

Macintosh

By TotalOverflow, '11

Chapter 3

"Now let's see ya try, son."

"Ah don't wanna..."

"Y'all have ta learn to buck, son, if y'all ever want ta run the farm someday."

"But..."

"Don't talk back ta me! Now buck!"

I reared up and kicked. Nothing happened.

"Ah can't do it!"

"Jes' try again!"

Kick. Nothing.

"C'mon son, y'all can do it!"

Nothing.

"Ah jes' can't do it!"

"Jes' keep tryin' son. Y'all want ta earn yer cutie mark, don't ya?"

"Ah s'pose..."

He fixed his hat.

"So keep tryin', an' someday ya'll get a nice apple on yer flank, just like the rest of the family."

"An apple?"

He stared at me.

"Of course; yer goin' ta run the farm one day, so of course y'all are gun' get an apple."

"But Ah don't wanna run the farm..."

He hit me on the head.

"No buts! Don't go gettin' no more fancy ideas! Now keep buckin', Macintosh!"

Big Macintosh awoke with a start when the bell struck one o' clock. After the race he had returned to the tree he sat under, dropping onto the grass exhausted from running, and fell asleep not much later. Wiping his eyes and cricking his neck he looked around the park, unchanged from earlier save for the shadows having crept to new angles. He stood, stretched, straightened his heavy harness and felt his stomach grumble. He hadn't eaten since before the sun rose, and after wearing himself out in such an unusual way he felt ready to eat half the apple orchard.

The air was warm with the noon sun, but a cool breeze ruffled his mane. *I haven't had a dream like that in a long time*, he thought, trotting along the road. Ironically, for such an unorthodox day filled with new experiences, the large pony's mind was being flooded with long forgotten memories and flashbacks to his youth. *I need to stay focused on today. I don't want to accidentally run into anypony...again.*

At the end of the street he could just make out what looked like a restaurant; it was a rather large building with tables out front, filled with ponies. Many pictures of clovers decorated the place, and once he was closer he could read the myriad of signs that identified it as the 'Clover Café.' A well-kept colt with a small mustache was taking orders, making his way to a table occupied by Daisy, who was by herself. Mac heard her place her order and return the menu to the waiter, sighing and laying her head on her hooves. Macintosh's eyes lit up when he saw her, excited for the chance to talk to someone he knew.

"Howdy Daisy," He said cheerfully as he approached her table. She rolled her head, looking at him through half-closed eyes.

"Oh, hey Macintosh," she said, yawning, "How's it going?"

"Ah'm fine, but what about y'all? Feelin' all right?"

"Yeah, I'm fine," she turned her head the other way, sighing again.

"Tired?"

"I suppose."

Almost all the other tables were filled with groups of ponies, laughing and enjoying each other's company.

"How come y'all are here alone?" asked Mac. Daisy straightened up and stretched a bit.

"It's my lunch break; the others are still working," she said flatly, avoiding eye contact.

"Oh."

It was a strange environment: an island of solitude and solemnity in a sea of jubilation.

"Well, Ah'm a mite hungry, mind if Ah join ya?"

She glanced up in his general direction, her silvery green eyes avoiding his. "Sure, go ahead." The waiter returned, bringing Daisy a sandwich and handing Macintosh a menu. Instantly befuddled by the sheer amount of choices, he simply requested the same sandwich as Daisy. She began eating her sandwich in silence, glancing around the restaurant at the other ponies, but never holding her gaze for long. *She's sure a quiet one*, thought the stallion, *I thought I was the quiet type*.

"So," he cleared his throat, "how long have y'all known yer friends?"

"Lily was my neighbor when we were little and we went to the same school..." she took a bite from her sandwich, chewing and swallowing quickly, "Rose moved into town several years ago and we just kinda started hanging out."

"Oh," said Macintosh, unsatisfied, "what about Blues?"

"What about him?" she accused suddenly without removing her eyes from her meal.

"Er, nuthin'," he backpedaled, "um, yer jes' friends, but, it's okay."

"That's right we're just friends," she said angrily, although to Mac it almost sounded more depressed than angry. The waiter returned with Big Mac's sandwich, which he was about to devour in a couple bites before he remembered his time with Twilight. Sitting straight and lifting the sandwich with a hoof he took a small bite, chewing carefully thirty times before swallowing. It was excruciating.

"So, what kind of ideas did ya have 'bout workin' with mah sister Applejack?" offered Mac, trying to get some sort of interaction going between the two. She looked up thoughtfully, but still never made eye contact with him.

"I was thinking about the flowers that grow on apple trees, that they might sell, but

maybe even selling tree saplings. I think it could work.” Her voice showed a tiny amount of enthusiasm as she stated her ideas, but she still seemed distant and distracted. Finishing her meal and standing (Macintosh barely remembered to do so as well), she tossed a few bits on the table and turned to leave.

“Well, see you,” she said bluntly, stepping away.

“Oh, uh, goodbah.”

Suddenly, she stopped and looked back to him, finally meeting his eyes.

“Are you still going to come tonight?”

“Eeyup,” Macintosh smiled. For once, she did too.

“All right, see you then,” she briskly cantered off, her curly green mane bouncing with every step. Standing for a few more moments, Macintosh watched her until she was out of sight. *I wonder what her story is?*

Once Big Macintosh was alone he indulged himself in his sandwich, trying his best to eat it slowly and carefully but eventually gave up and downed it in a second. It wasn't very satisfying, but it was expensive, so he decided to save his appetite for supper. He left his money on the table and trotted away from the café. The town's layout was becoming familiar to him; he had always been a quick learner. He wandered aimlessly, wondering where he could go next. *That park is awfully nice, but surely there must be somewhere else I could go.* The road around him suddenly grew dark and cold; he looked up to see a few pegasus ponies pushing pillowy clouds in front of the sun. As he watched, one of them whistled loudly to get the attention of the ponies stuck on the ground.

“The scheduled rainfall begins in five minutes, everypony!” she shouted as even more flying ponies appeared, filling the blue sky with dark clouds. Flapping their elegant wings they carried about their task with ease, confounding Macintosh with their ability to actually grasp the clouds. Sighing wistfully, Big Mac didn't notice the other ponies running for cover from the impending downpour; his eyes were transfixed on the flying ponies as they soared through the air, completely free from the confines of the ground.

“Hey! You!” one pegasus called down to him, “do you wanna get drenched or something?”

The glaze finally left his eyes as he had to process what was said. “A li'l rain never hurt nopony,” he said, his deep voice carrying through the cool air with ease.

“See?” a blue maned, orange filly grinned, lifting a cloud, “I told you I wasn't the only one who likes the rain!” Closing her eyes and sticking her snout in the air she tossed the raincloud carelessly towards a group of pegasi who were too busy moving their own clouds to notice the incoming cumulous. It struck one of them, causing him to lose his grip on his own cloud which in turn spiraled out of control at a young, white pegasus filly who was trying and failing to move a cloud of her own. The large cloud hit her hard, sending her hurtling for the ground, her eyes wide with shock and confusion.

“Cotton!” a blue-haired, white pegasus shrieked, flying as fast as she could for the falling filly, but a quick calculation in Macintosh's head assured him that she wouldn't be quick enough. Rearing up with a bray he kicked his legs away from the road, blazing across the street in a blur of red. The young pony's wits finally returned as she screamed, flailing her limbs and flapping

her wings as the road rapidly rose to meet her. In a few seconds, this dark day would become much darker.

I'm not going to make it!!

Pushing every ounce of his strength into one powerful jump he flew through the air, spinning to catch the filly with his front legs and falling harshly onto his back, skidding painfully to a halt. The speed of her fall knocked the wind out of him, but his harness absorbed most of the impact. Eyes still glued shut and screaming frantically, the filly kicked Macintosh in the jaw a few times before she opened one panic stricken eye to see her savior.

"It's all right now," he said softly, trying to hide the pain in his voice, "Yer safe now."

"Cotton Cloudy!" gasped the white pegasus as she landed next to the pair, "are you okay!?"

Cotton's eyes were still locked on Macintosh's, wide with fear and astonishment. He smiled at her, which seemed to break her out of her daze; hopping off him and jumping into the arms of the older pegasus she began sobbing, her emotions finally catching up to her. Macintosh noticed that all the pegasi had stopped their work to watch the event.

"You're safe now," sighed the mare, hugging the filly closely. Macintosh picked himself off the road, trying to reclaim his lost breath. "Oh, thank you so much!" she said, looking up to him, "Oh, if it weren't for you..." she nuzzled Cotton again as the orange pony floated down towards them.

"Ohmygosh! Lightning Bolt! I'm so sorry!" she whimpered, covering her mouth with her hooves. Lightning Bolt looked up at her, her eyes a mix of anger and relief, but she quickly turned her attention to young Cotton.

"And just what were you doing up there, young lady?" she said sternly. Sniveling, Cotton Cloudy pulled away and kept her gaze on the road.

"I'm sorry Mom, I just wanted to help..."

"You know you aren't strong enough to fly that high yet! You're too young!"

"But Mom, I *can* fly!"

"No!" yelled the mare, her bright blue eyes brimming with frustration, "you can't fly! You just can't! You're going to hurt yourself if you keep trying!" Something painful resounded in the back of Macintosh's mind: for a brief moment, Lightning Bolt was replaced by a large, yellow earth stallion who glared down at a young, red colt wearing a brightly colored cape.

"But Mom..." moaned Cotton.

"No buts! Now you go back home right this instant, and when your father gets home we're going to have a long talk about this!" Wiping a tear from her eye the small filly hung her head shamefully and plodded along the road towards her home. After a few moments of silence a pegasus cleared his throat.

"All right you ponies! Let's finish this job up and get this rain a' falling!!" One by one the pegasi pulled themselves away and resumed their work. Lightning Bolt brushed her blue mane out of her eyes and looked again at Macintosh.

"Thank you so much. Little Cotton wants to be a weather pony so badly she actually got her cutie mark first in her class, before she had even learned to fly properly," she chuckled nervously, wiping her eyes dry, "Thank you again. Is there any way I could repay you for saving

my daughter?"

"Her safety is payment enough, ma'am," Macintosh said after a moment, his mind filled anew with painful memories, "please dun' be too hard on the young filly, Ah'm sure she's learned her lesson."

"Thank you," she smiled, lifting off the road and receiving a hug from another pegasus. Moving the last cloud into place the flying ponies disappeared above the veil. The sun was completely hidden from Big Mac's view now, and the dark clouds began to release their reservoirs, a light drizzle dancing upon the dry road. The cool rain felt good on his hide, washing away the anxiety that filled his heart. *That sure was a close one...* He thanked Celestia that he was able to catch the filly in time. The rain began to fall harder now, so he looked for some cover. Catching sight of a gazebo at the end of the road he trotted briskly to hide under its protection, shivering from the cold, damp air. He shook himself off as he stepped beneath its canopy, and found himself a seat in the empty pavilion, where he waited patiently for the downpour to finish.

"Macintosh?"

"Yes, Ma?"

"Yer father's out workin' the fields, why don't y'all go out an' help?"

"But Ah'm busy."

She fixed her bow.

"When ya finish, why don't ya go an' help?"

I looked up from the table and my work.

"Y'all still can't buck?"

"No, dear, not until the foal's born."

I held up my creation.

"What do ya think, Ma?"

"Oh, it's lovely, Macintosh!"

I put it on.

"Now, Ah can fly too!"

She sighed.

"Just don't let yer father see it, okay?"

The rain didn't fall for long, just enough to relieve the dry gardens and fields. Pegasus ponies swiftly cleared the skies, allowing the bright sun to warm the streets of Ponyville. Slowly but surely the streets were filled with all sorts of folk again, resuming their day as if nothing happened. Macintosh yawned, stretched and cantered out of the little building. Looking to the now blue sky he wondered what his family was up to right now. *Apple Bloom's probably finishing up school soon, and she'll work up an appetite playing with her friends, I bet.* He trotted along the road, his hooves clattering cheerfully and sending small sprays of water with

each step. *Applejack's no doubt bucking her way through the spartans by now, with that old hat glued to her head.* He chuckled, wondering when was the last time that hat was cleaned. *Granny Smith's probably taking a nap before she gets up to do some housework, and get started on supper.* Suddenly he felt very homesick and lonely, a stranger in a strange place. Milling around, he caught sight of Blues, trotting in place on the doorstep of a flat roofed house. He raised his hoof to ring the bell but quickly pulled it away again, muttering to himself. Macintosh strolled casually up to him, trying not to startle him, but he did anyway.

"Hey Blues!" The blue colt jumped and spun to face the voice.

"Oh, hey...Um..."

"Macintosh," the red pony smiled.

"Right, sorry," he grinned sheepishly, rubbing his neck.

"So, what're y'all doin'?" It was an innocent question, but Blues reeled at it.

"Nothing! I mean...Yeah, nothing! Why, what makes you think I'm doing anything?"

"Is that yer house?"

Blues sighed, gazing long-fully at the building. "No, Vinyl Scratch lives here...I was hoping to talk to her..." He shuffled uncomfortably and pulled out a large black disk from one of his satchels. "I was hoping I could show her some of my music, but she probably wouldn't want to waste her time..." Macintosh noticed for the first time that Blues' cutie mark was a pair of musical notes.

"Do y'all write blues music?" he asked innocently, but Blues just rolled his eyes and huffed as he put away the disk.

"No, I hate blues!" he moaned, hopping off the porch, "I don't know why my parents named me after it! I mean, at least my brother *likes* jazz..."

"Oh, so what kind o' music do ya write?"

"The stupid kind," his ears folded back, "I don't know what to call it. It's weird and experimental. Vinyl Scratch is really good at writing music; I was hoping she could offer me some advice. Oh well," he turned to leave, "she's probably not home anyways. See you tonight!" he trotted off, holding his head high but dragging his hooves. Macintosh looked back to the house, its strange flat roof standing out amongst all the other thatched roofs. A faint, rhythmic thumping sound, almost booming, came from within. He shook his head.

"City folk sure are odd."

By the sun's position in the sky Macintosh guessed it to be around three in the afternoon, and a trio of strikes from the clock tower confirmed it. Roaming around town he came within sight of the bakery, the wonderful smell of bread wafting through the air. It reminded him of his mother's baking. She was a wonderful mare, her light orange coat and auburn mane shone with love and life. The pink bow she wore in her hair was an heirloom from her side of the family, passed down through the fillies. She loved her family so very much, giving more than she should have been able to ensure their safety and happiness. Often she would help father with the apple bucking, and she passed on her secret technique to young Applejack, who loved every second of it. Macintosh regretted taking her kindness for granted, and in his mind, never telling her how much he loved her and was thankful for her. But at least he was blessed enough to remember her, unlike poor Apple Bloom...

After breathing in the tasty air for a few moments, Macintosh resumed his stroll, watching ponies go about their business in peace. He could hear the school bell ring, followed by distant excited shrieks from the fillies and colts, relishing their freedom from education. *I suppose I could go see Apple Bloom*, he mused, turning in the direction of the school bell. Once the old building came into view, he was taken aback at how little it had changed from his youth. The red, single classroom schoolhouse still had dozens of painted hearts adorning it, the weather vane still permanently stuck facing east and the red flag fluttering in the breeze. The old steel swing-set still stood somehow, splintering seats of wood not concerning the foals who happily swung from its frame, kicking the air. The hedges out front had grown larger, but they were still trimmed, and even the bush pruned to look like a pony had survived. Macintosh wondered if the old groundskeeper still worked here, his goofy hat and long goatee still intact.

Bouncing with energy, three little fillies whispered excitedly on the front path. Apple Bloom was suggesting something to the others, a young white unicorn and the little pegasus from earlier, Scootaloo. He cantered cheerfully towards the group.

“Howdy, Apple Bloom!” he grinned. The fillies jumped at his deep voice, but smiled back when they recognized him (except for the unicorn, who seemed confused).

“Hiya Big Macintosh!” chirped Apple Bloom, running up and nuzzling her big brother’s neck.

“Hey dude!” Scootaloo hopped over, her small wings extended.

“How was school?” asked Macintosh.

“Boring,” complained Apple Bloom, “Ms. Cheerilee was goin’ on about cutie marks again. I’m the only one in my class without one, now!”

“Yer all in different classes, eh?”

“Different schools, actually, but now it’s time to crusade!” grinned Scootaloo, pulling out her helmet and scooter from seemingly nowhere, “C’mon girls, let’s go get our cutie marks!”

“Yeah! See ya Macintosh!” Apple Bloom galloped down the path, followed by Scootaloo and eventually the unicorn, who still gazed at Big Macintosh with confused eyes. Feeling slightly dejected, Macintosh waved after the trio.

“Oh, those three are such a hoof-ful,” sighed a maroon mare with three smiling flowers as a cutie mark who ambled out the front door, “but I really do admire their enthusiasm.”

“Howdy Cheerilee,” smiled Macintosh, “it’s been a while.”

“Yes, it certainly has, hasn’t it?” she said happily.

“Ya broke yer promise, y’know,” Macintosh grinned mischievously.

“I know, I know!” laughed Cheerilee as she looked back to the school, “It just took me a while to realize what my cutie mark meant.”

“Ah remember,” reminisced Mac, “ya always thought y’all were goin’ ta sell flowers.”

“And I tried for a while, if you’ll recall,” her green eyes flashed, “but I hated it. When I promised I would never set foot inside a school again I should have known I’d do exactly that. Despising learning but loving teaching. Figure that one out.”

“Ah guess it’s kinda hard ta sell smiling flowers,” chuckled Macintosh, remembering the time she tried to do just that.

“Oh yes,” she sighed, looking back to Macintosh, “and how about you? Still working on the farm?”

“Eeyup.”

“Well, at least your cutie mark makes sense. It must run in the family to love applefarming.”

“Ah s’pose it must,” mumbled Mac, shuffling his hooves.

“Well, I should probably get going,” Cheerilee smiled, “it was nice to see you again.”

“You too,” perked up Big Mac, “are y’all goin’ ta the party t’night?” he asked suddenly. Cheerilee was stepping back inside the school but stopped and spun to face him.

“You know about that? You’re going!?” she marveled, her eyes glittering.

“Eeyup.”

She burst into laughter, clutching at her sides. “I didn’t think you’d ever go to (hee hee) another party after-”

“Yeah, yeah!” Macintosh flushed, “Ah know, y’all dun’ hafta remind me! ‘Sides, there’s no guarantee that she’ll be there.” This caused Cheerilee to collapse to the ground in a fit of giggles.

“Yeah, right! Sure she won’t!” She slowly picked herself off the ground, her eyes watery, “oh, I need to bring my camera tonight! This is going to be gold!”

Macintosh huffed. “Well, maybe Ah won’t go!”

“No! No, it’ll be fun! Besides, you’re right! I’m sure there won’t be any clowns this time!”

Macintosh flushed bright red. “Then what’s the camera for?”

“Um, I always take it around with me. You know, to take pictures of stuff,” she wiped her eyes and stepped into the school doorway, “but don’t worry about it; you should totally come! I’m just kidding about the camera. I’ll see you then!” snickering to herself she closed the door behind her, leaving behind a blushing Macintosh.

“Ah knew Ah should never have agreed ta go,” he bemoaned, adjusting his harness.