

Patchwork Pony

{Scootalone}

So, like, this new pony friend was all scary, I mean really scary, but I wasn't scared. He seemed nice enough, if I didn't look directly at his smile. It was all pointy like Spike's teeth, and the smell of blood kept making my flight response twitch. It was really hard to keep my wings down as we trotted along toward the CMC command center. But I knew I had to fight it, just like Rainbow Dash would. Rainbow Dash wasn't afraid of anything! She beat up mean old Nightmare Moon, and then she hoof wrestled Discord until he gave up and let them turn him to stone again. Then there was the time she scared off that dragon breathing smoke by bucking him right in the snout and making him cry like a little filly...

"Scootaloo!"

"Huh, wha?" I snapped out of my little daydream to find my friend, Applebloom, staring at me. We were at the command center, and Sweetie Belle was leading the new pony up the ramp.

"Ah was sayin we should split up an git some supplies. We gonna need some soap an rags. Sweetie is gonna try ta git some clothes fer him ta wear, and Imma try ta git some food from mah sister."

"Uhh, okay. My dad might have some stuff that will work. Lotsa old rags and brushes at my place. I think I still have the first aid kit Rainbow dash gave me after I fell outta the tree last month. That neck wound looks pretty bad." I did my best to grin, and not look like I was daydreaming about my hero again. I can't help it though, Rainbow Dash is just so cool!

She just gave me this weird look, like she knew something was up, as I put on my best innocent smile. "Well, okay then. Meet back here inna hour."

I waved and scooted off as fast as my wings could carry me. Somehow I had missed the part where we agreed to let him stay at the club- err, command center. It was kinda coming back to me, but then I forgot it all again when I came up to my house. I was always proud of our home. My dad had built it himself for my mom when they got married and moved to Ponyville, and it made me feel safe. There was a little garden of flowers out front, which I needed to weed again, and the fence needed a coat of paint, but it was home.

Bouncing through the front door, I froze, then remembered to wipe my hooves before dad could yell at me. I stashed my helmet and scooter near the door and ran through the house. "Mooom, Daaad! I'm home!" I ran into the kitchen, and they were waiting for me as always. I kissed my hoof and touched each of the frames tenderly. Their smiling faces beamed back at me proudly as I bustled about looking for supplies. Mom had went away when I was born, and dad had raised me until the day he left to look for her. He said he was going away to be with mom, and I just know that when he finds her, he will bring her home so we can be a family again. Until then, their portraits keep me company, and our family is happy.

Bucket in hoof, I collected my dad's old toothbrush, soap, and some coat brushes. I was glad Applebloom was handling food, as my odd jobs hadn't brought in much lately. It was nice of the

Cakes to give me all the day old bread I could eat, and the few bits they started giving me after I walked in on their little private party really helped out around the house. Not that I would ever tell anypony what I saw, even if I knew what I saw... I never knew a pegasus could bend that way, or that some unicorns really do have five legs. Mr. Cake sure did look funny wearing that hood though. Yeah, some ponies are weird.

Finally I was ready to leave, and I collected mom and dad from the table, bringing them to the bedroom. "Mom, Dad, I'm gonna be staying with Applebloom and Sweetie tonight, k? So don't stay up for me, and I promise I'll stay safe!" I kissed them both, and tucked them into bed, as they beamed lovingly back at me. Before I left, I was sure to leave the night light on, so they wouldn't get scared at night. Whistling a little tune I had heard Sweetie singing, I grabbed my helmet and scooter, then bustled out the door, bucket in my mouth. The day was bright, and the breeze felt awesome on my wings as I scooted back to my friends.

Making it back in record time, despite a minor tree sap incident, I powerslided my scooter into it's normal home like a boss. Up the ramp I ran and into the room to find our guest staring at the art on the walls solemnly. The smell of blood once again hit me like a wave, and I stifled my urge to run as he turned and smiled at me. I saw death in that smile, full of blood and pointiness, and I nearly wilted before he remembered to close his mouth.

From outside I could hear Sweetie and Applebloom arriving, and slowly made my exit as the monster pony followed me out. I still hadn't said a word with the bucket in my mouth, and it was the perfect excuse for my being too scared to talk. Outside, Applebloom was just pouring a last bucket of water into a large tub, and Sweetie was neatly laying out some food that had been gathered on a nearby table. I dropped the bucket and ran over to see what was for lunch, but was stopped by an angry yell from my yellow friend.

"Scootaloo! That food is for Patches, so don't go being all greedy an eatin it. Now help us git him all clean first." Rolling my eyes, I slunk back to the tub, where the silent pony was stepping into the water. "Okay Scoots, y'all kin git his top an me an Sweetie kin wash the bottom half."

I complained by way of groaning. I was always given the 'Up high' jobs, because I was a pegasus, but it was just another reminder that I couldn't fly yet. At least I could flutter, and I grabbed a brush to do just that. One of his eyes rolled back to watch me, and I almost dropped the brush when I saw it was the same color as mine. I coulda swore that eye had been green earlier...

"Uhh, just gonna scrub yer back and ma-, err, head a bit, Mister. We'll get you all cleaned up in no time!" I spat the brush out and started to work. He just nodded silently and did his best statue impersonation as he looked ahead. Having that gaze turned away helped, and I quickly got to work. I had the easy task, as he was mostly clean on his top half, since most of the blood was on his hooves. I quickly had him brushed down and went to work on his weird horn. It was silver metal, and looked to be bolted onto his skull. A small plate and four rounded rivets held it in place. That musta hurt! After a bit of polishing, it shined brightly in the sun and looked wickedly sharp. Tapping it with a hoof made it ring like a silver bell, and got me a strange look from it's owner, to which I grinned sheepishly.

Hopping down I saw Sweetie trying to clean the blood off his neck, while Applebloom attacked the hooves. "Oh buck me! I forgot the first aid kit!"

"Scootaloo, watch your mouth!" Sweetie belle glared at me, looking rather surreal floating a bloodied rag with her magic.

"Aww don't tell me how to talk, you dictionary!" I retorted hotly. I hate when ponies tell me what to do.

"Don't call me a dictionary, you chicken!" oooh, hot words!

"No pony calls me CHICKEN!" I flexed my wings, getting ready for a scrap. This little screwhead was cruisin' for a bruise'!

"GIRLS! What in tarnation is wrong with you two?" We both stopped to see Applebloom, face and hooves splattered with blood, looking like a freshly risen corpse as she glared at us. We're all supposed to be friends, and work together. This here pony needs our help, and you two are actin' like foals."

"Yea! Besides, his neck looks all healed anyway. We don't need the first aid kit, I think." Sweetie washed away the last of the blood from the neck, revealing a nasty scar and a strange lump, but no wound. I just let all the anger flow out of me in a sigh. It was hard to stay angry at Sweetie Belle, the way she acted all cute and stuff, but I hated when she acted all like an egghead. And I REALLY hated when any pony called me a chicken!

Applebloom sighed and rolled her eyes, then used another rag to wipe the bloody mess from her face. "Yech! You weren't kiddin, it tastes terrible!" She made a sour face, the same one I made the first time I busted my nose and tasted blood. You had to take risks though, if you ever wanted to be a daredevil like Rainbow Dash! "Hey Scoots, kin ya take a lookit his wings? Yer the only one that knows anythin' 'bout pegasus wings, and his look is pretty bad shape."

I sighed, yet another reminder that I was still a failure as a pegasus. I mean, c'mon, even the Cake's little brat could fly already! Instead of arguing, I just fluttered up to Patches' back and started poking at the wings. They really were a mess. I tried to flex them, and they moved fine, although he didn't try to move them himself. "They don't hurt any, do they mister?" All I got was a slow shake of his head.

Shrugging I went back to work, trying to remember the brief class on pegasus hygiene I was forced to take in school, and the lesson that Rainbow Dash had given me on wing care. I smoothed the primaries, checking for breaks, pulling out a few loose feathers. The secondaries were pretty ruffled, but mostly intact, and some brushing got them all in line. Stretching out one wing to check for any other damage, I heard a loud pop, like rocks hitting together, and suddenly the wing shot straight out. Deprived of my hoofhold, I fell immediately onto my face beside the tub with a wet squelch, as the forming mud softened my fall. Barely. "Ow."

Getting up, I saw the wing arched over me, as Patches looked back curiously as if the appendage had just appeared there. He was slowly flexing it, and giving it a flap, and I realised

that he hadn't moved it once since we found him. The wing must have been dislocated in whatever fight he was in. The other wing still lay limply along his other side, and I hopped to my hooves to get to work on it. Quickly I had the other wing working just as well, minus the faceplant, and he was slowly flexing them with ease.

"Ooh! Them some pretty wings, mister!" Applebloom drawled. I couldn't help but notice, one was blue, and the other a bright yellow, looking for all of equestria as if he was part Fluttershy, and part Rainbow Dash. "You did a right good job there Scootaloo!"

I beamed with pride, I was a real pegasus, after all! Then I cringed as the pony grinned back at me. Yea, the teeth. "Ok, next step is we clean those teeth!"

I pulled my dad's old toothbrush out of the bucket, and hoofed the toothpaste from the tube. I paused a moment as I realized holding the brush in my mouth meant getting my face a lot closer to his mouth than I was comfortable with. I heard a giggle and felt my mouth tingle as a greenish glow tugged the brush from my mouth. I spotted Sweetie grinning at me as she went to work on our new friend's grin. He made a face at the taste of the toothpaste, but then smiled wide to let her work, opening his jaw entirely too wide for a normal pony as she worked. Soon enough, his teeth were sparkling white and far less scary. In fact, I saw that only a few of his front teeth were pointy, and I didn't notice unless I looked hard. Lack of blood was a big improvement!

After we all splashed in the water to rinse off, and Patches gave a mighty shake like a dog to dislodge the water, we all looked like a bunch of drowned rats, but grinned all the same. If our families could see us they would chew us out for hours.

"FOOD TIME!" I whooped and made a beeline for the table. My friends were cheering right behind me and we gathered around the feast. Applebloom had outdone herself! There were apples, of course, bread, a stack of sandwiches, a whole apple pie, a jug of apple juice (bah, still no cider), and even a jar of Zapapple jam! "Wow AB, you really got a great haul. How did you get your sister to let you take all this?"

"Ah didn't." She responded matter-of-factly, then grinned. "Ah jus asked Granny Smith, an told her we was havin a picnic! I could barely haul all this stuff she piled on me. She kept sayin we was growin' young fillies an needed our nourish-mant."

I nodded as I was shoving some jam covered bread in my mouth. It was amazing! "Wemind meh ta' tank yuh."

Sweetie Belle gave me a disgusted look and took dainty bites of her sandwich, imitating her sister, Rarity. "You're not supposed to talk with your mouth full." I laughed, and shoved a slice of pie in her mouth. She started to look angry, then grinned as the taste of the pie sank in, and next we were all going face first into the food. I stopped long enough to notice that Patches hadn't started eating yet, and was staring at the food strangely. I couldn't understand at first, until I recognized the look on his face as the same Sweetie used to get when she first learned to use her horn.

"Uhh, mister, I dunno if you can do magic with that metal horn of yours. Just dig in and enjoy the food." he shrugged and rolled his eyes. His green and blue eyes. What the hay? Wasn't the

green one maroon earlier? I shook my head as he sank his face into the basket of apples, gobbling them down with gusto. I smiled and returned to my own food, and soon the sound of chomping and nomming was all you could hear.

Soon enough the feast was gone and we all sat around grinning like idiots with full bellies. For once, the ragged smile of our new friend wasn't putting my mane on edge, and we were all totally relaxed. It was of course Sweetie Belle that ruined the quiet moment.

"So Patches, where are you from anyway? And what happened to you?" In response she only received a shrug and a sad look. Whatever had been done to him must have messed him up bad.

"Well, y'all can stay here fer now, till we figger out what to do. There's room in the clubhouse, and we kin bring ya more food tomorrow." Applebloom showed the typical Apple family hospitality. It was probably the best idea, since Rarity would freak, and I couldn't very well bring him home to MY parents.

"Yea, I think Imma stay here and keep him company, so he won't get lonely. I already told my parents I was gonna be sleeping over with you guys, so they won't mind." Applebloom gave me that weird look again, like she wanted to tell me something, but just shook her head and changed her mind.

"Yea, Scootaloo, me an Sweetie should prolly both be gettin' home before our sisters come lookin fer us. Just drop by mah house iffin ya need anythin'." She shot another strange glance at our new friend, who seemed busy staring at a spoon on the table, tongue stuck out of the corner of his mouth as he concentrated.

Sweetie bell interrupted him with a hug, "Aww, poor Patches. Did you used to be a unicorn?" The strange pony just shrugged in response. "It must be horrible to not be able to use your horn! I only just started being able to use mine well, and I hated it. It took forever to learn to use it properly." Gasping, she smiled, "I know! Maybe you just need to learn how to use it again. I can bring some of my learning books for you to read!"

"Umm, Sweetie Belle? I'm not even sure that's a real horn he has. It looks like someone bolted on a fake one, just like they stitched on his wings. For all we know he may be an earth pony." I tried my best not to get her hopes up.

She glared at me and stomped her hooves on the table. She was so cute when she got angry. "Nonsense! If he has a horn, then we can teach him to use it! And I bet you can teach him to fly with his wings too!"

"Sweetie Belle!" Applebloom shouted to stop her friend, but the damage had been done. Yet another reminder that I could not fly myself.

"Yea, whatever..." I muttered, and stalked off to the command center. I got enough teasing from the other kids at school, and I didn't need to hear it from my friends, even if she didn't mean it.

For a smart egghead, that unicorn could be so clueless at times.

I made it as far as the door before she got a clue and tried apologising, but it was too late, I wasn't listening. I glared back at my useless wings, so small against my body. The docs had said since I was half earth pony, I might be a late bloomer and not grow into my wings till later, but that was a load of horsefeathers. Pound Cake wasn't even a year old, and BOTH of his parents are earth ponies. I think. For a big mare, Mrs. Cake looked kinda sexy in those fishnets. OK! Not the time for that kinda image, bad brain, bad! Moving on...

The others joined me inside, looking pathetic, while Patches just looked confused. I guess he wouldn't understand. Or maybe he would, since he couldn't use his horn either. Sweetie offered to brush my mane for me, but I declined. I don't need any prissy mane-cut! I compromised by letting her brush my tail instead. She is just as sweet as her name, and it's hard to stay mad at her. We all sat around giggling as we took turns brushing each other into presentability. I managed to get most of the knots out of Patches' tail, while Sweetie lamented his lack of a proper mane. He did show signs of stubble, so hopefully it would grow back in time.

By the end, we were all laughing and joking, except Patches, who smiled and was silent of course. A good mane-brushing always did wonders for a pony's mood, or at least that's what Miss Fluttershy always said. Not that she had any moods other than happy or frightened. I swear, for a grown mare she sure acted like a little foal. I once saw her hiding in a bush from her own shadow! Oh, but I'm getting sidetracked again.

After the other girls had their manes all pretty, and I had beaten my own into its normal cool style, they declared that it was time to head home before it was dark. That left me alone with Patches, who was looking at the posters and stuff we had around the room. Not sure how to break the ice, I started to feel a bit nervous around the strange pony. I was suddenly quite aware of how big he was, nearly as large as Applebloom's brother, Big Macintosh. I was also suddenly aware that I had stopped noticing his strange appearance. The patchwork hide and wild colors had seemed out of place at first, but now I only saw a really big pony. A big, sad pony.

"Uhh, so. You from around here?" I resisted the urge to facehoof at so corny a line. Of course he wasn't from around here, or we would have known who he was. In response, he just shrugged. "Y-you got any friends? Ponies who would miss you?" Again, a shake of the head, and a shrug. He looked sad and distracted, and looked back at the drawing on the wall. "Oh, uhh, sorry. I guess you don't remember much do you. You musta got your head hit pretty hard or something. One time I flipped my scooter and bounced off two trees before I stopped. Couldn't think straight for a week, but Twilight used some spell and fixed me right up. Then she gave me a lecture on wearing a helmet." I sighed, remembering the day. She kinda made me think of what my mom would have sounded like scolding me, and I've worn a helmet ever since.

Suddenly inspiration hit. "Oh, I know! Maybe Twilight can use the spell to fix your memory! She's super smart and stuff, and can figure out most anything. I bet she can find out who you are in ten seconds flat!" I beamed at the idea, and got a happy nod in return from the large pony. He seemed to cheer up a bit, but still remained a silent sentinel, slowly moving around the room.

Finally he stopped in one corner, surrounded by my many trophies and tributes to my idol, Rainbow Dash. There was a feather I had gotten from when she competed in the Running

of the Leaves, pictures from her winning the Best Young Fliers Competition, and some drawings I had made myself. There was even a crude doll I had made, with a bit of hair I had secretly swiped from the one time she got a trim at the spa. I blushed a bit at the memory of that little adventure, and trotted over to see what he was looking at. It was the poster of Dash, flying with the rainbow behind her, taken the day she had performed the Sonic Rainboom.

"That's my favorite picture. I was there on the ground the day that Rainbow Dash did her Sonic Rainboom, because I couldn't get anypony to take me up to the Cloudiseum. I was right underneath where it went off, and the entire sky exploded in colors! I got knocked flat on my back, and it was the most amazing day of my life." I grinned, and bounced as I began to gush about my favorite subject. "Rainbow Dash is the fastest flier in Equestria, and one day she will be captain of the Wonderbolts, then I will be her wingmare!"

He smiled and looked down at me, then back at his own multicolored hide, and bright blue wing. Slowly he flapped it, then sat down to look at the rest of my display. I giggled and poked him in the side to get his attention. "Hey, your hide is as colorful as Rainbow Dash's mane is! I bet if you could fly as fast as her, you could make a Rainboom of your own." He chuckled, a deep rumbling sound, almost like a growl, but I could see the laughter in his eyes. Suddenly he reached out with a wing and pulled me close for a hug, nuzzling my mane. It felt so good, that I just smiled back. It was so warm and safe that I didn't want to move, and I just sat there smiling stupidly.

After a while, a thought passed my mind, and I felt a chill. "You don't remember your parents do you, Patches?" His smile faded, and he shook his head. He must have sensed my change in mood, because he just stared at me solemnly. "I don't know what I would do if I forgot my parents. M-my mom, she went away when I was born, and sometimes I forget my dad's voice, it's been so long since he left." My hooves flew to my mouth as I realized what I had just revealed. I looked up at him pleadingly, but his expression never changed. He doesn't know me, he doesn't know anypony, and he would never tell my secret. I've worked very hard to keep it a secret, even from my friends, and so far only two ponies know. Pinkie insists on knowing everypony in Ponyville, and she kept prying until she knew about my parents, but I made her Pinkie Promise never to tell anypony. Miss Cheerilee found out when I missed one too many parent conferences. She made me promise to stay in school, and keep my grades up, but never told anypony on me. She knows I'm smart for my age, but keeps an eye on me all the same. I wouldn't have made it without her help.

Now, suddenly I opened up to this total stranger, and I wanted to tell him everything. I needed to tell somepony, and it was eating me alive. So I did. He never judged me, never said a word (not that he could), he just sat there with that thoughtful look on his face as I told him my life story. I must have started crying at some point because it became hard to see, and he just held me under his wing as I cried myself out. The last thing I remember before drifting off was how warm and safe I felt under those feathers. And for the first time I could remember since my dad left, I didn't feel alone.