

CHAPTER 1

SUMMER DAYDREAMS

Dan Delion woke up to the sound of robins singing outside his bedroom window. He didn't bolt out of bed like he usually did. Instead, he fluffed his pillow, folded his hands underneath his spiky blonde hair and listened to the birds singing. He stared up at the ceiling with his big brown eyes. Summer was coming to an end, and soon the robins would be flying south for the winter. For a moment, he wondered what it would be like if he could fly like a bird. Or even like Lucinda the Ladybug!

Tomorrow was the first day of school, but he wasn't nervous about that any more. Dan sprang out of bed, grabbed a pair of blue jeans out of a wooden dresser drawer, and jumped into them. He took his magnifying glass from the top of the dresser and put it in his pocket.



He seldom left home without it because he liked to hunt for bugs. After pulling a yellow and green striped tee shirt over his head, he dashed downstairs to eat some breakfast. He drank a large glass of milk in one large gulp and poured himself another one. Then Dan put the milk carton back into the fridge and grabbed a carrot muffin.

While he munched on the carrot muffin, he began to daydream about Lucinda the Ladybug. He also thought about everything that had happened to him and the other Greenhouse Kids over the summer. It had been the best summer of their lives! He remembered the first time that he told his friends about his big secret . . . finding Lucinda the Ladybug and the hidden greenhouse where she lived. He had told Foxy Gloves first.

A scowl suddenly crossed his forehead as he remembered running into Jason “Speedy Seedy” on his way to Foxy’s lemonade stand. Jason, the school bully, made him feel a bit sick to his stomach. He took another large gulp of milk, still deep in thought, staring into the air.



Jason had earned the nickname Speedy Seedy because he usually won the school races. Dan put his carrot muffin down and smiled as he raised both arms up into the air like he had when he crossed the finish line, beating Speedy Seedy in last June's race. "Yes, I really did beat him," he thought to himself.

Then he wondered what Speedy Seedy had been up to, because he hadn't seen him since early July. He also remembered how happy he was when he found out that Speedy Seedy couldn't see their secret greenhouse, or Lucinda the Ladybug. Only The Greenhouse Kids could see her and the greenhouse! That's because they were extra special people with a first and last name that matched a plant or flower. That was cool!

Dan's mind shifted gears. He stopped thinking of Speedy Seedy, and thought about Foxy again. He remembered telling her about Lucinda the Ladybug and the secret greenhouse. They were trying to decide who they should tell next, Holly Hocks who lived next door to Dan, or Dan's best friend, Johnny Jump-Ups.



Dan continued chewing on his carrot muffin. He laughed to himself when he remembered the goose bumps Holly had on her arms when she heard his big secret. He thought her big blue eyes were going to pop right out of her head!

After they told Holly Dan's secret, they ran to Burger World to find Johnny Jump-Ups, and sure enough, there he was, biting into a giant hamburger. All four of them had gathered in close around the restaurant table while Dan told them about Lucinda the Ladybug and the greenhouse. Johnny didn't believe him at first, but he soon found out that he should have. Dan began by telling them that he had gone bug hunting up at the old mansion that belonged to the English Ivys years ago.

This brought a lot of chatter about the English Ivys, and whether the mansion was truly haunted. Many people thought the spooky mansion was filled with ghosts because there were three tombstones in the front yard: one for Mr. Ivy, one for Mrs. Ivy and one for their little girl, Marigold, who had died about



ten years before Mr. and Mrs. Ivy. Poor little Marigold was only eight years old when she passed away. Holly said they were called the English Ivys because their last name was Ivy and they were from England. Everyone also thought it was funny that they had the same name as the vine that grew wild all over their house.

Dan didn't think that the English Ivys' mansion was haunted, but the others weren't so sure. As Dan was explaining his secret, Virginia Creeper suddenly crept up on them and tapped Holly on the shoulder, scaring her half to death. Virginia was known for popping up everywhere and creeping up on everyone!

They *used* to think that Virginia Creeper was icky and weird because she had long black wavy hair, small pointed ears and bright red lips. They didn't know why she wore black clothes all the time either. They didn't think that she was icky any more, not since they found out that she was one of *them*. She was now one of The Greenhouse Kids, and they found over the summer that she really had



grown on all of them, just like Lucinda the Ladybug said she would!

Dan stopped daydreaming and checked the clock on the wall. "Geez," he said to himself. "I better get going. I'm late." He pulled on a pair of white socks, tied his high-top running shoes, and ran out the screen door, letting it slam shut behind him. He ran next door to Holly's house and hoped that he wasn't too late.

