

Magarius awoke shortly before dawn when his unicorn kicked to be let out.

"All right, Snuffles," Magarius yawned, "I'm up." The old wizard stretched, scratched his beard, and stumbled out of bed.

Snuffles kicked more insistently. Magarius put his hand on the door, and paused. Snuffles was never that desperate to get out, unless there was someone out there. Magarius rolled his eyes and groaned. Lorius was probably still out there, likely waiting for some sagely advice. Well, he wouldn't get any. That was final. Mind made up, Magarius went down to let Snuffles out.

Snuffles always seemed so delighted to see the old Wizard. *All right*, Magarius admitted to himself, *it's probably because I feed him. But he is so much better than a canine-familiar.*

Magarius had gotten some amused glances from his peers at the university when his unicorn familiar found him. But all the same, unicorns were picky. The fact that the small black one had picked him was an honor. The fact that Snuffles was a deadly killer was an added bonus. The two got along reasonably well, (well, as well as a self-proclaimed grump and a carnivore could get along) and that was all that mattered.

Magarius opened the door to let Snuffles out. The Unicorn rubbed his head against Magarius before charging out the door.

The wizard watched. If there was someone out there, their expressions would be priceless when confronted with the unicorn. Few people saw a live unicorn. Most people lived under the mistaken impression that unicorns were gentle, and herbivores. Their expressions upon being charged by a black 50 pound fluff ball with a sharp horn and fangs. So much so, in fact, that the expressions almost always cured Magarius of his perpetual bad mood. Of course, if it was Lorius, it might be disappointing. The wizard's scowl deepened when he remembered the lad seemed to know about carnivorous unicorns.

His mood just got worse when he found it *was* Lorius out there. Even more annoying, Snuffles was *not* ramming him. He was playing. Apparently his blasted familiar had heard Magarius refer to Lorius as a guest, and thought of him as a new friend.

Magarius rolled his eyes, bemoaning his fate, and stepped outside to get rid of that royal nuisance.

"Kid, what are *you* still doing here?" Magarius yelled at the youth.

"I'm *trying* to leave, sir, I really am!" Lorius called back. "But you see, your unicorn wanted to play. How could I say 'no' to your pet?"

Snuffles growled at that word.

"He is *not* my pet," Magarius warned. "He is my familiar. You would do well not to confuse the two words, boy! Snuffles is very picky."

"My apologies, Snuffles," Lorius addressed the wizard's familiar. "A poor choice of words on my part."

The unicorn nodded his head in acknowledgement, and held his chin up for a scratch.

"So, sir, would you please let me go? I want to leave before the royal guards arrive." Lorius's voice was plaintive.

"Snuffles, let the kid be," Magarius called to his familiar. "He's got places to go, and they *don't* involve us." He shot a warning glance to the kid. Hopefully the youth would get the hint, and Magarius could just ignore this as another meaningless interruption into his sleep schedule.

"Thank you, kind sir," Lorius acknowledged, sounding only barely sarcastic. "If you will excuse me, now, I most try to reclaim my kingdom."

Thunder clapped and lighting flashed through the cloudless sky.

Lorius groaned. "You'd really think I'd have learned by now, wouldn't you?"

Magarius just waved the lad away, and turned back to his house. Snuffles soon followed. Hopefully that would be the last they would see of Lorius.