

Lucky Charms

an interactive adventure series

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Lucky Charms

Book One

an original
Interactive Adventure Series
written and illustrated by
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“How do I read an Interactive Adventure?”

Very good question!

Before you get started, it is important to know that Lucky Charms is a book like you've never read before (unless you were an avid reader of children's book during the 80s or 90s...). This book is not meant to be read from start to finish, but rather to be read in the order of your choosing. A variety of adventures await you within these pages, but you will only be reading the one *you* wish to read.

Periodically, this book will ask you to make a decision. Every decision you make alters the storyline, and offers you a new selection of options, so choose wisely. Listen to your instincts. Go with your gut. Choose what feels natural. Once you do, that is when your adventure truly starts.

Where your choices take you might surprise you, but what you want to choose might surprise you even more...

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CHAPTER ONE



Your first memory is that of your sixth birthday party.

You remember sitting at the head of the table with the sickly sweet scent of frosting heavy in your nostrils. Your cheeks had already begun to ache, a penalty from too much laughter throughout the day, and you knew your eyes were bright as you stared at your birthday wish. Well, what was soon to be your birthday wish, at least.

Your knuckles ached as you gripped the edge of the table, squeezing your eyes as tightly as you could while you searched your imagination for the perfect present. It was difficult, of course, because that day had already been the perfect day. What else could you call a day when your mother wakes you to breakfast in bed carrying a bowl of lucky charms, marshmallows only, and chocolate milk topped with whipped cream? But you knew you had to wish for something. After all, isn't that what birthday cakes were all about?

And so you sat. Your ice cream was waiting, sitting on the counter next to a bowl of nuts and chocolate syrup, your friends were staring, eyes wide in anticipation, and right in front of you was the most beautifully decorated cake of your life with six brightly burning candles. Your cheeks stretched a little further as you found it, the wish you had spinning around and around your head.

You took a deep breath, and...

To blow out your candles, turn the page.

Your grin exploded. All six candles had been blown out with one breath and, as you looked through the smoke, you saw your wish come true.

There he was, whispering in your mother's ear. He wasn't carrying a gift or even smiling, but he was there, and he was your dad. You were about to call out to him when you noticed the frozen smile on your mother's face. Something was wrong. All you could hear were her softly pleaded words of, "No, please," and, "Don't go. Not today," with his answering look of disgust.

Your mother's watery eyes held yours. Her makeup had begun to fade, the hidden colors of purple and green beginning to show through. You stared into her eyes at that moment, only half noticing your father's retreating figure in the background as he walked out the front door carrying his bags, and you noticed for the first time that day your cheeks no longer hurt. You were no longer smiling.

Leave this memory; you are now 8 years old on page 3.

You awake to a familiar crash. Mom is home.

Without opening your eyes you try to figure out what time it is. When you fell asleep it was Wednesday. Wednesdays she works at the bar, her second job. These are not “big tipper” nights, as she would say, so she normally comes home a few hours early. When she comes home a few hours early, she has already started drinking but is not yet drunk enough. She often complains of never being drunk enough.

Today is Thursday; it is roughly 1 a.m.

To check and make sure Mom is okay, turn the page.

To stay and listen from bed, skip to page 8.

You climb out of bed and head to your bedroom door, yawning. Your hand is resting on the cool metal of the doorknob when you hear another crash, followed by a loud swear. You pause.

Sometimes these times were great. Sometimes the two of you would go for a midnight drive to look for an open restaurant, because man, didn't waffles sound so good? Sometimes the two of you would crank the music up so loud the windows would rattle, dancing until sweat dripped off of your faces. Sometimes you would play games, chasing each other around the room until one, or both of you, fell. Once she tripped over the carpet and hit her face on the edge of the table. At first you were worried, there was so much blood, but she just laughed and laughed and laughed.

But sometimes you would ask what she was drinking. You tried it once, that cherry-colored liquid in her cup. It ripped through your throat and you screamed as you held your stomach, positive that somehow your insides had just caught on fire. You asked her why she drank it, that awful stuff. Sometimes you learned to keep your stupid mouth shut.

You stand at the door, the cold metal of the doorknob still chilling your palm, and make your decision.

*You had better go check on her. Turn the page.
Maybe you should go back to bed... Skip to page 15.*

As you hear yet another crash coming from the direction of the living room you realize you had better go check on her. What if she needs help? Now that dad is gone, never seen or heard from again after that fateful birthday party, you are the man of the house. Or so she tells you. You aren't quite sure what being the man of the house entails but so far it seems to revolve around extra chores and helping Mom pick up her messes. You aren't sure, but you do it anyway. It makes her happy.

You open your door and slowly walk down the hall. The crashing has stopped. You pause, about to peek your head around the corner, when you are suddenly knocked back and off of your feet. You hear your mother's grunt of surprise as she tumbles into you, barely catching her balance on the wall to her left.

"What're you doin' on the floor, kiddo?" your mother slurs. "A funny place to sleep, don'tcha think?" She giggles, "Or is it? I dunno. Maybe it's not so bad." She slides down the wall to sit on the floor beside you. As you start to sit up your mother catches you wincing and a look of worry clouds her hazed expression. "Oh no, wha- what happened? Lemme see."

"I'm fine." You gently push her hand away, slightly embarrassed by her overly affectionate drunken habits, but secretly craving the attention.

"No you're not, you're on the floor. Someone pushed you down, I saw it. I was there!" She runs her hand through your hair. The alcohol must be playing tricks with her memory but you don't have the heart to try and correct her.

Or do you?

To make up an excuse, turn the page.

To remind her she was the one who pushed you, skip ahead to page 7.

“Nobody pushed me, Mom. I just tripped. Forgot to tie my shoes.” You quickly glance down at your bare feet, embarrassed at your lack of imagination. You look up at her, anxious, worried that she will be angry with you for lying.

“Wha- shoes?” She looks toward your feet. “You don’t got no shoes on!” She laughs, playfully shoving you to the side. Her laughter escalates as she loses her balance, slowly tipping over, and you find yourself giggling along with her. Her enthusiasm is contagious.

“Nu-uh! I put on my invisible shoes today. You just can’t see them.” You wiggle your toes theatrically. She continues to laugh as you pantomime tying your invisible shoelaces, exaggerating each step as you sing, “Bunny ears, bunny ears, playing by a tree...” She’s almost hysterical now as she grabs your feet, pretending to steal your invisible shoes as a cover for a tickle fight. Before either of you have won you are both exhausted and laying side by side, tears running down your cheeks. You look at her with a smile on your face, breathing heavily.

Her eyes are closed as she rests her hand against her forehead. Her breathing is labored and she coughs slightly. “Whew. You really wore me out, little man. I concede defeat. I wave my red flag.” She flaps her hand in the air. “Or is it white? I can never ‘member...” Her voice trails off and you realize that she has fallen asleep. You contemplate waking her, you’re still in the hallway after all, but she seems so peaceful that you decide against it. Instead, you walk to her bedroom, grab a pillow and a blanket, and gently tuck her in. As you walk back to your room, yawning one again, you leave the door ajar so you can hear her breathing. And as your eyes are slowly drifting shut, you smile.

You have fallen asleep. To dream, skip to page 20.

“Well... I fell because you knocked into me, Mama.” You pause. “But it’s okay, I’m fine! It was my fault really, just standing there-” you add, hurriedly. She’s staring at you, blankly, as you continue. You start to stumble over your words, watching as the hurt rises in her face. You wonder why you couldn’t have just left this alone. Why was it so important to correct her?

“I see,” she says, her hands hanging limply in her lap. You reach for them, hoping she’ll tussle your curls, go back to that playful once more, but she flinches. You can hear her murmur to herself, shaking her head ever so slightly back and forth, as she stands up. She wobbles a little, causing you to reach out again to help her steady, but she knocks your palms away. She doesn’t even look at you as she wanders down the hall into her bedroom, still muttering, and closes the door behind her.

You stare at the faded wood, the white paint peeling from years of use and no upkeep, and wait. Maybe, you think. Maybe. A large crash causes you to jump a few minutes later and something, you don’t know what, slams on the other side of the door. You hear her swearing loudly moments after, allowing you to let out a breath you didn’t know you were holding, followed by the unmistakable sound of glass against glass.

And after that, silence.

There’s no use staying in the hall. To go back to bed, skip to page 14.

You sigh, squeezing your eyes tight as you resist the urge to join your mother in the other room.

Sometimes these times were great. Sometimes the two of you would go for a midnight drive to look for an open restaurant, because man, don't waffles sound so good? Sometimes the two of you would crank the music up so loud the windows would rattle, dancing until sweat dripped off of your faces. Sometimes you would play games, chasing each other around the room until one, or both of you, fell. Once, she tripped over the carpet and hit her face on the edge of the table. At first you were worried, there was so much blood, but she just laughed and laughed and laughed.

But sometimes you would ask what she was drinking. You tried it once, that cherry-colored liquid in her cup. It ripped through your throat and you screamed as you held your stomach, positive that somehow your insides had just caught on fire. You asked her why she drank it, that awful stuff. Sometimes you learned to keep your stupid mouth shut.

You sigh once more, opening your eyes. You slowly breathe in and out, in and out, repeating your nightly ritual of counting the 27 cracks on the ceiling, barely visible in the faded moonlight. As you count crack number 23 your eyelids slowly droop. All that is left is the faint crashing and screaming, ringing in your ears like a lullaby.

You have fallen asleep. Turn the page.

A door slams, jolting you from your slumber. Your eyes snap open, seeing nothing in the darkness of your room, and you strain your ears to find where the noise was coming from. You stay silent, waiting, but you can't hear anything. You are beginning to wonder if the noise was only a lingering piece of a dream when you hear it: the distinct sound of a woman getting sick. Mom.

You climb out of bed, sighing. She gets like this sometimes. When she's too busy she often forgets to eat, so when she comes home to drink... Well, you normally find her passed out on the bathroom floor. You put on your sneakers and head down the hallway toward the only bathroom in your tiny house.

"Mama?" The stench of vomit stings your nose as you open the bathroom door. Your mother's body heaves as she retches into the toilet. Her hair covers her face and you notice the majority of it has fallen into the bowl. You wait a few moments, listening, before she groans and picks her head up so she can rest it on the cushion of the dirty toilet seat. "Hey Mama," you say.

"Hey Kiddo," she rasps. Her eyes are tinged with red as she looks at you with vomit covered strands of hair sticking to her cheek. The circles under her eyes are darker today, you realize. She looks exhausted.

To get Mom cleaned up, turn the page.

"Are you feeling okay?" Skip to page 11.

You walk to the bathroom sink, grabbing a dirty hand towel and placing it under a stream of cool water. You turn toward your mother, grateful you remembered to put on your sneakers as you step into a puddle along the way. As usual, she wasn't able to run here fast enough, and you learned your lesson a long time ago that slippers are far too absorbent. You kneel next to your mother, careful to check the dryness of the tiles first, and gently wipe her face. She groans, sighing tiredly, and closes her eyes.

"Hungry?" you ask.

"Thirsty," she whispers.

"Alright," you say, quickly running to the kitchen in search of a clean glass. You find one that you feel is clean enough and take it back to Mom, full of cold water from the tap. You help hold her hair to the side as she takes a sip. You take the glass, turning to set it on the counter, when she stops you.

"Wait. Stay." She grips your hand, not bothering to open her eyes. She knows you'll stay whether she looks at you or not. You always do. She sighs contentedly as you lean against the side of the bathtub, gently stroking her hair. She likes this, you have found out, and now asks for it every time. A few times a month you two sit here, just like this, in silence. Soon she will drift off to sleep, around the same time that your wrist starts to cramp, and you will cover her with a blanket from the closet. You will turn off the light before walking back down the hallway toward your room, taking off your shoes before climbing into bed, where you will sleep until morning. You know this will happen, it always does, but for now you are content to simply lean your head back and allow your fingers to run through her hair.

You have fallen asleep. To dream, skip to page 20.

“Are you feeling okay?” you ask. As a way of response your mother groans, turning her head once more into the bowl. You feel a wave of pity as you kneel beside her, gently rubbing her back. A few minutes later the worst of it seems to have passed and your mother leans back, resting her head on the edge of the bathtub. Her breathing slows.

“Hungry?” you ask.

“Nah,” she breathes, “not yet. Thirsty though.”

“Alright,” you say. You stand up, holding out your hand to help her up. She gives you a weak smile, pretending she’s too heavy, but she’s too tired to keep the act up for long. You hold onto her hand, giving it a small squeeze, before you let go and head toward the kitchen. Mom sits on the couch as you search for a glass. You finally find one that is clean enough and fill it with cold water from the tap, using your free hand to dampen a small towel as well. She takes a small sip, using the towel to clean her face, as you move trash and dirty laundry off to the side so you have a place to sit. You lean back, settling into the couch, as your mother sighs.

“I’m not tired,” she complains, resting her head atop yours. “Wanna watch some TV? Stay up past your bedtime?” She laughs softly, nudging you gently. You nudge back.

“Sure.” *Turn the page.*

“We should go to bed.” *Skip to page 13.*

“Sure.” You reach for the remote, tapping it against the table to remove most of the crumbs. You hold it out for her but she shakes her head, closing her eyes. You shrug and turn to the TV, switching channels until you decide on some late night cartoons. You lean into the cushions, getting comfortable, and tuck your feet underneath your body for warmth.

After a few minutes Mom starts to yawn. She scoots to the side, stretching out so she can place her head in your lap, and sighs contentedly as you begin to stroke her hair. Soon she will drift off to sleep, giving you an opportunity to replace your lap with a real pillow. You will cover her with a blanket, tucking her in, and turn off the TV. You will walk back down the hallway toward your room, taking off your shoes before climbing into bed, where you will sleep until morning. You know this will happen, it always does, but not yet.

You keep running your fingers through her hair, listening to her soft snores, and watch TV.

You have fallen asleep. To dream, skip to page 20.

“We should go to bed,” you say softly, staring nervously at your toes as they clench and unclench uncomfortably. You’re tired, your eyelids feel heavy, and you’re worried she might get sick again. That’s happened before, you remember, when she tells you she’s all right a few moments before she’s puking on your shoes. You’d rather go back to bed.

“Oh,” she says, picking her head up to look at you from a distance, “okay. That’s fine. I didn’t really want to watch TV anyway. My head hurts.” She leans away from you, leaning against the armrest. You look up at her, suddenly feeling guilty. What harm would watching a little TV do? You are about to tell her you’ve changed your mind when she gestures angrily, not meeting your eyes, “What are you even doing up, anyway? I just told you it’s past your bedtime. Get to bed.”

“I-” you stammer, desperate, “I was just-”

“I thought I said go to bed! Leave me alone, you’re making my head hurt.” She stands up, sighing in frustration as she presses her hands to her temples. “I need a drink...” you hear her mumble as she walks into the kitchen. You look down at the floor again as you sit alone on the couch. You might as well go back to bed.

Moments later you’re lying in bed, staring at the cracks in the ceiling. You sigh. You know you did the right thing but you can’t help feeling regret. You can’t help feeling as if you’ve missed out on something. Maybe it wasn’t something wonderful, but it might’ve been something good. Something nice.

You sigh once more, curling up underneath your blanket, and fall asleep.

To head back to your room, turn the page.

Moments later you're lying in bed, staring at the cracks in your ceiling. You sigh. You know you did the right thing, or at least you think you did, but you can't help feeling regret. You can't help feeling as if you've missed out on something. Maybe it wasn't something wonderful, but it might've been something good. Something nice.

You sigh once more, wishing, as you often do, that there was a way to turn back the clock. You close your eyes, trying, but all you get is a sore, wrinkled up nose. You turn to face the wall, curling up underneath your blanket, and fall asleep.

You have fallen asleep. To dream, skip to page 20.

You yawn softly, suddenly exhausted. You let your hand drop from the doorknob as you realize it's probably better to just leave her alone. It's late and she's obviously upset. The best thing to do is just ignore it, go back to bed, and wait for morning. It's safer. You yawn once more as you climb back under the covers, still warm, and close your eyes.

You're just about to drift off to sleep when you notice her stomping footsteps. They're getting louder with each step and you can clearly hear as she trips over something in the hall, swearing loudly. You jump as whatever it was slams into your door. Your heart races as she gets closer, obviously coming to your room now, and you squeeze your eyes closed as you hear the doorknob slowly turn.

The light from the hallway spills onto your face. You do your best to feign sleep as you hear her walk toward you. Your unease grows. You aren't sure where she is, but you can hear her breathing. She must be close. Your breath quickens in anticipation, desperately fighting the urge to open your eyes. What is she doing? Why is she just standing there?

To open your eyes and peek, turn the page.

You slowly open your eyes, careful to make it seem as if you're still sleeping, and peek. You can't see her at first, your eyes taking a few moments to adjust. You're beginning to wonder if you're imagining things when there she is. Staring at you. Less than four inches away from your face.

You shriek, jumping backward in surprise and getting tangled in the covers in the process. You are trying to free yourself as you hear her laughing, and when you shriek again, accidentally falling off of the bed in your struggle, her laughter escalates.

"Oh man, you shoulda seen your face!" she laughs. "Priceless." You're breathing heavy as you look at her, wondering what's going on. Her pink cheeks and hysterical laughter tell you she's been drinking, but you already knew that. Her disheveled clothes are a different story though, so you arch an eyebrow in her direction.

"What?" she asks, crawling onto your sheets. She plops down, laying her head on her hand as she looks down at you, reaching out with her arm to tickle your toes. "Can't a mommy come in to tuck her little man g'night?" You stifle a giggle as she continues to tickle your toes. You kick your feet in protest, pretending to struggle. Secretly, you love when she's like this.

"I was already asleep, Ma. You woke me up."

"Well of course I woke you, I wanted to say g'night! I can't sleep though, not yet..." She looks at you in a softly pleading manner with a slight smile to her lips. You roll your eyes, knowing this look.

"Well, what do you want now?" Turn the page.

You stand up, arms akimbo. “Well, what do you want now?” you ask. Her eyes open wide and she jumps out of bed to clap her hands onto your shoulders.

“Well ain’t you the greatest little boy a momma could have? I knew you’d help me!” she giggles, swaying softly. You hold onto her forearms to help keep her steady but she shrieks as she falls backward, landing on her butt with a thump. She starts to laugh again and you can’t help but join her. You follow her lead, sitting on the floor, and smile. Her laughter was always contagious.

Once she calms down you nudge her with your shoulder.

“So...?”

“What?” she asks.

“I said so?”

“Yeah, and I said what?” She nudges you back.

“What did you need?”

“Huh?”

You laugh, exasperated. “What did you need?”

“Why would I need anythin’? It’s time for bed, I’m just goin’ to sleep.”

“Oh, come on, we just talked about this! You said you can’t sleep yet.”

“Why wouldn’t I be able to sleep?” she asks. “That’s just stupid,” she says, poking you in the forehead to punctuate each word. She gives one last playful shove, smiling as she does so, before she stands up. “Now come on, get up. I don’t even know why you’re awake. It’s way past your bedtime, kiddo.” She helps you stand.

“You’re the one who woke me up, you know,” you say, climbing into bed. She pulls the blanket up to your chin, tucking you in, and kisses you sloppily on the forehead. Well, on the pillow; her aim is a little off. “Night, Mom,” you say.

“G’night, sweetie.”

You close your eyes as she walks into the hallway and closes the door behind her. You are starting to drift off to sleep when...

What now? Turn the page.

“I remember!” your mother shouts, slamming your door open. Again. You shout in surprise. Again.

“What?!”

“I need your help with my zipper,” she says, twisting at an awkward angle to demonstrate her lack of agility. You can see that the zipper for her dress has already been pulled partway down but is now just beyond the reach of her fingertips. “A girl can’t sleep with a dress on.”

“Fine,” you say, beckoning her closer. She hunches slightly so you can reach and with a little effort you manage to pull the zipper all the way down. “There.”

“Great! You’ve been a big help, my little one.” She turns around to kiss your forehead, accurately this time, and you two once again say goodnight. On her way out the door you see her do a little wiggle with her shoulders, causing her dress to fall past her arms and onto the floor. You shake your head as you watch her trip over the fallen dress, barely managing to regain her balance. You snuggle a little deeper into your pillow, closing your eyes to catch some much needed rest, but quickly open them. The light from the hallway is streaming right into your eyes. She left the door open. Typical.

You get up with a huff to close the door, smiling to yourself as you, hopefully for the last time, climb under the covers. “Silly Mom,” you think.

You have fallen asleep. To dream, turn the page.

TO BE CONTINUED...