

Arlet, Antonio, and the Unicorn of Sweet Dreams

Arlet was seven years old, had an imagination that wouldn’t fit in her pockets, and a tiny friend named Antonio.

Antonio was a mouse with long whiskers and round ears. He was brave, funny, and a little clumsy. If there was a puddle, he’d step in it. If there was a branch, his tail would get caught. And if he said, “I’ve got this under control!”, it was best to step back a bit.

Together they had lived a thousand adventures. But that Saturday, Arlet suggested a very special one.

“Antonio, we’re going to the forest to look for a unicorn.”

The mouse stopped nibbling on his toast.

“A unicorn? One of those with a horn here?” He pointed to his forehead with such energy that he smeared jam on his nose.

“Exactly!”

“I was thinking so.” That’s why I put jam on my face. To make a good impression.

Everyone said unicorns didn’t exist.

“They’re just things from fairy tales,” they’d told her.

But Arlet wanted to see one with her own eyes. That’s why she’d packed a backpack with water, a blanket, and a bag of sweets.

“To find a unicorn, we need a quiet place, sweets, and lots of patience.”

“We have the first two,” said Antonio. “Can you buy patience at the bakery?”

The forest smelled of damp earth and fallen leaves. Threads of light filtered through the branches, and the birds sang so high above that Antonio walked with his head held high.

“Look, Arlet! That bird looks like it’s wearing a hat!”

THUD!

He tripped over a pinecone and fell, sitting on the moss.

“I’ve decided to rest,” he announced.

Arlet helped him up, and they continued until they found a clearing. In the middle was a flat stone, surrounded by small flowers. There were no cars or voices, only the leaves and the water of a stream.

“Here,” Arlet whispered.

They spread the blanket behind a bush and placed the treats on the stone: marshmallows, strawberry gummies, and colorful candy strips.

Then they hid.

They waited a while.

And again.

And another, longer one.

“Do we have a lot of patience now?” Antonio asked.

“Not yet.”

After a moment:

“Now?”

Arlet looked at him.

“Okay, okay. I still have some.”

A little noise broke the silence.

Yum, yum.

Arlet turned around. Antonio’s cheeks were puffed out.

“Antonio! You’re eating the treats!”

The mouse swallowed.

“I was just checking they were good. Imagine if the unicorn came from far away and didn’t like them!”

Arlet had to cover her mouth to keep from laughing too loudly.

They waited again. Little by little, the mouse stood still beside her.

Then, a drop fell on a leaf.

Then, another.

It was a very fine rain, even though the sun was still shining. Arlet poked her head out from behind the bush and gasped.

A rainbow stretched across the sky.

And something was descending.

First, they saw four gleaming hooves. Then, a mane swirling with the colors of the rainbow. And finally, a pearly horn shimmering in the sunlight.

A unicorn was descending from the sky, sliding down the arc like a toboggan.

It landed softly in the clearing and approached the stone.

“Antonio…” Arlet murmured. “Look.”

“I see it,” he replied. “And this time I didn’t bump my head.”

The unicorn sniffed the strawberry gummies and tasted one. Then he closed his eyes, delighted, and ate another.

Arlet came out of hiding.

“Hello…”

Antonio followed her, but he stepped on a corner of the blanket and rolled down to the unicorn’s feet.

He got up immediately and bowed.

“Antonio, at your service. I usually arrive like this.”

The unicorn chuckled softly.

“My name is Celest. Is this your snack?”

“We prepared it for you,” Arlet said. “We wanted to meet a unicorn.”

“Well, you chose the sweets very well. Strawberry ones are my favorite.”

Antonio looked at Arlet with pride.

“I knew it. That’s why I left them.”

Celest lowered his head until he was at the girl’s eye level.

“Thank you for the snack and for waiting for me. Would you like to go on a trip?”

“On your back?” Arlet asked.

The unicorn bent its legs so they could climb on.

Arlet sat on its soft, warm back. Antonio climbed up behind Arlet and hugged her waist.

“Ready?” Celest asked.

“Yes!” Arlet shouted.

“Wait a minute, one of my ears is on backward!”

But they were already taking off.

The forest shrank beneath their hooves. The treetops looked like a green sea, and the stream, a silver ribbon.

“Where would you like to go, Arlet?”

The girl didn’t have to think about it.

“To my school!”

Celest jumped between two clouds and, suddenly, they were flying over the courtyard.

All of Arlet’s friends were there: some were playing ball, others were jumping rope, and some were drawing with colored chalk.

“I’m up here!” she shouted, waving.

Her friends looked up. A ball lay abandoned in the middle of the yard, and a rope stopped turning.

“Arlet! It’s a unicorn!”

She waved with both hands, laughing.

Antonio also wanted to wave, but he didn’t dare let go.

“Wave for me! I’m too busy holding on!”

Then they flew toward **Girona**.

They flew over the city walls and the cathedral, following the Onyar River between the colorful houses.

Arlet leaned forward slightly to get a better look.

“You can see them all from here!”

Antonio looked at the reflection in the water.

“Arlet! There’s another mouse flying on a unicorn!”

He looked again.

“Ah. It’s quite handsome.”

Celest turned toward the sea and soon they arrived in **Barcelona**.

They circled the towers of the Sagrada Família and flew over Park Güell, where the mosaics shimmered in the sun. Beyond, the sea was filled with tiny white reflections.

A seagull flew alongside them for a while.

Antonio tried to look like a seasoned traveler.

“Good morning. We fly often too.”

Just then, a gust of wind ruffled his whiskers to one side.

Arlet was still laughing when Celest asked her,

“We have one last place. Which one do you choose?”

The girl took a deep breath.

“NEW YORK!”

“Well, hold on tight!”

Celest soared high into the sky. They crossed a cloud that left their cheeks cool and ran along a band of light, with the ocean far below.

When they emerged on the other side, New York City rose before them.

“Wow…” said Arlet.

The skyscrapers were so tall it seemed they could touch them with their feet. They passed the Empire State Building, saw the paths of Central Park, and arrived at the Statue of Liberty.

Antonio greeted her very politely.

“Good afternoon, ma’am! Your ice cream is getting cold!”

“It’s a torch, Antonio!” said Arlet.

“Oh.” Well, it’s best she doesn’t lick it.

Celest circled wide over the city so Arlet could take it all in one last time. She remained silent, her eyes wide open and her hands buried in the colorful mane.

When the sky began to turn pink, Celest headed home.

Arlet had snuggled up to his neck. Behind her, Antonio was fighting off sleep.

“I’m not sleeping,” he murmured. “I’m watching with my eyes closed.”

They landed softly in front of the house. Arlet got off and helped Antonio, who had a numb leg and was hopping along.

Then she hugged Celest as tightly as she could.

“Will I see you again?”

The unicorn nuzzled her cheek.

“When you have very sweet dreams, Arlet, I will always appear.”

“Even sweeter than candy?”

“Much sweeter.”

Antonio lifted a little leg.

“Can I come too?”

“Of course. I’ll wait for both of you.”

Celest took off. A rainbow appeared before him, and the unicorn followed until it disappeared into the clouds.

That night, Arlet went to bed with a smile. Beside her, inside a small box with a pillow, Antonio was already starting to snore.

Just before falling asleep, she heard him whisper:

“In New York… the ice creams… are too big…”

Arlet let out one last giggle and closed her eyes.

In her dream, Celest was already waiting for them.

And Antonio, this time, had put on a helmet.