

## Macintosh

By TotalOverflow, '11

### Chapter 5

*"Well, Ah hope yer happy, son! Yer little flyin' attempt's landed ya a fine nice groundin'!"*  
*The casts hurt. They were itchy.*

*"Tryin' ta fly with a cape! Ah thought Ah raised ya better'n that!"*

*"But Pa-"*

*"No buts! What were ya thinkin'? Did ya really think ya could fly? What're they teachin' ya in that expensive school o' yers!?"*

*I cried. His words hurt.*

*He sighed.*

*"Come with me, son..."*

*He took me outside and showed me the sky. There were some of them flying up there, moving clouds.*

*"Look at 'em closely. Do y'all really think any o' them really care 'bout any of us earth ponies? They don't care 'bout whether or not it rains an' we have a strong harvest! They jes' lounge around the skies all day, goofin' off an' messin' about with their clouds!"*

*Their beautiful wings flapped in the air.*

*"But Pa, they eat the food we grow."*

*"But they dun' thank us fer it, do they? Nah, they wouldn't know hard work if it hit 'em in the head! Why would y'all want ta fly with them?"*

*"I..."*

*"They didn't notice when y'all tried ta fly, did they? Heck, they probably don't even see us right now! They don't care that ya hurt yerself tryin' ta fly with 'em! They don't even want you with 'em! Why would they want a 'lowly earth pony' ta fly with them?"*

*They never once looked down to the ground.*

*"Look at 'em, flappin' around like they own all of Equestria!"*

*Their legs kicked at the air, keeping them away from the earth. Away from us.*

*"Them and their fancy wings! Listen son, those no good horesey-pony-pidgeons think they're better'n us! They leech off our hard work 'n spend all day playin' with their clouds!"*

*One of them flew to his friends.*

*"Us earth ponies are the ones who work! We don't need no wings!"*

*They started laughing.*

*"They dun' care 'bout us!"*

*They were laughing at me.*

*"They are nuthin'!"*

*How dare they?*

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In the end, Macintosh didn't dress up at all for the evening. He'd almost made it out the door with his tie on, but was stopped by a chortling Applejack who assured him that if he wore that bright green and yellow tie he wouldn't be able to show his face in town for years. So he began his trek, unadorned and nervous. His harness provided a certain sense of comfort: almost like a brace against whatever the day could throw at him. Without it, he felt strangely...well, naked. He considered turning back to get it, but figured he may as well get used to not wearing it. After all, he couldn't wear it all the time right? He didn't need some silly pulling collar to be his identity.

The sun had just begun its descent by the time he left the farm, and as he entered town he caught sight of the clock tower, its face reading seven thirty.

"Now where did they say it was again?" he mumbled, glancing around anxiously at the streets which were significantly emptier than that afternoon. *Shoot, where is it?* His mind drew a blank. He remembered something about a tent, but other than that...

"Hey Big Macintosh!" he heard a familiar voice call out. Turning, he saw Rose trotting up to him. "On your way to the party?"

"Eeyup," he was relieved to no longer be alone, "but Ah forgot where it is."

She chuckled, pointing to the East. "It's just on the edge of town, that way. There's a big tent set up, so you can't miss it. I'm just closing up my shop right now, but would you like to go together?"

"Sounds good ta me," he smiled, his nervousness receding. He was becoming accustomed to being around others, and he found himself at ease around somepony as friendly as Rose. He followed her over to her flower cart, most of its inventory sold. The empty little cart looked oddly decrepit in the dim lighting, and without the presence of its two other owners it seemed rather...sad. Straightening up a few odds and ends and locking her bit-box behind a door, she pulled on a rope which dropped a pair of wooden shutters over the cart with the word 'CLOSED' poorly painted on each and walked back to Macintosh.

"Oh, you aren't wearing your...Uh, thingy."

"Mah harness? Nah, figured Ah didn't need it."

"Oh, I see," she said, leading the way. They trotted together in silence for a bit before Rose spoke up. "So, how was your day? Anything exciting happen?"

"Eeyup, quite a bit, actually," he smiled, "definitely more'n Ah'm used to." He described some of the more interesting highlights of his day, and she hung on his words; she even gasped when he told about how he caught Cotton Cloudy in the nick of time. She was completely absorbed in his recounting, and they made it to the edge of town just as he finished the story of his day.

"Wow!" she marveled, "that's so cool! I wish I could have seen you race Rainbow Dash! You must be really fast!"

He blushed. "Ah'm sure Ah'm nuthin' special."

"Are you kidding!?" her emerald eyes were large with excitement, "you almost beat her and you were able to catch that falling filly! That's really incredible! You're really something!"

"Heh," he chuckled, embarrassed by her sudden shower of compliments. They stopped on top of a small hill which granted them a great vantage point of the setup below. There was a large, round tent erected in the middle of the small valley, and a few flashing lights from inside

illuminated its fabric. It was big enough to hold probably at least a hundred ponies if they all squeezed together. Ponies were wandering around idly, waiting for the show to start, and there was even a pair of bouncer ponies standing vigil at the entrance in case things got out of control.

“Come on,” she trotted down the hill, “we’re just in time!” He followed, lagging behind a bit to enjoy the light show. The whole atmosphere was filled with excitement. Maybe tonight wouldn’t be so bad after all?

“OH BOY! CUPCAKES!”

*Oh no.*

*SHE’S here.*

He just barely caught sight of her curly pink tail bouncing through the crowd towards a table of snacks and desserts. Swallowing heavily he lowered his head and tried to back away, but as if sensing his fear she looked directly at him, her large blue eyes growing enormous.

Memories came flooding back as she began bouncing towards him.

*The hoof-shake buzzer.*

*The cake.*

*The punch.*

*And...The clown.*

*Oh sweet Celestia in Canterlot, the CLOWN.*

“Hiya Big Macintosh! I haven’t seen you in like, forever! I mean, where’ve you been? Probably farming apples ‘cause you’re an apple farmer, I guess! I mean, duh, where else would you be! It’s not like you were doing much of anything else, like flying into space or something! Oh! I knew this one pony who flew into space...” she rambled on, bouncing around him as he took a few shaky breaths, slowly continuing his walk to the tent. *Maybe if I just ignore her, she’ll go away.*

“...I’ll still never understand where she got that oatmeal, and even though I tried to warn her, she still threw it in and as soon as it hit the core, WELL!”

*Guess not.*

“Pinkie Pie,” he said slowly and quietly. She stopped her blabbering and looked at him with large, expectant eyes.

“Stay away from me,” he growled, turning and briskly trotting to the other side of the tent where he could have some time alone to think. He never looked back to her, but if he had, he would have seen a very emotionally injured pony.

He sat down against a nearby tree behind the tent, deep in thought. That pony...He didn’t really know why he was so afraid of her, and even though every logical fibre of his body screamed at how irrational he was behaving, he couldn’t help but feel terrified of her presence. *What am I afraid of? That she’ll hurt me? I’m much too big to be hurt, much less by a filly like her.* Thinking back, he recalled the party she ruined. It was just supposed to be a simple birthday party, but instead it became a swirling torrent of pain and embarrassment. Everyone *laughed* at him.

He remembered what his father told him often about running the farm and a family: that once you lose your respect, you lose your authority, and the fastest way to lose your respect is to be laughed at. His ego took a severe blow from Pinkie's unexpected arrival into town and into his party, after he had so recently taken charge of the farm and the family. He was still very young, but he took it very seriously, and after she made a fool out of him, how could his family respect him any more? She made him cry. In front of his friends and family. How could he ever forgive her insolence?

Thinking about what she did, his fear slowly turned to disdain. He didn't want to let her get too close, worrying she might embarrass him again; not to mention her incredible reservoir of energy just wasn't a good match for his laid-back personality. Lily was random. Pinkie Pie was random on an infinite sugar rush. Luckily, he was able to avoid her any time he did need to come into town, and this was the first time he'd spoken to her in years. His gut wrenched as the harsh words he just said to her finally registered in his mind. *Still, she had it coming, didn't she?*

*Didn't she?*

"Macintosh?" Rose said. She had quietly walked up to him, startling him slightly. "Are you okay? What was that about?"

He sighed. "Ah'm sorry. Ah'm fine."

"I just saw you talk with Pinkie Pie and then run off."

*Did I really run?* "Ah jes' had a bad party experience with her once," he said, only telling part of the story.

"Haven't we all?" she laughed, "the first time she threw a party for me she lit my entire flower garden on fire. She never used fire-crackers at a party again. Still, she was so upset over the whole thing that she helped me replant the whole garden, and I just couldn't stay mad at her. She still gives me a free cupcake every time I visit her at the bakery."

Macintosh looked at the ground. In his mind, he could hear the warring voices of his mother and father...

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*"But honey, he said he was sorry-"*

*"No buts! Ah'm the head o' this family an' Ah won't have no son o' mine embarrassin' me like that!"*

*I pressed my ear against the door, trying to listen in.*

*"Is that all ya care about? Yer pride? Haven't ya ever once thought about how much it hurt Macintosh?"*

*"He jumped off the barn! Ah'm surprised he ain't dead!"*

*"But y'all didn't hafta be so harsh on him! Those things you said really hurt his feelings. You shoulda seen how much he cried!"*

*"If mah son ever wants ta become a stallion like me, he'll have ta learn not ta cry!"*  
*Become like my father?*

*"Besides, Ah can't forgive him fer what he did ta mah reputation! When Ah'm not bein' scolded by all the mares in town fer bein' a bad parent and lettin' mah son plummet off roofs, Ah'm bein' laughed at by all the colts, askin' questions like 'So when's yer son gonna get his*

wings?' *No pony laughs at me!*"

*"But ya need ta forgive him!"*

*"No Ah don't!"*

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"Are you okay, Macintosh?"

"Huh?" his mind thrust back into reality, he looked up at Rose, who stared down at him, confused and concerned. "Oh, yeah, Ah'm fine. Jes'...thinkin'."

"Well come on, the others are waiting!" she smiled, and helped him to his hooves. He smiled back, relieved that she broke him out of that painful memory. The argument he overheard hurt him to hear, but the spanking he got for being caught eavesdropping hurt even more. *Become like my father...*

"Hey dude!" grinned Blues, who took a sip from his punch. They had just made their way inside the tent and quickly found the others, congregated around the snack bar.

"Hello Macintosh," Daisy nodded, smiling slightly upon seeing him. While most of the other ponies around were filled with excitement (and sugary treats), Daisy seemed oddly calm; maybe even a little bored.

"Hi BM!" Lily shouted. The others stared at her, aghast. "Oh, oops. That's probably not a good nickname."

Macintosh quickly brushed it off. "Hey Lily; good ta see you guys again."

"So you were able to come after all, eh?" Blues smirked.

"Eeyup."

"THAT'S IT!!" Blues exploded, pointing a hoof at Macintosh who took a step back.

"What's it!?" Rose panicked a little.

"At Winter Wrap Up! I was on the plant team and helped clear the fields! *That's* where I've seen you before!" he grinned, immensely satisfied with himself. Once he noticed all the others staring at him he threw up his hooves. "Hey, I *said* it would bother me all day..."

"Wow, Blues," Lily giggled, "you're pretty slow sometimes."

"Story of my life," he shrugged.

Macintosh chuckled, and as he helped himself to some punch a light red, blonde earth filly with a cherry cutie mark trotted over to Blues, passing him a cupcake.

"Thanks, Cherry!" he grinned, nuzzling the filly, "Macintosh, I'd like you to meet my fillyfriend, Cherry! She runs a cherry stand in town." She smiled pleasantly at him.

"Howdy!" smiled Mac.

"Excuse me," Daisy said suddenly, briskly leaving the group.

"What's her problem?" asked Cherry. Blues shrugged and Rose sighed, but before anypony could say anything the lights in the tent faded completely and a loud voice boomed over the speakers.

"Attention, everypony! Are you ready to party?"

"Yeah!" the crowd cheered, Lily screaming particularly loudly.

"I said, ARE YOU READY TO PARTY!?"

“YEAH!!!”

“Then stomp your hooves for...DJ PON-3!!!” The crowd burst into cheers as the colored lights exploded into a frenzy, illuminating a white, blue maned unicorn wearing sunglasses who stood behind a turntable. Suddenly a heavy, incredibly loud beat spread through the tent, followed by pulsing electronic techno, Macintosh’s ears instinctively folded back at the intense volume.

“THAT’S VINYL SCRATCH!” Blues shouted, his voice only barely audible over the loud music.

“IT’S A LI’L LOUD, AIN’T IT!?” shouted Big Mac, but his complaint went completely unheard by the crowd of ponies who began hopping and dancing in time to the rhythm. Big Mac could feel the thumping beat rumble in his chest, even shaking the ground he stood on. He had to bring his hooves to his ears; they felt about ready to bleed. “WHAT IN TARNATION IS THIS NOISE!?” He had never heard anything this loud before. “HOW CAN ANYPONY ENJOY MUSIC THIS LOUD!?” His voice was completely lost under the trance inducing music, which was just too much for him to process. Coupled with the pulsating, flashing lights he felt his knees go weak. *Air. I need air!*

He pushed his way through the crowd, making a mad dash for the exit. When he finally made it out into the field, the music was still loud enough to pound in his chest, but at least it didn’t sting his ears anymore. He strolled away from the tent, making his way for the other side of the field. From this distance he could actually make out the individual notes and tunes in the song, and even though it wasn’t to his taste, he could at least recognize it as music now. *Why in Equestria would anypony want to listen to music that loud?* He strolled through the now empty valley, the tent behind lighting up the sky with dozens of colors in a radiant glow. Although it was a wonderful sight, the music was still too loud for his liking, so he continued his walk through the field. Off in the distance, he caught sight of something yellow and pink scampering between the trees in pursuit of a small, white animal. Getting closer, he recognized them as the yellow pegasus from that morning chasing a small white bunny who was doing his best to get to the tent.

“No, Angel!” she pleaded, finally getting a hold of the critter with her hooves, “that sort of place isn’t for a small bunny like you! You could be hurt or stepped on!” The rabbit kicked, trying to get away from her but she tightened her grip. “Besides, that loud music could hurt your ears! If you come home I promise I’ll buy a big carrot cake for you tomorrow!” he glared up at her. “Okay, two carrot cakes.” He finally resigned himself, nodded his head and began bouncing away towards home. She sighed and plumped herself down against a tree. Macintosh approached slowly, the distant rhythm of music hiding his hoofsteps.

“Howdy,” he said as gently as he could, but the pegasus still yelped and jumped slightly. Once she recognized him, she calmed down. A little.

“Oh, um...Hi,” she said quietly, her head low.

“Look, Ah think we kinda got off on the wrong hoof today. Mah name’s Big Macintosh. But y’all can jes’ call me Macintosh, or Big Mac, or Mac, or whatever suits ya.”

“Um...I’m...Fluttershy.”

“Howdy Fluttershy!”

“Um...Hi.”

Macintosh scuffed his hoof, taken aback at just how reclusive this pony was. She made him look like a party animal in comparison.

“So, uh, that critter...Ah mean, that rabbit. He a pet o’ yers?” he said, causing her face to lighten up a little.

“Oh, yes, Angel Bunny is a very special friend of mine, but I wouldn’t call him a pet,” she smiled, “he’s really wonderful, even if he has trouble listening sometimes...”

“Ya seem ta be pretty good with animals.” At that, her eyes glowed.

“I love taking care of small creatures! It’s my special gift, you know. Really, I enjoy helping anything in need, from small animals to injured ponies. Sometimes I volunteer at the hospital when I have time,” a bit of courage seemed to be building inside the mare as she stood straighter, “how about you? You’re Applejack’s brother, right?”

“Eeyup.”

She looked at him sideways. “Do you enjoy working on the farm?”

“Ah s’pose, it’s a livin’,” he said slowly. She looked deeply at him, as if sensing his apprehension, but quickly broke her gaze. The next few moments were filled with silence.

“Um,” Macintosh cleared his throat, “Ah was kinda wonderin’...Or, I was jes’ curious about...”

“My wings?” she said suddenly, her eyes focused on the ground. Stunned, Macintosh stuttered over his next words.

“Uh, yeah, actually...Why were ya so keen on me keepin’ them a secret?”

She sighed, and met his gaze with her large eyes. “I...suppose I should tell you...But...not here,” she glanced around, “come to my cottage tomorrow morning. I mean...If that’s all right with you...If you’re free...”

“Sure thing, Ah’ll be there,” he said. She smiled awkwardly and turned to leave. “Hey, listen,” he called out after her, “if’n y’all dun’ want ta talk ‘bout it...”

“No, I think...I would like to,” her smile became authentic, “I’ll see you tomorrow, then.” She flew off, her regular length wings flapping stiffly in the air. Macintosh suddenly resumed breathing, the tense air finally lifting. *It’s just so strange being around that one...She seems a little...Familiar?*

He stood there for a few moments longer until he heard the music slowing down. Cantering back in the direction of the tent a new song picked up, but it wasn’t as loud or intense. The bouncers eyed him as he approached the tent, but being smaller than him they didn’t say anything about his strange departure or return. Inside, the lights had become more steady, illuminating all the ponies inside, including the white unicorn at the back, still bobbing her head in time to the beat as she adjusted a few knobs on her station. Standing a little ways in were his friends, who called him over.

“Macintosh!” Rose asked, “is everything all right?”

“Yeah, you just kinda took off for no reason,” said Blues, Cherry still clinging to his side.

“Sorry ‘bout that,” Mac said sheepishly, “Ah jes’ ain’t used ta music bein’ so loud.”

“You get used to it,” smiled Lily as she chewed on a cupcake, “then you start to like it, and then love it, and pretty soon your ears bleed and you go deaf! And then you can only hear music when it’s that loud! It’s awesome!”

He stared at her, horrified.

"She's just kidding," chuckled Blues, "don't listen to her."

"Oh, ah ha ha," Mac forced a laugh.

"Hey Blues!" Lily shouted suddenly, "I think I see Rarity over there! Do you still have both your eyes?"

"Shut up!" Blues yelled, greatly annoyed, "It's not funny!" The others all laughed, Mac chuckled awkwardly and, looking around, noticed somepony was still missing. "Say, where's Daisy?"

"I dunno," answered Lily, "she still hasn't come back."

"I swear that Daisy pony isn't right in the head," grumbled Cherry. Blues shot her an injured look.

"Hey, c'mon, she's not bad, you just got to get her to break out of her shell."

"Oh, you know all about breaking a filly's shell..." Cherry cooed, playing with his mane.

"Ew, get a room you two!" Lily shouted dramatically, covering both hers and Macintosh's eyes. Laughing, he looked off into the crowd. Everypony was enjoying their evening, dancing in time to the music or eating snacks, or both in some cases, causing them to miss their mouths. One pony tried his best to bob his head with the beat and take a drink at the same time, and was rewarded with a straw up his left nostril. He even spotted Cheerilee, who was wearing a checkered neckerchief and dancing with her friends, a tan coated, indigo and pink maned mare and the same cyan unicorn filly from earlier. Bouncing merrily through the crowd was Pinkie Pie, who locked eyes with Mac for just a second, her smile faltering before she bounded away again. *I don't want her to embarrass me in front of my new friends*, he thought bitterly.

*"Is that all ya care about? Yer pride?"*

"What are you looking at?" asked Lily, who pressed her head against Mac's, snapping him back to reality.

"Oh, uh, nuthin," he stammered, backing away.

"Nuthin', or *nuthin*?"

"Um, neither?"

"Oooh!" she winked at him. *What in the world is with this pony?* he questioned, smirking at her antics.

"So, that white unicorn..." Mac began.

"Vinyl Scratch!" Blues cut him off, grinning. Cherry rolled her eyes.

"Er, yeah. What's she do, exactly?"

"She's the DJ," continued Blues, "she chooses the music for things like this. She also does remixes and a lot of originals as well. That song she just played was a new one of hers; it was pretty cool."

"Yeah!" grinned Lily, "I liked the part where it went boom-boom-wao-wao-wao-vreentvreentvreent-noooorn!"

"Did y'all get a chance ta talk ta her b'fore the show started?" asked Big Mac. Blues shot him a glare and became flustered as the others all fixed their gazes upon him.

"I, uh, I-I, well, um, n-no, she's...uh, too busy."



"Why would you want to talk to DJ PON-3, Blues?" Rose asked innocently.

Mac answered for him. "Because he wanted ta show her his-"

"-Autograph book! Yeah, and get her to sign it!" Blues blurted, shaking his head at Macintosh.

"Oh, okay," said Rose, satisfied. Cherry stared sideways at her nervously grinning coltfriend, and Lily eyed him suspiciously.

"Really?" Lily probed, her eyebrow cocked.

"Yes, really," gulped Blues.

"You're not writing more of that weird mu-"

"No!" he shouted, "ahahaha, I told you I'm not anymore!"

"Really?" Lily's lips curled into a mischievous grin, "so you don't want to show her your 'Underwater Ferris Wheel' song?"

"Shut up! I wrote that in grade school!" he stammered, "I've gotten a lot better since then!"

"HA! I knew it!" she giggled, "I knew that was why you wanted to go tonight!" Blues glared up at Macintosh, who was shuffling uncomfortably. *Well, pony feathers. What did I just do?* He looked for any sort of escape from the quarrel, and noticed Lightning Bolt trotting up to him, smiling. *Oh, thank Celestia.*

"Hello again!" she smiled. He cantered over, away from his group of friends who were too busy teasing Blues to notice him leave. She looked him over, her white coat mimicking the colors of the overhead lights. "I'm sorry, I don't think we've been properly introduced."

"Ah overheard the other pegasus ponies call ya Lightnin' Bolt," he said, "mah name's Macintosh, or Big Macintosh, or whatever works fer ya."

"Well Macintosh, I wanted to thank you again for saving my daughter. When I told my husband about what you did, he insisted on meeting you, so we were wondering if you'd like to come over to our place tomorrow for brunch?"

"Well Ah'd love ta," he grinned, "but really, alls Ah did was mah duty as a pony of Equestria."

"And a fine pony you are," she remarked, "it's the least we can do as thanks." She gave him the directions to her place and confirmed the time before she left the party, heading back into town. Mac followed her partway to the entrance to get a look at the outside world. The sun had fallen behind the horizon but a bit of golden light still bloomed under the navy blue sky. Only one or two stars were visible, and the moon hadn't yet risen into the sky, so this would officially be considered twilight. He thought about the purple unicorn with the same name for a moment, briefly wondering what book she was buried in now, but his thoughts were broken at the sight of a streak of rainbow whizzing through the cool air. It slowed down for just a moment, revealing it to be Rainbow Dash. She was trying to do some sort of roll, keeping her legs outstretched and her wings tucked in. It didn't go so well and she skid onto the grass a couple dozen yards from the tent.

"Howdy Rainbow," shouted Big Mac as he trotted over. She swiftly jumped to her hooves, trying to look casual.

"Oh, hey there! I musta got hit by a crosswind or something," she said, gasping for air. She stared at him for a moment, tilting her head. "I didn't take you for a party pony, Big Mac!"

“Well, Ah’m not, really,” he chuckled, “but mah friends invited me, and it’s not too bad, jes’ loud. What’re y’all doin’ way out here?”

“Practicing!” she hovered in the air, her slim wings effortlessly keeping her aloft.

“Fer?”

“The WonderBolts! Only the greatest flyers in all of Equestria!” she pounded her chest, face beaming with pride at extolling her idols to anypony who would listen, “I’m totally going to get into their ranks someday, and even become their captain!”

“Wow, sounds like y’all got big plans.”

“You better believe it! I’m gonna be famous!” she did a little spin in the air, striking a pose, “then everypony will know I’m the most mega-awesome pony around!”

“Ah know somepony who already thinks that,” grinned Macintosh. She spun to face him, her rose eyes a mix of shock and excitement.

“Who? Who!?”

“A li’l pegasus pony Ah met t’day named Scootaloo,” Mac said. Rainbow’s face fell for a moment as she returned to the ground, but she quickly put on her best indifferent expression.

“Oh, yeah, that little filly recognizes me for the greatness I am,” she said, her voice a little uncertain.

“She told me how much she wants ta fly jes’ like you.”

“Yeah, I know,” she said sadly, kicking at the grass, “I mean, I enjoy being a role model, but she kind of cramps my style sometimes...I mean, she can’t even fly yet, and she keeps asking me to show her tricks and stuff.”

“She can’t fly yet?” Mac said, tilting his head, “Huh. Well, Ah guess we all got ta start somewhere.”

“I guess, but I kinda feel bad for her. Um...” she looked around, making sure no one was within earshot, and beckoned him to come a little closer. “I’m going to tell you something, but you have to promise not to tell anyone. You’re Applejack’s brother, so I know you’ll keep your promise.”

He nodded and stepped forward to hear her whispers as she sat onto the grass. He did the same. She sighed, looking around thoughtfully before speaking.

“I talked to Scootaloo’s parents a while back. They wanted to thank me for spending so much time with her, but they also told me that...Well, it’s possible she may never be able to fly.”

“What?”

“Her wings are too small. I mean, it’s possible they might suddenly grow in, but it looks unlikely. She should be able to at least fly a little by now, but her wings are still too little.”

Macintosh stared at the grass, his mind racing. *I thought it was bad enough not having wings and being stuck on the ground. But HAVING wings and being unable to fly? That almost sounds like torture.*

“I feel bad for her,” sighed Rainbow, “it’s like I’m showing her the life she could never have. I’ve even seen her try her best over and over to fly, and I know she wants to more than anything, but...” she trailed off, absentmindedly fiddling with the grass. Macintosh stared into the night sky, a few more stars appearing within its dark canopy. To be denied your own birthright...fate could be cruel sometimes. Mac knew this from experience. *I wonder how many others are out there, wishing to touch the sky while trapped on the ground.* He’d only spoken to

Applejack once about his dreams of flight, but she couldn't empathize with him. She was completely satisfied with life as an earth pony, and from the pleasant demeanors of others he had met, they seemed to feel the same: perfectly content with their lot in life. He looked down at his cutie mark, a green apple half, seeds exposed. It felt more like a branding to him, marking him as an apple farmer for life rather than a symbol expressing his 'special talent.'

"Do..." he said suddenly and softly, "do ya think it's possible...ta get a cutie mark ya don't want?" From the side of his eye he could see her stunned expression as she looked at him before she glanced down at her own cutie mark.

"I...Dunno. I'm not really a philosopher like Twilight is. You should ask her." They stared into the sky for a few moments longer until the pegasus stood up. "I'm going to get going. It's pretty late. You'll keep your promise though, right?"

"Of course," replied Big Mac as he remained seated on the cool grass.

"All right, I'll see you later then," she said as she zipped off into the sky. He watched her leave, her blue wings gracefully carrying her through the air.

Over to the East the moon had just begun its ascent, its clear ivory face shining down upon the world. Macintosh still wasn't used to seeing it without the visage of the Mare in the Moon upon its surface, but its disappearance was a pleasant reminder of how drastically things can change, and how some old pony tales turn out to be real. One common tale among foals was to wish upon the stars and the princess who guided them. When Macintosh was young he made such wishes almost every night for a pair of large, colorful wings of his own. His wishes halted after his disastrous flight attempt that landed him in the hospital, but sitting here now he felt a sudden urge to make that wish again.

"Star light, star bright," he started, picking a large, brilliantly gleaming star, "diamond up in Luna's night, hear mah cry, hear mah plight, an' grant me the wish Ah make t'night," he recited softly, but stopped when a thought hit him. The old poem mentioned Princess Luna, but nopony really knew who she was before she was freed last year. *She was the Mare in the Moon*, he realized all at once, *and she's just as real as anything else*. He never really thought about it before, and he suddenly wondered if Princess Luna had heard all his wishes from his youth while she was in the moon. He had only seen her for a brief while at the 'Summer Sun Celebration' last year, but he was enraptured by her beautiful appearance. Her navy coat, her flowing blue mane that seemed to glisten with a hundred stars and her long, graceful wings. He would never forget the way she looked at him for just a moment: her large eyes that seemed to glow like the moon itself pierced his soul, and he had felt, just for an instant, that she knew all about him. It wasn't until just now that he understood that feeling. *She heard my wishes. She probably knows me better than anypony else*. He felt very vulnerable, looking up at her moon, wondering if she was watching him right now.

With a deep sigh, he restarted his new poem, making a wish he'd never made before....

*"Star light, star bright,  
Diamond up in Luna's night,  
Hear my cry, hear my plight,  
Grant me the wish I make tonight.*

*So many wrongs to be made right,  
Landing all within your sight.  
Princess would you please alight  
On Earth before the dawning light,*

*To visit those who dream they might  
Someday own the gift of flight.  
Cast your gaze upon the sight  
Of one denied her own birthright*

*Please O Princess of the Night,  
Dear Luna with your stars so bright,  
Use your magic to make right  
Destiny's cruel act of spite*

*Star light, star bright,  
By the ivory moonlight,  
Before the darkest hour of night,  
Please grant the wish I make tonight.”*

The moonlit sky gave no response, but Macintosh thought he felt a presence. Out of the corner of his eye he thought he saw a deep blue figure, but as he turned to look it vanished. He suddenly felt very serene, his wish made in more sincerity than any he had made as a foal. Staring into the star-filled canopy, he still longed for the ability to soar among the clouds, but if given the choice, he would gladly give up that gift to the one who deserved it more than he.

After watching the stars shine for a few more minutes he returned to the tent and bid his friends a goodnight. They invited him to meet up again tomorrow, which he happily accepted.

The trip back to the farm was unusually peaceful for the large stallion, and he was suddenly filled with a feeling of excitement for the day ahead.

“Princess Luna,” he said softly, glancing again at the shining moon, “Ah sure hope Ah get ta meet ya someday.”