

A/N: Who's a miracle worker? Why, I believe I am! Yes, Chapter Eleven is *already done!* I came into some extra free time recently, and decided to spend it like a true brony: by writing about ponies!

Talk about making up for lost time, huh?

Also, another shoutout to Saintspirit, who has submitted yet ANOTHER fabulous piece of fanart!

Chapter 11

"Aaaand... all done!" Rarity proclaimed, stepping back. Spitfire breathed a sigh of relief as she was released from the unicorn's ministrations. She appreciated Rarity's work, but that didn't make standing still for hours any easier. "What do you think, darling?"

Spitfire hopped down from the pedestal in the center of Rarity's new workshop. Blueblood had it set up for her in Avenger's Mansion, as their headquarters was now known, when Rarity had made it clear that she would *not* allow Equestria's newest team of super-ponies save the world without proper attire.

Spitfire winged her way to the full-body mirror and examined herself. She was wearing a brand-new bodysuit, colored in shades of orange and red to match her fiery mane (hah!). It was actually pretty similar to her Wonderbolts flight suit, aside from the color, but this left her head uncovered and her mane free. Her fire seemed to emit mostly from her mane, so leaving it free gave her unrestricted access to her powers. "I love it!" Spitfire said with a grin, turning this way and that in midair to admire herself. "It's a lot more comfortable than my Wonderbolts suit. What's it made of?"

"To be honest, I'm not entirely certain." Rarity admitted, trotting up to stand next to Spitfire. "Blueblood invented it. Something about... unstable molecular... structure? Oh, something like that, I never can follow when he goes into his genius mode. It's such a wonderful fabric, regardless, don't you think? It's so light and flexible, it breathes so much better than latex, keeps you warm in the cold and cool in the heat, doesn't tear easily, and of course it's able to withstand the intense temperature of your powers, dear." Rarity gave a bit of a dreamy sigh. "Blue certainly manages to work miracles sometimes, when he manages to focus long enough to finish a project."

"It *is* pretty nice," Spitfire agreed, before giving Rarity a knowing grin. "You sound... especially impressed, though I have a feeling it's less with the fabric and more with its' inventor."

Rarity sighed. "Oh dear, is it that obvious?"

“Fraid so,” Spitfire chuckled. “You know, Blue has a pretty bad rep from what I heard, but he’s a pretty good colt, all things considered. Handsome, rich, brilliant, polite so long as you smack him upside the head every so often... you could do worse.”

“I suppose I could,” Rarity said wistfully. “Still... the last time I pursued him it ended in disaster. I suppose I’m a bit nervous about trying again.”

“Oh, you dated before?” Spitfire asked curiously. “I didn’t know you guys knew each other before the Avengers.”

“Ah... not exactly... It’s a long and embarrassing story,” Rarity said, her face coloring slightly. “Another time perhaps.” She shot Spitfire a sly glance. “What about you, dear? Any colt catch your eye recently? Perhaps a certain... military stallion?”

Spitfire grinned at Rarity. “I’m sure I don’t know what you’re talking about.” She glanced up at a clock on a nearby wall. “Gah! Horsefeathers, I’m late. Big Mac finally got a break from whatever it is the Princess has him busy doing, and we were gonna go out for doughnuts.”

“Oh?” Rarity had a very... *interested* expression. “Big Macintosh? He’s quite a comely stallion himself, you know...”

Spitfire gave Rarity a friendly shove. “Ah, stow it, will ya? I’ve been trying to talk to Mac since we came to this mansion a week ago. I just got some things I need to say to him, that’s all.”

“Whatever you say, darling~” Rarity singsonged as she went back to her worktable. “I need to get back to work on *Caramel’s* outfit. I’ll be sure not to tell him where you’ve gone.”

“Aw, cut it out, Rare!”

“Big Mac!” Spitfire called as she flew across the rebuilt Pony Joe’s. The large earth pony looked up and smiled, waving the pegasus over.

“Howdy, ‘Fire.” Big Mac said, gesturing for her to take a seat. “Good ta see ya’ll again.”

“It’s good to see you too,” Spitfire said, giving the larger pony a brief hug before sitting down and waving to Joe to bring over some doughnuts. The friendly yellow unicorn had fully recovered from his store’s destruction over a month ago, and immediately brought over Spitfire’s favorite chocolate glazed doughnuts. “Where’ve you been all week? I’ve been trying to talk to you since we got here!”

Big Mac fidgeted a bit. "Ah, well, y'know... Princess keeps me real busy. There's a mighty lot'a behind-the-scenes work to do fer the Avengers." All technically true. Big Mac had been taking lessons from Pinkie. "But Ah finally got the day off. It's good ta see ya'll doin' better."

Spitfire nodded, her smile drooping a bit as she stared down at her doughnut. "That's... why I wanted to talk to you, actually. The last time we talked... after Soarin's accident... I was a mess. I didn't know what to do with myself... I don't know if I'd have ever forgiven myself for that. I'm still not sure if I ever will... but I can live with it now. Thanks to you." She looked up and smiled. "You talked me out of my funk. You got me on the Avengers, which I think I really needed. And the Princess tells me it was you who convinced Blueblood to pay for Soarin's treatment."

Big Mac rubbed the back of his neck. "Ah just suggested it, really. Rarity did most'a the real convincin'."

"Still. I just wanted to thank you," Spitfire said, leaning over the table to give Big Mac another hug. He hugged her back. "I really appreciate it. And the Avengers is one of the best things to happen to me! I don't think I could've stood being around the other Wonderbolts without Soarin', but if I just did nothing I'd go crazy. This is just what I needed."

"So ya'll're enjoyin' it?" Big Mac said with a smile. "How's the team? Ya'll gettin' along?"

"Oh, definitely!" Spitfire said with a broad smile. "You know Caramel, right? He said you used to work on a farm together."

"Eeeeyup. Good colt."

"Definitely," Spitfire agreed. "He's a sweetheart, he really is. You don't meet many colts like him these days." She had a strangely happy look on her face.

Big Mac grinned. "Ya'll just be gentle with him, alright?" Big Mac cautioned, though he continued to grin. "He's like mah lil' brother. Don't you hurt him now, you got that?"

"I'm sure I don't know what you mean." Spitfire said with a smirk, as she did to Rarity. Then she relented and added "But I promise. You don't need to worry."

"Good," Big Mac said with a nod. "What about Blueblood? Ah heard some pretty nasty stuff 'bout that one."

"Yeah, so did I." Spitfire shrugged. "Either it's just gossip or he's changed, because he's not that bad. Oh, he's still a insufferably pompous flankhole with more money then he can ever spend, more intelligence than he knows what to do with, and more ego then the other two combined, but he's actually pretty alright once you get used to him. You just need to smack

some manners back into him every so often, that's all."

Big Mac chuckled. "Well, considerin' Rarity's still hanging with him after what he did t'her at the Gala, he must be pretty charmin'."

"The Gala?" Spitfire questioned. "You mean that disaster last year? Rarity was there?"

"Ah... yeah. It ain't mah story t'tell, though. Ah wasn't even there," Big Mac shrugged. "Ya'll should ask Rarity 'bout it."

"Maybe I will." Spitfire said, more curious than ever.

"Anyway, what about yer new leader? Thor, right? What's he like?" Big Mac couldn't resist; this was a unique opportunity to get an honest appraisal of what another pony thought of him.

"Thor? He's alright, I guess," Spitfire said with a shrug. "He's certainly impressive in person. Really... big. Even bigger than the Princesses. And he's really inspiring, like the Princesses are. Just talking to him makes you want to go out and save Equestria. But..."

"But what?" Big Mac pressed.

"Well... He's kinda... distant," Spitfire said finally. "It's like... he's some kind of natural force. Like a storm, really. Big and powerful but really far away." She shrugged. "I dunno, whenever he talks it just feels like a speech. We've talked at least a dozen times, but I already feel like I know you better. And we've only talked twice!"

Distant? Big Mac wondered at that. He never even considered trying to make friends as Thor. Thor was a leader, a role Big Mac played, not an actual pony. Just a mask he wore.

Maybe he should take that mask off sometime.

He and Spitfire continued to talk for the better part of an hour, munching on almost a box's worth of doughnuts - apple cinnamon for Big Mac, chocolate glaze for Spitfire. Finally, Spitfire glanced up at a clock and said she had to leave. "We're having our first training session today." She explained, though Big Mac already knew. "Blue has been setting up some sort of gizmo ready to help us train, and it's finally ready. I better go meet the others." She gave Big Mac one last hug. "I'll see you around, Mac!" She flew from the shop in a blur.

Big Mac just grinned, pulling Mjolnir from his saddlebags as he trotted out of the store. At his godly speed, he'd be there in plenty of time to make it seem like he'd been there the whole time.

“Welcome to the Danger Field!” Blueblood - or, rather, Iron Pony, as he was wearing his armor - said grandly as the rest of the team entered the room. ‘Room’ was something of a misnomer, though. The enormous chamber was buried deep under Blueblood Manor, and it was easily twice as large as the grand dance hall in Canterlot Castle. It was spectacularly unimpressive aside from its size, however; a concrete floor, brick walls and ceiling, and a single large window into an adjacent room set high on one wall.

“Doesn’t look too dangerous.” Firebird quipped. She was wearing the new uniform Rarity had prepared for her, and her mane was burning gently. She felt the fire was just as much a part of the Firebird identity as the outfit, and so she resolved to keep her mane alight while in costume. “Looks pretty boring, actually.”

“It’s big enough for some combat training, I guess.” Captain Equestria noted. Rarity had done a nice job with his outfit, a bodysuit of the gentle blues and and yellows of the Equestrian flag. It matched his shield and beret rather well, both of which he carried with him, and it had the sun-and-moon emblem of Equestria on the flank, where the cutie mark normally went. It looked *really* good on him, Firebird thought privately. “But we’ll need some equipment.”

“No we won’t!” Iron Pony said gleefully. “This room is a special bunker designed to protect all of Canterlot’s nobility - my ancestor who built this place was something of a paranoid, you see. The walls are thick enough to withstand the apocalypse itself, so we can use our powers without worrying about damaging anything - especially you, Lord Thor.” Thor nodded, privately wondering just how accurate that was. “As for equipment, well. I installed some of my inventions into the walls and floors; I guarantee you won’t need anything else.”

Thor’s brow furrowed. “What exactly did thou install, Blueblood?”

“I’m glad you asked!” Iron Pony looked like a child in a candy store as he waved up to the window. By straining their eyes, everypony else could just barely see Rarity waving back. “Lady Rarity is up in the control room there; she’ll be controlling the Danger Field’s equipment.” He raised his voice a bit, the armor’s mask amplifying it so he could be easily heard from the control room. “Rarity, dear, run program L-23B, would you?”

There was a moments pause, and suddenly everypony besides Iron Pony jumped as the room around them... vanished. Suddenly they were standing amidst what appeared to be the ruins of Canterlot Castle. “Behold!” Iron Pony exclaimed. “My fully-immersive holographic environment, or FIHE. It’s practically impossible to tell the difference, isn’t it?”

“Quite impressive,” Thor admitted, kicking a piece of rubble. He felt the impact against his hoof, and it went skittering across the ground. “How did thou make the stones solid? They were not here before.”

“Hard-light holograms,” Iron Pony said proudly. “They look real, they even feel real, but they’re little more than forcefields covered by a hologram. I had to enchant nearly half my supply of gems to keep track of all the information and create all the holograms, but I’m working on streamlining the process. I think it was worth it regardless, don’t you?”

“Well, as impressive as this is,” Firebird said dryly. “It seems more like a toy than a training device. How does this give us combat practice?”

“Oh, ye of little faith,” Iron Pony chuckled. “Hard-light holograms can do more than just make rocks. Rarity! Run program E-1, if you please.”

There was a shimmer in the air before them, and suddenly a pony very familiar to Thor popped into existence. “Odin’s blood,” He whispered. “Your machine can duplicate the Wrecker?”

“The Wrecker, as well as several other enemies we’ve each defeated.” Iron Pony confirmed. “It can also do some generic enemies, as well as duplicate a large number of the mutants in the Princess’s files, which she generously leant to me. I also made up several foes of my own design, as did Rarity, Princess Luna, and Pinkie.” He shuddered briefly. “As an aside, it is in everypony’s best interests not to load any file with the prefix ‘P’.” Everypony nodded in agreement. “Good. Now then, this version of The Wrecker is actually about half-again as strong as the real thing, since Thor already demonstrated that he can fight the real one on his own. I thought he’d be a good foe for us to begin practice on.”

Thor nodded slowly. “The Wrecker is powerful, but simple, uncomplicated. He was my first foe in this age; it is appropriate that he be the Avenger’s first foe as well. Shall we begin?”

Firebird flared her mane, taking to the air. “Ready when you are, boss!”

Captain Equestria readied his shield, digging his hooves into the ground. “Just say the word.”

“Very well!” Iron Pony said, as Thor took up a ready position as well. Iron Pony readied his shields and emitter crystals, then called out: “Rarity, begin the simulation!”

“Watch those flames, you madmare!”

“Stop jumping in my way, you spoiled foal!”

“Come on, I left that wide open for you, Cap!”

“I can’t read your mind, Firebird!”

“Captain, now would be an opportune time!”

“Sorry, Thor!”

It was about an hour later when the Avengers limped from the Danger Field, sore and disgruntled. There were several singe marks and dents on Iron Pony’s armor, and everypony else had been knocked around rather brutally.

“I feel like I just spent the last hour boxing with a dragon.” Captain Equestria groaned.

“What are you complaining about?” grumbled Iron Pony. “*You* spent all your time in the background. *We* did all the fighting.”

“If by fighting you mean charging ahead like an idiot and getting in everypony’s way, then yeah.” Firebird quipped.

“Well maybe I could have timed my attacks better if you had actually *communicated* with us, instead of just expecting us to know when you’re ‘ready’ for us!”

“**ENOUGH!**” Everypony stopped arguing as Thor’s deep voice reverberated throughout the hallway. “We are all at fault, myself included. I am accustomed to working with ponies with an instinct for battle, which you three have not had time to develop. You do not yet know the basics of teamwork.” He turned to Firebird. “Firebird, for many years you led a group of ponies who you knew perfectly, and who knew you, and would follow your lead. You do not lead here, and we do not instinctively know what you plan as your fellows from the Wonderbolts might. You must communicate with us, and be willing to adapt your plans to the actions of others.”

Next he turned to the armored prince. “Iron Pony. You are so eager to prove yourself, so focused on your own goals, you disregard your fellows. You charge ahead, unheeding of the danger you cause to yourself and your allies. You must take care to note their actions, so you can better work as a member of a team.”

Finally, he turned to Caramel, who was looking sheepishly embarrassed. “Captain Equestria. In many ways you are Blueblood’s opposite. You are *too* cautious, too patient. You

wait and wait, to afraid of failure to take a risk. You cannot fear failure. When you see an opening, you must seize it.”

Thor looked at each of them in turn. “We must learn to work together, to trust each other and work as a unit. Do you all understand?” Slowly, all three of his teammates nodded.

“Good.” He said with a nod. “Then I think one more round in the Field is in order.”

The team groaned, their shoulders slumping. They all turned to reenter the Danger Field.

Suddenly, Firebird gave an alarmed yell and collapsed to the ground. In moments, Caramel was by her side, pulling the mask of his costume off as he tried to help her up. “Spitfire? Spitfire, are you okay? Are you hurt?”

Spitfire did not answer, save for a low, quiet moan. Her eyes had gone blank white, a strange mist obscuring her pupils. Thor put a hoof on Caramel’s shoulder. “Hold, Captain. Firebird is susceptible to receiving omens of the future; she may be receiving such a vision now.”

Caramel gave Thor a worried look before turning back to Spitfire. After a few tense seconds, Spitfire gave a sudden start, her eyes returning to normal as she tried to bolt upright. Her legs gave way, but Caramel caught her before she could collapse. “Easy, easy. Are you alright?” he asked, concern in his eyes.

“Y-yeah, I’m fine,” Spitfire said, panting. “I... I had a vision.” She let Caramel help her to her hooves.

“What did you see?” Iron Pony asked curiously.

Spitfire took a deep breath. “I saw Manehattan.” She turned to Thor. “We have to go there. Now!”

“Why?” Thor asked, urgently. “What did you see?”

Spitfire shuddered, and Caramel held her tighter. “Flames. I saw all of Downtown Manehattan in ruins and flame. I don’t know how, I don’t know when, but I know it’s going to happen soon unless we go and stop it *right bucking now!*”