

Eneas: The Magic Unicorn

By Jody Studdard

Eneas lowered his horn to face the other unicorns as they approached. There were three of them, and they wasted no time spreading out to the sides in an attempt to surround him. All three were older, bigger, and stronger than Eneas.

“Leave me alone,” Eneas said. “I didn’t do anything to you guys. I’m minding my own business, just like you wanted.”

“Did you hear that, guys?” the nearest unicorn asked. He was a big, bulky stallion, much larger than Eneas, with a sharp horn that sparkled menacingly in the afternoon sun. His name was Diomedes. “Eneas here says he’s minding his own business. If so, why’s he in our space again?”

Eneas and the other unicorns stood in the middle of a large, grass meadow that stretched for miles in every direction. Not far to the east was a grove of black and green olive trees.

“I didn’t know this was your space,” Eneas said.

“It is if we say it is,” one of the other unicorns said. He had circled around and now stood directly behind Eneas. He wasn’t quite as large as Diomedes, but he was every bit as mean. His name was Loxias.

“If you want,” Eneas pleaded, “I’ll leave. I didn’t know this was your space. Yesterday, your space was over there.”

He pointed his horn to the east, just beyond the olive trees. The day before, they had chased him away from there.

“Our space changes from day to day,” Diomedes said. “But, no matter where it is, you seem to end up right in the middle of it, don’t you, Eneas? Why is that? Do you like to annoy us?”

He stepped closer and shot Eneas a menacing glare.

“No matter where I go,” Eneas said, getting frustrated, “you guys always say I’m in your space. Last week, I went down by the stream, but you chased me away from there. So I went up by the hill. But you didn’t want me up there, either. Now I come over here, and here is no good. Where can I go? Just tell me, and I’ll go there. I don’t want any problems.”

“What’s wrong, Eneas?” Loxias asked, a sad, droopy look forming on his face. “Do you feel like you’re being picked on?”

“Yes,” Eneas said. “You guys pick on me every day.”

“Poor Eneas,” Loxias said. “How can we make it up to you? How can we make you feel better?”

Eneas spun quickly to the right to face the third unicorn, Euryalus, who had moved dangerously close.

“You could leave me alone,” Eneas said matter-of-factly.

“That’s no fun,” Diomedes responded. “If we left you alone, what would we do all day? We’d get terribly bored. And after all, we’re just trying to have a little fun. Aren’t we, fellas?”

They all laughed.

Diomedes shot a quick, suggestive glance at the other unicorns. “Now let’s have some real fun, guys. Get the freak!”

In unison, they closed in on Eneas. The nearest one, Euryalus, lunged at Eneas with his horn, but Eneas deflected it and knocked Euryalus momentarily to the side. In the meantime,

Loxias kicked at Eneas with his powerful hind legs, and the kick was so powerful Eneas would have been knocked to the ground had it landed. Luckily, Eneas was just quick enough to save himself, and he dodged Loxias's dangerous hooves by side-stepping quickly to the left. As he did, however, Diomedes reared up on his hind legs and swung his mighty front feet at Eneas's head. Eneas tried to duck away, but he didn't react in time. One of Diomedes's hooves struck him in the face, just below his left eye. For a brief second, he saw stars and his vision went blurry.

He knew he couldn't hold out much longer. The other unicorns were too big and too fast, and there were simply too many of them. As such, he did what he always did when he was caught in these situations. He unfurled the large, feathered wings that grew from the sides of his back, raised them high into the air above him, and flapped with all of his might. Before the other unicorns could react, he had leaped into the air and flown away.

"Yeah, there you go again," Eurylaus shouted from below. "Running away again. Coward!"

Eneas flew to the safety of a nearby stream. As he landed on its far bank, he knew he'd be safe for at least a little while. Diomedes and the other unicorns had had their fun for the day, and now they would stay away, at least until tomorrow. After all, they rarely picked on him twice in the same day.

Eneas wasn't like the other unicorns. Unlike most unicorns, he had a pair of massive, feathered wings that grew from his back, one on each side of his spine. He had inherited them from his mother, Phedora, who was a winged horse known as a pegasus. To his mother and the rest of the pegasi, the wings were a blessing, for they allowed them to soar high into the sky, just as Eneas had done to escape Diomedes and the other bullies. To Eneas, however, the wings were a curse of the worst kind. Because of them, the other unicorn boys treated him like a freak and teased him mercilessly.

A few minutes later, a pegasus drifted from the sky and landed next to him. She had shiny, black fur, a brush-cut mane, and sparkling chestnut eyes. Her name was Philina. She was Eneas's only friend in the whole world. A look of grave concern formed on her face as she saw the nasty purple bruise that was forming rapidly on Eneas's cheek.

"What happened?" she asked. "Did those bullies pick on you again?"

Without saying a word, Eneas bent down and took a sip from the stream. He was too embarrassed to answer.

"Why don't you tell your parents?" Philina asked. "They could do something."

"That only makes it worse," Eneas said. "The last time I told my parents, Diomedes and the other boys called me a snitch and picked on me twice as much as normal."

"Then why don't you come and stay with my family and the pegasi herd?" she asked. "My parents like you a lot. They've already said you can stay with us if you want."

Eneas shook his head. "We already tried that, remember? Last year. Things weren't any different with the pegasi. They picked on me, too, almost as badly as the unicorns do. Remember the time down by the old vineyard? I barely survived that one. I still have the scar to prove it."

He glanced down at the front of his left foreleg. A long, purple line ran from the bottom of his knee to the top of his hoof.

"It's been a year," Philina said. "Maybe things will be different this time."

Eneas shook his head. "You know how it is, Philina. The unicorn boys don't like me because I have wings, and the pegasi boys don't like me because I have a horn. No matter where I go, I'll always be an outcast. I'll always be a freak."

“What are you going to do?” Philina asked. “You can’t keep going on like this, getting beaten up every day.”

Eneas sighed with resignation. He didn’t really like what he was going to say, but he had no choice but to say it anyway. He had been thinking about it a lot lately, and the day’s encounter with Diomedes, Loxias, and Euryalus had convinced him there was nothing else he could do.

“I’m going to run away,” he said.

Surprise and fear raced through Philina’s beautiful eyes. “Run away?” she said. “That’s crazy. Where will you go?”

“To Mount Olympus,” Eneas said.

“Olympus?” Philina asked. “Why?”

“I’m going to find one of the gods,” Eneas explained, “hopefully Zeus himself, and I’m going to ask him to use his powers to make me normal, just like the rest of you. Then, and only then, will I be able to fit in with everyone else and live a normal life.”

“Oh, Eneas,” Philina said. “I wish you wouldn’t do that. It’s silly. You don’t need to change yourself. You’re fine just the way you are.”

“Yeah, right,” Eneas said. “I appreciate your support, Philina. You’ve always been so nice and so kind. But you just don’t understand. You don’t know what it’s like to be me. Look at you. You’re gorgeous. You’re the prettiest pegasi in the entire herd. All of the stallions want to be your boyfriend.”

“Some of them like Ophelia better,” she said.

“Ophelia?” Eneas said. “No way. She’s not half as pretty as you.”

The minute he said it, Philina’s eyes got big and she started to blush.

“Anyway,” Eneas said, “everyone likes you and wants to be your friend. But not me. Nobody likes me. Like I said before — I’m a freak.”

“You’re not a freak, Eneas,” Philina said. “Don’t ever say that. You’re special. And you don’t need to do this. You don’t need to run away.”

“Yes I do. I’m going to leave tomorrow morning, right at sunrise. Hopefully, the trip won’t take too long. And you needn’t worry. I’ll come back and see you as soon as I can.”

“But the trip to Olympus is a long one,” Philina said. “And it’s dangerous. The last unicorn to go there disappeared and was never seen again. Some people say he was captured and eaten by a minotaur.”

“You worry too much,” Eneas said. “It’s okay. I can take care of myself. Trust me. And besides, if I get in too much trouble, I can always fall back on my old plan and do what I always do when I get in trouble. I can tuck my tail between my legs and fly away like the coward that I am.”

There was a long, awkward silence as the two stood there, speechless, staring blankly at one another, waiting for the other to say something. Eneas ran one of his front hooves through the dirt as he waited for Philina to bring forth another objection. Much to his shock and surprise, another objection was not forthcoming.

“Just so you know,” she said, “I don’t approve of this. Not one little bit. It’s pure foolishness. But if you have to go, then I’m going with you.”

Eneas didn’t know what to say. He hadn’t anticipated this. He was about to object when Philina cut him off abruptly.

“Don’t say a thing,” she said. “I don’t think you should go in the first place, but if you have to, then you’re taking me with you. It’s as simple as that. Understood?”

“I don’t know —” Eneas began.

“Enough,” Philina interrupted. “I’m going or else.”

“Or else what?”

“Or else I’m going to fly over to your meadow and tell your parents what you’re up to. That’ll put an end to your little trip real quick, won’t it? Your dad will ground you for a month.”

Eneas sighed. Philina had always been a stubborn, headstrong filly, and, as he had learned long ago, once she made up her mind there was no changing it.

“Whatever,” he said. “Will you be ready by sunrise?”

“I love mornings,” she said. “I’ll be up before you.”