

The first book of the Netflix series.

At Unicorn Academy, Sophia can't wait to discover her destiny and become a Unicorn Rider. First, she must bond with Wildstar to unlock her unicorn's magical powers.

But evil Queen Ravenzella wants to destroy Unicorn Island, the academy and its magical unicorns. Will Sophia and her new friends have the courage to battle to protect everything they love?



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ENTERTAINMENT



Unicorn Academy

SOPHIA'S INVITATION



Unicorn Academy™



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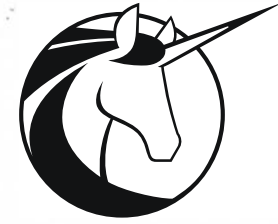
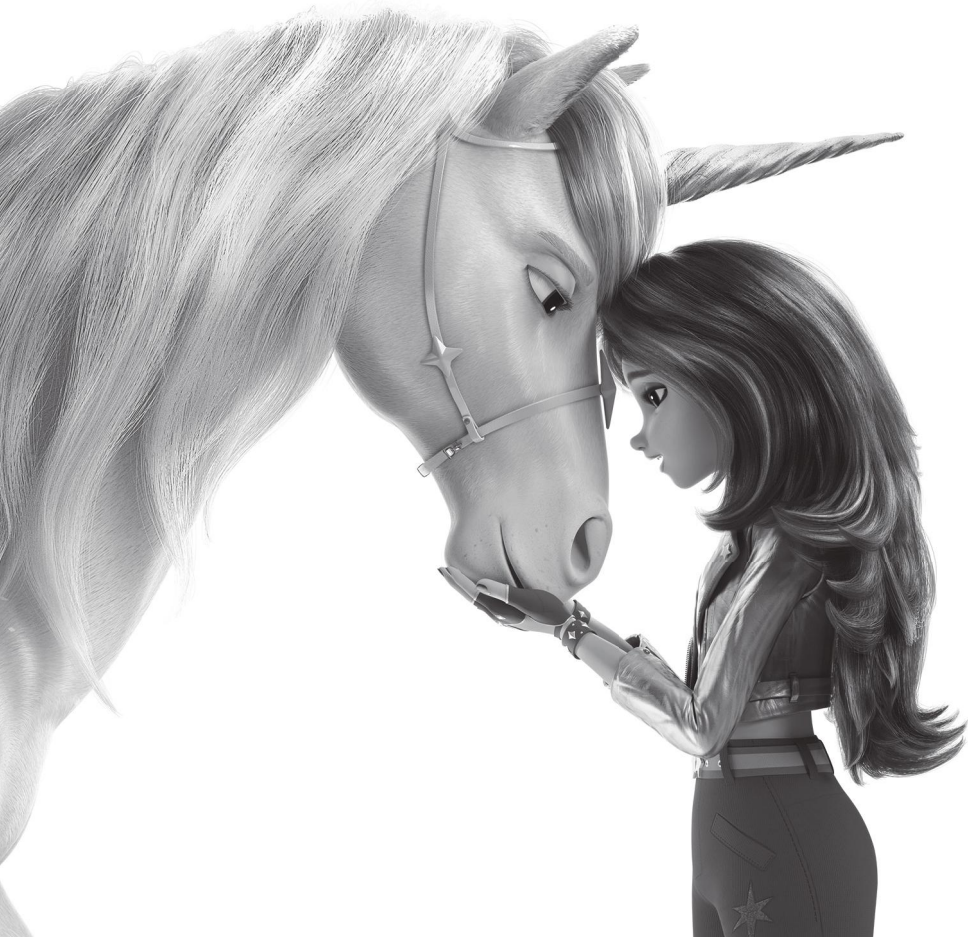
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PROLOGUE A JOURNEY BEGINS...

In the furthest corner of the bluest ocean, through secret shoals and hidden behind an enchanted mist, lies the most amazing place on Earth. Every part of it tingles with magic – from the sparkly, snow-capped mountain peaks to the flower-strewn forests. This is Unicorn Island.



One day, a twinkling dot of magenta light appeared in the island shadows. Quick as a hummingbird, the light darted out into the sunshine, flitting left and right. It shimmered



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and circled above the island's waterfalls and meadows, before gliding up towards a green hilltop. An opal-white unicorn with a spiralled horn was standing there, gazing out across the sea.

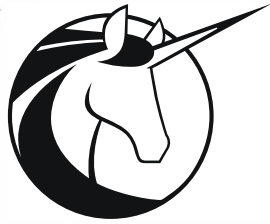
The unicorn watched, her rainbow mane billowing in the breeze, as the dot danced closer and closer. She was not startled – it was a light she had seen many times before. The dot swirled around the body of the majestic creature, along her horn and up into the air. It was a Fate Fairy, a tiny magical being with fluttery pink wings and bright eyes. The unicorn silently bowed her head in greeting. The Fate Fairy hovered beside the unicorn for the shortest of moments then flew off once again, spiralling up, up into the sky ... where it joined a cloud of other Fate Fairies glowing in gem-like colours, their wings buzzing with excitement.



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The unicorn looked up to see the Fate Fairies gather and then soar higher still. Just before they disappeared out of sight, the cloud suddenly separated, the dots whooshing off in different directions. All that was left behind was the beautiful unicorn and a fading glow of shimmering, pink light.





CHAPTER ONE

“Atta girl!” exclaimed Sophia Mendoza, as Mary Lou sailed over a fallen tree. The height of the jump would have sent shivers down the boots of some riders, but Sophia wasn’t in the least bit afraid. How could anyone be scared when they were having fun with their best friend?

Mary Lou, Sophia’s beautiful chestnut mare, whinnied with pleasure. She was enjoying this just as much as her rider! The horse galloped on, weaving through the woods, hooves thundering across the ground.

“This way,” said Sophia, gently guiding



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Mary Lou past some low branches. “Let’s go!”

Sophia had loved Mary Lou ever since she could remember, and exploring was their favourite thing. Over the years living on the farm she called home, she had grown into a skilful rider, staying firm in the saddle despite the speed of Mary Lou’s gallop. Sophia laughed as the wind whistled through her tawny brown hair. Around her neck she wore a crystal star pendant that glinted prettily as they sailed in and out of the trees.

When she was out in the wild, everything else disappeared. All she had to think about was the sunshine on her back, the reins in her hands and Mary Lou whisking her away on an adventure. Sophia urged her horse on, past shadowy glades and prickly thickets of brambles, until the afternoon sun began to fade and it was finally time to turn back. Together they galloped into a grassy meadow, towards a neat paddock



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surrounded by a tall wooden fence – home.

“Last jump,” whispered Sophia, leaning over Mary Lou’s neck. “Let’s make it a good one!”

Mary Lou’s ears went back as she pushed firmly off the ground, leaping over the fence with ease. She whinnied happily and slowed down to an easy trot.

“Perfect,” laughed Sophia, slipping to the ground. She kissed the horse’s nose, before adding, “As always!”

Mary Lou nickered, nudging Sophia tenderly. While the girl patted her neck and chattered to her, the horse noticed something out of the corner of her eye. What was that pink shimmer of light hovering above the farmhouse? Mary Lou blinked in surprise. But when she opened her eyes and looked again the light had disappeared.

Sophia hadn’t noticed anything strange, she



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was more troubled by how quickly the sun was starting to set. She took Mary Lou’s reins and led her hurriedly across the paddock.

“It’s getting late,” she said. “We need to get you back to your stable before...”

“...Mum finds out?”

Sophia groaned. Her little brother, Marco, popped out from behind the stable block, beaming from ear to ear. He was only nine years old, but he had already learned some impressive detective skills.

“Mum is going to freak when she finds out you took Mary Lou out of the paddock!” he said.

Mary Lou and Sophia exchanged a secret nervous glance.

“I’m just guessing of course,” Marco continued, “since I heard her say to you earlier, ‘Don’t even think about taking Mary Lou outside the paddock’.”



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Sophia gave him a playful punch in the ribs. She really didn't want to get caught breaking the rules, but it had been such a lovely, sunshiny afternoon. It almost felt wrong *not* to go out and have an adventure.

"Luckily Mum never has to find out," said Sophia, thinking fast. "She's busy making dinner, and you know how lasagne always gets the better of her."

To her surprise, Marco didn't reply. Instead his smile faded and his big brown eyes grew even wider than usual. Suddenly, Sophia was aware that someone was standing behind her.

"Hey Mum!" she gulped, spinning around.

Sophia's mum glared at her daughter. One hand was on her hip, the other was holding a pizza box.

"I didn't make dinner," she said firmly. "I ordered in."



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Quick as a flash, Marco swept past his sister, lifted the box out of his mum's hand and made a dash for the house. "I'll just bring this inside. Bye!"

Sophia's tummy did a flip. Mary Lou bowed her head and looked down at the ground. They really were in trouble now.

"How many times have I told you that you're not allowed to go riding off the farm?" said Sophia's mum.

"Mary Lou needed to stretch her legs," argued Sophia. She sighed. Her mum had a way of looking at her that made it impossible not to tell the truth. "I just took her along the track," she added quietly. "Dad and I used to ride it all the time."

Her mum's eyes softened. She stepped forward to stroke Mary Lou, then led the horse towards the stable and started getting her ready for bed.



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“I am just trying to keep you safe,” she said gently.

“I’m a good rider,” replied Sophia, fetching Mary Lou’s water bucket. “You don’t have to worry about me.”

Her mum raised an eyebrow. “Really? Last week you rode out in a thunderstorm to catch a runaway chicken. The week before I caught you both playing tag with a bull.”

“Fair point, Mum.”

Sophia glanced over at Mary Lou, who now had her bridle removed and was busy enjoying a lovely neck rub. It wasn’t that they *intended* to do dangerous things, they just sort of – happened.

“Why can’t you ever do some safe, typical teenage stuff?” asked her mum. “You could make some friends, go to the movies, have sleepovers. It could be fun.”

“Friends are overrated,” said Sophia, giving



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Mary Lou a goodnight cuddle. “I’m more of a rebellious loner with a love of adventure that can’t help driving her mum nuts.”

Sophia’s mum shook her head and chuckled, leaning in to join the hug.

“You got that right,” she agreed. “Oh, and about you sneaking out.”

“Grounded?” said Sophia. “Yep. I thought so!”



Cock-a-doodle-dooooo!

The farm’s big red cockerel was perched on the wall outside Sophia’s bedroom. He fluffed up his feathers, took a deep breath and crowed again. *Cock-a-doodle-doo!* It was his job to wake everyone up bright and early each morning, and he was never late.

Sophia yawned sleepily, did a big stretch, then lifted up the window and popped her head out.

“And a very good morning to *you!*” she said,



giving the cockerel a friendly wave.

Sophia slid her feet into a pair of slippers and headed downstairs. She could already smell the warm, homey scent of her mum's pancakes cooking in the kitchen. On the landing she passed the photo of her dad, Miles Mendoza. Sophia and Marco still missed him so much – sometimes it was hard to remember that he wasn't just out in the stables feeding the horses or doing jobs around the farm. As she went past, Sophia gently kissed her fingers and pressed them to his picture frame, just as she did every single day.

“Morning, Dad,” she whispered.

Sophia was still staring into her dad's kind face when the doorbell rang.

Ding-dong!

“I'll get it!” shouted Sophia, taking the stairs three at a time. She skidded up to the front door in seconds, but when she threw it open no one



was there. Sophia stepped out onto the porch, looking left and right. “That's strange,” she mumbled, before turning back inside and almost tripping over a shiny silver box sitting in the middle of the doormat.

Sophia gazed at the box. How had that got there? A shimmer of magenta light hovered behind her as she looked again for a delivery person. When she finally gave up and carried the box inside, the light darted away.

Sophia took the box in to show her mum and Marco. Although it was heavy and sturdy, the outside had been beautifully decorated with a pair of gold and lilac horses. Sophia gasped when she noticed her name engraved on the top.

“What is it?” asked Marco.

Sophia's mum watched anxiously as her daughter carefully lifted the lid. Inside the box was a smart invitation, written on sparkly card:



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Sophia's face lit up. A school where she would get to ride all day? A place for her to be with horses as part of her lessons? It sounded like a dream come true! She looked at her mum, pleadingly. "Can I go?"

"And can I have her room?" chipped in Marco.

Sophia's mum frowned. "What about your school here?"

"They don't let me bring my *horse* to lessons!"

said Sophia, "and it's not like anyone would miss me there."

"But I would miss you," said her mum. "Marco would miss you."

Marco began to nod, then quickly shook his head. "Actually, the new bedroom *would* heal the pain..."

His mum shot him a fierce look. Marco saw his cue to make a speedy exit as Sophia picked a brochure out of the box filled with information about Nuncior Academy. It sounded amazing.

"I know you worry about me," she said to her mum, "but I have a feeling that I am meant to do this."

Sophia's mum stared at the brochure for the longest time. At last she looked up and said, "I am sorry. I don't think this is a good idea."

"Mum! Seriously?" Sophia clutched her crystal pendant and felt herself starting to cry. This was

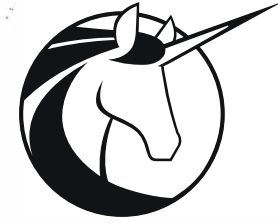


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a riding academy. Her mum knew that caring for horses had always been her dream. And surely ruining someone's dreams couldn't be right? "Dad would want me to go!" she blurted out. "If *he* were here, he..."

Sophia's mum turned her head away. "Our family has lost enough," she said, simply. "I don't want you leaving, Sophia."

There was nothing more to say. Sobbing, Sophia ran back up to her bedroom and slammed the door.



CHAPTER TWO

Sophia stayed inside all day. To be grounded and *not* going to Nuncior Academy – it was too depressing for words. As she lay there on her bed surrounded by her posters, cushions and special things, Sophia couldn't imagine a time when she would ever feel happy again. Without her dearest dreams, the whole world had turned grey and sad. She reached up to the shelf and pulled down a chunky book with a worn pink cover – the Mendoza family photo album.

"I wish you were here, Dad," whispered Sophia, gazing fondly at the pages of neatly mounted

