

## The Creature That Came to Ponyville

*A My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic fanfiction by Friendly Uncle*

### Part 4: The Assimilation

Celestia's sun lit up the sky in a riotous display of color as it sank slowly beyond the horizon, its dull orange glow reflected off the shiny surface of countless apples in Appleoosa's vast orchard. An amber yellow pony with a dirty blonde mane stood atop a rocky outcropping overlooking the orchard, a buffalo girl at his side, smiling down at the wonderful sight.

"Never thought I'd see the day," commented Braeburn, "Appleoosa's orchards pristine and growin', and the buffalo roamin' happily through it, and all it took was an apple pie."

"I am truly grateful that our people could come to an understanding," said Little Strongheart, letting her head rest against Braeburn's shoulder. Braeburn felt his heart skip a beat, and the barest hint of a blush appeared on his cheek. He hurriedly swiveled around so that he was facing the buffalo directly, gazing into her beautiful eyes.

"I gotta say Strongheart, I was kind of wonderin'... if maybe the two of us couldn't come to an understandin' of our own," he said quickly, trying and failing to keep a hopeful smile off of his face. Little Strongheart blinked up at him.

"Between us? I don't understand."

"Well..." Braeburn pawed the ground agitatedly, suddenly unable to meet the buffalo's gaze. "I know you and me... we ain't from the same place, ain't from the same people, but... I have to tell ya... and I don't know how you and yours would say somethin' like this... but after the way you handled yourself during the troubles I just gotta say Little Strongheart I think you're the whole steamboat, and that's a fact. And I understand if'n you don't feel the same way, given' we ain't even the same species and all, but if you did..."

He grinned nervously, while Little Strongheart let out a small laugh. Braeburn's blush reappeared and intensified as the buffalo moved closer, until their noses were very nearly brushing.

"I don't entirely understand the expression you're using," Little Strongheart giggled, "but I think I get the gist of it... were you hoping for something... like this...?"

She closed her eyes and pursed her lips, and Braeburn felt his heart leap with joy as he leaned in towards her.

Then, to his shock and chagrin the Buffalo suddenly pulled back, staring at him in surprise.

"What, is it my breath?"

"Braeburn, what's that!?"

Strongheart pointed at Braeburn's chest with one slender hoof, and he looked down to see three points of red light arranged in a triangle on the front of his vest. The pony reared in surprise, but the lights followed his movements, settling back over his heart when he returned to his hooves. Braeburn and Strongheart looked around in panic, but they could see nothing else anywhere nearby.

"What the hay is goin' on!?" asked Braeburn, shying further back towards the edge of the outcropping.

"It must be the spirits!" said Little Strongheart, "they're trying to tell us something! Oh, maybe they don't approve of us!"

"Breed 'em!" swore Braeburn, rearing up on his hind legs again. "You hear me, whoever you are!? I love this here buffalo and if anypony or anyone has a problem with it then they're gonna answer to me! We gonna settle this AAAAAAPPLEOOSA STYLE!"

He brandished a small apple pie and waited, ready to hurl his weapon at the first sign of danger.

Little Strongheart's ear twitched, and then she gasped, pointing. Braeburn saw it too, a shimmer in the air like the outline of a tall, almost invisible being standing before them. The three dots on Braeburn's chest seemed to be connected to the thing by streaks of nearly invisible light. Twin glows, like burning coals, appeared near the top of the mirage. Its hideous voice tore through the twilight air.

"AAAAAPPLES!?"

There was a moment of tense silence, and then the red lights disappeared, and the shimmering figure faded from view, accompanied by the sound of heavy footsteps and something muttering to itself in disgust.

"... what is this I don't even," Braeburn managed.

"I think you chased the spirits off!" said Little Strongheart.

"Really!?"

"Either that or your pathetic attempt to intimidate them with an apple pie left them embarrassed to even think of stooping to take your life and they left us alone."

"... I can live with that."

Little Strongheart kissed him, and then they shared the pie.

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Fluttershy hit her head on the floor as she fell, crying out in pain. She had knocked herself dizzy, and her limbs were paralyzed with fear, but even at her best she wouldn't have been able to move before the creature landed. Its four hooves hit the floor with a bang and its dripping maw of razor teeth filled her vision like every nightmare she'd ever had come to life. Ropes of drool splattered over the pegasus' face and mane as that mouth full of teeth drew closer. Its lips peeled back and its jaws slowly levered open to reveal a second pair of teeth behind the first, emitting a soft, paralyzing hiss as they inched towards her.

Fluttershy had always been a nervous pony. Even situations that other ponies found routine or boring could frighten her. Things that legitimately scared her friends reduced her to bowel-emptying terror. Staring death in the face and entirely unable to find either her fight or flight button Fluttershy could only try to dig backwards into the floor with her shoulder blades and hope she woke up. The closest thing to coherent thought that she was capable of was a string of frantic mental profanity that would have made Rainbow Dash blush, but if she could have thought about it she would have been surprised that the creature even had time to kill her before her heart simply exploded.

Then the teeth abruptly left her line of sight as the creature reared backwards slightly, turning its phallic black skull to stare down the length of its powerful blade-tipped tail. Barely able to think, Fluttershy found her eyes following the creature's gaze to Angel, grabbing the end of the creature's tail and digging his buck teeth ineffectively but determinedly into the creature's chitinous hide. Snarling, almost in annoyance, the creature raised its tail to its mouth, jaws widening as it prepared to snack the rabbit off of itself.

Fluttershy's eyes narrowed.

The thing was threatening her *baby*.

"YOU PUT HIM DOWN!"

The creature's head whirled back around, inner jaws shooting outwards to punch a hole in Fluttershy's skull. But the pegasus was already moving, thrusting backwards powerfully with her wings and bucking upwards as hard as she could with all four hooves. She couldn't throw the creature off of herself, or even propel it any significant distance, but it was knocked off balance. Its teeth barely missed her, leaving a series of shallow cuts on her cheek, and before it could get itself back properly onto its hooves Fluttershy had shoved herself away from it, rolling into the nearby wall. Angel leaped off of the creature's thrashing tail and landed beside her, tugging on

her wing in an attempt to get her up.

It didn't matter now, though. The only way out of the room was through the creature, its powerful tail making even flight unsafe in the close quarters of Fluttershy's cottage. The creature knew it too, and it stalked forward unhurriedly as Fluttershy stumbled to her feet. It let out a long, chittering hiss as it stalked its prey, perfectly willing to take its time. The creature couldn't have known, even if any of her friends would have told it, what a mistake it was to back Fluttershy into a corner.

Faced with death on hooves, Fluttershy pushed Angel behind herself, flipped her bangs out of her face, spread her wings in an instinctual threat display, and unleashed the full power of The Stare.

The effect on the creature was immediate. It lowered its head and screamed, tail lashing about itself, every muscle bunching. Its hooves tore splintering gouges in the floor and its tail embedded itself in a rafter, shaking the entire ceiling. Fluttershy wasn't even sure how her stare was affecting the thing, it had no eyes that she could discern, but despite clearly wanting to it was unable to move a step further. The Stare kept the monster at bay as surely as an invisible wall of iron.

Fluttershy didn't relax. She planted her hooves firmly and continued to direct her baleful gaze at the creature. She knew as long as she continued to use her power that she and Angel were safe- The Stare had reflected the horrific powers of a cockatrice and even a hint of it had been enough to cow a dragon. The creature could not hurt her now. The moment she let her concentration drop would be a different story. Fluttershy's experience with animals was mostly restricted to the sort that wouldn't eat ponies, but she knew enough about animal behavior in general to guess at this thing's motives. She knew that if she let her guard down for an instant the creature would kill her.

The thing's tail carved a long groove in the floorboards and it slammed its hooves repeated on the ground, never ceasing its nightmarish wail as it fought to penetrate the barrier of Fluttershy's stare. It carried on for what seemed like hours as Fluttershy strained to continue staring it down, sweat lathering her flanks and eyes beginning to burn. The creature screamed and thrashed and pounded its head on the walls.

And finally, it slumped to the ground and lay still.

Fluttershy's heart skipped a beat, and she risked a blink, cringing as her eyelids closed over painfully dry eyes, pushing tears down over her cheeks. The creature didn't move, but its lips peeled back and it made a low, gentle hissing sound through its teeth, almost like pleading. Fluttershy continued to stare until, at last, the creature turned its head away and curled around itself, assuming its best approximation of a fetal position, still making that low, begging hiss.

Fluttershy closed her eyes gratefully and rubbed them with one hoof. She could feel her wing muscles creak with tension as she gently folded them again. Angel leaped on top of her and huddled underneath her mane, scared out of his small bunny mind. The creature continued lying on the floor.

Slowly and delicately as she could, prepared to leap backwards and out of harm's way at an instant's notice, Fluttershy took a step forward and gently stroked a hoof down the creature's spine, between its dorsal horns. It shuddered, and the hissing lowered slightly in pitch.

"There there," Fluttershy soothed, "it's alright now."

She continued to stroke the creature until it began to slowly unroll, raising its enormous head to regard her with the smooth cowl that covered its face. There were no sensory organs to be found, but Fluttershy felt nonetheless that the creature could see her in some manner, and it was studying her now. She raised her other hoof and stroked the long ridge of its skull as gently as she could, leaning in to press her cheek against it.

"You're very disoriented aren't you?" she whispered, "you poor thing, you're not from anywhere around here. You don't have any idea what I am or where you are! But everything's going to be okay now, I'm going to take care of you and maybe my friends and I can figure out a way to send you back home."

The creature stopped hissing and turned its head to gently but awkwardly nuzzle Fluttershy's cheek. The pegasus giggled and hugged it softly around the neck.

"Now, what to name you..."

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Luna yawned hugely as she slowly drifted into consciousness, looking around blearily as she did so. She wasn't in her room.

"... oh no... not the moon again!"

She was on her hooves and upside down on the ceiling, wings flapping madly, before sense reasserted itself. The moon didn't have ceilings. Nor, for that matter, did it have the embers of dying fires in fireplaces, comfy cushions, or bookshelves. Sheepishly, looking around to make sure nopony had seen her, Luna drifted back down to the floor and the large pillow she'd been sleeping on. There was a small paper scroll sitting on it, which Luna telekinetically unrolled and read.

*Couldn't bear to wake you little sister, so I left you to spend the day in my bed. I'll see you at dusk. -Celestia*

Now she remembered. Luna had come to sit with Celestia as she went through her morning mail, and she must have fallen asleep. A quick glance at the clock told her that she still had some time before sunset, so she fell back onto the cushion with a sigh, stretching all four legs into the air. She felt good, for once. Something about Celestia's room had apparently calmed her sleep, which had been uncharacteristically devoid of nightmares. She felt well rested, though still lazy, staring up at the ceiling. She imagined that it was spinning slightly, sparking green and...

Wait, it was sparkling green.

And then a thick scroll of paper hit her in the face.

Celestia entered her room just in time to hear Luna's panicked yelp. Looking around, she found her sister lying on her bed and frantically trying to dig her way out from under a small mountain of paper.

"Luna? Are you alright?"

"IT'S FULL OF STARS!"

Celestia chuckled and magically raised the paper off of her sister. Her face lit up as she examined the top of the scroll and found familiar handwriting.

"Ah, it's from Spike and Twilight Sparkle! She's completed the assignment we gave her."

The two alicorns slowly eyed the length of the scroll. It had completely unrolled now, and very nearly circumnavigated Celestia's entire bedroom. Luna stared in awe at the sheer length of the report while Celestia found a smaller sheet of parchment inside the scroll, which turned out to be a cover letter.

"She regrets the excessive amount of time it took to compile the data," Celestia read, "and writes that with some more time she could produce a more exhaustive statistical spread, as she had difficulty locating any reliable astronomy texts written more than eight hundred years ago, but she hopes that this will do for now."

"We only gave her the assignment two and a half days ago," said Luna very quietly.

"Twilight is... very eager to please," Celestia chuckled, "Oh, this is interesting, she says her friend Fluttershy found a new type of creature near the Everfree Forest. And she was wondering... if we... knew what it was..."

"Celestia?" asked Luna, looking up sharply as her sister's voice slowly died away, "what's

wrong?”

Celestia wordlessly passed Luna the letter and pointed out the part of it where Twilight described Fluttershy's find. The pegasus had included some very detailed sketches. Luna's eyes widened.

“Celly, have you been in the habit of introducing new and unusual fauna into Ponyville's ecosystem since my banishment?”

“No.”

“...Damn.”

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The creature understood.

The queen had been altered somehow. Or perhaps the creature had not been born correctly. Their skins were different and the smells were all wrong and the queen would not produce the right pheromones or direct its thoughts the way the creature's instincts had led it to expect, but it was the queen and it must be obeyed. The creature did not know how to think for itself. The creature did not know what to do with confusion. There was only the indomitable will of the queen.

The queen knew how to think. The queen could reason and analyze and give orders. And the queen had given the creature orders. Therefore it was the queen. The creature did not have the mental space for a being that could give it orders that was not a queen, and therefore the small soft pink and yellow creature with wings was its queen.

It took a very long time for the creature to adjust to this, but by the time the moon had fully risen it knew what it had to do. The queen was young and small, perhaps still in the process of molting, and it was vulnerable. The queen needed drones, and eventually warriors, and then it could build a proper hive and a nest and begin to produce eggs.

The creature crept out into the dark.

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Ponyville didn't have enough medical emergencies to warrant a proper hospital. Examinations and outpatient procedures were performed in the doctor's offices, and the rare surgeries were typically flown to Canterlot for specialist care. A morgue was rarely necessary either, since most ponies died in their beds. As a result, Twilight Sparkle found herself in a little used white room in the back of town hall with Nurse Redheart, Zecora, and Mayor Mare. They were gathered

around a low table holding an unsettling, sheet-covered shape.

"I found her lying half in the river," Zecora explained while drawing a satchel out from underneath her cloak, "This was beside her."

Twilight Sparkle scrambled backwards with a cry as the zebra pulled out a hideous spider-like creature. Zecora let it fall to the floor with a muffled thump. The other ponies relaxed slightly once it was clear that the thing was dead.

"What is it?" asked the nurse, nudging its tail with one hoof.

"I have seen many strange creatures in the forest of Everfree, but the identity of this strange thing is beyond even me. It may have caused the death of Applejack's friend, but why would it simply die in the end?"

"No face," mused Twilight Sparkle, levitating the tiny monster onto another table and examining it as closely as she dared. "That orifice on the underside could be a mouth, but it doesn't have any teeth... and the tail doesn't look like it has any kind of a stinger."

"You think it was venomous?" asked Nurse Redheart.

"If this thing did kill Dollars to Donuts that's the only way I could think of it doing so," said Twilight, "it's not big enough to seriously injure her otherwise."

"But... she didn't die of any kind of poisoning," said the nurse slowly, glancing over at the sheet-covered corpse.

"Really?" Twilight blinked, "what was the cause of death?"

"Perhaps you should see," said Zecora, "explaining it would be beyond me."

Nurse Redheart drew back the sheet. Twilight Sparkle and the Mayor flinched at the sight.

"Okay," said the unicorn after she managed to keep her dinner down, "whatever this thing Zecora found is... I don't think it did that."

"This was clearly the work of some kind of monster," said the Mayor, frowning, "there are so many horrible things in the Everfree Forest, there's no telling which of them could do something like this."

"That's what I thought at first," said Redheart, "but the wound is... strange. It's not a claw mark, and it's not a bite either. Just a neat, round hole. I don't know what would cause something like



that.”

“The ribs are bent outwards,” said Twilight softly, ears laying back. “But the... hole doesn't go all the way through. It's an exit wound without an entrance.”

“Something inside of her forced its way out through her chest?” asked the Mayor.

Nurse Redheart nodded. The mayor excused herself to be violently ill.

“Many things in Everfree,  
would like nothing more than to eat a pony,  
but this body was not touched,  
I can't say I like the implications much.”

“I'll do some research,” said Twilight, slowly turning around to look back at the dead monster Zecora had brought. “And I want to talk to Fluttershy about this. I don't know if she'll be any help with Dollars here, but that thing you found reminds me of something she was telling me about earlier. Something that looks like a bug, but it isn't a bug... a mouth but no eyes... it might be related to this. And if we're starting to find weird things in Everfree that nopony has ever heard of before, it might be related to this poor pony dying of something that nopony has ever heard of before either.”

“An expedition into the forest might not be a bad idea,” said the nurse, “as much as I hate to think of something like this happening to anypony else... we really don't have any information here. If we could get a look at where she died, we might be able to figure out how it happened.”

“I could arrange such a journey,” said Zecora, “and ensure that everypony came back safely.”

“Good,” said Twilight, “it's way too late to risk a trip like that now, so how about this. Zecora, you can stay at the library tonight. Nurse Redheart, you come over tomorrow morning with anypony you'd like to bring, and then we'll stop by Fluttershy's place. If we do this fast we can get into the forest and back before dinnertime.”

“Sounds like a plan,” said Redheart. Zecora simply nodded.

“Good. Whatever did this, it's not going to hurt any more ponies if there's anything I have to say about it.

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Roseluck hummed to herself as she trotted down the cobblestoned street, Ponyville's street lamps lighting the way to her house and her snuggly wuggly bed. She'd stayed out much later than she'd intended, but when she hung out with her friends Lily and Flower Wishes she always

found she'd completely lost track of time. She wasn't worried though, she wouldn't be needed at the flower shop until mid afternoon, so she had plenty of time to catch up on lost sleep.

Lost in her thoughts, she didn't notice one of the lamps was giving off significantly less light than the others until the creature's tail snaked down and wrapped around her neck. She didn't even have time to scream. The powerful extremity pulled sharply upwards, and with a quiet snapping noise, Roseluck went limp.

Hissing softly to itself, the creature gathered up the pony and draped her over its neck before slipping down the lamp post and disappearing into the shadows.

-End of part 4

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I think that even if I continue writing for a hundred years I shall never cackle as diabolically as I did when I heard the cries of "*FLUTTERSHY! NOOOOOOOOO!!!*"

...she probably wasn't ever in any real danger. I can be realistic about how willing I'd be to actually hurt my waifu. But if everypony had been enthusiastic about the fic taking the darker road I might have seen just how dark I could have made it. As it is, I'm going to continue trying to balance the horror with cute. We'll see just how much mood whiplash I can generate.

Now I need a cute nickname for a xenomorph. Anyone have any suggestions? :3