

The Book of Friendship
by BillyColt

Part 1: Learning

Chapter 1

The comb hung in mid-air, sparkling as it was carefully dragged through the brown mane. The white unicorn kept a close eye on the mirror, as he wanted to make sure that he presented himself as best as he could. He was going to meet somepony special today. Somepony he hoped he'd be very close to.

After diligently brushing his teeth, he headed downstairs. His name was White, and he certainly looked it – he was a white unicorn, obviously, with brown hair, blue eyes, and what a beaming smile for a cutie mark. He was the spitting image of white-bread-upper-middle-class-oh-no-I'm-in-some-sort-of-cheesy-family-sitcom-aren't-I?

There was more to him than that, however. The title he answered to was *Brother White*, for he was a proud member of the Fraternity of the Joyous Friends of Celestia.

“Well,” he announced at the bottom of the stairs, “I’m off.”

“We wish you the best of luck,” said his father, who was also the spitting image of white-bread-upper-middle-class-oh-no-I'm-in-some-sort-of-cheesy-family-sitcom-aren't-I?

“Remember to write us every week,” said his mother, hugging him. His mother was also the spitting image of white-bread-upper-middle-class-you-get-the-idea.

“I will, mother,” he said.

“And remember to brush your teeth,” she added.

“I always do.”

“And when you talk to your partner,” said his father, “remember to let him talk about things that interest *him*, not just you.”

“I *will*, dad,” he said, laughing nervously.

“And White?” Dad asked, just before he left.

“What?”

“We love you.”

“I love you, too.”

With his goodbyes over, Brother White left his house, to take part in the most important thing he had ever done.

Another member of the Fraternity was sitting alone at a table. Occasionally, he smiled feebly at other ponies that were passing by. They didn't pay him much attention – he didn't say much. He was a dark blue earth pony with black hair, brown eyes, large round spectacles, and a rolled-up scroll as his cutie mark. He was waiting for the big ceremony, where they'd get their badges and then head off to their destination. His name was Scroll, and he was waiting for his mission partner, Brother White. He didn't know what he looked like, though.

He saw the other ponies pairing up at tables, and he worried that he wouldn't meet his partner until the ceremony, and if they weren't friends before getting sent off, then it might be less like a friendship and more like “yeah, I have to work with you.” He didn't want that.

“Hello,” said a unicorn, “this seat isn't taken, is it?”

“Huh?” Scroll looked up. It was a white unicorn. “No, go right ahead.”

“Thanks,” said the unicorn, sitting down. There was an awkward silence – the blue earth pony wasn't really one for conversation. Must've been shy. “Soo...”

“Is this thing working?” asked a pony at the microphone onstage, “Good. Well, Brothers (and Sisters), how are we feeling?”

“Great!” everypony in the room responded.

“Has everypony met their mission partner yet?”

There were various calls of “yes” and “uh-huh” through the hall, except from the white unicorn and the blue earth pony at the table.

“Now, today we've got something very special for all of you. Fillies and gentlecolts of the Fraternity, please give a warm hoof for – Princess Celestia!”

“You're kidding,” said Brother Scroll, gaping as the Princess walked onstage.

“Thank you, Brother Emcee,” said Princess Celestia.

“I can’t believe it – the Princess is actually here!” Brother Scroll whispered frantically, “The actual Princess!”

“When the Fraternity was first founded, I was pleasantly surprised that there were other ponies who thought that the magic of friendship was worth sharing. I thank you for your time and dedication.”

“Now then,” said Brother Emcee, “when your names are called, come up to the stage and receive your badges. Now then – Sister Hope and Sister Starshine...”

The ponies went up as their names were called, receiving polite applause from the rest of the auditorium (more popular members got more applause).

“Sister Charity and Sister Promise...” continued Emcee.

“I’m nervous,” said Brother Scroll.

“Why’s that?”

“Brother White and Brother Scroll,” said Brother Emcee. Both the ponies stood up.

“You’re Brother White?” Brother Scroll asked, surprised, “well, I guess you are...”

“Good to meet you, Brother Scroll,” said Brother White, walking up the steps on the side of the stage, Brother Scroll close behind.

“Ready for your big mission?” Brother Emcee asked them quietly, holding out the badges – they read “Brother White” and “Brother Scroll.”

“You betcha!” said Brother White, eagerly taking his nametag. Brother Scroll, however, was staring at the ponies in the crowd.

“I’m standing in front of hundreds of ponies...” he said, stiff as a board.

“Hey, don’t worry, it’s not a big deal-”

“Of course it’s a big deal, that’s why it’s a ceremony!” Scroll whispered frantically.

“Are you feeling alright, Brother Scroll?” Princess Celestia asked softly.

“He’s good, just got a bit of the jitters,” Brother White said, taking Scroll’s nametag and slapping it on his chest (Scroll jumped, startled), “excited and all that,” White finished as he walked off the stage to modest applause.

Suddenly, Scroll bolted out the door. Brother White looked back on the stage, but they'd moved on to the next pair. He followed Brother Scroll out the door, onto a balcony – the poor earth pony was leaning on the railing, his head over the edge.

“I think I need an inhaler,” he said, “well, no, I don't have asthma... maybe I need to throw up.”

“Ooooooooooookaaaaay,” said Brother White, walking up to him, “is something wrong?”

“I'm nervous,” said Brother Scroll, retreating back onto the balcony, “why do we have a balcony?”

“It's a fancy place. But why are you nervous? I mean, ceremony wasn't that bad-”

“Not just the ceremony, but the mission, the Fraternity, the whole thing. I don't know what I thought I was getting myself into...” he was pacing back and forth frantically, “I don't know, what did you do when you joined?”

Brother White was quiet for a minute. Then he laughed. “Join? Well, not really,” he said, “I mean, my parents were in the Fraternity. You mean, you just joined?”

“Uh-huh,” Scroll said, calming down, “I wasn't born into it or anyth-”

“That's GREAT!” said an excited Brother White, putting a leg around Brother Scroll
“This is just great! I'll be able to show you the ropes, help you out and everything. We'll be the best of friends! No, we'll be more than that!”

“I'd like that...” said Brother Scroll, smiling bashfully.

“So, are you ready?”

“I hope so.”

“I don't think you needed to pack quite that much.”

Brother Scroll was laden down with an enormous pair of saddlebags. The two were getting ready to board their ship. Brother White's saddlebags were much smaller.

“So, where is this place we're going?” asked Brother White, holding a sheet of paper in front of him, “Earthquake Island?”

“It's not really part of Equestria,” Brother Scroll explained, “their economic situation is lower than ours, and there are... racial tensions.”

“Racial tensions?”

“Yeah. The earth ponies, the unicorns, and the pegasus ponies don’t really get along well. I don’t know all the details, though.”

“There are two other Brothers working there – Brother Shine and Brother Sky.”

“Unicorn and pegasus, right?”

“Yeah.”

“White?” Scroll asked quietly. Brother White stopped and turned around.

“I’m nervous,” Scroll continued, “I don’t know if I’ll be able to do anything. I mean, I just joined the Fraternity, and...”

“And what?”

Scroll lowered his head. “I’ve never really had a friend before.”

“Well, you’ll make tons of new friends,” reassured Brother White, “and look at it this way – you’re a living testament to the success of our Fraternity!”

“Really?”

“Yeah! Come on, we’re gonna do great!” and with White’s encouragement, Scroll climbed onboard, and they set off for Earthquake Island.

When they arrived two days later, they stepped off the boat and into the town. It didn’t seem like a particularly impoverished area – a little old-fashioned, maybe, with almost all of the buildings made out of unpainted wood, but there were tons of old-fashioned places in Equestria. It just wasn’t... shiny.

Brother White surveyed the town eagerly – earth ponies, and lots of them, going through their day-to-day activities. Then White noticed it – earth ponies, all of them.

“Not many unicorns here...”

“Not *any* unicorns here,” said Brother Scroll, looking around nervously, “just an earth pony town. All over the island, just earth ponies. No pegasus ponies, either...”

“No, there’s one!” said Brother White, pointing his head up in the direction of one frantic

flier. There was a loud CRACKing sound in the air, and the pony seemed to lose his bearings. He hit the roof of one of the nearby buildings with a loud SLAM and fell off, several roofing tiles shattering on the ground after him.

The two good members of the Fraternity ran after him. He was picking himself off the ground, but with a great deal of difficulty.

“Hi!” said Brother White in his usual friendly manner, “We’re with the Fraternity. Is there something wrong here?”

The pegasus pony stared at them with an incredulous look on his face. “What?” he asked, as though he’d been told that the sky is filled with bananas.

“There he is!” shouted another voice – an earth pony who had rounded the corner. Two more earth ponies followed, and they had with them what appeared to be staves. They raised them and pointed them at the pegasus. The pegasus saw them, and was about to make a break for it, when BANGBANGBANG!

The pegasus fell to the ground, dead. Brother White was covered in blood, and seemed to have gone numb from shock. The smile fell from his face and his right eye twitched involuntarily.

Brother Scroll started a panicked fit of breathing, at risk of hyperventilating, and he shouted,

“Oh, *fuck*, they have guns!”