

# UPSIDE★DOWN MAGIC

WEATHER OR NOT

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# 1

*P*op. Pop. Boom!  
Totally by accident, Nory Horace turned into a squid-puppy.

In other words, a squippy. When it happened, she dropped her backpack. And her lunch bag. In her squippy form, she couldn't hold on to them. *Zamboozle!* she thought. *Bad timing.*

Before fluxing into the squippy, Nory had been waiting outside her classroom at Dunwiddle Magic School.

Waiting.

And stressing.

Alone in the hallway.

The other students had all gone home or to after-school programs. Nory was still here because she was waiting for her parent-teacher conference.

Nory's teacher was Ms. Starr, and Nory's parent-person was Aunt Margo.

Aunt Margo was late.

Ms. Starr was late, too. At the end of the school day, Nory had watched her shrug into a bright yellow cardigan and pin one of her braids back into her bun before saying that she was running down to the store for some chocolate.

Ms. Starr ate chocolate? Nory had never imagined teachers eating chocolate. She always pictured them eating vegetables.

Nory's father ate lots of vegetables and he was a teacher. In fact, he was the headmaster of a fancy private magic school called Sage Academy. Nory's

older brother and sister went to Sage . . . but Nory didn't. She had flunked the entrance exam.

It had been a terrible day. During the Big Test, Nory's magic went wonky. She had fluxed into several mixed-up animals. Also, she had totally forgotten to hold on to her human mind, the way she was supposed to when she changed into animal form. She might have bitten someone.

Okay, she *had* bitten someone.

It was too awful to remember.

After she flunked the Big Test, Father sent Nory to live with Aunt Margo in the town of Dunwiddle. Here, Nory could go to an Upside-Down Magic class and learn to work her unusual magic.

At Dunwiddle Magic School, Nory worked hard. She studied magic, math, science, literature, and social studies. She grew to love Ms. Starr. She was even starting to love having upside-down magic.

But in Ms. Starr's Upside-Down Magic class, it was difficult to know if she was doing things *right*.

Ms. Starr taught headstands, hula-hooping, and poetry recital. The students learned to calm their minds and express their creative spirits. They even painted with their feet.

How was Nory supposed to know if she was doing good work?

What *was* good foot painting, anyway?

Nory could be failing and not even know it.

She checked the clock on the wall. It was 3:06. The parent-teacher conference was supposed to have started at 3:00.

Now it was 3:07.

AHHHH!

Where were Aunt Margo and Ms. Starr? It was very stressful!

That's why Nory Horace turned into a squippy. *Pop. Pop. Boom!* Squippy-Nory had a golden retriever head and golden retriever front legs, with squid tentacles at the back.

*Oh, drat-doodles,* she thought. *Not now!*

Typical Fluxers turned themselves into typical animals, like kittens. When they got stronger, they learned to transform into dogs, goats, gerbils, and hamsters. But since Nory was an Upside-Down Fluxer, she fluxed into mixed-up animals. She was learning to control her magic and was getting pretty good at holding the shape of just plain kitten. But when she started off as something un-kitten? Like a puppy? She had a *very* hard time holding on to her human mind.

Squippy-Nory looked at the empty hallway.

*Run! Play!* thought Squippy-Nory.

*No!* Girl-Nory told herself. *Sit down. Flux back to human form! Parent-teacher conference is about to start!*

*Yum yum yum, smell all the yummy smells!* thought Squippy-Nory.

Her dog paws skittered down the hall, dragging her squid tentacles behind her.

*What's in that locker?* wondered Squippy-Nory. *Stinky, sweaty gym shoe smell—mine, mine, mine!*

Squippy-Nory nosed the locker's metal slats. She got it open.

Books, papers, and pencils spilled out. Stinky sneakers spilled out!

*Yip-yip-yooray!*

*Nom nom, slobber slobber.*

Squippy-Nory took a sneaker in her mouth and hurtled farther down the hall.

*Ooooh, paper bag! Lying there with nobody around!  
Smells like tuna sandwich.*

Flinging aside the shoe, Squippy-Nory attacked the bag. It ripped open—*zwoop!*

*Where was the tuna?* All she could find was an empty bit of plastic wrap. Squippy-Nory grabbed the paper bag with strong puppy teeth.

*R-r-ruff! Tear, rip, shred!*

“Nory?” A voice spoke from above.

Squippy-Nory froze.

Surprise! Embarrassment! Stress about the conference!

Nory couldn't help it. She did what squids do when they get nervous.

She squirted ink. On the floor.

Aunt Margo was standing with her hands on her hips. She wore sneakers, jeans, and a puffy coat. Her pale cheeks were pink from the cold November air, and her short hair was covered by a knitted cap.

"Nory, I know that's you," she said. "Can you flux back now, please?"

*Sloop-slither-pop!* Nory was human again, sitting on her bottom in the hall. A quick body scan told her that, yep, she was back to her full girl-self: smallish in size, brown skin, big hair, rainbow sweater, and three plastic rings she'd gotten from a vending machine at the corner store. Her pants were dry, thank goodness. But next to her was a medium-sized puddle of ink.

Nory scrambled to her feet. "I might have fluxed into a squippy."

“Yes, I saw,” said Aunt Margo. She surveyed the mess. There was a smile at the corner of her mouth. “So did you piddle on the hall . . . or squiddle?”

Nory winced. “It’s squid ink.”

Aunt Margo laughed. She strode to the bathroom and returned with paper towels. She mopped up the squiddle, threw the lunch bag in the trash, and put the shoes and school supplies back in the locker. Then she squirted hand sanitizer on her hands.

“Ready for the conference?” Aunt Margo asked as they walked to Ms. Starr’s room.

Nory wasn’t ready at all—but she squared her shoulders and nodded.