

Boo Boo Ponies

By Dana Ailer

My friend, Michelle, is a parenting genius. She introduced me to the Boo Boo Ponies. Michelle, a nurse, quickly caught on that she would have to be creative to take care of the scrapes and bumps of her twin girls, Sadie and Lindsay. Each girl had her own set of neurosis about medical care. Since she was a baby, Lindsay couldn't even stand to have her toenails cut. She would run screaming from the room and hide in a closet every time the clippers came out. Sadie didn't mind the clippers so much, but pulling out a splinter could cause her to hyperventilate. So when immediate medical attention was called for (only if there was blood or a burn), Michelle muscled through it – pinning a small daughter down if necessary. But for toenail trimmings and the occasional splinter, Michelle called in the Boo Boo Ponies.

The Boo Boo Ponies are mythical creatures who spirit into the rooms of sleeping children and see to various boo boos. When, for example, Sadie got a splinter in the bottom of her foot, Michelle called the Ponies as Sadie ran screaming through the house. She spoke on her cell phone in hushed tones which Sadie couldn't hear over her own yowling, so she had to stand perfectly still and quiet so she could eavesdrop more effectively. Michelle gave Sadie's first and last name and address, then nodded solemnly while she (presumably) received instructions from the Ponies. My own daughter, Finn, observed all this with awe and eyed me with contempt for my apparent ignorance of the Ponies.

Knowing that the Ponies were scheduled to arrive worked as a wonderfully effective tool in getting all 3 girls in bed at a reasonable hour. It was not unlike the effect of Santa Clause's pending arrival. Once they were tucked away, Michelle and I were free to drink wine and gossip on the patio. (Did I mention she's a genius?)

The work came though before we went to bed. Michelle snuck into the girls' room and crawled under Sadie's covers from the bottom of the bed. Inside, with a flashlight in her mouth, Michelle dug out the splinter, applied Neosporin, and finished it off with a glittery band aid. She explained to me that the real key to selling the Boo Boo Ponies idea is that they only use band aids which the kids haven't seen before. She kept the secret glittery band aids on the top shelf of her bathroom closet. After the procedure, she crawled out of Sadie's bed, sweaty and triumphant, and the 3 girls were none the wiser.

Finn of course insisted that I get the Boo Boo Ponies' number from Michelle for our own use. Finn is an unbelievably light sleeper, so it took some maneuvering, but the Ponies did visit our house several times. That was years ago. So I was surprised last week when Finn showed me a tiny scratch near her elbow and insisted that I call the Ponies. I could barely see the scratch – it was one of those little scabs that looks like a mole – but, swept up in nostalgia, I agreed to call and schedule a visit.

My biggest fear as a single parent in planning any of these nighttime visits, from the Boo Boo Ponies or the Tooth Fairy or the Easter Bunny, is that I will fall asleep and forget to take care of the business at hand. There isn't anyone else in the house to remind me or to

fill in, in the event of an emergency. And as a matter of fact, that night I did forget and went to bed without bandaging Finn's tiny wound. I woke with a start in the middle of the night, finally remembering. Groggily I crept into Finn's room. Her scratch was hard to see in broad daylight, so in the dim glow of her nightlight, it was invisible. I knew pretty much where it was though, so I affixed the band aid, congratulated myself on the success, and stumbled back to my own bed.

The next morning, Finn called out from her bed, "*Mom!* The Ponies came!" I smiled smugly, remembering how I pulled it off. Then Finn continued, "But they put the bandaid on the *wrong arm!*" I bobbed and weaved. I told her that I told the Ponies which arm and I must have made a mistake. Finn wasn't sure who was more incompetent – me or the Ponies. She complained to her stuffed animals, "You'd think they'd *know*. I mean, they're *magic*."

The next night, Finn had a sleepover planned with my mom. As I was leaving her there, she suddenly pulled on my arm, wide-eyed, "Mom, I can't stay here! The Boo Boo Ponies won't know where I am!" I smoothly improvised, "I told them where you would be."

Finn grilled me, "You gave them the address? Did you give them directions too? We're in the woods out here; they might not be able to see the house from the sky."

I reassured her over and over; then called my mom from the driveway to give her instructions. She performed the required duties without incident, except for one tiny detail. Mom *also* put the bandaid on the wrong arm. The next day, Finn openly questioned the professionalism of the Ponies until she ran through the woods and got a long, jagged cut from a briar. The cut happened to be in pretty much the same place my mom and I had both put Pony bandaids. Finn took this to be a sign that the Boo Boo Ponies, rather than making a mistake, were actually trying to warn her of her impending injury.

And just like that, a close call in having the Boo Boo Ponies (and, consequently, all types of magical visitors) exposed as frauds quickly switched to a stronger confirmation of their "magic" than I ever could have managed intentionally. I relayed this story to Michelle, but she was non-plused. "Of course it all worked out; the Ponies are *magic*."