



RACHAEL MORALES



grow curious

A two-minute letter to the curious and weary.



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Leo lunged wildly toward the villains as Julia reached for the unicorn's nose. The animal flinched. Nostrils flared. Distress rolled down its shoulders and back. Ha, and Leo said she had a gift. Right.

Her gift was baking, and she would give anything for a snickerdoodle right now. Even an oatmeal raisin. But she wasn't Julia the baker at the moment. She was Julia the clumsy, creature-loving 12-year-old desperate to rescue a beautiful unicorn from a life of captivity. No bribes, no treats. No heroic cinnamon rolls. Just Julia.

"Comon, girl," Julia whispered to the animal. She whistled in rhythm with the surf, following Grandma Edith's favorite tune. The unicorn raised a tentative hoof. "That's right," said Julia soothingly. "This way. Let's get you back to those mountains."

Leo whispered urgently from the side of his lips, but Julia shook her head again. It was the cookies. The muffins. The perfectly buttery scones. Creatures couldn't resist pastries, and she happened to be an excellent baker.

Leo's eyes darted back to the villains. Grandma Edith's scarf had become a lasso, and the man dragged it across the sand in a second attempt to rope the unicorn. "Julia," said Leo again. "Think about it. How do you explain Felice? The griffins? Even the sprites love you."

It was true. The sprites provoked everyone but Julia. But could she really do this? Tame a wild unicorn without anything shiny or sweet? With just... With just herself? Julia clenched her fist and slid one foot forward.

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Chapter 1 Regroup

"There's no other way," said Julia, patting the puppy's flour-dusted fur. She would find Leo, apologize to him for embarrassing him in front of the magical creatures and, what, just hope he agreed to join her on a footrace to the coast? No big deal. She pictured Leo again, water and oats dripping down his hair and shoulders. A snigger escaped her nose, and she clapped her hand over her face to regroup and recollect her senses. This wasn't going to be easy -- but at least she had Felice for support. Who could say no to a sweet, darling pup?

Chapter 2 Fresh

"JULIA." Leo panted heavily enough to dull the rage in his voice. "All you have is an ungroomed dog, two scarves, and a giant cookie?"

"A fresh, *chocolate chip* cookie. And you forgot my winning, can-do attitude," Julia said, stumbling as Felice happily crossed in front of her. They ran on, approaching the beach. Julia wanted to defend herself further, but... better not to tell Leo he was right. "Trust me, it's going to work. They're not getting away with that unicorn."

Chapter 3 Anticipate

At least Leo still had Grandma Edith's ridiculous pink-- "Drat!" Julia's heart sank as the unicorn nabber snatched the scarf. Leo fell onto the sand beside Julia, his hands empty. Nearby, the unicorn filly pranced in the gentle surf while ignoring every yap from Felice. If Julia could get just one crumb of the cookie back from the villain, one tiny bite to coax the unicorn... Julia gasped as the thief ground the cookie beneath her sandals. Leo threw an unfair glare toward her. But really? How could she have anticipated losing all their tools within the first minute?