

The Unicorn in the Garden

By James Thurber

The Unicorn in the Garden:

A twentieth century short story that follows a modern and distorted American couple, and combines issues of mental stability with the existence of justice in this

In contrast to Traditional fables that features talking animals, "The Unicorn in the Garden" is set in modern times and features a unicorn that remains silent throughout the narrative.

The narrative is structured into three segments, concluding with a moral lesson. The initial section centres on the husband's demeanour after witnessing the unicorn's appearance, as well as his wife's response to his account of the miraculous sighting, which he recounts to her twice;

In the second part of the story, the focus shifts to the wife's actions after she decides to have her husband committed to a mental health facility for his belief in the unicorn's existence. This section also explores the reactions of the police and the psychiatrist involved in the situation;

The third and final section of the story depicts the husband's retaliatory actions, as he manages to evade his wife's trap. Ironically, the sentence that encapsulates this section is "The unicorn is a mythical beast." The fable concludes with a moral lesson, warning against overconfidence and prophesying success in any human endeavour.

The wife's character is effectively conveyed through her words and actions, portraying her as an unsympathetic figure to the reader. For instance, she opens one eye unfriendly, insults her husband by calling him a "booby," and wastes no time in contacting the police and psychiatrist as soon as he leaves home. Additionally, the author highlights a "gloat in her eyes," further emphasizing her unkind and vindictive nature.

In contrast, the author portrays the husband in a sympathetic light, which endears him to the reader. Despite his wife's rebuke, he reports his vision of the unicorn to her twice, demonstrating his determination and willingness to share his experiences with his spouse. He also displays a friendly and gentle demeanor towards the unicorn, highlighting his kindness and compassion towards all living creatures. As his wife schemes against him, he sleeps soundly among the tulips, emphasizing his peace-loving nature. Finally, he cleverly

employs his wife's words against her, displaying intelligence and resourcefulness in the face of adversity.

The author employs a narrative strategy in "The Unicorn in the Garden" to make the readers accept the reality of the unicorn. The use of the unicorn in the title immediately captures the reader's attention and sets the tone for a fantastical story. The opening of the story with the familiar phrase "once upon a time" further prepares the reader for a fictional narrative, and the concluding moral confirms that the story is, in fact, a fable. Through these techniques, the author compels the reader to hold their disbelief from the outset, making the appearance of the unicorn seem plausible within the context of the story. This ultimately adds to the story's charm and enjoyment for the reader.

This short story may require multiple readings due to its complex nature. James Thurber's focus is not solely on the skewed dynamic of contemporary couple, but also on the challenges of maintaining one's sanity, grappling with the issues justice in our world.