

Jack and Russell LUCKY FIND is about a 12-year-old boy and his best friend, who happens to be a Golden Retriever. They share adventures together that they don't always go looking for. What lucky finds for them! This is a fictitious story that takes place in the real Mississippi River city of Muscatine Iowa and surrounding areas. Their adventures offer life lessons in dealing with bullies, the importance of self-esteem and the value of friends.

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Jack and Russell
LUCKY FIND



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CHAPTER 1

Woof. Woof.

“You go and follow Jack and he’ll show you where they are,” said Gussie in her thick Swedish accent.

Jack took off running down the aisle and sat in front of the microscopes the lady in the red coat was looking for. Jack was a very intelligent dog, for you see he had a special gift. Even though Jack was a dog, he could understand English as well as any human. Of course Jack couldn’t speak English; everyone knows a dog’s vocal cords aren’t designed for speaking. But he could understand it, even with Mr. Gus and Ms. Gussie’s thick Swedish accents.

Jack belonged to Esbjorn and Lovisa Gustoff who immigrated to America from Sweden in 1958. Because their first names were so unusual to the people in the little town of Muscatine, folks started calling him Gus and her Gussie and the

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names stuck. The Gustoffs owned a toy store in Muscatine and Jack, the very intelligent Golden Retriever, was one of their biggest draws. So was Henry, the Gustoff's other dog and he was just the opposite of Jack. All Henry, a lazy Basset Hound wanted to do, was lay around and eat. Kids loved coming to the toy store not only for the toys, but to see Jack and Henry as well.

Gus and Gussie had the toy store for about eighteen years. When they first came and settled in the small community on the Mississippi River, Gus worked for Home-O-Nize, an office furniture maker. After a few years he and his friend Tom Davidson opened their own cabinet-making shop and did custom woodworking. They became very successful. As a hobby, Gus started making wooden trains, as he was very good at woodworking. Even today Gussie runs the toy store and Gus is usually downstairs making something out of wood. The toy store doesn't carry only Gus' hand-made toys, but all kinds of toys, for kids of all ages. They have wooden toys and stuffed animals, both large and small. They carry dolls and die-cast cars, race sets and even dollhouses. Lots of science stuff like microscopes, bubble-making kits, spy kits and even weather stations. And of course, trains. What toy store would be complete without trains? It was a really fun place to visit.

Everyday after school, Russell would come down to the store and do some chores for Gus and Gussie. Russell was Tom Davidson's grandson. Gus and Gussie have known Russell since he was born. He was like one of their own grandchildren. Russell would bag up all the trash and set it out; he would break up boxes and clean up the sawdust mess Gus would make during the day. Russell also loved demonstrating stuff at the toy store. Gus and Gussie loved having him come down and do it. He was really good at showing how to use a lot of the toys; after all who

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is better qualified to demonstrate toys to a kid than a kid is? Sales always seemed to go up when Russell was showing off the merchandise. He was a great little salesman. He was very polite when moms or dads would ask questions and took his time teaching the kids.

His favorite chore was taking Jack for a walk. He and Jack were the best of buddies. Henry would sometimes go on the walks too but he always just lagged behind and lay in the grass as Jack and Russell would play. Russell couldn't love Jack anymore even if he were his own dog. Jack loved Russell too. They would go for long walks along the riverfront, and romp and play at Riverside Park. Jack's favorite thing was the Frisbee. He loved chasing after it and catching it in his mouth. He would always bring it right back to Russell. Sometimes Russell would tell Jack to sit, throw the Frisbee and tell Henry to fetch it. Henry would walk about ten feet; plop down in the grass, and bark, "I've had my exercise for the day. If you want me to bring it back, don't throw it so far." More than once Russell got into trouble with his mom for missing supper because he and Jack just lost track of time playing on the riverfront.

Whenever Gus and Gussie would go on a trip, Jack would stay at Russell's house because they were the best of friends. Henry would always go and stay with the Gustoff's granddaughter, April, who would come to the toy store and help out whenever she could. She knew her grandparents were getting much too old to be running the store by themselves. So April would help out as much as her 17-year-old, teenage schedule would allow. After all there was cheerleading, the yearbook club, and chorus. Yes, boys too. Even though Russell was five years younger, he and April were best of friends. She would help Russell with his homework and sometimes she would drive him

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places he needed to go. “Hey any excuse getting to use the car,” she would say. They were almost like brother and sister and would tease each other like it too.

This Saturday had been busy. Mid-afternoon, a man came in and was looking at one of Gus’ hand-made trains. Gus had been making trains for years and was a very good craftsman. He knew the amount of time and work that went into making a train set with all the details, so his train sets were not cheap. They were very expensive and highly collectable.

“Hey boy,” the man said to Russell, “I understand these trains are made right here at this store.”

“Yes sir; Gus the owner makes them.”

“Is he in by any chance?”

“Yes sir; I’ll get him for you.” Russell went downstairs and called out to Gus. Gus and Jack, their Golden Retriever, came up the steps. As soon as Jack got within three feet of the man, he started sneezing. Jack sneezed and could not stop. Jack had never sneezed like this before and at first it was kind of funny. Soon Russell was starting to get a little worried. He took Jack and they went outside. As soon as Jack was away from the customer, he stopped sneezing. That was so weird thought Russell. Maybe Jack just got some sawdust up his nose from being downstairs in Gus’ shop.

“You stay here, Jack; I’m going back inside to see if he buys Gus’ train.” Jack lay down and put his head on his paws. Russell went back inside and the customer was talking to Gus.

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“This is a beautiful train set. What detail! You do very good work old man. I was wondering; I’m buying this for my son and I want to make it special just for him. Could you take and carve his name on the engine? Kinda like “Darren Express” or “The Darren Line” or something like that. You know, personalize it just a bit for him.”

“Ya, I can do something like that. Tell you what, you come back on Friday and I will have this all boxed up for you and have a special engine ready to go.”

“That sounds great. I’m going to go ahead and pay for it today and then Friday I just have to pick it up.”

“I’ll have it all ready for you.” The two men shook hands. “Momma, this gentleman is going to pay for the big set. \$799.95.”

“We’ll take care of it Poppa.” She pushed a button on the register and finally the total came up. “That will be \$869.95 with the tax,” she said hoping that the gentleman wouldn’t hear her knees knocking together from the excitement of having such a large sale. The man reached into his pocket and pulled out a huge roll of bills. They were mostly hundred dollar bills from what Russell could see. The man peeled off nine of them and gave them to Gussie. She counted out the change and gave the man his receipt. They both exchanged a thank you and the man walked out the door. Russell followed out behind him. As soon as the man was outside, Jack started sneezing again. Jack kept on sneezing until the man was about ten feet away. Russell petted Jack, “Maybe you need to go and see the vet.”

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Wendy came running down the crowded hall of Central Middle School trying to catch up to Russell.

“Russell,” she called out a couple of times. Russell turned around to see Wendy coming at him. He stopped to wait for her. She was really cute and a lot of the guys had a crush on her, though they would never admit it. At the age of 12, some boys still think girls have cooties. Russell knew she didn’t have cooties but 12 is an age when boys and girls are still pretty shy.

“Russell, I want to ask you something.” said Wendy trying to catch her breath.

“Hi, Wendy, what’s up?”

“Hey, some of us are going to get a float together for the Watermelon Festival parade next weekend. I was wondering if you would like to help out. We are going to make a huge paper maché watermelon and put it on our float.”

“Wow! That sounds like a project. Where are you doing this?”

“At my uncle’s house. He has a large flat trailer we can decorate up and use for the float. It’s going to be a lot of fun.”

“Sounds like it. Um, ya, I guess I could help out.”

“Sweet! See you Saturday at my uncle’s house on Iowa Avenue, across from Iowa Field.”

“Hey that’s not that far from where I live; okay, see you Saturday.”

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Just then some eighth grade girls came walking by.

“Hey, Windy, still blowing your mouth off?” asked Martha.

“Yeah...that girl talks more than anyone I ever met,” said Lucy. “She’s the reason they call them “her-icanes.”

“Everyone knows it’s Windy...” sang Patty as the three girls walked by.

Wendy lowered her head. She didn’t want Russell to see how embarrassed she was.

“Just ignore them,” said Russell. “I don’t think you talk too much.”

Wendy smiled at him. “I’ll see you Saturday then, okay?”

Now Russell wasn’t one of your most studious students. Russell was more of a daydreamer. He didn’t always pay attention in class and more than once he got caught by his teachers for not paying attention. Today was no exception.

“Russell, did you hear what I just said?” Russell snapped back into reality at hearing his name called in such a stern manner. He was thinking about Wendy and the float.

“I’m sorry Mr. Kemple; I was thinking about something you said earlier, about the Civil War not being about slavery.” That wasn’t what he was really thinking but if it sounded like his mind was still on the class he might not get in as much trouble.

“Really?” said Mr. Kemple, not sure Russell was telling the truth or not. “I said that everyone in the class needs to write an

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essay on something historical about Muscatine. Your essays have to be at least 900 words, typed and are due in 10 days. Your essays have to be turned in one week from this coming Monday. Monday the 21st. Is that clear? I want you all to be original in your ideas. Any questions?" Debbie Fischer raised her hand. Everybody in the class rolled their eyes at the same time. "Here it comes," someone whispered out loud.

"Can we include charts and pictures and timelines and graphs and such?" asked the teacher's pet.

"I think that is a great idea; every 900 word essay must have at least three pictures with it. If you need help scanning in your pictures, Mrs. Bradley in the library will be glad to help you. Great idea, Debbie." There was a low moan from the rest of the class.

Russell just dropped his head into his hands. "900 words," he thought. "I haven't spoken 900 words my whole life. And pictures too? What the heck am I suppose to write about?"

"You kids have no appreciation for good food," said Mrs. McKinley the school's head lunch lady. She was always in a bad mood and grumpy. "All you kids want to do is eat hot dogs. I have this delicious meatloaf today and all you want are hot dogs."

"That's because your meatloaf tastes like cardboard," yelled out someone further in back of the line.

"Who said that? You ingrates." The kids started chuckling.

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Russell got to the head of the line and decided he wasn't hungry. He had lost his appetite in Mr. Kemple's class when he heard the phrase, "900 words."

"I'll have the meatloaf, ma'am," said Russell. He wasn't going to eat it, just nibble at the potatoes and dessert.

"Well there is someone who appreciates a good meal," said Mrs. McKinley.

Russell found a seat with Jules, Dan, and Andy. "You got the meatloaf?"

"I'm really not that hungry and I thought it might make Mount McKinley happy," said Russell. They called her Mount McKinley because most of the time she was cold and stony, just like the mountain. "You guys thought at all about what you're going to do your essays on for Mr. Kemple?"

"No; haven't given it much thought yet; probably... the pearl button industry."

"Yeah, that sounds good," said Andy. Russell just wasn't sure if that was the thing he wanted to write about. That afternoon Russell had a hard time concentrating on his classes.

Russell burst through the door as the middle school emptied out. He ran the ten blocks to get to the toy store so he could get his chores done. Then he and Jack could spend the rest of the afternoon playing on the riverfront. Russell liked to run and it kept him in pretty good shape. Every day, Jack would sit out in front of the toy store at three o'clock, and when he saw Russell come around the corner, he ran up to meet him. Jack jumped into

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Russell's arms, licking his face as Russell hugged him. The two walked to the toy store so Russell could get to work.

"Well, how was school today?" asked Gussie as the two came walking in the door.

"All right I guess. Just another day."

"Did you learn anything today?"

Russell thought for a moment. "You know, I guess I'm still as stupid as yesterday."

"That's not good," came a gruff voice from the top of the stairs. "You need to learn something new every day." Gus had come up from his workshop.

"And just what did you learn new today, Papa?" mused Gussie.

"If you don't watch what you're doing, you can sandpaper the skin off your knuckles." He held up his hand and showed Gussie his bleeding finger.

"Oh you poor dear; let's get you a band-aide."

Russell started collecting the trash so he and Jack could go play.

Jack lay on the ground with his head on his paws looking out over the river. Russell sat next to him, throwing rocks into the water. "I have to do a report on something that has happened in

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Muscatine's history. It has to be 900 words long and have pictures. What am I suppose to write 900 words about?" Russell often talked out a lot of his problems with Jack. He knew Jack couldn't help with his problems but Jack was that kind of a pal. One who would sit and listen and empathize. We all need a pal like that. For some of us it's our parents or a close friend perhaps. Maybe even an aunt or an uncle or maybe even an imaginary friend. It just feels so good to have someone to talk to. "900 words," Russell repeated.

"You know I could do a report on Riverside Park. I wonder how long this has been here. How did this come to be a park?" Jack barked his approval to Russell's idea.

The following day, Russell came out of the locker room after gym class. He was heading to his next class when he heard a noise down by the back parking lot doors. He went to investigate. Randy Hanson and three of his buddies had someone pinned up against the wall and were hassling him. Randy was just a bully, plain and simple. Russell had been going to school with Randy since the first grade and knew him pretty well. In fifth grade, the two of them got into a pushing match that ended up in a wrestling match. Russell got the best of him then and sent him home crying after making him eat some grass. Russell wasn't scared of Randy; it's just that Randy now had three friends who always hung around with him and they were bullies too.

"Hey!" yelled Russell. "Leave him alone."

The four of them turned to see who was yelling at them. Russell could see it was Thomas Vasquez they had pinned to the

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wall. “What are you, his mommy?” taunted Steve Liddle, one of Randy’s friends.

“Leave him alone. Aren’t you guys going to be late for class?”

“Oh, now he’s a hall monitor too,” chided Harry.

“Is this all you have to do Randy? Bully other kids? Four on one. Wow! How tough are you guys?”

“Maybe you like the odds of four on two better?” said Harry.

“Four on two? What? Are you counting on him?” Russell said pointing to Randy. “He’s no help. I made him cry back in the fifth grade. We got into a pushing and shoving match and, how did it end? Oh, yeah. You went home crying. Did you ever tell them that story, Randy?”

“Shut up, Davidson.”

“You mean this kid made you cry once?” asked Steve.

“NO he didn’t,” shouted Randy. Randy’s three pals started laughing at Randy.

“Did he make you go home crying to mommy?”

“Shut up you guys.” Randy turned and stormed up the stairs. The three others turned and walked away.

“We’ll see you another time, Chico,” yelled Harry to Thomas.

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“You okay?” asked Russell after they went around the corner.

“Yeah, thanks. Idiots.” Thomas yelled.

“Come on. Let’s get to class.”

That day at lunch, the special was chicken a la king. With enough salt and pepper, it actually had a taste to it. Not a good taste, but it had a taste. Russell decided on that; he could pick the carrots out. He sat with Thomas and Pete and the subject quickly turned to bullies. “Just don’t be scared of them,” Russell said. “That’s what they want so if you show them you’re scared, they’ll just come back for more.”

“That’s easy for you to say,” said Pete. “It’s kinda hard to pretend you’re not afraid when you’re peeing your pants.” The three laughed.

“Pee on them, then,” Russell suggested. They all laughed.

“Then we would really get beat up,” laughed Thomas, “but then it would be worth it.”

“Really guys, don’t let them bother you. They’re just hot airbags. I mean seriously, if they get to be a real problem, tell an adult. Tell your parents or a teacher, or Mrs. Gullium.”

“Then we would get pounded for being snitches too.”

“It’s not snitching if you are doing it to protect yourselves. If you snitch just to see someone get into trouble, just to make you feel good, that’s snitching. But if they are really hurting you,

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that's not snitching...that's really self-preservation," Russell philosophized.

Pete and Thomas thought about it for a moment. "It makes sense, I guess," said Pete.

After everyone managed to choke down lunch, it was time for Russell to go to Mr. Sar's science class. Mr. Sar was a fairly young man who was already balding. A fun guy who liked to keep his class interesting for the kids. They still had a lot of reading to do but he also liked to do a lot of fun science experiments. Today while Mr. Sar was talking, Sarah kept biting her nails. She didn't mean to do it but this was getting on Mr. Sar's nerves. "Sarah, must you bite your nails? It's not good for you or your nails you know."

"I'm sorry Mr. Sar; it's just a bad habit I have."

"Do you have any idea how unsanitary that is? You should see what grows underneath your finger nails. Here, I'll show you."

He pulled out his nail clippers and scraped some of the gunk from under her finger nails. He put it on a microscope slide and reached into the unlocked storage cabinet to pull out the new high powered microscope. It was gone. "That's odd," he thought to himself. He looked at the check out sheet; none of the other teacher's had it signed out.

"What is going on here?" he quietly asked himself. He grabbed one of the older microscopes and put in the slide. He had Sarah take a look.

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“Ewww! This is what is under my fingernails? That’s disgusting!” The whole class clamored up to the microscope to try and get a look.

“Where the heck could that microscope be?” Mr. Sar said softly. Russell could see how upset and confused Mr. Sar was.



CHAPTER 4

Wendy went into her aunt's house to change her clothes. She didn't want to chance getting any paint on her good school clothes. Russell looked down at what he was wearing. He had on an old pair of jeans and a shirt he really didn't like anyway. He pulled off his sneakers so he wouldn't drip paint on them. If he dripped paint on his socks, no one would know once he put his shoes back on. That made sense to him. Soon the kids were getting green paint all over their paper maché creation. First a coat of dark green; followed by stripes of a lighter yellow-green. After the second coat, while the paint was still wet, they decided to go inside and get a snack and something to drink. They were inside for about a half an hour when they came back out to the garage. The paper maché watermelon was gone! They both just stood there...shocked. Wendy started crying. "We'll never get another one made in time for the parade on Saturday."

Russell looked over to where they had painted the watermelon. He could see smudge prints on the table. They took

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the watermelon while the paint was still wet! He looked down and saw someone had stepped in a small puddle of paint drippings on the ground. Spots from the paint on the bottom of a shoe headed down the driveway toward the street and...to Iowa Field! Russell put on his sneakers. Iowa Field was where Little League and soccer teams would practice and where neighborhood kids would just go to run around. Russell took off running to Iowa Field, leaving Wendy crying.

Russell charged into Iowa Field quickly, scoping it out for any movement. That watermelon was about three feet in diameter and about five feet long. It couldn't be that easy to carry that thing around. It would at least take two people. The field was surrounded on three sides by trees. He started walking the perimeter of the trees for any signs a large watermelon may have been there. Finally, there it was. There was a small path that led back into the brush and trees. Some of the leaves and branches had little bits of green paint on them. If you weren't looking for them, you would never have noticed them but Russell knew what he was looking for. He followed the narrow path until he could see the end. It came out behind an old green garage in someone's back yard. Whoever stole the watermelon must have cut through the yard of this old green house. Russell cautiously came out of the trees and looked around. Seeing no one, he ran across the yard and down the small driveway to the street. He looked up and down the street. He was on West Eleventh Street and didn't see any signs of a five-foot watermelon. "That thing was big and bulky; it can't be that easy to carry around," he thought. "They couldn't have gotten far." He looked across the street and saw an elderly couple sitting on their front porch. He walked over to them.

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“Excuse me; did you happen to see anybody run by here carrying a huge watermelon?” he politely asked.

“A what?” questioned the old man.

“A large watermelon, about five feet long,” Russell said louder, thinking the man had problems hearing him.

“You don’t have to shout, boy; I heard you. I just couldn’t believe what you said. A five-foot watermelon, eh? Yeah, we saw it. It was chasing a four-foot muskmelon.” He and his wife started laughing. Russell realized the silliness of his question.

“Thanks,” he said, “I’m sorry to have bothered you.” He turned and went running down the street.

“These kids and their drugs,” said the old man. “A five-foot watermelon indeed.”

Russell went back to Wendy’s uncle’s house. Wendy was sitting on the picnic table still sobbing. Her aunt was sitting there with her. “Did you find anything?” she asked as she saw Russell come up the driveway.

“Yes and no. I found where they took it to get out of Iowa Field but I couldn’t find any traces of it after that.” Wendy started tearing up all over again. “Hey, Wendy, it will show up. Why would someone want to steal a paper maché watermelon? Someone just did it as a mean prank. It will show up.”

“I hope you’re right,” Wendy sobbed. “We won’t be able to have our float in the parade if we don’t find it.”

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“I know...I know. We’ll find it; I promise.” Russell cringed at what he just said. Did he just make a promise he couldn’t keep?

Russell left and walked down to the toy store. The whole time he was trying to figure out how he was going to find that watermelon for Wendy. Maybe Jack could sniff it out. No, he was a retriever not a bloodhound. Maybe the police could find it. They have more important things to do than look for a paper maché watermelon. Russell was perplexed. Why would anyone want to take a paper maché watermelon? When Russell got to the store, Gussie was there all by herself. Gus was at the lumber yard and April was at cheerleading practice.

“I’m surprised to see you; I didn’t think you were coming in today.”

Russell was petting and hugging Jack. “I wasn’t supposed to but something bad happened.” Russell told Gussie the whole story about the missing watermelon. She just kept shaking her head in disbelief that someone would do something like that. “It just has to be someone pulling a mean prank.” After a few moments of silence, Russell stopped petting Jack and said, “Gussie, tell me about how you and Gus came to America.”

Gussie started in; she told Russell the whole story. A lot of it he had heard the other night from Gus but it was still all very fascinating. He asked a lot of questions and Gussie answered them all. She even explained how she and Gus came about adopting Jack. That was Russell’s favorite part of the story. Gussie finished up as a customer walked in. Russell went over to the science section to check out what kind of science kits there

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were. There was a good selection. There were kits on electricity that included different experiments you could do. There were weather kits, insect kits, kits on the human body. There were miniature skeletons you could put together showing all the bones. There was a kit that let you could grow bacteria. There was a neat optical one that allowed you to make all kinds of different periscopes. But all those pre-made kits seemed childish for what he was looking for. The best thing was a chemistry set with everything you needed for a whole bunch of experiments. That might be a possibility!

Gus came walking into the store with a two- by six-foot board. "I heard the darnedest thing at the lumber yard," he said to Gussie. Russell came from around the corner. "They were having some wild animal show up in Davenport, I guess, and one of the wild cats got loose. It was a cougar or a bobcat or something like that. They haven't been able to find it."

"Wow," said Russell. "Thomas was talking about how cool it would be to go see that show. But I guess not if there is a bobcat loose."

The next day Russell and Thomas were walking to their third period class when they saw Randy, Harry, Paul and Steve, the "fab four of bullies," picking on some kid they had up against the lockers. They were verbally abusing him. Then Russell noticed Randy raise his arm to slap the kid. Russell grabbed Randy's wrist, stopping his forward motion. He looked over and saw the kid was Pete. Randy looked over to see who had grabbed his hand. Russell looked him right in the eye. Then suddenly something caught Russell's attention. He looked up at Randy's

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hand. There was green paint on it. Russell's own words echoed in his mind. "It just has to be someone pulling a mean prank."

"Stay out of this, Davidson!" Randy commanded.

Russell ignored him and quickly looked at Harry's hands. He couldn't see any green paint. He then looked at Paul's hands but Russell couldn't see them very well. But the green paint on Steve's hands was very noticeable. "Pete, get to class, now," Russell said calmly. Steve tried to step in front of Pete to stop him from leaving but Thomas stepped in front of Steve to keep him from blocking Pete. Pete scurried away. Harry started for Russell but Russell jerked Randy's wrist and forced Randy to slap Harry in the face. Harry stopped and yelled at Randy.

"What did you slap me for?" Harry yelled.

"He made me do it," Randy yelled back, pointing to Russell.

"You guys have a nice day," Russell said as he and Thomas walked away.

"Perro fuerte ninguna mordedura," taunted Thomas to the bullies. "Yip, yip, yip."

That day at lunch Russell sat at the table right behind the four bullies. He wanted to try and overhear anything that would give him information on the stolen paper maché watermelon. They had to be the ones who took it. That paint on Randy's and Steve's hands was no coincidence.

"May I have everyone's attention!" came a booming voice over the P.A. system. "This is Mr. Huke and in all my years as a school administrator I have never been as troubled as I am now.

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We have been having a rash of thefts at this school the past couple of weeks. And now, I understand that the paper maché watermelon for the seventh grade float has been taken.” The four guys started laughing and giving each other high fives. That told Russell that they were definitely the ones who took it. “I am appalled that students of this school would do such a thing as this. I want to let you know if I find out who is responsible for any of this, the police will be involved and criminal charges will be filed. If anyone knows anything about any of these thefts, please come and talk to me personally.”

Russell now knew for sure who had taken the watermelon. He sat through sixth period English but didn’t hear a word Mr. B said. How was he going to find out where they took it? If he confronted them, they wouldn’t tell him. That would only end up in a fight and someone getting hurt. If he went to a teacher or the police, the boys would just deny it. He had no real evidence to prove they did it, just a gut feeling. Maybe they would somehow lead him to it.

Russell waited outside the school on the Cedar Street side of the building by the back parking lot. He knew he was going to have to wait for Randy to get out of detention. Randy always had detention. After what seemed hours, but was really only 45 minutes, Russell saw Randy and Steve walking together toward Tenth Street. Russell stayed behind at the school until he saw which direction they headed.

When the two boys got to the corner, they turned and walked toward Sycamore Street. Russell waited. The two guys crossed Sycamore and were walking to Iowa Avenue. Randy and Steve

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turned and walked up Iowa Avenue. After they were completely out of sight, Russell ran the two blocks to that corner. The guys had crossed the street, but were still heading along Iowa Avenue. Slowly Russell turned the corner to follow them on the opposite side of the street. He stood behind trees, hid in driveways, and ducked behind bushes to stay out of their line of sight, just in case they happened to turn around. The two were about to cross W. Eleventh when they suddenly turned up that street. Russell took off running to that corner. He reached the corner just in time to see the two guys walk into the garage of an old green house. An old green house! This is the street that Russell was on just yesterday when he came out of the trees and brush from Iowa Field. That was the old green house that he cut through the backyard to get to the street. That must be where one of them lived. The watermelon had to be at that old green house somewhere. How's he going to find out for sure? He sure didn't know. He turned around and started walking toward the downtown. His mind was reeling. Suddenly he had an idea. He took off running for the library.

As he ran into the library, he saw there was an open computer. "Great!" he thought. He sat down at the computer, typed in "www.google.com." When the screen came up, he typed in the info he was looking for. After looking at a few different sites, Russell came upon the information he was seeking. A big smile came across his face. He read it again. "This is going to be great! What a lucky find," he said out loud. He hit the print button. Then he was off to the toy store.

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“Gussie, remember I told you about the missing watermelon for the float?” gasped Russell trying to catch his breath.

“Ya...I sure do.”

“I think I might know where it might be. But I need a couple of things to get it back. Can I take them and pay you later. I’ll pay. I promise.”

“Oh, I’m not worried about that, but should you be doing this? Maybe we should call the police,” she said concerned.

“It will be fine. I promise. Can I take Jack with me too?”

Gussie knew that Jack wasn’t going to let Russell get into any trouble. “Sure.”

Russell ran over to the science section and grabbed an optical kit. He also grabbed a chemistry kit. He also got a squirt gun pistol off the rack. He bagged them up and then got the phonebook. He looked up the name Hanson. There were no Hanson’s that lived on Eleventh Street. Then he looked up the name Liddle. Sure enough, Robert and Jane Liddle, West Eleventh Street. That had to be where Steve lived. Russell looked up one more listing and punched the numbers into the phone.

“Hi...is Wendy there?” Russell waited. “Wendy, I think I have found the watermelon. Can you meet me at your uncle’s house in twenty minutes? I’ll tell you when I see you. Wear some old clothes.”

Jack and Russell LUCKY FIND is about a 12-year-old boy and his best friend, who happens to be a Golden Retriever. They share adventures together that they don't always go looking for. What lucky finds for them! This is a fictitious story that takes place in the real Mississippi River city of Muscatine Iowa and surrounding areas. Their adventures offer life lessons in dealing with bullies, the importance of self-esteem and the value of friends.

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