

Fallout: Equestria: Wasteland Shuffle

~Bebop

Prologue

THE FUN HAS BEEN DOUBLED!

Check the bottom of the final page for levels.

"Pretend for a moment, if you will, that the world as we know it is not what is essentially a ball of dust floating about in space... nor completely irradiated and filled with dopefiends, rapists, killer robots, and everything in-between," drawled an incessant old voice that was, for the record, just begging to be interrupted.

"No, pretend instead that the world as we know it is simply... an underground 'nest' of ponies happily calling 80,000 square feet of mollifying (and lethargy inspiring!) steel corridors their home(-s). Yeah." I nonchalantly spewed from my mouth. Yeah, that was an accurate description.

Now, sitting in the front of the classroom has its perks, such as not being able to tell if somepony's looking at you, but that didn't exactly dull the feeling of fifty or so ponies glaring pocket knives into me. Oh, well. The orange-cream and lilac hag stared at me with a look of near sanguine as she asked me to stand before the class in all of my idiot glory.

I am not a clever pony. Semi-intelligent, maybe. But not clever.

"Blue one, if you'd be so kind, why don't *you* give today's lecture on the outside world? Tell us all about what we should fear and why." She dragged out the word "all" so that it was almost painful in her hoity-toity accent, getting me to cringe as I faced the class.

Whispers followed; many referring to my coat colour and multi-coloured mane being out of place. I was the one weird colt in class that no matter how I tried, there was no way in hell I could blend in. So I didn't even try. I knew what was coming, and I knew I was going to give an extemporaneous speech on why this class was absolutely pointless here in about three seconds. Oh boy, was the class going to get an earful today.

...But before I give it to 'em, I feel I should first explain a bit. I'll be quick, but don't worry, I'll only be so brief just this once; ever since I was a foal, I've loved music. Jazz, to be specific. There's a single fast-paced old-time tune that plays once every now and again that got me my name. It's just so... *chaotic*. They call it bebop. Goes well, too- my coat's a deep-blue, a mane's black and neon green, and my tail's a "cozy" fire red, tipped with yellow, and covered in what everyone supposes is a spider web design. (The fuck's a spider, anyway?) Or maybe I'm just being stupid as usual and am using my single Luna damned braincell on being pretentious. Regardless, it made sneaky and

average-looking impossible concepts to even grasp. Not that I really cared.

It just feels like music, don't it? Yeah, that's what everyone says. After I got my cutie mark, they kinda just threw me into maintenance the minute I turned in my C.A.T. test. Figures. They really just give you the job that they think you'd be good at. There's nothin' really to it. **EVERYONE** has a job. That test is stupid. 'Nough said. Well now they've got me an' everypony else attending these ridiculous survival classes whenever you're not scheduled for sleep or eating or work or... yeah. And so we come to today: I wake up, meander to the shower stalls with all the other 06:00 F-shift ponies, wade through the muggy, humid air past the E-shifters going to bed, eat my... paste sandwich with a side of oatmeal paste and drink my (surprise, surprise!) paste-based orange juice. I don't even know what an orange is. (Am I drinking a colour?) Fix the heating talisman that's been goin' ta shit and off to class! Woo-hoo.

But enough of this parenthetical, hypothetical, whatever-thetical crap. Onto today's lesson in being, well, me.

"Fillies and gentlecolts, if I could have your attention." I gave a hearty pause, allowing them to pay heed to my words of wisdom... and let me compose the rest of my thoughts. "This class, as you may have gathered, is incredibly necessary to your health, because, as we all know, going outside is something we do every. Fucking. Day. And it is our duty to sit here and listen about things that not a single one of us has any clue about. Not even Ms. Breakback back there." A couple of colts in the back started to snicker, the rest seemed mildly entertained, my rare outburst taking a few by surprise, "Now come to think of it--"

I was cut off by the sound of the newly-dubbed Ms. Breakback throwing a ruler at the back of my head and nicking my ear-- good goddess, she had a good... jaw... for an old mare! "Sit back down now, before I have your rations removed for the rest of the week!" She said through gritted teeth.

Whereas this was not my first time having to do something because I spoke out in class, it *was* my first having to turn around and address them in an attempt to embarrass me. Mistake. A lot didn't know it, but I liked to read. I wasn't an egghead as some had claimed (before getting zapped with a miniature arc-welder, I might add) but I did enjoy reading about the honeyed words of adventurers in lands afar. And apparently vaporized. I'm not shy to talking to a crowd either. Something's definitely wrong with me... also a claim I can't say is not unfamiliar to my infamously tagged "omnipotent ears." I don't know why they think that, but whatever.

At this point, it was decidedly so that I was going to be seeing the overmare in her office again. Maybe I could settle this thing without having to beat her over the head with a Big Book of Arcane Sciences again. Figuratively, that is.

"Well, you've done it again," the red and yellow old mare looked at me with pleading eyes, "you've gone and

made yourself look like an idiot. Again. Why do I always have to do this to you? Always you? Just you?" Her face would've looked cute in all its sadness, had she been a generation younger. And, you know, not my mom. She sighed and looked at me with regret.

"She definitely had it coming. You know she had it coming. The whole *stable* knew she had it coming." I avoided her gaze and instead looked up toward the lights that filled the room with an effervescent glow. Grey ceiling, grey walls, grey floors. Yep, all systems nominal.

"That isn't the point. Miz choufleur was just doing her job, the same as you're doing yours." She shuffled some papers on her desk. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw that one of them had my name on it. Well, horseapples.

"You're not gonna do what I think you're gonna do, are you?" I looked around, seeing if I could read just the first bits of that paper... maybe it was one of the loose ones in the stack that I could actually see the first few words of every line... maybe.

"You're going to to work double shifts tonight, and tomorrow, and the next day. Actually, according to these papers, it'll be another two weeks," oh, Celestia scorch my testicals with sun fire. There's no way in hell I was gonna get any sleep tonight. "And no, talking with your father will not be of any benefit to you. Goddesses know what he's up to right now, so don't even think of bothering him. You remember what happened the last time you surprised him at work." Now it was just a glance in my direction and the obvious face of disapproval. Okay then. I can deal with it.

The second I trotted out the open door, I no longer felt the nicely air conditioned breeze of the overmare's office, but instead the annoyingly moist, hot air of the atrium and halls beyond. Great. My frustration must have been palpable. I hate it when this kind of fuckery is about the stable. Some days I can get away with it, and others... this shit happens.

Blind Iridescence walked up right beside me and nuzzled my flank. There's something more wrong with her than just about anypony else. She's one weird pink pony. *You're one weird blue pony*. She didn't even let me get to my room before she could break in and make me feel even more anxiety about future generations. I mean, *that* kind of name with *that* kind of personality. Really? Were her parents playing jokes on one another when she was born?

"Hey, there. What's the Beeebop up to?" She's using her seductive voice. Why is she using her seductive voice? What did she want? "Why are you looking at me like that? Did I do something to upset you? I know you told me to leave you alone, and that I'm 'a decade younger," she accented in a mocking voice, before whinnying out the rest of... whatever she had to say, "and that I have no business in your affairs and blah blah blah." She's going to be the death of me one day. I could almost be her father and she does... *this*... constantly. (Although, to be perfectly honest she was only three years younger than me.)

"If you've gotta know, I have a date with the 4 o' clock shift in less than two hours, and if you don't leave me

be so I can eat and attend to my other physical duties, I'll have you brought to security for being out after your curfew." I knew that what I said meant nothing: she was always out after curfew and nopony ever gave a crap. She was kinda just made everyone's day just by being there. Except maybe mine. Her morale-boosting tricks didn't exactly work on me. Perhaps it was her dusty pink coat. Or it is possible that I just wasn't interested in younger fillies.

To my delight, she almost looked hurt. "Oh. I'm sorry. I'll just, you know, leave." How she could go from a happy disposition to sorrowful mare blew my mind every time.

"Wait," well I figured maybe I could get something out of this, "what did you really want to say?" I said with my best "I'm sorry" smile. It must've looked painful.

"Well... could you maybe. Uhm. Talk to the overmare and uh... *askhertoletmechangejobs?*" Well that was surprising. And from out of absolutely nowhere. She loved her clergypony job. Didn't she?

"While I may be close to the overmare, it is highly unlikely that I can get her to do something like that. It's completely against protocol, and unfair to everyone else. If I could have another job, I'd take what my cutie mark shows. If *I* could, you'd have an actual psychiatrist in here," I tried my best to sound official and whatnot, but it just wasn't doing anything, "why do you want to change positions, anyway? Maybe the over*stallion* would be keener to seeing about your problem. What's more, is that I didn't think you wanted to get married. Or, at least that's the only reason *I* can think of someone not wanting that job. It's the only one in the stable you can refuse." (Albeit, the only alternative was working in rations.)

"There's no one right now that wants to uhm... marry *me*," the words sounded agonizing coming from her as she winced at her own articulation, "but I think I could get them to warm up to me." Now she *did* sound hurt.

After a pause, I replied, "So I was right. Well I don't think I can actually do that for you, considering I just got told off for stating that the G-shift teacher was useless. Who is it you had in mind, anyway?" I asked as I started walk down the corridor, lights passing overhead, humming of generators and running water to my side.

It was quiet for a while as she scrunched up her face in thought before saying matter-of-factly, "you n' the entire stable would've known before too long, I think," so much for getting information out of her. I wasn't going to bother pressing for information.

She turned and walked away, tail swishing back and forth, synchronized with her hips. I could look, but not touch; she's just old enough to get married, too young for me. Come to think of it, I thought her job suited her better than half the ponies around here fit into theirs. She always gave the best wedding parties.

The ever-humming grey floor clacked under hoof after each step. Fillies and bucks, barely marked, raced past me on what was most likely their first day of work. It had been my grandmother's idea to have work start on a

synchronized day. The first Monday of the month: easy to keep track of time that way. However, once the crowd had passed, I heard a group of ponies three or four turns ahead whispering about something I figured was bound to be interesting if the tone of the guy reminding them to keep quiet was anything to go by.

It wasn't much, but I could piece together what I heard, "sub level... lizard thing... medical... dead... hole... wall..." What?! Something had gotten in here? How? That just wasn't possible. Or maybe I was just being me again, stupid and all. But then again...

I made myself loud and clear as I approached the group, as far as I actually knew, soliciting sex and hoarded Med-X. That got them quiet in a hurry. "Howdy, y'all. I was just on my way to my room to change into my work barding, and I couldn't help but overhear somethin' or other about a hole in somethin', a pony in medical, and death. We talkin' 'bout seditious tales concerning the weak infrastructure of stable 34, or just recitin' really bad poetry?" The crowd of three nickered amongst themselves about the "clown pony" before actually addressing me.

"Well, considering that you're the overmare *and* stallion's son, we think it'd be kinda stupid to let you in on everything, but we also know that you like to keep things quiet, so we'll let you in on half of what's going on." Whereas the leader of the bunch, Erudition, was one of the better students in class, I'm not totally sure he should have gone ahead and told me he was only going to tell me half of what he knew. It was one of those moments when I nearly facehoofed in the middle of a conversation.

Before he could continue, I interjected with, "Well considering you're an idiot and just told me that there's more to it than you're gonna let on, why don't you just tell me anyway?" Wiped the smug grin right off his face!

The other two glared at him while he continued, "Oh. Okay. Yeah, maybe we should. Well, the A-shift maintenance workers were, well, working this morning when one of 'em left to take a leak in the sublevels. He came back screamin' his head off about how there was a giant lizard bitin' his leg off. Uh... it turns out that something really *did* take his leg off. It's yet to be confirmed that it was actually a *lizard* or anything, but he sure didn't look good with half his front left leg missing! They're saying he was poisoned, too. Looks as though he might die 'cause it took too long to get him to medical. Regardless, rations is passing out antivenom bulbs to everyone under the pretence that one of the school's science experiments got out.."

One pregnant pause later, and I parted with a barely audible "thanks." Erudition looked on with concern in his eyes. The overstallion was going to hear about this.

I had put on my work barding and wandered into the overstallion's room before all hell broke loose. The conversation with my father lasted exactly five minutes and went fluidly from Carrion's want for a change in career to rumours of poisonous lizards and a hole in the wall. Just as it looked like I might've gotten something done with both of those issues a gunshot outside the door startled both of us. I jumped back and my father fell out of his chair. The one room where everything wasn't nice and clean; lucky son of a bitch, had he kept his room clean, his head might

not of just landed on a stack of magazines, practically unharmed.

Actually, to be more accurate, we didn't know it was a gunshot. No pony had ever heard one before in Stable 34. It sounded like the cymbal at the crescendo of a song. In person, and right next to your ear.

Of course, being the figure of authority, Cobalt the overstallion got up, walked to the door, opened the door, poked his head out and had it promptly bitten off.

I may be used to weird shit; it runs in the family, but this was completely, totally, absolutely unexpected. There was no exposition, plot outline, middle, or comprehensible end, let alone introduction precluding what the FUCK had just happened! One second, there was a loud noise, the next, there was one of two protectors of the stable without his head. I couldn't really see what happened, just a long, arcing claw and it was gone. Horn and all. Oh yeah, did I mention we were unicorns?

And blood was beginning to pool. Oh goddesses, why don't you treat me to dinner and some alcohol before I get **fucked**!? I glanced in the direction of one of the faces of power... or where it should be and looked away before I heard a wet THUMP as his body fell to the ground.

My legs began to shake. My heart rate increased. It got really hard to breathe all of a sudden. And I was down. I backed into a corner and hyperventilated long enough to feel the air conditioner stop working and pass out. Now I could be unconscious in an uncomfortable wet heat. Thanks, Stable-Tec. I fucking hate all of you. Make a stable resistant to bombs, but not whatever came after 'em.

"Hell's Bells!" I think there's a good chance that if I hadn't had a strictly work relationship with my father I would have gone catatonic right then and there. Thankfully, the shock wasn't great enough to do that as it was. Seeing blood wasn't so much of an issue as the lack of a head and everything that goes with it. Awake for a grand total of fifteen seconds and already about to pass out again. Way to go, me.

It became apparent I had been out for quite a while after I noticed that the blood had coagulated and dried in a giant pool around overstallion Cobalt. "By Celestia's beard, I think it's been a few hours," I checked my pipbuck and saw that I wasn't too far from the mark. In fact, it'd been ten. (A few, ten... it's all the same, yeah?) "Guess that means I don't have to go to work then, huh?" *Okay Bebop, now is not the time to make jokes.* I inhaled and smelled. Well... nothing particularly out of place. Mildew and old books was the norm in the western corridors. The blood hadn't necessarily begun to smell. (And suddenly I'm okay with a dead guy in the same room as me.) *It was going to happen eventually.*

I really didn't want to become the next victim of whatever it was that took off the overstallion's head, so I crept toward my father for his desk key, listening to everything. Dead quiet. I grabbed the key in my mouth from his back pocket, ass uncomfortably close to my face, and slunk toward his desk. It opened with a very satisfying click and out slid the drawer. Too quickly. The resulting noise was far greater than I'd hoped for.

A long pause. Nothing. Thank goddesses. Inside was a laser pistol, and fifty, (what I assumed were,) clips. It had something inscribed on the handle: "Lyra's –" the rest was smudged away. It was written in ink. Old ink. Like from a ballpoint pen. (On metal?) One more thing to go on my steadily growing 'what the fuck' list, I guess. Another thing: the second I picked it up, my pipbuck assessed it and gave it a value. But we didn't have a currency. What... how...? If only I were smarter.

I walked cautiously out of the room, stepping as lightly as I could over (and through) the blood on the floor and body it belonged to. Yep. Still disgusting. I think if it hadn't been for watching an operation or two, I'd be vomiting all over the place.

Looking outside the door took me some time to get used to. The lights were still running, the generators still humming, the air conditioning had kicked back in, and the only thing out of place was the body count in the hallway. That did it. All over the place. On my hooves and in my mane, and on the overstallion. Oh, goddesses I was going to need a shower. The second I finished though, it occurred to me that out of all of this, the best thing for me to do now would be to actually start using this glorified wrist watch.

I brought up the Eyes Forward Sparkle, a program that only security ever really used, and saw two white bars accompanied by a whole bunch of nothing. What the hell did two white bars mean? *Time to find out.*

Tiptoeing through the hallway, trying not to touch the assorted organs of those on the floor, I made my way toward the closest white bar, judging by how it moved off to one side more quickly than the other. Actually, for all I knew, it could be on one of the floors below me. What'd I have to lose, though?

Interestingly, enough, by the time I got there, eight or ten more white bars had shown up on my E.F.S. Out of the 300-some ponies that lived here, that wasn't a very good sign. *Why am I so okay with this?* Even more interesting, however, was the fact that as I was getting there, I saw that just about every door into dormitories had been cut with what looked like a welding torch... but more than that. It was like it just melted away like butter, or maybe torn like paper was a better analogy. The marks on the wall suggested it was either caused by a steady beam or claws. The mere thought of the latter scared the shit out of me. Most interesting of all, though, was that one: the pony I had made my way to appeared to be in my room. Or maybe it wasn't a pony... I'd just kind of assumed it was a pony. And two: *my* door wasn't torn apart. Oh well, don't look a gift monkey in the face.

I pushed a button in the center of the door and waited for the solid steel doors to part and rip themselves asunder into the ceiling and floor. And was greeted by a muffled scream. A dusty pink pony with a hoof shoved in her

mouth attempting to silence her own fear as I paced semi-casually into the room, 'Octavia' hovering at my side.

The second the doors closed, she stopped screaming and collapsed in a pile of tears. I looked down at her with the most unamused look on my face that I could conjure. In a corner, frightened beyond comprehension was that weird little filly. With a bit of effort, I dropped *Octavia* and lifted her telekinetically onto my bed. She wasn't going to be helpful sitting in front of my safe. I trotted over to my clothes drawer, magically locked the door from where I was, opened my clothes drawer, got out my saddle bags and went to my standard issue Stable 34 safe, painted cobalt blue, unlocked it with the password I found at the bottom of my list of notes on my pipbuck, brought out a single healing potion, 5 bobby pins (who the fuck decided to put these in here?) One half of a syringe of Med-X, twenty pre-war bits, a fancy buck cake snack, and the weirdest looking Sparkle Cola I'd ever seen. Granted, I've only ever been in the presence of a grand total of three. 'Sparkle Cola: Diamond!' an exuberant buck declared. Iridescence gasped for air. I did nothing but run my hooves through my mane. It was so humid in there.

^^^*****^^^

Now it was time for me to panic. In no time, I joined my oxymoronic acquaintance in the struggle for air as I thought about, *really thought about*... what I'd seen. If I had any say, I wouldn't be moving for a good, long time.¹

¹Hoofnote: Level up! (1)

Base perk: Swift Learner: self explanatory.

Trait: Cool Headed: You like to play it cool! While in verbal, physical, or other combat with a hostile party, gain +3 Endurance. Base Endurance is set to 4. As a result, your calm demeanor has given you the supreme accuracy akin to one of Equestria's Finest! Guns and energy weapons you fire are 20% more accurate and ignore an extra 1 DT at the cost of 20% more AP and 20% slower fire rate.

Trait: Claustrophobic: You feel constricted by enclosed spaces. Gain a +1 buff to all SPECIAL attributes while outdoors. Suffer a -1 nerf to all SPECIAL attributes while indoors.