

Charlie Horse

Story By: Andrew Frinkle

Yaneth was having a great dream. She was chasing a giant pink marshmallow with a large fork. It was alive, so it was giggling and running away. Every few steps she got close enough to get a mouthful of it on her fork. It tasted like cotton candy. It was such a great dream, at least until it ended abruptly...

Yaneth sat upright, joggled out of her dream. She looked around and saw it was still dark, but her leg ached horribly. She twisted and grabbed at her leg, which felt like someone had grabbed it in a vise. What was going on?

Her toes felt like someone was forcing them to cross each other and her calf ached terribly. It was agonizing, and she didn't know what to do. She tried to hold her foot with both hands and pull them the opposite way they kept going. It wasn't working. She whimpered and bit her lip. It hurt so badly!

She rolled over, falling onto the rug beside her bed. It was hard, but she tried to get up to walk. When she put weight on it, it helped, but the muscles were still tight. She stood on her tiptoes and the muscles were forced to relax. She stood there for a moment, but when she relaxed, it came back!

She grabbed for the bedpost and remained on her tiptoes for a count of twenty. Then, she relaxed and let her feet go flat. The cramp was gone. That was bad! She'd never had such a horrible cramp, so bad it woke her out of a deep sleep and a great dream.

Warily, she crawled back into bed and got under the covers, worried the cramp would come back if she relaxed her foot and calf muscles too much. After a few minutes, it did not, so she slid back into an uneasy slumber. This time, she was being chased by the marshmallow in her dream. It was a cruel turn of fate that her campfire food had turned into her enemy.

In the morning, she asked her mother about the cramp in her foot. Mom just smiled and gave her a banana. "Eat more potassium." She suggested. Supposedly, a lot of people got them now and then, or didn't if they were lucky.

She'd had her first "Charlie Horse," but Yaneth hoped it would be her last, even if she had to eat a banana every day for the rest of her life!



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Use the information in the story to answer the questions below.

1. What is Yaneth doing in her dream?
 - A. chasing a cotton candy man
 - B. eating a brownie
 - C. throwing a pie
 - D. trying to eat a marshmallow that's running away
2. What wakes Yaneth up?
 - A. a sudden pain in her chest
 - B. a cramp in her foot and leg
 - C. a scream
 - D. a loud noise outside
3. How does Yaneth get rid of the pain?
 - A. She takes medicine.
 - B. She drinks warm milk.
 - C. She does exercises.
 - D. She stands on her tiptoes.
4. What does mom prescribe for Yaneth's cramps?
 - A. adult daily vitamins
 - B. exercise
 - C. bananas
 - D. a hot bath
5. What is the nickname given for the leg cramp Yaneth had?
 - A. dead leg
 - B. Charlie Horse
 - C. toe jam
 - D. monster leg

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