

# Room For Rent

Being awakened at eight in the morning may be normal for some folks, but on my day off I like to sleep in. I was not in the best of moods as I trudged across the floor to answer the insistent knocking, and I certainly was not prepared for what met me.

“Whaddaya want?” I muttered, as I blinked bleary eyes at the empty air in front of me. A moment passed before I thought to look down, and was greeted by the pinkest thing I had ever seen. Rubbing my eyes, I refocused on my visitor and saw it staring back at me with a huge grin.

“Hi, I’m Pinkie Pie! What’s your name?” A voice that was way too chipper and high pitched for this early in the morning issued forth, causing me to flinch.

“Uhh, hi. Name’s Louis, what’s up?” I muttered back. My brain was trying to process what I was seeing, and managed to dredge up news articles about these creatures. Something about some weirdos breaking into a government lab and creating a portal to another world, filled with colorful creatures from a cartoon. Of course, the real creatures looked as much like the cartoon as I looked like a character from a Popeye. Small, cloven hooves, shaggy coats, and roundish heads sporting large, liquid eyes made them look more like mutated deer than the ponies they claimed to be. And now one was standing on my doorstep.

Her eyes (I decided the voice seemed female) grew wide, and suddenly she gasped, standing on her hind hooves and leaning forward to smash her muzzle into each of my cheeks. “Bonjour! I am so happy to meet you, Loo-ees!”

Shocked, I took a step back and wiped what I was sure to be pony drool off my face. “What the hell was that?”

“Oh, my friend, Rainbow Dash, told me that was how French humans greeted each other. She said it was called a French Kiss!” Sitting back on her butt, she beamed proudly at me.

“Woah, woah woah. First off, I am not French. I was born and raised one hundred percent American. Second, that was not a French kiss. Third, I don’t know many French people, but I am sure a French kiss is NOT how they greet one another.” Shaking my head in disbelief, I was starting to wonder if this was some sort of elaborate prank. I wondered where one could possibly be hiding cameras in my front yard.

“Oh well, my mistake. So what is a French kiss then? Can you show me?” She blinked with a blank look on her face. Nobody could be that stupid.

“Not enough alcohol in the world.” I shook my head. “No way I’mma french a horse.”

Her entire body wilted and her ears went flat against her head, a look of total dejection clear on her alien face. “Oh. Well you don’t need to be so mean about it.”

“What? I just don’t have a thing for horses. Nothing personal.” I shrugged. The resultant flinch warned me I had said the wrong thing. “What did I say?”

“Oh, it’s just, being called a horse is a really bad thing where I come from.” She straightened a bit, still hiding a quaver in her voice. “It would be like me calling you a stupid monkey that throws his poo at everypony.”

“Hey! That was one time!” I shook my finger at her, getting another flinch. “And I swear, someone put something in my drink! I don’t even know how I woke up in that zoo.”

A bit of a smile crept back onto her face, as she wrinkled her nose at me adorably. “Eew?”

“Nevermind that. So horse is the N-word for you, I apologize. Won’t happen again.” Filing the info away for later, I stuck out my hand for a customary human shake without thinking. She smiled and took it eagerly. “So, what brings you here anyway, little pony?”

“Oh, I forgot!” Stretching her rather long neck around behind herself, she fished around in the bag on her back, pulling out a newspaper. A big red square was drawn around an article I had published just the night before, along with several balloons and smiley faces around it. “Ahm hee ferr duh roomf!”

Taking the paper from her mouth, rather surprised it had remained dry, I looked at the classified ad, and then up at the date. It was today’s paper. The ad lady had told me it would be at least a week before the ad would run, and to expect at least a month before I received any serious offers. Then again, does a bubblegum-pink alien from another dimension count as serious? Was I even awake?

“Oh. Umm. Yea.” I floundered as the pink mare just beamed up at me, the earlier awkwardness seemingly forgotten. I stepped back, waving her into the room, and I swear as she bounced behind me, I heard some sort of spring noise.

As I flopped into my favorite chair, the bouncy mare landed on the couch across from me, still beaming like a sociopath about to kill a kitten. For a moment the thought of having an animal rubbing it’s rear all over my clean furniture occurred to me, before a tidbit from the news article came back; Apparently in our uptight society, the idea of another sentient race running around naked was brought up, and it was revealed that most of the ponies wore thong-like undergarments to hide their naughty bits. This was especially a relief considering the anatomy of the males. Fuck, now I was thinking about pony anatomy.

Keeping my eyes on the face of my guest, I cleared my throat. “Ahem. So you are here about the spare room?”

“Yeppers, most of my friends are here on Earth as a sorta exchange program, as the ‘Ambassadors of Harmony’, or something.” I was almost hypnotized by how her entire body seemed to move like a hyperactive jello sculpture, especially her hair. It didn’t exactly look like the pictures of the cartoon I had seen, but then very little about these creatures did. It was a cartoon caricature after all. Instead of a large poofy mass, the individual finger curls flopped around in all directions like the wig on a giant pink cupie-doll.

The next thing I knew, I was getting a close up of another difference from the show, a large pink

hoof. "Hello, Louie? You kinda spaced out there a moment." I blinked at the cloven appendage and mumbled an apology.

"Sorry, still kinda early."

"Oh, that's ok. I'm getting used to all kinda stares and stuff. But that's okay, because I'm also making lotsa new friends!" She bounced backwards to the couch again in a single fluid motion. "So anyway, I was saying how since I didn't have any special politic-ey type agendas like my friends Rarity and Twilight, I was gonna just do what I do best and make lotsa friends! But you can't make friends unless you leap into the thick of things and meet lotsa ponies! Oh, I mean people!"

I felt my eyes glazing over again and I was starting to regret my late night of internet surfing and gaming. It didn't help that her energetic prattle made me instinctively want to tune her out. She was definitely a morning person. I hated morning people, but the mortgage wasn't gonna pay itself, and if she was some sorta celebrity, she should have money.

"So." I interrupted, "Here's the deal, the rent is five hundred a month, plus half the utilities. I keep a clean house, and expect it to stay that way. What you do in your room is your business, but if you break anything or attract vermin, you will pay for the cleanup. Also, if you are bringing anyone over, call ahead so that I know." So far solemn nods were my only reply, so I continued. "Public areas are shared, as is the responsibility of keeping them clean. You make a mess, you clean it up. Trash goes out on Mondays and Thursdays, and it's your turn on Thursday to make sure it goes out." still more nods, and the longest stretch of silence yet. It was becoming a bit uncomfortable. "Finally, if you have any addictions, you can walk right out the door now. My house is clean in more ways than one, and I will not tolerate any drugs." Again, the nod, so I dropped the final bomb. "Oh, and you will need to have a job. I don't care who you are or how rich you are, but my parents raised me that idleness causes trouble. If you wanna live here, you gotta work. Deal?"

After a moment of silence, I watched as my tirade sunk in, and the gears were practically spinning in the pink mare's head. Finally she blinked, and grinned that creepy grin of hers again. "Okie, Dokie, Loki!" And she stuck out her hoof for a shake.

Taking it warily, I gave it a firm shake, and sat back down. "So, what do you plan to do?"

"Well I get plenty of money from my royal stipend as an ambassador, but I don't like to sit still either." A raised eyebrow was my only reaction to that understatement. "So tomorrow I have a job interview, and for now I have enough for a few month's rent." She pulled out a purse from her bags, and fished out a gold coin. My eyes went wide as I realized the value of such a large chunk of gold. "Woopsie! Wrong purse. Need to take this to the bank and get it exchanged." I would swear that it had been a calculated move on her part, if only I could believe such a scatterbrained ditz could possibly be that subtle.

Finally she pulled out another purse, and handed over a stack of currency that made my eye twitch. There was easily several thousand dollars in large bills in a single stack. She smiled sweetly at me and slid them across the intervening coffee table at me. "Is that enough? I'm still learning the money you use around here."

I nearly choked at her naivete, and failed to stop myself from facepalming. Carefully I picked up the stack, counted out first and last month's rent, and slid the rest back to her. "I am gonna recommend you talk to a banker as soon as possible. Never carry around that kinda cash, and don't ever let anyone see those coins." I sighed at the look of confusion on her face. "I don't know what things are like where you come from, but that is enough money to make even good people think about doing bad things to get their hands on it. You seem like a nice kid, and I'd hate to see you taken advantage of." That got a smile from her. "Get a bank card, use that to buy things, never carry more than twenty bucks cash on you for emergencies."

The next moment I was rocked back in my chair as I was slammed by a pink missile. I swear I felt my ribs creak, and my back popped itself wonderfully back into alignment as the tackle-hug forced the breath from my lungs.

"Thanks Louie! I knew you would be a great friend!"

I managed to choke out something even I didn't understand, and suddenly the pressure was released. I coughed and saw my assailant sitting back across the room in the couch as if nothing had ever happened, still grinning.

"Louis." I managed to choke out, still trying to decide if I wanted to be angry at the assault. She did pop my sore back, after all.

"Wat?" She tilted her head, like a cute pink puppy dog, and looked at me.

"My name is Louis, not Louie. Louie is some two-bit gangster thug name." I explained, finally getting my wind back. "I took alotta shit growing up for my name, and now I earned the right to use it."

"Oh, okies Louis." I had to chuckle as she still managed to make the name sound like 'Loo-ees'.

Shaking my head, I got up and motioned her to follow. "Okay, time for the Tour. For now we will consider this a trial run. You can stay for one week, and if things work out, I will have a lease written up and we can make it permanent. Until then, you are on probation. I have never lived with a pony, and I don't know how many humans you have lived with, but I tend to be strict, but fair. You okay with that?"

"Yeppers! You are my first human friend, and I can tell we are gonna get along great!" She bounced in place like some demented pogo stick, and I heard that squeaky spring noise again.

I deadpanned, and gave her my best sober stare. It was hard not to smile around the little creature as she exuded cheer and energy. "Let's not get too far ahead of ourselves here. This is first a business relationship. Friends is a bit stronger word than I am willing to use without knowing someone better. I have few friends, but every one is worth more than the world to me. Friendship for me is like respect and love. They are EARNED, not given."

Her ears did that little wilting thing again at my little speech, but perked back up at the end. Suddenly she stood straight, plastered a Serious-Sam look on her face, and saluted with one

hoof. "Yes SIR! I will do my best to earn both your respect, and your friendship!" Her face finally melted into her normal smile, and she giggled playfully.

The dam finally broke, and I smiled in return, also returning the salute. "I think we are gonna get along just fine, Pinkie."

We continued the tour, Pinkie nearly exploding across the kitchen when she saw all the fancy appliances. My mom was a home shopping addict, so we had every sort of gizmo imaginable. I barely learned to cook ramen, so most of it went unused in her absence. My new roommate proclaimed to be a world class baker and cook, so I told her to go for it. I did insist she clean up, as well as wash her hooves before touching food.

Next step was the bathroom. I paused a moment trying to think about how to word what I wanted to say, but then decided to be blunt. "So, um, Pinkie? Are you, you know, housebroken?" I just got a blank stare in return. "I don't wanna be rude, but do you know how to use human toilets?"

Comprehension dawned and her face lit up, with a bit of blushing. "Oh yeah! I had to take some classes to learn how to do things in the human world, and part of the class was on potty etiquette. The toilets you use are a bit different, but pony plumbing is basically the same. It wasn't too hard to learn." She smiled sheepishly at me again. "And yes, I always wash my hoofsies!"

"Well, umm, that's good. I guess." Unsure what else to say. "So, this is your own private bathroom. Feel free to decorate how you want, but you have to buy your own stuff. There's a few rolls of TP and some soap to get you started, but you need to buy the rest."

"Oooh, yay! I've never had my own bathroom before. When I was a filly, I shared one with my sisters, and the Cakes never did finish the guest bathroom," she gushed.

"Yea, well knock yourself out. Just keep it clean, and smelling fresh." I received a nod in return.

And next is your bedroom." I gave the grand reveal, showing off my old room. It still had a bit of a teenage boy decor, with some posters and a nondescript green wallpaper. My old bed was stripped down, but still functional. "It used to be mine, so it's still got guy colors. If you want to repaint, I will go in half on supplies. Just don't tear down any walls."

"Oh, oh, oh! Can I paint it pink? Cuz' pink is totally my favorite color!" I rolled my eyes at such an obvious choice.

"Sure, knock yourself out, but please keep the paint off the carpet." Sighing, I realized this must be what it was like to have a younger sister.

The rest of the day went relatively smooth. I ran some errands, and helped Pinkie buy some stuff for her room. The bank would have to wait until the weekend was over, so I let her keep the money in my safe. Surprisingly, she had brought almost nothing with her, and so she had to order quite a few things since ponies still were not common enough to be a target market at most stores. She was cheerful enough, and other than refusing to let her remodel the house, we

got along well. All in all I was feeling good about my new roommate, but exhausted by her sheer energy, and at the end of the day I slept like the dead.