

# Perquisition

## Chapter 4

Sketch and Kickbolt stood there speechless, both of them staring wide-eyed at the creature on the pedestal. After a few silent moments, Sketch leaned forward to get a closer look.

"I-I don't... what?" she uttered. Both of them still staring at the newly emerged pony that was just lying there, either unconscious, asleep or dead.

Kickbolt took a few steps forward, slowly placing himself in front of Sketch just in case. "Do you think... he's alive?" he asked.

Sketch raised her head to try and get a better look without getting closer. After a moment she noted, "I think he's breathing."

Kickbolt slowly approached the unicorn stallion to get a better look, stopping when he was only a few steps away. The unicorn was bigger than himself, and the coat was a deep dark red color. Upon seeing it, Kickbolt froze on the spot. The mane was dark orange, hanging slightly over his eyes. But compared to Kickbolt's own long hair, it seemed almost short.

But something was still wrong.

"I don't think he's hurt or anything, just... just not awake?" Kickbolt finally said after a few minutes of silence. He leaned closer to the stallion bit by bit trying to examine him, until he finally could see what stood out. With a puzzling look he finally turned his head back to Sketch. "But... he doesn't have a cutie mark?" Both ponies blinked for a few moments before saying anything else.

Sketch shook her head while collecting her thoughts. "No cutie mark?" Sketch wondered, walking up to Kickbolt to get a closer look herself. Sure enough, the mysterious stallion didn't have a cutie mark. "Do you think we should help him? Maybe he can tell us what's going on."

Kickbolt was wary, but couldn't just deny help to someone, even if that someone could be a potential enemy. He gave a slight nod as he moved up to the unicorn to check if the stranger truly was asleep - or worse. Reaching his one good wing while slanting his left side forward, he poked the stallion with his hoof.

"Mmfwrffgh..." the stranger groaned, putting both Kickbolt and Sketch on the alert.

The pair briskly traded a glance with each other, both nodding. Kickbolt leaned his head

down to the ear of the unicorn. “Uh... hello? Are you okay?” he said in a slightly louder voice than when he normally spoke. Before waiting for a response he quickly took a few steps back just in case.

The unicorn slowly blinked himself awake while giving off a long yawn. His orange eyes giving off a few tears while straining to see. When the yawn finally ended his eyes suddenly shot open. He quickly raised his head and started to move around in a panic until he apparently lost his balance and fell sideways to the ground. His breathing was rapidly getting heavier and faster. He frantically looked around the room. Finally his eyes finally locked with those of Kickbolt who was standing just a few meters away with his left wing pointing a few blades in the stallions direction.

Sketch hurried up to Kickbolt’s side. “Relax, calm down! We want to help!” she offered after deducing that the unicorn had less of an idea on what was going on than they had, based on his reaction. “Do you know where you are?”

His eyes shifted between Kickbolt’s wing blades and Sketch’s comforting eyes for a moment until he finally shook his head after swallowing hard. “I-I-I... I don’t... I-I don’t understand...” was all he could get out before he started hyperventilating and trembling while lying on the hard floor.

Kickbolt and Sketch traded looks again for the third time. Sketch’s hard glare coupled with a few nods towards the blades got the message to Kickbolt that his weapon wasn’t helping the situation. The pegasus hesitated but eventually retracted them. “Uh... sorry about that, I just can’t be too careful considering where we are...” he apologized while his eyes trailed off. This seemed to help in calming the red unicorn down, if only a little.

Sketch took the opportunity to speak up. “It’s okay. You’re safe. Do you know where you are? How you got here?” she tried saying in a calming voice.

The unicorn stared at her for a moment before trying to speak up again. “I-I... I don’t r-r-rem-remember...” he stuttered. After a few seconds he took a few deep breaths. “I d-don’t know w-whats going on!” he continued more clearly after having settled himself.

Kickbolt, seeming more at ease now, shrugged his one good wing before opening his mouth to ask. “Do you know your name?”

The red stallion seemed to ponder for a moment. “I-I-I...” was all he said before he shook his head. “I d-d-don’t remember... a-a-anything... I’m sorry,” he said while shuffling uncomfortably on the floor in an awkward position.

“Memory loss?” both Kickbolt and Sketch said in unison, which seemed to alarm the unicorn slightly.

Sketch shook her head, clearing her mind. "First things first," the green mare announced. "Are you alright? You're not hurt, are you?" she asked again. The unicorn's trembling eased slightly. He avoided her eyes, and after a few moments he shook his head.

Kickbolt took a step forward and asserted himself, bringing the attention back to him. "Well, can you stand up then?"

The unicorn looked at Kickbolt, and then back to Sketch, observing their bodies and postures. After another few moments of awkward silence he eventually started moving again, slowly getting up on his legs, one at a time until his odd positioning over the legs caused him to lose his balance and fall back down again. Tears forming in his eyes as he tried to speak up. "I c-c-c-cant... I don't know h-how to," he cried, tears rolling down his face. Sketch and Kickbolt took a moment to absorb the information, unsure what exactly he meant by not knowing how to stand.

"I'm sorry, what? How can you not know how to stand?" Kickbolt questioned him in a surprised tone.

"Kickbolt, shh! He's obviously upset!" Sketch quickly hissed.

"Sorry..." he said while turning his head away in shame.

Sketch walked up to the unicorn and nudged him, temporarily stopping his sobbing. "Uh, are you hungry maybe? I have some leftover carrots if you want them." She pulled out one of her carrots and placed it in front of the unicorn.

He lifted his head, still sobbing lightly. When his eyes caught the carrot he slowly leaned his head closer to give it a sniff, deciding it was edible. After a quick test munch, the rest of the carrot was greedily devoured.

"Whoa. You might want to slow down or you'll end up choking!" Kickbolt exclaimed, after which he pulled out one of his apples. "I never liked carrots that much, but I got some apples if you want to try," he said as he reached into his saddlebag. He brought out one of his apples to share. He placed it on the ground and carefully nudged it so it rolled up to the unicorn.

Using the same procedure as before, but much quicker, the unicorn gave the apple a sniff, then a test munch followed by gobbling it up. "T-T-Thank you..." He gave an apologetic look, turning his eyes towards the wall next to them instead of facing them directly. "I didn't r-r-realize I w-w-was hungry," he said. After finishing the apple he turned back to face the pair. "Um..." He stared at Kickbolt with his orange eyes, his lips trembling as he eyed towards Kickbolt's saddlebag.

Kickbolt chuckled as he took out another apple. "At least you have a good taste in food." Sketch just rolled her eyes while Kickbolt hoofed over a second apple. The unicorn grabbed the fruit as it rolled towards him and snapped it up.

"So now that you've eaten, wanna give this whole standing thing another go? You just gotta make sure to keep your legs separate." The pegasus showed by example. "It's easy! Just try and do what I do," he educated the unicorn while trying to show how he moved his own body from lying to standing position. As he was bringing himself up again he felt his chest ache, causing him to grit his teeth.

The unicorn slowly tried to replicate the same movements Kickbolt had done, mumbling something to himself while doing so. He smiled as he managed to stand and keep his balance.

He stood a bit taller than Kickbolt, much to the pegasus' displeasure. "Wow, Sketch. Now I know how you feel around other ponies," Kickbolt said. This was quickly countered with a prod from the earth pony's hoof into his broken wing, causing him to yelp.

"D-Did I do anything w-w-wrong?" the unicorn stammered, confused as to what was going on.

"No, it's just Kickbolt being Kickbolt," Sketch replied with a flat voice. "Anyway, as you just heard, that's Kickbolt," she said while motioning her hoof dangerously close to his wing again, almost making Kickbolt step back in fear of being poked at again. "And my name is Map Sketch, but everyone just calls me Sketch." She walked up closer to the unicorn, trying to be friendly rather than just comforting.

"I-I-I'm sorry... I-I don't r-remember my n-name," he responded while lowering his head. "It's w-weird... I don't recall anything - not even how t-to move normally, b-b-but I can still talk just f-fine?" he said while slumping down his posture a bit, almost losing his balance. Wrinkling his forehead while trying to rectify himself, he managed to regain his balance. Nobody spoke as the unicorn lost his balance again. Both Kickbolt and Sketch were eager to encourage him, but they thought it was best to remain silent.

Sketch finally opened her mouth to respond afterwards. "Aside from the stuttering problem you seem to have, you're talking just fine." The unicorn reacted to what Sketch said by giving off a depressed look. "I'm sorry, that was uncalled for," she apologized. "So... what do we call you?"

"You want to name a fully grown stallion?" Kickbolt retorted.

"What, you want to just keep on calling him 'him' and 'you' or 'unicorn'?"

"Then I propose Crimson!" Kickbolt replied with a huge grin on his face.

Everypony just stared at Kickbolt for a moment before Sketch spoke up again. "You just came up with that?" she queried, while eyeing him suspiciously.

"Well I'd be lying if I said I just randomly made it up. I mean, he's red!" he affirmed while motioning towards the unicorn.

"Um..." the unicorn tried to speak up. "Crimson... I-I-I sorta I-like it." His earlier depression seemingly vanished, now smiling again.

Kickbolt was beaming again. "I'm starting to like this guy!" he exclaimed as he placed a leg over the unicorn's back on pure reflex. To both the explorers surprise, the unicorn's smile grew as Kickbolt did this. They expected some sort of negative reaction from him.

Crimson's face lightened for the first time, until he started shuffling his hooves uncomfortably as he realized another problem. "So... how d-do I w-walk?" he asked while looking down on his hooves uncomfortably, lifting separate legs one by one. He tried to move forward by moving his two fore legs in an unusually long step, but not moving his hind legs at all. This resulted in him standing stretched over the ground just barely able to keep his balance.

Kickbolt stifled a laugh. "Uh, hold on there," he said while helping Crimson up again by pushing his flank, forcing in his hind legs to the correct position.

Sketch blinked. "Here, I'll show you," she finally replied, followed by her walking around slowly to show how she moved her legs to get around. "Just try and do what I do. You basically want to move both your legs on one side of your body right after each other, then you switch to the other pair of legs." She began walking around in an exaggerated manner, taking ridiculously big steps, forcing attention to her leg movement.

Crimson nodded, ready to give it a try. His first few steps were wobbly, and slow; he had to think about every step he took before actually doing it to ensure no mistakes were made. Kickbolt walked next to him. He had been biting his own lips the entire time, but when he was starting to gain speed as he got used to the movements, his face showed relief instead of anxiety. The echoing sound of his hooves hitting the stone floor gradually became faster and, after a few minutes, he seemed to have gotten used to it well enough to walk around at normal speed.

Sketch spoke up when she thought his walking had become good enough, which incidentally was around the same time he bumped into Kickbolt, causing Crimson to apologize quickly while Kickbolt chortled. "Maybe we should consider heading back to town, considering the... *circumstances*. I think it's starting to get late, too. If we hurry we might make it back before it gets too dark." Crimson tried to move around to face Sketch, but seeing as he hadn't gotten the hang of turning just quite yet, it took a bit longer than they liked.

As he finally could face her again, he stopped moving around. “B-back t-to where?”

“To the town we live in, and where we came from before coming here,” she said while pointing towards the lone staircase leading out of the room. “Uh... you really don’t remember anything, do you?” she asked as she frowned.

Crimson’s eyes immediately dropped to the floor. “I... I’m s-sorry, n-n-no.”

Not wanting to spend anymore time waiting for awkward moments to pass, Kickbolt took the liberty to speak up. “Well, we have several reasons to get back to town, bumping into you here just gave us another one!” the blue pegasus chuckled nervously. “It’s a bit to walk, so we might as well get going.” Crimson nodded.

“W-well, lead on then,” Crimson said.

Kickbolt and Sketch started walking ahead of him to show the way, but they only managed to get a few steps down the stairs before getting knocked off their hooves by a great red form that was tumbling down, knocking anypony in its way with it. Luckily this particular staircase was rather small compared to the other ones, and rolling down it went rather quick. Well down at the bottom of it, three ponies were lying groaning in pain from the rough journey down.

“A-a-a-apparently I can’t walk on stairs...” Crimson said, lying with his legs tangled with the other two ponies who were busy figuring out what just happened. “Sorry,” he squeaked with such a high tone that sounded almost humorous compared to his normal deep voice. Sketch and Kickbolt grumbled something as they got their legs sorted out and got back up, and finally helped Crimson back up again.

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“S-so I can be good at a-a-anything?”

Sketch pondered for a moment before answering. “Well, technically, maybe.” Her eyes looked at his bare flank, missing its cutie mark. “As I said, you’re... a bit peculiar. Normally we get our cutie marks when we’re young. For you to be an adult and not have one is what’s weird.”

“So you d-d-don’t know if I will be able t-to get one, I s-see,” Crimson said, his earlier curiosity regarding cutie marks seemingly killed. “B-but you also m-mentioned magic? How d-d-does t-that w-work?” he asked while turning to Kickbolt after taking a careful step down the stairs.

Kickbolt thought for a moment, unsure how to answer. Scratching his head with one hoof while murmuring to himself, until he finally came up with a good answer. "Basically, most unicorns can use their horns to do magic." Content with the simple explanation, he nodded before continuing. "I'm not sure how-

"W-wait... horn? I h-h-have a h-h-horn?" Crimson interrupted. "Where d-d-do I have a h-horn?" he asked quickly. Kickbolt just stared back at him while motioning towards his head. "What, w-where?" Crimson asked again, as he jerked his head around as if looking for a phantom was stalking him.

"On your head! Your head!" they chanted together while trying to keep their voices from drowning in laughter as Crimson kept fanatically looking for something just barely out of his vision no matter where he looked. Sketch finally cleared her throat, and raised a hoof to point directly at it. "Your horn is on your forehead," she giggled.

Crimson flushed a brighter red than his usual color. "...t-t-that explains it." His eyes crossed as he tried to look up his own forehead, past his orange mane hanging over his eyes. "So I c-can use m-magic?"

Kickbolt wiped away a tear from his eye before replying. "You might be able to, but we're no unicorns, so we couldn't say *how*." He raised his silvery mane to show his bare forehead. "If you haven't noticed, I've got wings instead. I'm what you call a pegasus," he said while giving his left wing a few lazy flaps. "Normally I can fly, but just before we found you, my right wing got injured." He turned his head to look at his bandaged wing instead. "That's another reason why we're heading back to town now, I need to get this looked at."

"So how how m-much f-f-further is it?" Crimson asked. "We've b-b-been walking down these stairs a while n-n-now," he continued while taking another step down.

Sketch moved in closer as if she had been a few paces away. "Well, we're almost at the bottom of the tower now, and it's taking a bit longer than usually because..." She trailed off, not wanting to blame Crimson directly for being slow.

"Because I c-c-can't walk down these s-stairs normally?" Crimson answered, as he took yet another careful step down. "I'm s-sorry..."

Sketch quickly responded, "No! Don't worry about it! I'm sorry I just said that." She nodded apologetically.

Crimson gave a weak smile. "It's o-okay. "

Sketch continued, "Well, at the end of these stairs it's a short walk to get out of the tower,

and after that we're almost back at Fourtow, where we live."

Crimson nodded slightly, and then examined Sketch a bit closer, he couldn't help but notice her lack of both a horn and wings. "So... forgive me f-for asking, but w-what are you? I'm an unicorn, and Kickbolt is a p-p-pegasus..." Crimson raised an eyebrow.

"Oh, I'm an earth pony. We're pretty much really durable," Sketch simply said in a quiet voice.

Kickbolt turned around and rolled his eyes upon hearing this. "Well, there's more to earth ponies than *that*," he said hastily. "They're the only ones that can manage crops. If anypony else tries to, the plants just wither and die after a while." As he ended the sentence he was looking directly at Sketch. "But this earth pony here couldn't grow a weed even if she tried to!" he ended while giving a wide grin.

Sketch stopped walking and turned to face Kickbolt with a frown. "Well, *normally* pegasi can manipulate clouds." She was now staring down Kickbolt's toothy grin with her own sly smile. "Even more importantly they can use the clouds to control weather. But *this* pegasus here isn't called Kickbolt for nothing!" Kickbolt's grin quickly died out. "As soon as he even touches a cloud, lightning shoots out all over the place! He's even been prohibited from helping the weather ponies, having been declared a hazard!" Kickbolt was now glaring at Sketch, who was quite happy to gaze back with the same intensity. Both of them kept on narrowing their eyes further the longer they stared.

Until they broke out in loud laughter simultaneously as they started walking again towards the end of the staircase.

Crimson, as confused as ever, stood only a few paces behind them. "I-I-I... w-what?" he stuttered before continuing after the couple. Kickbolt was patting Sketch's back while still laughing, and Sketch was trying to stifle her giggling with her hoof brought up to cover her mouth.

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They were finally outside the tower. The clear night was making it easy for the moon to help them see in the dark as they made their way to Fourtow. The morning dew gathering on the grass reflected the moonlight as it swayed back and forth in the gentle breeze.

"So as far as I know, most unicorns are capable of using any type of magic. Assuming they've studied for that particular magic," Sketch explained to Crimson as she tried to gather her thoughts about unicorn magic. "Unless your cutie mark represents some talent that your magic



could be associated with, that would usually let you use that type of magic without any training. Other than that, all unicorns can use a few basic types of spells, like telekinesis or a light spell.”

Crimson nodded furiously, intrigued by the concept of magic. “So I j-just concentrate on say, m-making a l-l-light?” he asked.

Sketch scratched her head. “Beats me. You’re the unicorn, you tell me.”

Kickbolt shrugged his one good wing. “You might as well give it a try as long as we’re just walking.” He raised his head as if trying to look over the hills in front of them. “The wall for the town should be visible any moment, and from then on it should only take us around half an hour to reach it.”

Crimson blinked a few times as he thought about what to do. He closed his eyes and clenched his jaws as he concentrated for a moment. His walking slowly came to a stop as he tried to use magic. Sketch and Kickbolt halted to see what he was doing, giving him a moment to try. His jawline kept getting more tense as he tried harder to produce something - anything - from his horn. He planted his hooves in the earth as he took a lower posture, putting more effort into it.

Sketch and Kickbolt could see sweat forming on Crimson, whatever he was doing wasn't easy. They backed away a few steps to give him some space, unsure of what exactly to expect.

Crimson tried to reach into something he only now could feel was there, it was faint, but definitely there. Magic. It felt as if it was a part of him - a part that longed to awaken - and reaching out everywhere around him for as long as he could hold it. How had he not felt this before? He tried to grab it, move it, control it, commanding it to do what he wanted, make a light. It resisted, as if without the proper way of telling it what to do, it wouldn't listen. It warranted a few orange sparks from his horn, but he was too busy to notice this himself. It did give Sketch reason to “Ooh!”, which he was unable to pick up on as well. Maybe if he tried it a bit differently...

Sketch could feel something by now as well. The same faint feeling whenever magic was cast nearby. It almost gave her goosebumps. Kickbolt could feel his feathers getting itchy, he tried to shrug it away but they only got ruffled instead, making them even itchier.

Crimson tried to focus on this new sensation through his horn. He could feel it flowing around him, with him, inside him. The long grass around him started swaying against the wind by an unseen force, the dew drops lifting into the air.

Kickbolt noticed the flying droplets. “Uh, do you think he knows he’s doing that?” he whispered to Sketch while nodding towards the floating water puddles, slowly growing by the merging drops.

Sketch shrugged casually. "I'm guessing that's just the effect of too much unfocused magic. I don't think he knows how to use it," she said.

Crimson could imagine it, his horn lighting up the entire night all by itself. He tried to envision this as he focused the magic through his horn one final time. Unlike his previous attempts, he could feel something in his horn now, it was a small tickling feeling.

As Crimson finally opened his eyes to see how much he had accomplished, he managed to see a few single sparks flying away from the tip of his horn. "D-did you see th-" *Splash*. When he stopped concentrating the water gatherings that had collected around him all fell to the ground, drenching him as the liquid splattered all over. "W-w-water? Huh? What h-happened?" he quickly asked as he shuffled around, trying to see the reason for him getting wet.

"You levitated the water dew from the grass. When you stopped concentrating it all came splashing down on you," Sketch replied as she was rummaging in her saddlebag. "Here, you'll freeze like that." She threw a small blanket over his back. It didn't do much, and Crimson was already starting to shiver from the cold breeze. "We need to get you back to town, you can't stay out here like this."

"D-did you see the sparks?! I did m-magic!" Crimson spluttered, not caring that he was freezing his own hooves off. "I can't b-believe I even made the w-water float t-t-too!" He grinned while hacking his teeth from the cold.

"There were a few sparks, but no actual light, sorry," Kickbolt said, "but Sketch is right, we need to get you indoors now or you'll just end up sick or something."

Crimson was too busy giving off a goofy smile for himself at his own accomplishment to bother thinking about the cold.

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They had hurried the rest of the way to Fourtow, or at least, tried to. The combination of Crimson not being able to properly gallop yet along with his body quickly getting colder had made it harder for him to move. They had made it to the town gate, and Crimson had already dried but was still shivering.

Sketch brought up a hoof to Crimson's forehead, she shuddered upon touching it. His body temperature felt alarmingly low. "We *really* need to get you inside." She turned to Kickbolt. "Can you take him to your place? It's closer. I'll see if I can get something from my house to help."

Kickbolt nodded quickly.

Crimson himself didn't really pick up any of that, he was too busy admiring the buildings: the simple wooden structures with hay for roofs, the lovable architecture, the cute little windows, the quaint shadows watching him from afar.

*The what?*

He blinked. They were gone.

Kickbolt nodded towards their left as Sketch was running off in the opposite direction. "Come on, it's just around the corner," he urged.

Crimson opened his mouth to mention what he had just seen, but not before feeling his own legs buckle away under the weight of his body. "I-I... uhh." His vision started blurring.

He fell to the ground as he could see stars forming in front of him. Stars, and an alarmed Kickbolt standing next to him.

[~Chapter 3~](#)

[~Chapter 5~](#)

(Author's note: I'd like to thank ARBPW and LysanderasD for helping me with editing and making my story readable. If you liked it, please leave a comment, they're probably the biggest source of encouragement I've yet to encounter. Don't forget to rate!)