs.”

She gave Riley a big smile. “That army fort is in San Francisco, right? It’s a long way. But maybe you could ride the train there.”

Riley smiled back. “You’re right, Andi. Uncle Sid is taking me to the fort for Christmas. He told me this morning.”

“Hooray for your Uncle Sid!” Andi shouted.

Then Andi stopped shouting. She stopped smiling. Her happy thoughts about Riley turned sad.

She didn’t want Riley to leave the ranch.

Not ever.

## ***Andi's Circle C Christmas*—excerpt**

“Will you come back?” she asked in a small voice.

Riley was eight years old. Sometimes he acted too big for his britches. But Andi liked to play with him.

Riley gave Andi a friendly shove. “You goose! It’s just for a visit. I’ll be back.”

Andi fell backward into the sweet-smelling hay. Even in December, the hayloft smelled like summertime. On rainy days, it was Andi’s favorite place to play.

“Then hooray, *hooray!*” she hollered.

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