

Unicorn's tale

'Unicharm' key to magical world

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Crunch, crunch, crunch. Err ... Joey, did you hear something?" Melissa asked quietly. She had been afraid of the forest animals until today. "For the last time, Melissa, there is absolutely nothing in the forest that will hurt us," Joey assured his sister.

Melissa and Joey McMann were riding home from the market with supplies when their horse stopped and grinded its teeth. There, standing next to an apple tree was ... "Is that another horse?" Melissa asked in awe.

He was so mad! Melissa probably didn't even look at it. Joey's face was as red as a radish and paler than an onion at the same time. He had never seen anything like it! To him it looked like a Pegasus, a horse, and a lion mixed in one!

Started, the "beast" looked for somewhere to run. But Melissa climbed down from the wagon, without Joey noticing, to examine it. The creature seemed to shiver as Melissa came closer.

"Hmmm, paws, wings ... horn!" Melissa thought. "But with lion paws?"

Melissa thought aloud suddenly, "It's a unicorn!"

Now Joey looked even paler and gave his sister a "you-better-get-in-the-wagon-right-now" look. Melissa was calm and climbed into the wagon. She signed and looked backward. The unicorn was following them! Finally Melissa could study the creature without distractions, so she got out a pocket journal and wrote:

- Unicorn:
- Purple
- orange hair
- has wings and lion paws
- small backpack attached to neck

Melissa put the pocket journal back in her pocket. They were now almost out of the forest. Five minutes before they got home, the unicorn ducked behind a tree.

When they got home, they unloaded the groceries into the house and Melissa walked back into the forest and started calling out, "I won't hurt you, come on out."

After what seemed like ages, the unicorn stuck her head out from an old oak and whined. She had obviously been looking for Melissa, too.

"Do you want to come with me?" Melissa asked hopefully.

The unicorn plodded over and nuzzled Melissa, and she could tell it was a definite "YES." So Melissa took the unicorn to the barn and did all of her chores before she started grooming the unicorn.

"What's this?" she asked suddenly.

A small jeweled necklace was on the unicorn's neck. Melissa touched it, and in a flash, a girl was in front of her. She looked a little like the unicorn. She had long orange hair and was wearing all purple. She also had the same necklace.

"Who are you?" Melissa was as bewildered as Joey was in the forest.

"I'm Anna," she replied. Her voice sounded calm, but she looked startled and surprised.



"How did that just happen?" Melissa demanded.

"Well," she sighed. "My mother was a unicorn, but my father was a man. See my necklace?" She held it out and continued. "Half of the face is a person, the other a unicorn." She paused for a second. "I just don't know how you turned me back. Maybe if I look in my backpack for a book about my charm I'll know."

Melissa calmed down, and looked at the strange girl's back. "Same leather backpack," Melissa thought to herself. Like before, it had the little brown sash, and like Anna's clothing, was purple.

"I was wondering," Melissa started, "if it was OK for you to sleep here tonight, in the barn. I mean, if you want to stay ..." Melissa regretted she had said it.

"WOULD I! Ummm... whoops..." Anna gestured with her hand, "But you'd really let me stay here?"

"Of course." Melissa was still dizzy from her fall. "But it could be risky. Joey comes out at 5 every morning to feed the animals, but

maybe he'll let you stay here."

"There's just one teeny problem with your theory um ... Mariah? No, ... um, Maya, no ... Melissa!" Once again Anna paused. Melissa could tell she was the dramatic type.

"If your bro' thinks I'm a problem, he's sure to tell your parents. Plus, remember how scared he was in the woods?" Anna remarked reasonably.

Melissa's face fell. "You're right, and if I tell him you're a girl too they're sure to find you and they'll, they'll ... get ... rid of you ... and hurt you."

"Yep," Anna almost sounded cheerful.

Melissa who was surprised, remarked,

"Then why do you sound so happy?"

Anna blushed, "Oh I'm not happy, but unicorns have healing powers."

"What do you mean healing powers?" Now it was Melissa's turn to blush.

"I can heal myself. Isn't it obvious?"

"No."

"Well, we do. You know, I'm kind of hungry. After your dinner, can you bring me something to eat?"

Before Melissa answered, she thought for a moment.

"Do you like roast beef?" she asked suddenly.

Anna frowned. "No, I'm a vegetarian." "Whoops, umm ... ooh, I know, I'll bring you some salad!" Melissa had a sudden burst of memory.

"OK ... but no dressing."

"MELISSA!"

That night Melissa came back to the barn with the tasty greens on a plate with a fork. She also brought a glass of water in case Anna was thirsty.

At first Melissa couldn't find Anna. Then she heard something behind her. She spun around. Nothing.

"Anna?" she whispered, like the whistling wind.

Cough, cough, cough. "Oh my goodness! Blach, omigosh!"

Anna was covered in hay and was spitting out hay like a cola machine spits out soda.

Melissa quietly handed Anna the water cup. Anna drank it quickly and breathed with relief.

Anna told her what had happened. Joey had come into the barn, and she had hidden in the hay and waited. She told Melissa that Joey had taken the backpack with the book all about her necklace.

"Well, I wonder what he did with it." Melissa knew he would probably read the book.

"May I have that salad?" Anna asked.

"Sure." With that answer, Anna wolfed down her treat.

Meanwhile, in the house, Joey was studying the book he had nabbed from the girl in the barn. He knew it had to be her, because of the necklace he saw on the unicorn in the forest. He was planning to catch her.

The book had information on the necklace, and this is what it said: "This charm is like a birthmark on a unicorn that had a human and a unicorn for parents. The creature can be both human and unicorn. This is called the Unicharm."

Joey looked outside his window and could not believe what he saw. Not Anna, but a unicorn, black with gray hair, was staring back.

The window was open, and the unicorn used its paws to put Joey on its back. Joey was so terrified, he didn't even bother to do anything. As it flew down to the ground, Joey noticed a unicharm on its neck too. When he got to the ground he touched it, and in a flash, another teen was in front of him.

Joey didn't even need to ask.

"I'm Alex, and I came for my sister, Anna."

"I think she's in the barn with my sister."

Alex sounded upset. "What? She made contact with two strangers?"

"Um ... yes." To make things better, Joey led him to the barn. He couldn't believe he was doing it, but he didn't want to find out what would happen if Alex got mad, and he didn't feel like getting beaten up by a person two feet taller than him anyway.

The two girls were surprised to see their brothers walk in. Alex told his sister that their parents were worried about them and they needed her. So they left. But they always visited each other.

Always.

The author was a fourth-grader when this story was entered in the Solano County Reading Association competition.

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