



The Hunt of the Unicorn

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Elayne thinks the old family story that one of her ancestors stepped through a tapestry into a world of mythical beasts makes a great fireside tale. But she lives in the real world. In New York City. And she's outgrown that kind of fantasy.

Until she finds herself in front of a unicorn tapestry at the Cloisters museum and sees *her* initials woven into the fabric. And hears a unicorn calling to her. And slips and falls—into that other world.

Suddenly the line between fantasy and reality isn't so clear. But the danger is real enough. Almost before she can think, Elayne is attacked by a ferocious beast, rescued by a unicorn, and taken prisoner by a tyrant king. Each of them seems to have an idea about her—that she's a hero, a villain, dinner!

But Elayne has a few ideas of her own. She wants to overthrow the king; she wants to tame the unicorn. She wants to go home! And she's willing to become both hero *and* villain to do it.

The Hunt of the Unicorn Details

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Author : C.C. Humphreys

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From Reader Review The Hunt of the Unicorn for online ebook

Lucy says

This book has received rather low ratings *frown* and I am not a technical reviewer or a precise critique, I just rate books on how much I enjoy them. ;)

Once I picked up this book, I just kept reading it! I read it until 3 am when I was done with it, and it was a really good read. I hadn't done that in a while and it felt so refreshing to be *that* into a book. I wholeheartedly recommend it for those into different worlds split rather masterfully, mythical creatures, and heroines/books that pleasantly surprise you.

(view spoiler)

Sure, there were things that could have been better. Imagine if (leading with some of what another reviewer wanted) Elayne was a little more fleshed out or we learned more about the Ama-something! Leo could have been terrifying (although he was definitely manipulative & I didn't see how bad he was until Elayne noticed his lips were very thin, haha). There were things that could have been improved upon, but I enjoyed the book nonetheless.

Sanya says

You can't say it is not real if you don't see it with your bare eyes.

Kate says

(More like 3.4-3.5 stars) I read this book all the way through in one sitting. The writing style and story was engaging, but I did have some nit-picky things about the characters. I did love the details around the history of the tapestries created in this story. I'm happy to see that our heroine learns and honors her promises to her most true friend (Moonspill). Still, I feel that the other characters were a bit underdeveloped.

The king-elect, Leo, is one example in the fantasy story. He does some noble things like save Elayne from the griffin; but then he goes around and does crooked things like hunting these beasts so cruelly. At times he claims to want to step out of his father's hunter shadow, but then again he could be playing a political card that way. I see a strange reflection of him in Moonspill, who has his own inner rage and and troubles dealing with his ancestors. Both in a sense are trapped (at odds) with tradition and ideas of heroic greatness. I wish that we could have picked his brain more to understand his reasoning, along with Marc's (did a whole 180) and Amaryllis's (came across as a spoiled brat).

Especially Marc, who seemed to be on the "weaver" side from the get-go. He doesn't fully explain his reasoning for helping Elayne and building up her hope (and playful flirtations), then stabbing her in the back like that near the end. I can get he wants to help his sister marry the prince. But it's like he feels no guilt about the girl and unicorn who helped him in the past. I think he could have redeemed himself if he had helped in some form at the end again (playing a double agent). While I believe this may be a stand-alone, I think it would be interesting to revisit Goloth again. Perhaps Elayne is called back by Moonspill and is meant to help him restore some order to riotous Goloth and the fabulous beasts that may now be encroaching into the city (seriously bring them some democracy). Maybe Leo and Marc could redeem themselves a bit in a sequel, or at least develop into more ambitious villains.

Cindy says

This review may also be found on *A Thousand Little Pages*.

Elayne has lost all hope for her father's recovery as he battles leukemia, and it is with a feeling of defeat that Elayne sits down with him one night and cracks open the old volume entitled *The Maid and the Unicorn*. Elayne reads of the story of the magical weaver Francois Robochon, his daughter and her namesake Alice-Elayne, and the escape from Goloth, Land of the Fabulous Beast on the back of a unicorn. Even as Elayne scoffs at the fantastical story, her father insists on its authenticity and presents a supposed unicorn horn passed down from Elayne's ancestor to her as a gift. It isn't until Elayne comes face to face with tapestries depicting the great unicorn and woven with the initials *AE* that she finally realizes the truth, although the realization *does* come just a bit too late. Plunging head-first into the Land of the Fabulous Beast, Elayne seeks to discover a cure for her father and possibly save Goloth from its tyrannical ruler, the descendant of the weaver Robochon's murderer, King-Elect Leo.

The Hunt of the Unicorn turned out to be a lot more than I'd originally expected. The beginning was a bit heavy on the info-dumping, but the authors chose a more creative method. We read about the entire history and back-story as Elayne herself reads from *The Maid and the Unicorn*, and her commentaries certainly added to the story.

It took me 80 pages to get into the story, and the rest of the book flew by as a result. We are introduced to fascinating Moonspill, handsome Leo, joking Marc, sweetmeat-addicted Amaryllis, and other charming or back-stabbing characters as the story progresses. My favorite being the two-headed amphisbaena snake, who, upon meeting Elayne, proceeds to exchange their knowledge of the language of the beasts with her for *her* knowledge of modern English. It is quite entertaining to hear the snake, especially the Baena half, speak in a mix of Olde English and "teenspeak."

The Hunt of the Unicorn is a great addition to the plethora of unicorn books out there. It stands out among the rest, too.

Book Source: Review Copy via Flamingnet

Lydia says

Buah recuerdo que lo leí cuando empecé a interesarne/obsesionarme con los unicornios hace como 5 años y que me gustó mucho la idea y los personajes (sobre todo la protagonista, por alguna razón conecté mucho con ella) y que odié también mucho al príncipe ese.

Recuerdo que al terminarlo lo primero que pensé fue "y ya está?!? NO HAY MÁS?? :((".
A ver si lo releo algún día.

Liana says

Not a bad story, but I cannot help but feel that it's trying too hard...? It's so big and colourful, but it comes

across like a first or second draft...? It's like it was put in the bookstore too soon, and cut off from being a more epic story...

...Bah, don't listen to me. Unicorn stories are always cool, including this one!

Dark Faerie Tales says

Review courtesy of Dark Faerie Tales.

Quick & Dirty: A fantasy book with good action and a fun adventure, but the characters were hard to relate to. I would recommend it more for the middle grade age group.

Opening Sentence: Thunderstorms rumble nearer, the air charged with static, as sticky-hot as only a New Orleans night can be.

The Review:

Elayne is a young girl living with her sickly father. Her mother died a few years ago and now her father has cancer. The treatments haven't been going very well and they aren't very hopeful. One night her father brings her a diary of one of her ancestors Alice-Elayne the woman she was named after. In the diary it talks about another world where Alice grew up. The world was filled with magical creatures and an evil tyrant king. Alice left that world behind to start a new life here in our modern day, but before she left she made a vow to a unicorn that if he ever needed her help she would gladly give it. Now 500 years later Elayne will have to fulfill that promise.

On a school field trip they visit a museum full of old tapestries, while there Elayne ends up walking through a portal to a different world. She is in the world that Alice talked about in her diaries and everyone thinks that she is the maiden from a prophecy made long ago. She is supposed to end the tyranny that has plagued the kingdom for all these years, and to do that she has to tame a unicorn. While on this wild adventure she meets many new friends and there may also be hope for her dying father. Everyone says that a unicorn has the power to heal the sick and lucky for Elayne she happens to know a unicorn.

The story is mostly told from Elayne's point of view but there is a few times where you get to glimpse into the mind of the unicorn, Moonspell. I had a hard time with Elayne. She did have some good qualities like bravery, compassion, honesty, but I just found her voice to be really annoying. She is young and very immature which was hard for me as an adult to connect with. I usually love having a young adult as a protagonist, but they have to have a certain maturity level that Elayne just didn't have. I think that a younger audience would have an easier time connecting with her as a character than I did.

Moonspell is the unicorn that helped Alice-Elayne escape all those years ago and he has called Elayne back to Goloth. He needs to help save the kingdom and in order to do that he has to be tamed by Elayne. It was interesting being inside his head. He has an internal battle going on where a part of him is crazy and out of control, than another side where he can see reason and wisdom. He needs to bring both sides together to bring harmony to the land and himself. I liked Moonspell just fine but there was nothing that really stuck out to me as unique or different about him.

This was just an ok read for me. Like I said, I had a hard time with Elayne, which made me feel disconnected

with the story. Some of the things I did like were that it had good action and a fun adventure. The world was interesting and the descriptive writing made it easy to imagine everything. The pacing was a little slow for me and I had a hard time getting through some of the book because it would drag. Overall, I felt the book could have been better, but I think a younger audience would probably really enjoy this book.

Notable Scene:

Cross over, Alice-Elayne.

Her name! Spoken by a voice that seemed to be both in her head ... and coming from the tapestry. She jumped, staggered a step forward. Maybe it was the yellow flashing lights. But the scene before her was no longer just hanging on a wall. It was something happening, an arm's length away. Every plant moving in a breeze. Every hunter breathing in. Every animal crouching to leap.

And the unicorn ... The unicorn was no longer in profile. She could see both its eyes, which were an extraordinary fathomless blue. They sparkled with a universe of stars, beneath a column of spiraling ivory....

The unicorn's horn.

The unicorn's horn! She clutched its shape beneath her sweater as if it could steady her for the words that came again.

Cross over.

She didn't know if she fell or reached out to stop herself from falling. She just knew that when her fingertips touched cloth, they sank into it.

And the room turned upside down. Tapestry dissolving; her, falling. Into a woven tree, through the tree. No fear in the falling. No time for that. Time only for one question, one answer.

What do you do when a unicorn tells you to cross over?

You cross over.

FTC Advisory: Knopf Books for Young Readers/Random House provided me with a copy of The Hunt of the Unicorn. No goody bags, sponsorships, "material connections," or bribes were exchanged for my review.

Vicky says

This is the story of Alice Elayne, a young girl whose father is dying of cancer. In order to help him through the difficult days, she reads to him from a book that is supposedly the story of their family. For hundreds of years, there has been an Alice Elayne in the family, along with the book and a small box. Inside the box is a piece of a unicorn's horn. Supposedly in the beginning, an ancestress wove a tapestry that, with the touch of a unicorn's horn, opened a doorway between two worlds - the ordinary everyday world, and a fantastic realm where mythical beasts roamed. The weaver of the tapestries had his life saved by the unicorn and in return promised that if ever the unicorn needed help, Alice Elayne would be there.

Of course, Alyce Elayne doesn't believe a word of the story.

And of course, she is wrong.

This is a delightful story full of emotion, adventure, fantastic creatures, danger, and more. Though some of the characters are stereotypical, most are well developed and the world-building is excellently done. A definite read for anyone who loves unicorns and fantasy.

Julie says

I've looked for a book like this about a unicorn for over a year now. I found this by sheer luck. I was in the bookstore looking for a book for the Care of Magical Creatures challenge for a Harry Potter themed reading challenge and found this on the shelf.

I read it in two sittings stopping only to take my kids to school. I had to know how it ended. I loved how this book blended tropes from other fantasy stories to make a story that was completely unique. I loved that Elayne was a modern girl who refused to be a pushed around damsel in distress. I loved that this book wasn't just about a girl and a unicorn but saving an entire group of people from tyranny. I especially loved that while a love triangle was hinted at, Elayne didn't have time for that!

What is it with girls and unicorns? C.C. Humphreys gets it.

I did have one minor complaint. An entire land of magical creatures and no dragons are mentioned? Seriously? But it'd make a great sequel. Hint. Hint.

Raven R. (AvalonReadsBooks) says

I will never forgive this author for killing that poor griffin chick. Two stars gone just for that alone.

Other then that a good book. Had some good twists. Got hella annoyed with Elayne, she was a complete and utter idiot. She made horrible choices. Didn't like Leo, he was a chauvinistic pig and I hope he dies. The unicorn was great, the magical creatures were wonderful, and I liked that everything sort of works out in the end. Just not for that baby griffin. UGH.

Heather says

Before I begin my review, I should make one thing clear. I am a unicorn lover and collector, taking care to only keep gorgeous, majestic unicorns around (forget the childish, cute ones). I feel this is a necessary tidbit about me, as it might – well, probably does – influence my opinion of this book – or any book wherein one of the main subjects is a unicorn. Well, I don't know, maybe not. I mean, a bad book is a bad book, whatever creatures might be within its pages ... anyway, no, this is most definitely NOT a bad book. Very good, but I'm getting ahead of myself ...

When I read the title of this book, my interest was instantly piqued – for what I’m guessing are now obvious reasons. I wasn’t further excited by the description, but decided to give it a go anyway. I think the reason the description didn’t further excite me is because it sells the story short. This makes it all sound so simple, but it’s so not. It’s an intricately woven fantastical tale that leaves a fantasy lover (such as myself) quite satisfied. And, best of all, loose ends don’t get left at the end. This story stands on its own! (Such a refreshing thing, as I think series are overdone these days.)

The chapter on the hunt of the gryphon was absolutely amazing. (I no longer have the book available to me, but I believe “griffin” is spelled “gryphon” – hence my spelling of it here.) The hunt itself, along with the chase at the end was written so very well. I felt my heart accelerate as the action progressed, until the very end moment of the chase. WOW. So well done.

The book as a whole is action-packed and fast-moving. There were very few chapter breaks at which I felt I could put the book down. The action was going, and the next chapter continued it. There were a few spots where I could put the book down without feeling like I was interrupting the current scene, but not a lot. So, if you read this book, be prepared to sit and read for long stretches. But, it’s a good thing – unputdownable books are the best!

The Hunt of the Unicorn includes all manner of mythological beasts, no just unicorns. There are manticores, the aforementioned gryphon, and many others. If you love mythological creatures, this book is for you! Heck, if you love fantasy, this is a good read. (And if you love unicorns like I do, then buy the book NOW!) I highly recommend it. In fact, this was a tour book (and ARC, to be precise), and I was sad to let it go. I will definitely purchase a copy for my own enjoyment again and again.

Long story short: Awesome book, especially if you’re a fan of the fantasy genre and/or mythical creatures. The Hunt of the Unicorn is a wild ride with surprising incidents thrown in to keep the reader on her (or his, I suppose) toes. I thoroughly enjoyed this book, and was made even happier at the end because there are no loose ends left – I actually closed the back cover satisfied!

Jessica-Robyn says

Is it possible to give unicorns a dark side?

I’ve come to the conclusion that unicorns are probably the hardest sell of all magical creatures. Sure, they are right up there with rainbows and butterflies on the popularity scale for most females under the age of fourteen (or at least they used to be before Edward came along), but the mythology of unicorns is pretty simple. In the same way vampires are an embodiment of darkness, unicorns are an embodiment of purity. A unicorn is a healing creature with a thing for virgin girl companions. I guess when I ask if unicorns can have a dark side, what I’m really asking is: Is there an interesting story to be found within the mythology?

Unfortunately, I’m not totally convinced. Although The Hunt of the Unicorns is a perfect example of a really great attempt the story here was just too... tame for me.

This isn’t the sort of thing I would normally choose to read, but I got this book after meeting C.C. Humphreys in 2011 and have put off reading it till now. Confined to my bed I had only the books in front of me to choose from and I wanted something I knew I could read through quickly. The Hunt of the Unicorns fit the bill, so I started reading, and got incredibly bored, incredibly quickly. If I was reading this under

different circumstances I can almost guarantee that I would have set it down for a looooong time before continuing, but desperate for entertainment I pressed on.

To give the author credit, he put a lot of work into creating an interesting magical world for his story to take place in. The imagination and variety of beasts that he uses was oddly fascinating and I feel he succeeded in what he was trying to achieve in that world. However, it was also very touch and go. In some places I feel he didn't take things far enough, in others you can see the development of the world getting to broad and getting in the way of the development of the characters and the plot. For me, the characters are the most important part of any story. In the Hunt of the Unicorn it was more about the world building then it should have been.

Our protagonist Elayne is a great character in concept, but not in execution. It wasn't till I finished the book that I realized that she wasn't really a character, but a story device. I had no idea of who she really was. She had plenty of motivation, but very little substance. She's sort of just a teenage girl who gets swept up in a adventure, which is fine, but I ask for a little more.

On the other hand I was happy to see that the unicorn character, Moonspill, was a character in his own right and not just a horse with a horn. He had his own motivations and of all the characters in the story he stands out as one of the more rounded. Also very noteworthy is the character of Amphisbaena. A two-headed snake with mouths like no other. Amphisbaena is a surprisingly funny character gifted with all languages of man, beast, and magical creature alike.

Overall, everything was pretty good. There wasn't anything I hated or disliked and I finished the book without many complaints. Then of course I sat down to write this review and *really* thought about it.

I realized two things.

First off, near the beginning of the book there is a scene that is central to the unicorns role in Goloth, Land of the Fabulous Beast. The role of the unicorn is to apparently purify the water so all the animals in and around Goloth can drink from the rivers because of course the humans have f-ed it all up. Normally, I would have considered mentioning this to be a spoiler because at the time it seemed like a pretty big deal. I thought that it was going to be part of the central plot of the story, but it isn't. It actually amounts to nothing. I can understand wanting to showcase the unicorns powers, however there are quite a few moments later in the book where this water-purification thing should be brought up again, but it isn't.

Then my second problem, the big, giant, plot hole problem. Later on in the book, when talking about the unicorns, it is mentioned by Moonspill that there is a place that is far away, over mountains yonder, where his children are safe from the dangers of Goloth. In this magical world, or at least in Goloth, Land of the Fabulous Beast all creatures are hunted, hunting is what everything is all about, the book is called The Hunt of the Unicorn. So if there is a place that is safe, why don't **all** the creatures just leave and go there? If the forest is on fire, you leave the forest.

I will say, before I put a cap on this review turned unexpected rant, that while I was reading The Hunt of the Unicorn it was an enjoyable experience, but the more thought I put into it the more I'm disappointed. For a book that I went into with very low expectations it did pretty well! Now however, I just find myself wanting to move on.

If I were to recommend this to someone it would be to younger YA readers. If I was just coming into the YA genre and I loved adventure fantasy then this would have blown me away!

Jessica at Book Sake says

This fantasy has it all. A great division of the two different worlds. Mythical creatures such as the Cerberus, Cyclops, and of course the Unicorn. A heroine who just doesn't know what she's capable of. A tyrant king. The list goes on.

I found that the book was quick in it's pacing and kept moving the storyline along. There were no dull moments at all. Both boys and girls will like this book as it has something for everyone. Between the small moments of romance there are many more moments of danger and fighting to keep the excitement going.

There weren't a lot of overwhelming characters with hard to pronounce (or hard to remember) names as in many fantasy books, and that was a very welcome change to this girl. I often get discouraged and just stop reading the names all together when I read books like that. This one was completely readable, nothing to fret over or wonder about. I'd love to see a follow up novel!

Reviewed by Jessica for Book Sake.

Taylor says

I received this book as a ARC for doing reviews on my local teen library blog.

The only things Elayne cares about are her dad and the cancer that is poisoning his body. When he tells her about the family history and how one of her ancestors came into this world through a tapestry, she thinks it is great story. Maybe it will take their minds off the fact that he's going to the doctors the next day for more tests.

The next day while on a school trip to the local art museum Elayne sees the unicorn that was so famously in her ancestor's tapestries along with her own initials, also known to be in the tapestries. Suddenly the emergency lights go on and everyone leaves except Elayne who leans against one of the tapestries. She finds herself in another world called Goloth which she recognizes from the family history. Within a minute, a huge creature she also recognizes from her father's history started to attack her. She is saved by a unicorn named Moonspill. Suddenly the story from last night is being re-enacted almost right in front of her eyes. This time though, she's in it. Next she finds herself riding the unicorn, being taken by the soon-to-be king and attempting to find her place in this new world. Elayne knows from her history that the king "Leo" was evil and is attempting to stop a prophecy from occurring that centers on Moonspill and herself. Eventually she escapes from the dungeon with some inside help so she can make the rendezvous with Moonspill. They find themselves among many mirrors in the forest, and Moonspill unable to negotiate his way, yet this is the only way Elayne can get back to the normal world. Elayne has been gone for a week and her father illness is worse. Moonspill's horn has the power to help her father with its magic power to take away poison. The New York climate affects the unicorn though and he is weaker here than in his usual world, Goloth or the Land of the Fabulous Beasts. Will he be able to help her father? What about Moonspill's mate? She is back home, locked in the soon-to-be king's dungeon with all other fabulous beasts that will be sacrificed in The Games that will make the new king official if he can kill a unicorn. Suddenly, Elayne is back in Goloth, with the future king considering her as his future wife. She and the two unicorns have a plan to change the future in the Land of the Fabulous Beasts.

It was fascinating to read about unicorns as one would mostly think of them in young children's books but this proved that they have their place in young adult fiction as well. I loved how the story had all different creatures and it was up to your imagination combined with the writing as to what they look like. I would recommend this for teen girls who love fancy and love to see female domination. Teen boys may like the action.

K.A. Wiggins says

This was a decent kids or YA fantasy read that might be elevated to great if you love unicorns, fairytale/legendary/mythical beasts and old-school fairytale-quest-fantasy. The tone felt a little dated compared to current trends (it is 2011), but there were interesting ideas woven into the narrative and an easy-to-follow, coherent (if a little predictable) plot. Characterization felt a bit lazy; the heroine is remarkable for her 'maiden'-ness and general naivety, the only other named (human) female character is bad, you can tell because she's a stress-eater and obese, and the named male characters are family or romantic interests who quickly fall out as questionable. Liked the identity and trust issues with the unicorn and the tie-in to the tapestries at the Cloisters - good creative re-use of history and artifacts. Also enjoyable was the portrayal of legendary beasts, especially the slang-and-middle-English speaking two-headed snake, who imho was the best character of the lot. Nothing wildly fresh, but there doesn't always have to be. A gentler read than most, enjoyable especially for a niche fanbase.
