

Dear Diary,

July 17, 1908

Today is my birthday, and since you don't have a name yet, I guess I'll just call you Diary for now. I'm Amber, and today is my ninth birthday. For my birthday, I got a new dress, a beautiful china doll which I named Susie, and you, a beautiful leather journal with flowers on its cover, from Daddy and Mama. My little brother, Blake, a chubby little two year old, gave me a bouquet of weeds tied with a piece of thread. My sister Charlotte, who is six, and is just learning to sew, made me a handkerchief matching my new dress. The stitching is kind of crooked, but it's cute anyway. Today couldn't have gotten any better. Mama ordered my favorite cake from the French bakery: vanilla cake with strawberries. We had a party at home and even Aunt Mary and Uncle George, who we don't see often, came to celebrate. They brought along my cousins: Jill, James, and Jennifer. The sun was shining this morning, the flowers are in full bloom in Mama's garden, and Daddy even came home from work early. What more could I ask for? Alright Diary, I have to go now. Mama just said that even though I can stay up a little later now that I'm nine, it's late enough. I have to go to bed now. Good Night Diary!

With Love,

Amber Elizabeth Beaumont

Dear Diary,

August 4, 1908

I'm sorry that I haven't written lately. Things have been crazy around here. I was gonna write yesterday, because I had some important news, but I was so tired from crying that I fell asleep holding you in my hand and never got a chance to write. By now you're probably wondering what I'm talking about, so I guess I'll tell you.

Yesterday, August 3, 1908, will be a day that goes down in the history of the Beaumont family; one that will change the course of our lives forever. Usually, Charlotte, Blake, and I do our lessons in the morning, and then we help Mama around the house until Daddy comes home in the evening. Yesterday, however, was different. Daddy left for work in the morning as usual, but around noon he came home covered in soot, smelling like smoke, with tears streaming down his face. Between sobs, he told us that as he was driving into work that morning, he had seen a fire from the outskirts of town. When he got into town, he realized that it was his carriage shop, and by that time, the whole building was engulfed in flames. It was too late. There was nothing he could do. He lost everything. It was really scary, because it was the first time I've ever seen Daddy cry. Daddy has always been the strength of our family, and to see him weeping made us all cry. Even little Blake, who didn't really understand what was going on, was crying, because he saw us crying. This is the worst day ever. Diary, I'm so glad I have you because it's so much easier to write my feeling than to speak them.

In Tears,

Amber Elizabeth Beaumont

Dear Diary,

September 22, 1908

We've managed to live for the past month and a half on the money that Mama and Daddy had saved up, but after paying all of the bills he had and trying to feed us, Daddy officially declared bankruptcy this morning. So it's moving day. In order for us to have a little bit more money, Mama and Daddy decided that we must sell our beautiful countryside home and move into a shack outside of town. This stinks. I love this house. I don't want to move. But Mama says that I have to be strong for Blake and for Charlotte. I have to show them that it's gonna be okay. As I packed my things, I tried to stay positive. "Maybe we'll be able to come back someday," I comforted myself. I woke up early this morning, and, sitting at the top of the stairs, I overheard a conversation between Mama and Daddy. They were talking about what Daddy was going to do to make some money now that we didn't have anything left to sell. I heard Daddy tell Mama that would be a street performer, because he had always thought street performers were amusing. He said that he could make at least enough money to feed us. Mama told him that there were already too many street performers, but he told her that he was going to be something different, that he would be a horse clown. A what?! I'd never heard of a horse clown. But, in our house, what Daddy says goes, and if he thinks he can make money as a so called horse clown, I guess he can just give it a shot. I need to get back to work helping Charlotte and Blake each pack a small box to take with us. See you later Diary.

Anxiously,

Amber Elizabeth Beaumont

Dear Diary,

December 24, 1908

It doesn't feel like Christmas Eve today. Daddy went into town this morning, just as he has every day since he decided that he should be a horse clown. It is really cold outside, and there has been a steady snowfall since late morning. We were all sitting around waiting, and it was around dinner time, but Daddy never came home. We sat there, and finally, as the church bells struck nine o'clock, we heard the door open, and Daddy walked in. His nose was swollen, his face was red, his fingers and toes frostbitten, and his beard was matted with snow. In tears, he apologized for being late, and as Mama and I rubbed snow on his hands and feet to revive them from frostbite, he told us that, due to the snow and the fact that it was Christmas Eve, not many people stopped to watch a silly horse clown. He looked down at the floor when he admitted that he had not made enough money to buy anything for supper. Only two small pennies clinked in his cup, not enough even for a loaf of bread. We cried with him; we cried that this Christmas was so lonely, so hungry, so cold, when last Christmas we had lived in a splendid house in the countryside. In waves of grief our loss rolled over us. Last Christmas Daddy had a job. Last Christmas we had celebrated in the warmth and comfort of our home, surrounded by family and friends, and eating until we could eat no more. But nothing, nothing could prepare us for this- destitution, poverty, hunger, cold. I used to love Christmas, but this, this... I...I...I don't know what to say. Between you and I Diary, sometimes I feel angry. I don't know why Daddy ever thought that being a horse clown would make enough money to feed five people. I don't understand why he couldn't find a different job-

like a farm hand, or an apprentice, or a carriage driver for some wealthy family. At least then we would have something to eat, and we wouldn't be feeling so miserable. Oh God, why us? Why us? I don't get it. How could this happen to us? Diary, I'm really sorry, but your pages are now stained with tears. Okay now, I have to go to bed. We have another day before us tomorrow, another day to be hungry, cold, tired, and lonely.

Depressed,

Amber Elizabeth Beaumont

Dear Diary,

December 25, 1908

This has shaped up to be a great Christmas! Now I know you're probably thinking that I'm crazy because just yesterday I told you this was the worst Christmas ever, but we got a big surprise! One of Daddy's former wealthy customers, Mr. James had seen him on the street the day before, and from Daddy's current occupation as horse clown seen that we weren't doing so good. So he set out to find us, together with his wife and kids, to bring some joy to our Christmas. Since all of their family lived far away, and the weather is too dangerous to travel, their family was no longer coming to visit, so they have lots of extra food. They brought their Christmas dinner to our house and shared it with our family. They also brought presents for Blake, Charlotte, and I. It was magical. For a short time, we were no longer hungry, no longer lonely, surrounded by friends, celebrating the birth of our Savior. Between you and I Diary, maybe Daddy being a horse clown isn't such a bad idea, because if he hadn't been out yesterday, Mr. James wouldn't have seen Daddy out yesterday, and wouldn't have come with his family to celebrate Christmas with us. Alright Diary, I'm tired. Talk to you tomorrow Diary. Merry Christmas, Diary!

Excitedly,

Amber Elizabeth Beaumont