

Frankie's Lucky Day
A Children's Story
by CJ Heck

Sometimes, miracles really DO happen ...

The morning sun peeked through the white lace curtains at Frankie's window. As the sunbeams teased her eyelids open, she yawned and stretched, then sat up and swiveled to the edge of the bed to slide her feet into the fuzzy pink slippers that were waiting on the floor below -- all things she had done a thousand times before. For Frankie, today only *began* like any other normal day ...

Frankie yawned again and then made a nasty face at her reflection in the mirror over the dresser. What a mess, she thought, as she brushed the tangled auburn hair, finally deciding on a ponytail to tame the wayward curls. While she was attaching the little gold pin to her Brownie uniform, her mother called to her, "Frances? Frances Sharon! Now don't forget to wear your Brownie uniform. Remember, you have Scouts after school today."

She hated it when her mother called her that! Frances was such a horrible name. She didn't care that she was named after her great-great-grandmother Frances. Maybe it had been a fine name way back then. But to Frances Sharon Curtis, a modern girl who lived in the here and now, it sounded like something a farmer named a horse that wore a straw hat with holes cut out for its ears! There was no sense arguing with her mother about it. Frankie frowned. What was done, was done. Then she finished tying her sneakers as she shouted her answer, "Okay, Mom. I'm wearing my uniform!"

As Frankie ate her breakfast, she thought about her two best friends, Sarah and Allie. They both called her Frankie. They were the ones that gave her the name -- she couldn't even remember anymore how long ago it was. Allie had just let it slip out one day, and the nickname stuck, and that was just fine with Frankie. She sighed. She wished her parents would call her 'Frankie' instead of (eww, gross), 'Frances'.

When Frankie finished her breakfast, she put her dishes in the sink. Then, gathering together her books, homework, and lunch bag, she kissed her mom goodbye in the doorway and left to meet the school bus on the corner.

“Frances, don't take the bus today, honey. I'll be picking you up right after school for Brownies. Oh, and don't forget, Sarah and Allie will be riding with us.” Her mother reminded, her as Frankie was closing the door.

Frankie nodded to her mother and ran down the front steps of her house just like she did every day. Today when she got to the bottom, though, she could see a small, pink 3-inch square piece of paper lying on the sidewalk. Frankie bent down and picked it up, admiring the curly design across the top of it. Thinking she would like to try to draw it, she tucked the little pink paper into the pocket of her Brownie uniform.

The morning was way too long. Frankie felt as though she was going through each of her classes in a fog. She could remember turning in her homework, and writing down the new homework information each teacher wrote on the blackboard, but that was about it. Frances Sharon Curtis, also known as Frankie, felt very different today. It was a good feeling, too, like something big was about to happen, although what it could be, she had no clue.

When the lunch bell finally rang, Frankie hurried to meet her friends in the cafeteria. There was Sarah at their regular table, just across from where the lunch line formed. Sarah had big blue eyes and the prettiest wild and curly red hair that Frankie had ever seen on anyone, boy or girl -- and she had a wild and crazy sense of humor to go with the hair, Frankie laughed. She was also covered with freckles that were nearly the same color as her hair. Sarah could always make Frankie laugh! They had known each other since meeting on the playground in kindergarten and had been best friends ever since.

Right beside Sarah, sat Allie, and both of them were giggling. Allie had been a new girl in town. Frankie and Sarah had met her on the very first day of school last year, while they were all waiting for the bell to ring and the doors to open. Most kids thought Allie was stuck-up, but Sarah and Frankie both knew she was only shy. Allie was a pretty girl, very short with big brown eyes and hair the same color. She always looked so healthy, thought Frankie. Her skin was the color of a peach and her cheeks were always rosy.

"Hey, Frankie!" Sarah yelled, waving both hands in the air. "I have PB and J today. Wanna trade?"

"Shhh, you're gonna get us in trouble!" Frankie teased. "Sorry, Sarah. Mom packed me a turkey sandwich, my favorite."

"I have chocolate pudding to trade, too," Sarah teased back.

Frankie suddenly thought about the small pink square of paper she had found on her way to school with the curly design she was going to try and draw. She hated to part with it, but she decided she could probably remember how the design looked. Besides, she really loved chocolate pudding. "Sarah, I found this cute little paper on the sidewalk this morning. You want to trade my paper for your pudding?"

Sarah studied the little pink square that Frankie handed to her. Like Frankie, she thought it might be fun to draw the funny little design that ran clear across the top. "Sure, Frankie. I'm too full for pudding anyway." She said, as she tucked the small pink square into the front of her book to keep for later.

When Sarah went back to class, Wanda, the nerdy girl who sat in front of her, walked in with a fist full of new pencils. Sarah's pencil had shrunk to nearly half its size from sharpening it, and the eraser was completely worn away. Sarah thought about the small pink square of paper she had just traded her pudding for with Frankie. As much as she hated to part with it, she really needed a better pencil, so Sarah offered to trade the small pink square for one of Wanda's new pencils.

Nerdy Wanda studied the paper the same way she often studied a small scab on her arm in class before picking at it. She noticed right under the curly design there was a line of numbers. Among the numbers, of all things, was her exact birth date -- a ten for the month of October, and a thirteen. "Sure," Wanda agreed, "I'll trade." She was thinking, how unusual that some random thing like this tiny piece of pink paper has her exact birthday numbers on it -- who knows, maybe it's even lucky!

Later in the day, right in the middle of her math class, Wanda found she was out of paper. To someone like Wanda, a very snobby nerd who was ALWAYS prepared, that was nothing short of a tragedy! She turned to Mandy who sat in the seat just behind her. "Would you trade me some paper for one of my new pencils?"

Mandy was one of the nicest girls in the class. She offered to give Wanda some paper, but Wanda said, "No. I would always feel like I owed you something. Suddenly, Wanda had an idea. "Mandy," she said, "I have this really neat piece of pink paper. It has my exact birthday numbers on it, so it has to be lucky,

too. I would be willing to trade it with you for some paper. Okay?"

The truth was, Mandy loved anything small enough to use for a bookmark. She loved reading. She was often reading three or four books at the same time. Mandy looked at the small pink square that Wanda showed her and decided it would make a perfect bookmark for the book she was reading for her book report! She agreed, and after giving Wanda a few pieces of paper, Mandy tucked the little pink square into her book, allowing it to stick out between the pages where she had stopped reading last night.

Frankie's afternoon was almost as strange as her morning had been. She couldn't get rid of the feeling that something big was going to happen. She pushed the thought from her mind several times during the day, but it kept sneaking back in, uninvited. She had no idea what it was about and she just wanted the school day to be over. Frankie breathed a huge sigh of relief when the dismissal bell finally rang.

Once outside, she spotted Allie and Sara waiting for her at the bottom of the steps. As they walked to her Mom's car for a ride to Brownies, Mandy came running up to them. She told Frankie her mother called the school this afternoon to say she won't be able to pick her up. Mandy said she didn't want to take the bus and then walk to the meeting. "Could I please ride along with you guys? Tell you what -- I'll even give you my lucky bookmark if you'll let me ride with you."

As Mandy held out her bookmark to Frankie, Frankie's jaw dropped. She could hardly believe what she saw! Mandy's bookmark was the same small 3-inch square of pink paper she had found on the sidewalk this morning! It was wrinkled now, and one of the corners was bent down, but she could still see the curly design she had wanted to draw! Frankie smiled and told her, "Sure -- hop in!" Then Frankie tucked the little pink square back into the same pocket in her uniform where it had been that morning.

That evening at home, Frankie still had that goofy feeling about something big happening, while she was getting into her favorite pajamas. Suddenly, she heard a loud shout from her father downstairs. Her father never shouted! Something was wrong! Frankie ran down the stairs, two steps at a time, and into the living room, where her parents were sitting on the couch in front of the TV.

"Dad, what's wrong?" she asked.

Her mother took a deep breath. Then she said, "Honey, everything's okay. Daddy's just disappointed. He bought a lottery ticket last night and somehow, he lost it. He's been playing the same numbers every week for years and tonight, his number -- every one of his numbers -- finally were drawn in the

lottery. He's just disappointed, honey -- we're both disappointed."

Her dad then said to no one in particular, "I don't understand how I could have lost it. As soon as I bought the ticket, I put it in my shirt pocket, same as always. Then I got in the car and drove home. The only other thing I did was walk to the mailbox to mail some letters, but then I came right back into the house to have supper. I didn't even know it was gone until just now, when I looked for it in my pocket."

Frankie had the strangest feeling in the pit of her stomach. "Daddy, what exactly did the ticket look like?" she asked, thinking about her small 3-inch square of pink paper with the curly design across the top.

Her mother smiled. "Frances, it looked like, well, like a lottery ticket. It would be small with a lot of numbers on it. Frances, don't worry about it. It isn't like we lost something we already had. We're no worse off now than we were before."

Frankie turned around and ran back up the stairs, back into her room, and pulled the small wrinkled square of pink paper from the pocket of her Brownie uniform. Then she took it downstairs to the two people she loved most in the world. "Dad, did it look like THIS?" she asked.

Her mother and father stared at the little square paper, and then at each other, then back at the small and wrinkled pink square once more. Suddenly, like one single excited voice, they both screamed together, "**Frankie! That's it!**"

Frances Sharon Curtis, a girl with blue eyes, with unruly auburn hair, with two best friends named Sarah and Allie, smiled a huge smile. Her parents had called her 'Frankie'.

Then she smiled again, thinking about a small square of pink paper, everything it must have been through, and finally finding out what her funny feelings all day really meant: Today was a VERY lucky day.