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UPSIDE ★ DOWN MAGIC



**SHOWING
OFF**

Look out – there's
magic in the air!



UPSIDE★DOWN MAGIC

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by

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and

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Nory Horace arrived at Dunwiddle Magic School with really wet feet.

It was late October and rain poured down. The sky was dark even though it was morning.

Nory wore a raincoat.

She held an umbrella.

But she didn't have rain boots.

Back when Nory had lived with her father, brother, and sister, she'd owned a shiny pair of orange boots decorated with cheerful blue ducks. They were really great boots.

But now she lived with Aunt Margo. And she had no boots.

How had Nory been separated from her rain boots? She had flunked the Big Test to get into Sage Academy, that's how.

Sage Academy was the fancy private magic school where Nory's father was the headmaster. When Nory had flunked the Big Test, Father was so upset, he sent Nory away. She had moved to the town of Dunwiddle to live with Aunt Margo so she could go to a public school with a special new class for fifth graders who had wonky magic.

Of course, you weren't supposed to say *wonky*. The word *wonky* was rude. You were supposed to say *different* or *unusual*.

See, Nory was a Fluxer. That was her magic talent. Magic talents bubbled up when a person was around ten. Once you started fifth grade at magic school, you studied one of the five Fs of the magical world.

Fluxers were one of the five Fs. They could turn into animals.

Flyers flew.

Flares had fire magic.

Fuzzies had animal magic.

Flickers had invisibility magic of one sort or another.

Usually, Fluxers turned into ordinary animals like cats, dogs, cows, and goats. But Nory Horace didn't flux like that. Nory fluxed into mixed-up animals. When she did, she often lost control of her human mind. The animal mind took over.

It was very embarrassing.

Nory had been able to hide her problems for a bit. But during the Big Test to get into Sage Academy, she had fluxed into a snake-kitten in front of a lot of Very Important People.

Then Snitten-Nory had unhinged her snake jaw and chomped on her own father's hand, because it happened to smell like salmon.

Afterward, she turned into a dragon-kitten.

And she might have breathed a little fire.

Or a lot of fire.

And she might have zoomed around the testing room in an inappropriate way.

Okay, she did do that. Nory *did* turn into a dritten, and she *did* do all those things—and some things that were even worse.

It had been very, very humiliating.

She didn't like to think about it. And since Father didn't like to think about it either, he had shipped her off to live with Aunt Margo, as soon as arrangements could be made.

Nory hadn't packed her rain boots when she moved, because she'd been in a state of shock. When a person is thinking, *My whole life is falling apart! My magic is so wonky that my dad is ashamed of me! I have to move to a new town! Where I won't know anyone! I'll be stuck in a class of wonkos just like me, only wonkier!* that person doesn't also think, *Oh, hmm, in October it'll be rainy, probably. I'll pack my rain boots.*

Now here she was, six weeks into the school year at Dunwiddle. It was the first day of serious rain and her feet were *soaked*. But what was a girl to do? Wet feet were wet feet. Nothing was gained by moping.

Nory was good at looking on the bright side. It helped that she'd walked to school with her new best friend, Elliott. "Do you have extra shoes in your locker?" Elliott asked as they stepped through the entrance.

Everyone in Nory's Upside-Down Magic class kept extra clothes at school. They needed them. One of their classmates, Willa Ingeborg, had Upside-Down Flare magic that created indoor rain, and not always on purpose.

The students got wet pretty often.

Nory looked inside her locker. Bummer. She didn't have extra shoes, but she *did* have an extra pair of red socks. "Oh well, I can spend the day in socks," she told Elliott as she put them on.

"But the floor's a mess," he pointed out. "You'll

get them wet.” His ice magic wouldn’t help, Nory figured. Elliott was an Upside-Down Flare. He could freeze things. But a frozen floor would be worse than a wet floor. Everyone would slip. “Wait!” Elliott cried. “I have a better idea! Be right back!”

Nory stood still. Around her, students came in, closing up their umbrellas and hanging their raincoats in their lockers. All of them wore rain boots. A couple of Flyers hovered a foot or so off the ground to avoid the puddles, even though there was no flying allowed in the hallways.

Less than a minute later, Elliott returned with the wheelbarrow. The UDM kids usually used it to bring Bax Kapoor to the nurse’s office. Bax was an Upside-Down Fluxer who accidentally turned into a rock almost every day.

“Hop in!” Elliott said.

Nory rode to class with her head propped in her hands and her legs dangling over the edge. Her feet felt cozy and dry in her red socks.

I may be down a pair of rain boots, she thought, but I'm definitely up in friends.

Dunwiddle Magic School was fifth through eighth grades. The students were divided into the five magic categories: Flares, Flyers, Flickers, Fluxers, and Fuzzies. Then there was group of unusual kids like Nory: the fifth-grade Upside-Down Magic kids. Those kids studied with Ms. Starr, the Upside-Down Magic teacher. Ms. Starr taught literature, social studies, gym, math, and science—and she also had special training to help kids with upside-down magic. She wanted them to get in touch with their unusual talents. They did headstands in class. They hula-hooped. They did interpretive dance (though none of them liked it). They did trust exercises. They tried to feel their emotions and channel their magical talents productively.

Today, after math, Nory slid her protractor into her desk. Her friend Andres Padillo was floating on

the ceiling, attached to a long leash connected to his belt, as usual. Andres was an Upside-Down Flyer. He'd flown up, up, up on the day his magic came in, and *he had never flown down*. That's why he had to be on a leash. He couldn't stop flying.

Nory had an idea she'd been wanting to try. "Pull Andres down," she told Elliott. "Hey, Andres! Let's do a gravity experiment. I'm going to sit on you, okay?"

Marigold Ramos came over. "We're going to sit on Andres?"

"I'm not sure about this," muttered Andres as Elliott reeled him down.

"You'll be fine!" Nory said. "It's for science!" To Marigold, she added in a whisper, "Don't shrink him."

Marigold wasn't an upside-down talent. Or at least, no one had ever been able to put a label on her magic. She shrank things, but she couldn't make them big again afterward.

Andres was now floating level with the desks. He

grabbed on to the back of a chair with one hand and on to Elliott's shirt with the other. Elliott struggled with the leash, trying to keep him low. Andres's feet kept floating up.

Nory hopped onto a chair. She pulled Marigold up with her. "I'll sit on his shoulders. Marigold, you sit on his back. And, Andres, we're going to try to weigh you down. But maybe you'll fly us up, instead. Either way will be excellent, okay?"

"You might hit your heads on the ceiling," warned Andres.

"Students!" Ms. Starr said, walking over. "What in the world is going on?"

"An experiment, Ms. Starr," said Andres. Nory and Marigold were sitting on him, but he hadn't lowered down to the floor. He was just about two feet off the ground, with Elliott still holding the leash tightly.

"Girls, there will be no riding of Andres."

"But it's a *science* experiment," said Marigold.

"Yes," Nory said. "We're learning about gravity!"

Ms. Starr made her mouth into a stern shape. "Gravity is very interesting," she said, "but friends do not ride friends. Not even if you have permission. You all know that about Fluxers, right? You don't ride your fluxed classmates. And you don't ride your Flyer classmates either. So please. Marigold, Nory, Elliott. Let Andres go."

Nory and Marigold climbed off Andres, reluctantly. Elliott released the leash slowly and Andres bobbed back up to the ceiling. "Sorry, Andres," Nory called as her friend steadied himself against the top of a bookshelf.

Andres was laughing too hard to reply.

"Listen up," said Ms. Starr. "Today, for our magic studies, we are going to foot paint."

"Foot painting!" Nory wondered aloud. "Is that like finger painting?"

"It's good for managing new sensory input and creativity at the same time," Ms. Starr said. "That's an important skill for kids with unusual magic. Nory,

will you and Pepper go to the art room? Bring back four jars of poster paint, please. The big plastic jars. You can pick the colors.”

Pepper Phan was tiny. She had jet-black pig-tails and a round, friendly face. Pepper was an Upside-Down Fuzzy. More specifically, she was a Fierce.

Typical Fuzzies tamed unicorns or commanded groups of rabbits. Some sent carrier pigeons, or swam with alligators. Pepper was the opposite. Instead of trusting her, animals feared her.

Unfortunately, she couldn't turn her magic off. All animals, even people fluxed into animal form, thought Pepper was a terrifying monster.

When Nory was human, she liked Pepper a lot. Pepper was thoughtful and kept candy in her pockets. They both liked to hide out in the Dunwiddle supply closet when school got stressful.

Now the two of them walked down the hall together. The floor had dried. Bright red fire

extinguishers lined the walls in case of Flare problems. The neatly printed signs read:

NO FLYING EXCEPT IN THE FLYERS' COURT OR THE YARD.

NO ANIMAL FRIENDS IN SCHOOL WITHOUT WRITTEN
PERMISSION.

NO FLUXING WITHOUT TEACHER SUPERVISION.

Today, Nory noticed a sign she had never bothered to read before. It read:

DO NOT RIDE ON YOUR FELLOW STUDENTS.

They passed the fifth-grade Flyer class. Kids were at their desks, levitating slightly above their seats. The teacher was shaking a maraca, saying, "Up two-three-four, down two-three-four." The students raised and lowered themselves by magic.

"I'm glad I'm not a Flyer," said Nory. "Their lessons are so boring."

They passed the invisible water fountain and the signs for next week's kittenball games and invisible diving competitions. They stepped up to the art room.

The door was closed, so Nory knocked twice.

"Come in!" someone called.

They went in.

Suddenly, Pepper clutched Nory's arm. "Oh, no."

"What?" Nory asked.

Pepper was frozen in place.

Nory's eyes followed Pepper's. The kids in the art room were eighth-grade Fluxers. Most of them were in human form, but in the back of the room sat an elephant. She held a pencil in her trunk. It was Andres's sister, Carmen. She'd won a fluxing award for being able to do such an advanced animal. No one else in eighth grade could do any kind of large mammal yet.

The art teacher, Mr. Hamil, was also a Fluxer. He sat in the center of a large table, posing while the

students drew. His elbows were on his knees. His chin was in his palms.

He was in the form of a chimpanzee.

One elephant plus one chimpanzee equaled two jungle animals, and that was bad news for Pepper the Fierce.