

Natalia and the Baby Unicorn





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To my favourite little family from the bottom of my heart

- Your loving Babushka





The Sparkling Woods

Once upon a time, there was a little girl called **Natalia**. She is five years old, full of energy and full of ideas.

She loves dancing, drawing and playing her favourite games. Most of all, she loves being the leader. “Follow me!” she says, and off everyone goes.

Today, **Natalia**, **Alexei**, **Leta** and **Mamy** are walking into the Sparkling Woods.





Follow Me, Everyone!

The trees here are soft with green moss, and tiny sparkles drift in the air like snow.

“Everybody, dance behind me!” calls **Natalia**. She spins and hops between the mossy trunks.

Alexei follows with big silly jumps. **Leta** twirls on her long legs.

Mamy laughs and spins too, her cardigan glittering silver.

“Now wiggle!” orders **Natalia**. Everyone wiggles.

“Now freeze!” Everyone freezes.

Natalia giggles. Being the leader is the best game in the whole world.

Then, in the quiet of the freeze, she hears something. A tiny sound. A soft, wobbly whinny...

“Shh,” whispers **Natalia**. “Did you hear that?”







Behind the Glowing Mushrooms

Natalia tiptoes towards the sound. Behind a ring of glowing mushrooms stands a baby unicorn, all on his own. His coat is soft and white, his mane is peach and sky blue, and a tiny pearly horn twinkles on his forehead.

“Hello!” shouts **Natalia**, rushing forward. “I’m **Natalia**!” The little unicorn jumps back and trembles.

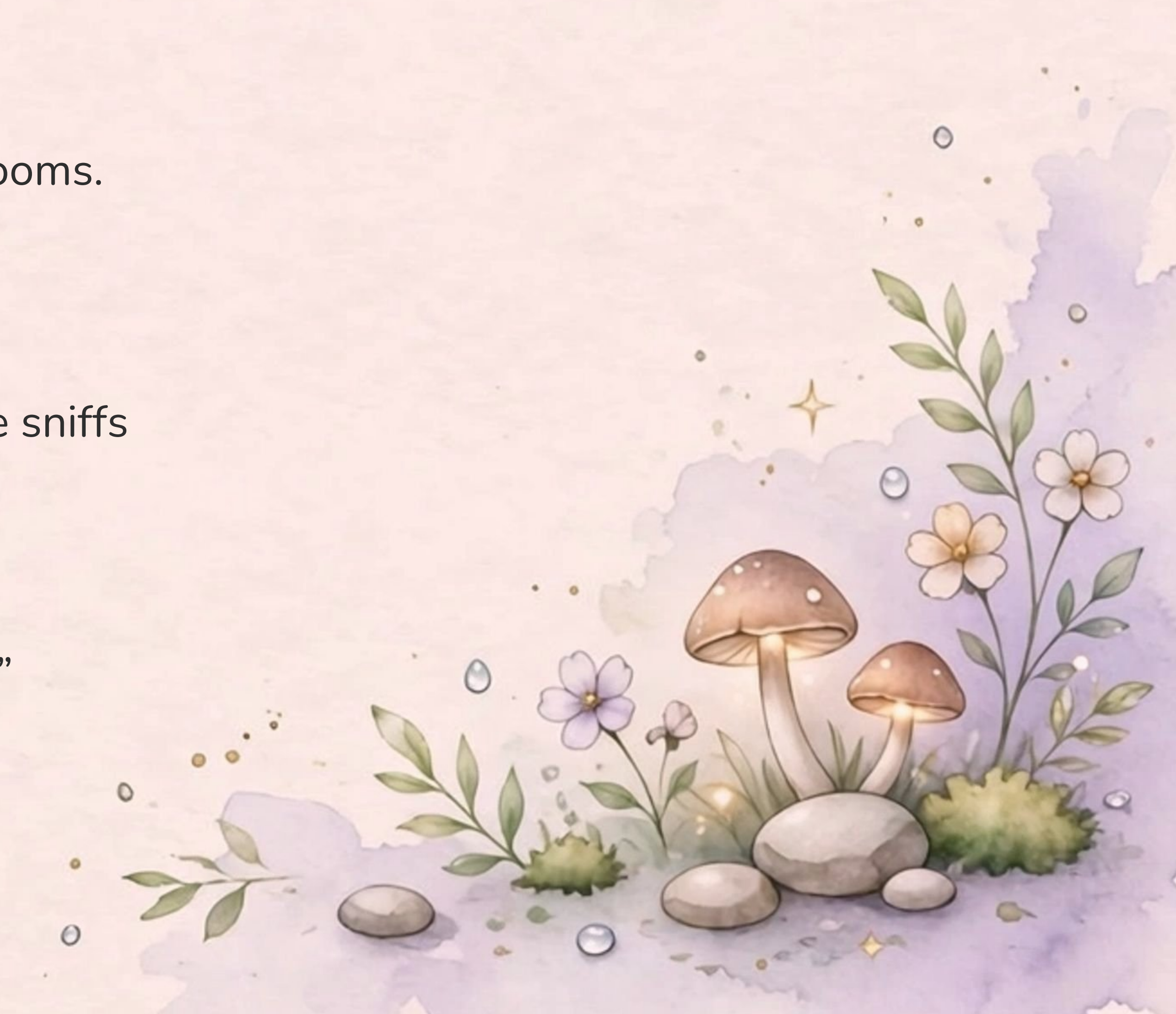
Leta touches **Natalia**’s shoulder. “Gently,” she whispers. “He’s scared.”

So **Natalia** kneels down slowly at the edge of the mushrooms.

She holds out her hand, very still.

The unicorn takes one step. Then another. His velvety nose sniffs her fingers.

“Hello, little one,” **Natalia** whispers. “I’ll call you **Pip**.”







Natalia's Map

Pip looks towards the deep woods and gives a sad little whinny.

“He’s lost,” says Alexei. “Where is his mum?”

Mamy listens. Far away, water is splashing. “In all the old stories, unicorns live by the sparkling waterfall,” she says softly. “His mother must be there.”

“Then I’ll take him home!” cries Natalia.

At the foot of an old tree, she spots a silver twig with a tiny star at the tip. It glitters in her hand like a magic wand.

Natalia crouches down and draws in the soft earth: the stream, the flowers, a big glade, the waterfall.

“This is our map,” she announces. “Follow me, Pip!”







Stepping Stones

Soon they reach a rushing stream. The water is shallow, but it splashes and gurgles over shiny stones.

Pip stops. His ears go flat.

He backs away. “Come on, Pip, jump!” orders Natalia.

But Pip only trembles more. Natalia takes a deep breath.

Shouting is not working.

She steps onto the first flat stone and taps it with her wand.

“Level one,” she says gently, just like in her favourite game. “This one is safe.”

Pip puts one hoof on the stone. “Level two,” says Natalia, stepping again.

Pip follows.

Mamy and Leta hold out their hands on the other side. “Level three... you did it!”







Fluttering Wings

On the other side, there is a corner full of magic flowers, pink, gold and blue. Suddenly, whizz! Three tiny fairies zoom out of the petals. Their wings glow and flutter.

Pip squeals and hides behind Natalia.

Natalia wants to shout, “Stop that!” But she remembers the stones. She stands very still and lifts her wand slowly.

“Hello, fairies,” she says softly. “Could you fly gently, please? My friend is a little scared.”

The fairies giggle like tiny bells. They slow down... and one lands on the star of Natalia’s wand.

Pip peeks out. The fairy waves. And Pip, very slowly, waves his tail back.







Side by Side

Beyond the flowers lies a wide, sunny glade. The fairies flutter ahead, twirling in the air. “Dance with us!” they sing.

Natalia loves dancing! She wants to leap and spin. But **Pip**’s legs are still wobbly.

So **Natalia** invents a brand-new dance, just for him. She rests her hand gently on his soft mane.

“Step, step, sway,” she sings. “Step, step, sway.”

Pip copies her. Clip, clip, swish goes his little tail. Side by side, they cross the glade.

Behind them, **Alexei** claps along. “You’re the best leader, **Natalia**!” calls **Alexei**.

Natalia beams. **Pip**’s legs are not wobbly any more.







Pip Shows the Way

Now the path goes into a shady part of the woods. The trees are tall, and the light is soft and green.

Natalia marches ahead. “This way!” she says. But **Pip** stops and sniffs the moss.

“Not that way, **Pip**. Follow me!”

Pip does not move. He sniffs again... and the moss begins to shine. Little silver hoofprints are glowing on the ground!

“Those are his mother’s hoofprints,” whispers **Leta**. **Natalia** looks at **Pip**.

Pip looks at **Natalia**.

“All right, **Pip**,” she says. “Your turn to lead. I’ll follow you.”

So **Pip** trots along the silver hoofprints, and **Natalia** follows, smiling.







A Song for Tired Hooves

After a long walk, Pip's little legs grow tired. He lies down on the soft moss and yawns.

"Time for a rest," says Mamy. Everyone sits on a mossy log.

Mamy shares apple slices from her pocket, and Pip munches one from Natalia's hand. Crunch, crunch!

Natalia does not like sitting still for long. So she makes up a song instead.

"Clip-clop, little hooves, clip-clop, off we go, home to Mother Unicorn, nice and slow!"

Leta and Alexei join in. Mamy hums along. Pip's ears perk up. He stands and gives a happy shake.

"Clip-clop!" sings everyone, and off they go again.







A Surprise in the Mist

At last, they hear a big splashing sound. In front of them, a little waterfall sparkles and shimmers. Silver mist floats over the water.

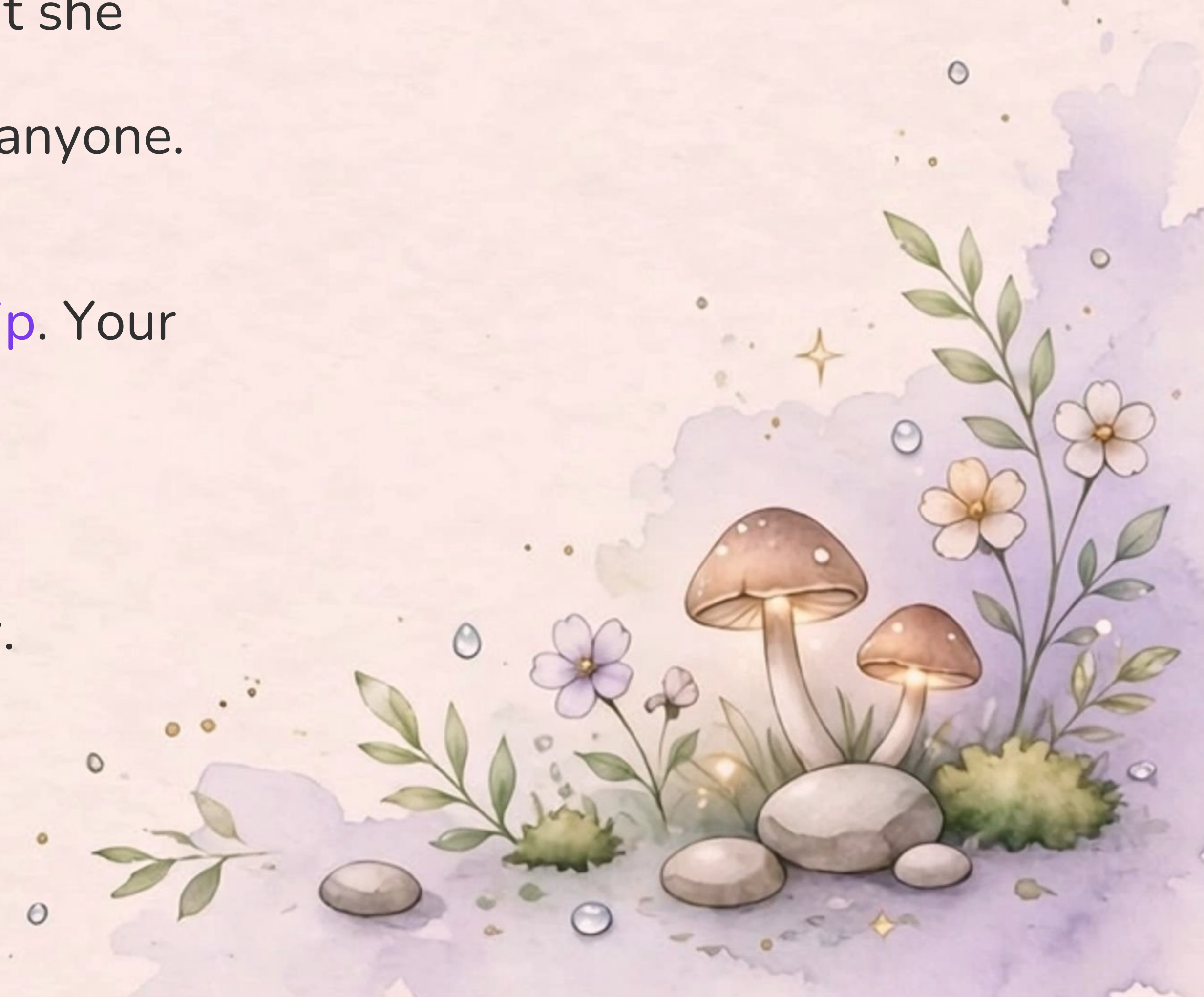
Then something moves in the mist. A tall shape. A long, twisty horn, shining like a pearl...

It is a grown-up unicorn with a flowing silver mane!

Natalia wants to shout, “Here he is! HERE HE IS!” But she presses her lips together. She does not want to startle anyone.

Instead, she kneels beside **Pip** and whispers, “Go on, **Pip**. Your mother has come.”

Pip lifts his head. He gives a loud, happy whinny.







Home at Last

Pip gallops through the shallow water, splish, splash, straight to his mother. Mother and baby touch noses, and Pip snuggles into her silver mane.

Then the Mother Unicorn turns to Natalia and bows her head, slowly and gracefully. It is her way of saying thank you.

Her pearly horn gently touches the star on Natalia's wand.

Sparkle! Stardust twinkles all around.

"Natalia!" cries Mamy. Mamy, Alexei and Leta wrap her in a big, warm hug.

"You looked after Pip so well," says Leta.

"You were a gentle leader," says Alexei proudly.

Natalia hugs them back tightly. Her heart feels as bright as the waterfall.







Follow Me, Gently

The sun begins to set. **Pip** and his mother swish their sparkly tails goodbye.

“Follow me, everyone!” says **Natalia**, leading the way home. Then she smiles and adds, “Gently.”

That night, **Natalia** draws a picture of **Pip** and his mother by the waterfall. She hangs it above her bed. And in her dreams, she hears a soft, happy whinny.



