



1 "We're here," said Mum, slowing to make the final turn.

Both girls sat up and leant forward, straining to get their first view of Lake Lofty Riding Ranch. The girls had saved their pocket money all year for this holiday.

2 "We can unpack later, after we've had a ride," yelled Emma. She leapt out of the car. "It's riding time!"

"You don't have to wait Mum, just dump the bags," said Lisa, leaning over to give her mum a parting kiss.

"We'll see you in a fortnight".

"When you're out riding stick together, that's all I ask," called Mum as she watched the two excited girls sprint down to the stables.

3 It only took the girls a few minutes to

convince one of the riding instructors they were competent riders and they were soon saddling their mounts for the afternoon. Lisa was given a jet-black mare named Diva. She stood about 15 hands high and seemed to have a very even temperament. Emma was given a big chestnut mare with a white blaze that looked like a flash of lightning. Fittingly, she was called Flash.

4 "Take these water bottles, it's pretty warm today," said the instructor, "and stay on the marked trails. We don't want you getting lost on your first day."

"We'll be fine, thanks," called Emma. She reined Flash around.

The girls stirred the horses into a canter and set off towards the sparkling, blue lake that surrounded almost half of the ranch. Emma

led the way, as she usually did, so she could choose the trail that looked the most interesting to her.

5 Within minutes they were out of sight of the resort centre. Emma, who had been scanning the forest with interest, urged Flash towards one of the many trails that climbed away from the fenced paddocks and up into the forested hills. The climb soon became steeper and the horses eased back to a walk without any prompting.

6 Eventually they came to a natural clearing on a gentle slope. Bathed in brilliant sunlight, it was warm and peaceful. The trail continued across the slope and into the forest on the other side of the clearing. Lisa dismounted and retrieved her water bottle from the saddle pack. This was an ideal spot to stop for a while.

7 Emma, who hadn't dismounted, was peering down the slope into the shadows below. "I can hear water down there," she said. "It must be a creek."

Without another word, Emma heeled Flash to the right and cantered down the gentle slope. Lisa, caught by surprise, repacked the water bottle as quickly as she could and climbed back into the saddle. She eased Diva down the hill and by the time she could see the creek, Emma had already disappeared into the shadows.

8 "Em, Em, where are you?" called Lisa. "We're supposed to stay together."

There was silence, apart from the sound of water tumbling over creek stones.

Lisa waited, hoping her sister would soon reappear from the shadows. She waited for what seemed like ages, all the time becoming more anxious. Was Emma all right or was she hurt? Perhaps she was just hiding, playing a stupid trick on her big sister.

9 Frustrated, Lisa decided she couldn't wait any longer so she turned Diva to the right and began to follow the creek. She had travelled no further than a few steps when she heard something. She pulled back on the reins and listened. The sound was getting louder and it seemed to be coming from behind, so she wheeled Diva around to face it. Soon it became clear that it was the sound of a horse galloping through the water.

10 Suddenly, out of the darkness, she saw Flash at full gallop, heading straight at her and Diva. The horse swerved at the last moment, just missing them, as they stood frozen in the middle of the creek. Lisa realised that Flash was riderless.

She felt sick in the stomach. Something must have happened to her sister. It was too late to catch Flash now. All that mattered was finding Emma.

11 After travelling for a few more minutes, Lisa came across hoof marks on the muddy bank. She urged Diva out of the creek and up the bank where she found a narrow hiking track. There were fresh hoof marks in the clay. Vicious-looking creepers and vines hung low over the path. Lisa dismounted and led Diva along carefully.

12 "Emma, Emma, can you hear me?" she yelled.

"Yes. Over here. Keep coming along the track." Lisa moved quickly, she knew Emma was close by. She soon found her, propped up against a fallen log. She was sitting awkwardly.

13 "Something spooked Flash and I took a fall. I think I've hurt my hip. It really kills when I move it," Emma explained through clenched teeth. "You'll have to go for help."

"Not so fast. Mum said to stick together. We'll wait for help to come to us," said Lisa, tying Diva's reins to a nearby branch. "Lisa," Emma whined, "can you help me get some of these thorns out of my leg? Those vines back there are full of them."

14 The girls set to work. It took ages to remove the strange barbed thorns covering Emma's jeans. Each had to be removed individually,

but it kept them busy and helped to pass the time. "They're tough to get out, aren't they?" came a voice. The girls looked up in surprise. Four riders approached.

15 "We thought we'd find you somewhere near here," said the lead rider.

"How did you know?" asked Lisa, realising that this was the rescue team.

"It was those Anchor Thorns you're picking at. We found them all over Flash's saddle cloth, when she came back to the ranch," he replied.

The girls still looked puzzled.

"Anchor Thorns only grow on the south side of Mount Warning, which is right here," he explained. "An unusual plant in an unusual place."

Questions

- Who paid for the holiday?
 - Mum
 - Dad
 - the girls
- Which statement is not true?
 - The girls were very excited.
 - Mum was staying at the ranch.
 - Emma rode a horse called Flash.
- What caught Emma's attention in the clearing?
 - the sunlight
 - the trail on the other side
 - the sound of flowing water
- What did Lisa think Emma was doing at first?
 - hiding from her
 - having a drink at the creek
 - looking for other riders on the trail
- How did Lisa know Emma was in trouble?
 - She couldn't find her straight away.
 - Flash raced past her without a rider.
 - She couldn't find her tracks in the mud.
- We know Emma was impulsive because
 - she didn't have a drink when they stopped.
 - she wanted the chestnut horse named Flash.
 - she left the clearing as soon as she heard the creek.

Vocabulary

Find words in the text that match the meanings below. The word is in the section shown in brackets.

- Making a lot of effort to do something (1)
- Experienced and capable of doing a task (3)
- Quickly changed direction (10)
- Cruel and fierce (11)
- Pointed and cutting (14)

Grammar

A **compound word** is made of two separate words, e.g. *afternoon*. Make compound words from the following lists.

- | | |
|----------|-------|
| 12 fort | nut |
| 13 chest | light |
| 14 sun | where |
| 15 some | night |

Back To The Text...

- Lisa's horse, Diva, was
 - female.
 - male.
- A horse's height is measured in
 - hands.
 - feet.
- Lisa could be described as
 - stupid.
 - sensible.

Sequencing

Look back through the card to find what happened first. Choose **a** or **b**.

- Lisa gave Mum a kiss.
 - Emma said, "We can unpack later."
- They came to a natural clearing.
 - They rode up towards the blue lake.
- Lisa felt sick in the stomach.
 - Lisa repacked her water bottle.

Think About This

- "It really kills when I move it", in Section 13, means:
 - I'm going to die if I'm moved at all.
 - The pain is awful when I move.
- The illustration on the front of the card refers to the text in which of the following sections?
 - three
 - four
 - five
 - six

Challenge Option

Drawing: Do a sketch of an anchor thorn. Use your imagination.

