

Her Welcome Home Party Was Already in Progress.

By Douglas C. Frasca

The hospital called informing him that his wife was to be released from her confinement. One year ago she had been pronounced “crazy as a jay bird” due to her unicorn obsession. Each month he was assured that she was in good health physically, and that her mental health was being carefully monitored. At first, she had been inconsolably angry, refused to eat, had to be fed intravenously, screaming herself hoarse about her husband and his unicorn. As time passed, she quieted, ate her bland food grimly, but would talk to no one. After several months she began tending a small flower garden in the courtyard, and spent more and more time on her appearance with make-up and nail polish. Finally, it was determined that she could be sent home.

The unicorn incident gained her husband some notoriety. He found himself the focus of a gregarious group of enthusiasts. When they told him they believed in unicorns, too, he protested that it was his wife’s obsession, but enjoying his new-found celebrity, agreed to host meetings of their Golden Horn Unicorn Society. He did not have to do much, just open up his home so they would have a place to drink his wine, eat his sandwiches, and regale each other about all manner of fanciful things. Sometimes they even mentioned unicorns. In no time, they began arriving in between the regular Society meetings. He did not mind, though, since they always made him feel special.

At the hospital, on the day of his wife’s release, he was met by a man in white, wearing a gold name plate. The orderly carefully guided his wife to their car. He helped her in and closed the car door firmly behind her. He watched them drive off and out of sight, before dashing for his own car.

On the way home, she was preoccupied with her fingernails. Finally, she turned to him and asked warily “Do you still see your unicorn?”

“No,” he told her...

“Stop here!” she pleaded. In front of a group of stores the car barely came to a stop before she bolted from the car. He was going to add ‘only fresh hoof tracks,’ but she wasn’t listening.

“I need new nail polish!” she shouted.

He had been advised to take her straight home, but could see her through the shop window so decided to humor her latest obsession. Twenty minutes later she came out smiling, climbed into the car, and proudly showed him her nails. “Do you like my new color?” She asked smiling. He looked at her hands, then frowned. The nails of her left hand were a different color than the nails of her right hand.

“Which one? I like both colors.”

Her smile vanished. “What do you mean, both colors?”

“Each hand has a different color,” he replied

She stared at him in stunned silence.

“Oh no, you don’t!” she screamed. “You’re not doing that to me again!”

Pushing him out of the car, she yelled, “We’re getting another opinion, NOW!”

She grabbed his arm with an unusually strong grip as she ushered him into the shop.

Inside she demanded of the saleslady, "How many colors do you see?"

"Why, only one," was the reply.

"Ha! I knew it." She said glaring back at him. "I knew you were trying to get me sent away to that booby-hatch again! I just knew it!" she screamed as she pushed him out through the shop door. She was about to hit him with her purse when the orderly stepped forward and grabbed her arm.

"My dear husband is trying to send me back with his lies!" she screamed.

"What lies?"

"Now he's saying that I put on two different colors of nail polish," she showed him the backs of her hands.

"But Mam, I see two colors, too. I do." The orderly offered, growing more concerned.

She may well have been returned to the hospital that very hour if the saleslady hadn't followed them out to hear what in the world the problem could be.

"It is peculiar of some polishes to change color under different lighting conditions," she assured them. "Come back in all of you and see what I mean." Inside she was finally able to convince them, even though she could not completely explain away the phenomenon.

After this unsettling episode, the couple continued on home. They both looked forward to a quiet homecoming, but, alas, this was not to be. Arriving home they found his old friends in their house already partying. A gregarious woman greeted them, and reading their astonished faces, said, smiling, "You left the front door unlocked, and we figured you wouldn't mind." His wife gave him a hard look.

"This is my wife who has been away for a long time," he offered weakly.

"Well, then dearie, this must be your Welcome Home Party!"

"HMMMMM, yes, and just exactly who are all of you?"

The party suddenly went silent for a moment then exploded with laughter.

"Why, we're the Golden Horn UNICORN Society!"

The man looked sheepishly at his wife whose expression was a gathering summer storm.

A moment later, the orderly who had been waiting in the yard, tensed to hear the rumble of heavy furniture crashing over followed immediately by a chilling shriek. Moments later he was knocked down by a mob of staggering figures exploding out of the front door. Stumbling and crying, and evaporating in every direction into the neighborhood.

In back of the house, half-hidden by a garden shrub, a bright white equine head perked up and a long, graceful horn flashed golden in the afternoon sun.