Fanfic: Braveblossom (Part 1)



The spring sun rose over Craftville, illuminating the low two-story houses with melting snow still hanging from their roofs. The town was slowly waking up from the cold night. A cart moved leisurely along the deserted road, and window shutters were opening here and there.

One of these windows belonged to the room of a young pegasus named Braveblossom.

Bright light struck the eyes of the golden-maned filly.

“Mo-o-om, five more minutes,” the little pegasus muttered through her sleep.

“I don’t want to hear it! A merchant from Baltimare is coming to town today, and your dad and I have to deliver an order to Dodge Town,” came the reply. “So, march to breakfast and then

go do the shopping."

"Okay," the filly mumbled without opening her eyes, feeling the blanket slide off her. She tried to fight back, clutching the edge with a blue hoof, but it was clearly an unequal battle.

"Now!"

Resistance was futile. Shivering from the morning chill, she stretched sweetly and finally, reluctantly, got out of bed.

At the bottom of the stairs, a tantalizing aroma awaited her.

"Pancakes!" she shouted, picking up speed. Indeed, on the table was not the usual oatmeal, but the rosiest pancakes imaginable, covered in apple jam.

"Happy birthday, Bloom," said the grayish-white stallion standing by the stove. For some reason, only he called her by her favorite part of her name.

"Thanks, Dad," the filly said quickly, hopping to the table.

"Just make sure to chew properly," came the voice of her bustling mother from somewhere behind her.

"Of courf," the little pegasus replied with stuffed cheeks, looking more like a hamster than a pony.

"Alright, your dad and I are leaving. Make sure to wash the dishes." Her mom walked over, brushed a strand of golden hair from her face, and kissed her blue forehead. "Happy birthday, Brave. Don't forget to wear your pendant before you go out."

Nodding in response, Bloom continued to devour her festive breakfast. Soon, nothing was left of the pancakes—luckily, everyone had already left, so she could lick the remaining jam right off the plate.

Now, only the reflection of two raspberry-colored eyes remained there.

"Can this count as washed?" she asked herself a rhetorical question, then sighed and headed to the sink.

When the clean dishes took their place in the cupboard, it was time to find the shopping list. Naturally, it was found where it always was—in the bathroom, hinting that she needed to wash her face and brush her teeth.

Finishing her morning ritual and putting on the turquoise pendant given to her last birthday, the little pegasus stepped out into the street. Remnants of unmelted snow lay here and there,

craft shops were opening, and the sounds of banging and grinding could be heard from the workshops.

Ignoring the passersby, Bloom began to read the list.

“Hey, Bravery!” A familiar voice called out.

“I asked you not to call me that,” the pegasus tore her nose away from the list and saw a chestnut unicorn in large round glasses. “And anyway, what are you doing here? I thought you’d spend the entire break with your books.”

“If only! I got kicked out onto the street. They said I shouldn't sit in a dusty library for the last days of the holidays.”

“Indeed, I wonder why,” Bloom sighed and took a handkerchief out of her saddlebag. Pulling the glasses off **Skein’s** nose, she began to wipe the dust off them meticulously.

Even though he was two years older than her and had already received his cutie mark, he behaved exactly like a child—perhaps that was why they became friends.

“Oh, thanks,” he said. “And where are you going so early?”

“Shopping. Can’t you see? Oh, right,” the pony put his glasses back in place. “Want to come with me?”

“Oh, no, the market square is probably crowded. Let’s go to the antique shop instead; I saw a couple of board games there that I wanted to play, and it’s not as fun alone.”

“But not for long, I need to get to the merchant,” agreed the pegasus, who really didn’t want to wade into the crowd right now.

“Oh come on, he doesn’t leave until evening, we have time.”

The foals settled on a huge antique rug under a large display window filled with odds and ends. They played various games from *Ponopoly* to *Connect Four Hooves*, until it became impossible to read the dice.

“Mrs. Antique, could you turn on the light?” the pegasus asked, and only then realized that it was getting dark outside.

“Oh no,” escaped her lips. “I have to run,” she said, jumping up and rushing to the exit.

“Bye,” the unicorn replied to the empty room, where only a cloud of dust remained. “A-choo!”

“Bless you,” came Mrs. Antique’s voice from the back room.

Meanwhile, Bloom was galloping at full speed to the market square. All the stalls were already closed. Reaching the fountain, the pegasus saw a cart driving away into the distance.

“Oh no you don’t!” she said and, without slowing down, rushed after it.

While the pony ran past the abandoned mill and deserted fields, the merchant was already driving into the forest.

“Hey, wait!” the filly shouted in vain. It was dark in the forest, and she had to slow down. However, a couple of minutes later, she managed to catch up with the burly pony named **Wheeler**.

“W-wait,” she said, trying to catch her breath.

“What is it? What happened? You’re Smith’s kid, right?”

“Y-yes, phew, sorry, I completely lost track of time, and my parents asked me to buy parts for their orders.”

“Heheh, young and green. Alright, speak up, what do you need?”

“H-here,” the filly took the list out of her saddlebags.

“Let’s see,” the merchant mumbled under his breath, lighting a small glass lamp. “I have everything except the last one.”

“What’s that?” Bloom asked worriedly.

“Well, eggs for a cake. I don’t trade in eggs.” He paused, thinking. “Although I do have one. A Pen-penguin egg, Royal.”

“A delicacy, that is. From distant lands. But I doubt you can afford it; I won’t sell something like this for cheap.”

“For the cake,” the pegasus thought. *“Right, tomorrow morning we were going to celebrate my birthday, and the only farm in the village is unlikely to sell anything right now.”*

“I’ll take it! They gave me extra money!”

“Show me.” He leaned down and shone the lamp into her purse, then sharply raised it to the pegasus’s neck, causing the flame inside to flicker out. Lighting a new one, he continued, “Nah, not enough money. But I would trade for that amulet. I doubt I can sell the egg for more than that, and it’ll probably start to spoil soon, so let’s trade. It’ll cover the cost of all the other goods too.”

Bringing a hoof to her pendant, Bloom hesitated. Shifting her gaze to the cart, the pony saw

that very big—no, huge—egg in a basket. Surely a cake baked with it would be terribly delicious, but was it worth it?

On the other hand, she would keep a few coins she hadn't given the merchant, and the pendant... after all, it was a gift to her, so it was hers to do with as she pleased.

"Sold to Mr. Wheeler!" she shouted, trying to imitate an auctioneer.

Saying goodbye to the merchant, Bloom, no longer in a hurry and walking on three legs, set off on the return journey. The bags were filled to the brim with parts, so she had to carry the egg, which almost completely blocked her view, pressed against her chest. She had to throw away the basket, but a golden-orange feather found at the bottom, tucked behind her ear, decorated her yellow mane.

Approaching the edge of the forest, the pony felt the egg jerk, and then a crack was heard.

"No, did I squeeze it too hard?" the pegasus thought, slowing down. *"I need to be more careful."*

But after a couple of steps, the crunch repeated. The filly stopped, trying to examine the egg in the light of the sun setting over the town. Suddenly, something struck from within, punching a hole, and a massive beak appeared.

Startled by what she saw, she dropped the egg onto the ground, causing it to split into two halves. Gathering her courage, Bloom tried to see what had landed on the ground.

An ugly, four-legged creature unlike any bird, covered in skin, with two hooked things on its back.

Examining it, she brought her head closer, getting almost face-to-face with the creature. A squeak rang out, and the pegasus felt pain grip her nose.

Frightened, she immediately bolted. Ignoring the weight of the bags, the little blue filly galloped back toward the village, away from this little monster.

Reaching her house, from the chimney of which thick smoke was pouring, she tumbled inside, barely catching her breath.

"Braveblossom!" Mom cried out, running to the noise. "What happened?"

"M-monster," was all the pegasus could utter, gasping for air.

"Monster? Where?" asked her mother with alarm in her voice.

"In... in the forest," the daughter replied, still trying to catch her breath.

“In… the forest? How many times have we told you not to go that far? You know it’s unsafe. And where… where is your pendant?”

“L… l…” despite her fatigue, Bloom suddenly realized that telling the truth about her deal wasn't a good idea, or she’d definitely be in trouble.

“Lost it,” the pegasus lied, and unexpectedly for herself, burst into tears.

“Lost it? You’re sure you didn’t break it or smash it? Tell me, I won’t be angry.”

“N-no, lost it,” the daughter answered, sniffing into her hooves.

“Oh, Braveblossom, looks like you’re grounded. At the very least, don’t expect any cake. Tomorrow morning, Dad and I will try to find your pendant.”

“But what about…”

“No ‘buts’! It was our gift to you. Now tell me, where was this?”

Burning with shame for telling an even bigger lie, Bloom described the spot in the clearing. The only thing she didn't lie about was when Mom asked her to describe the monster.

“A griffon cub,” genuine amazement sounded in her voice. “And a total chick at that. What could they be doing here? You’re sure you didn’t see anyone else there?”

Bloom shook her hung head negatively in shame.

“Don’t be afraid, they aren’t dangerous. Surely its parents were somewhere nearby. And what were you doing in the forest with full bags anyway?”

“We have a headquarters there,” the pegasus quickly invented a silly lie.

“Headquarters? With Skein? So this isn’t the first time you’ve gone there? Braveblossom!” her mom called her by her full name, which boded nothing good. “I am very disappointed in your behavior. You are punished. I’ll inform Skein’s parents too; he’s a grown pony and should understand that you shouldn’t go into the forest alone. It’s late, go to your room and think about your behavior.”

“Smithy!” Mom shouted. “Put out the stove, we have to get up early tomorrow.”

It would have been better if Mom had yelled; the gentle tone meant that things were really bad now. It seemed she was truly upset.

“And I dragged Skein into this mess too, idiot,” the blonde pony scolded herself, going up to her room.

Sitting on the bed, the filly fell into thought. *"...and all because of that ugly bird..."* A sudden clap of distant thunder interrupted her thought; the window shutter slammed from a gust of wind, making her shiver from the cold despite the warm house. *"...a chick that I left alone on an empty road in the forest."*

Irritation was replaced by pity, and the feelings of disgust and fear that had made her gallop away were replaced by... concern?

"He'll freeze out there! So what if he's a monster? I can't just abandon him like that, especially since even Mom doesn't think he's dangerous."

A plan was needed. Sneaking out quietly was the least of her problems. A tent and flashlight lay nearby in the locker on the top shelf, a warm blanket in the drawer under the bed, but food... *"What do chicks even eat? Worms?"* Even the thought made her feel sick. *"Maybe grain? As they say, a chicken pecks grain by grain."*

The grains were under the stairs, and going there was extremely risky. *"Oh well, he'll survive one day without food, and tomorrow he'll be fed."*

Stuffing her bags, she heard another, closer clap of thunder, and a couple of seconds later, lightning. *"Raincoat!"* the filly thought, climbing back into the closet. Prudently stuffing her bed with clothes to simulate a sleeping pony, she turned off the light and went to the window.

Bloom had always wanted to try the secret way down from the house, but the occasion had never arisen. She had never been punished so severely before. Of course, like all young fillies, she occasionally got into scrapes, but either her "battle" name or her mom's "battle" youth saved her from this fate.

Of course, the pegasus could have tried to flutter out the window on her wings and probably wouldn't even have crashed, but the loud landing would surely be heard. So, she took her first step onto the wooden board on the facade under the window.

The height of the second floor didn't scare her, but another conversation with Mom in case of failure instilled much greater terror. The filly calculated her movements with filigree precision, moving slowly, placing her hooves from stone to stone, trying not to lose her balance.

And a couple of minutes later, her hooves finally touched the cool ground. All four legs ached; perhaps without the heavy bags, the pony could have overcome this obstacle much faster.

The first drop hit her nose. Pulling up her yellow hood, the filly first walked along the dark, deserted street, and then, giving in to emotion, broke into a light jog.

"After today, I can sign up for the Equestrian Athlete Program... if my legs don't fall off," she cheered herself up with a joke.

The road to the forest seemed like an eternity, thankfully the rain was light, and the light from rare lightning strikes kept her from losing her way. Entering the thicket, the pony was finally able to light the candle in the lantern. Walking a bit further, Bloom saw glints from the eggshell.

On the still-dry ground, curled up in a ball, lay the whimsical creature.

“A-are you asleep?” Bloom asked in a timid voice. The creature didn't answer her. *“Too late?”* her heart skipped a beat. Bringing the lamp closer, she saw one of those strange hooked limbs twitch slightly.

“Phew,” the pony exhaled with relief, taking the blanket out of her saddlebag. Spreading it on the ground, she reached out to the bird with some apprehension. Feeling the touch, it opened one eye and let out a pitiful squeak.

“Hush, I’ll warm you up now, just don’t bite me again, deal?”

As if obeying the persuasion, the creature didn't react to being moved and wrapped up. In the end, only a bald head stuck out of the warm blanket.

“You can’t even tell you apart from a regular giant chicken like this,” Bloom said and giggled at her own joke.

The rain intensified, beginning to break through the wet treetops. Figuring out where to pitch the tent, she heard another equally pitiful squeak.

“Hush, tomorrow Mom will find you and feed you…” the pegasus said, “…along with my tent and blanket,” she finished in a less cheerful voice. *“Idiot, thinking plans through in advance is definitely not my thing. No, this won’t do.”*

“Okay, I’ll take you to the old mill, it’ll be warm and dry there,” the pony said, not really hoping she’d be understood. She picked up the bundle and pressed it to her chest, just as she had once pressed the egg.

Another squeak rang out, and the agile head tried to bite her nose again. This time, the filly dodged.

“What did you promise me?” Bloom asked with a frown. Ignoring her, the bird squeaked again and tried to reach the filly’s nose.

“No!” the pony said a bit louder and lightly tapped the beak with her hoof. Surprisingly, it helped; the bird squeezed its eyes shut and pulled its head into the blanket.

“That’s better,” she said and marched toward the mill.

Leaving the forest, she had to lean over to protect the improvised bundle from the rain, using

herself as an umbrella. The path to the mill was much closer than to the village, and the blanket didn't have time to get wet.

Climbing inside, Bloom lit the flashlight that had gone out in the rain and hung it on the cracked wall, then set up the tent with a faded drawing of a black-and-white pony in stripes.

As if waiting for her to finish all her chores, the creature began to squeak again, only not pitifully anymore, but loudly and frequently. It stretched its head out of the bundle and opened its mouth.

“I don’t have any food, understand? No, absolutely none.” But the squeaking and movements didn't stop. Only rarely interrupted to look at the filly with a yellowish eye.

With every cry of the bird, Bloom felt more and more guilty about what had happened. “Alright, fine!” the filly snapped.

In childhood, Dad used to take Bloom fishing, and the moment with the worms stuck with her for life; he would pull them out from under stones and driftwood, genuinely surprised at her disgust.

“Never in my life thought this would come in handy,” the pegasus grumbled to herself, lifting stone after stone at the entrance. Already despairing, Bloom overturned a rotten board, and a heap of wriggling worms appeared before her eyes.

The urge to vomit made the filly lean to the side, but on an empty stomach, that was all that happened. Overcoming herself, the pony took out a handkerchief and began to slowly pick up the worms, trying not to look at them.

Holding it on an outstretched blue hoof, she returned to the creature.

“Here, eat.” Bloom held out the hoof with the handkerchief to the bird’s beak. It fell silent and stared at her uncomprehendingly. A squeak rang out again, the head went up, and the beak opened. “I have to feed you too?”

As if confirming her question, another squeak rang out. Taking one of the worms with her other hoof, Bloom threw it into the gaping mouth. The creature lowered its head, looked at her, and made several movements resembling a cough. But then, squeaking again, it opened its mouth.

“Looks like I won’t get off easy,” the filly thought to herself. And she lowered the worm more carefully onto the bird’s tongue. The beak closed and opened again.

Methodically, she fed the creature worm after worm. She had to return to the rotten board a few more times for a new portion before the chick quieted down and, it seemed, fell asleep.

At some point, Bloom even felt relief that she had managed to feed this… this… this beak.

“Decided. That’s what I’ll call you—**Beaky**,” she said quietly and, obeying a strange feeling, kissed the bird on the forehead. But he, paying no attention to what was happening, continued to sleep peacefully.

The rain had subsided by that time, and despite her fatigue, in high spirits, the filly splashed through puddles on her way home. In the dim moonlight, she suddenly saw a familiar yellowish glint in one of them.

“The feather! I completely forgot about it.” Approaching the puddle, she put it in her bag. *“I’ll have to attach it to some pretty hat,”* the pegasus thought to herself.

Despite the wet stones, climbing into her window turned out to be easier than climbing down. Shoving the clothes off the bed, Bloom flopped onto the pillow and fell asleep.

Sleep on an empty stomach dictated its own terms; a carrot on a string hung before her nose. While part of her understood the stupidity of what was happening, she continued to stubbornly walk forward. Her teeth clacked, trying to reach the hanging sweet, but every time she was just a couple of centimeters short.

Fortunately, before the dream turned into a nightmare, her mother’s voice woke her up:

“Brave, what is this mess?! Don’t you dare tell me this is because of yesterday’s conversation.”

“Sorry, Mom,” Bloom wheezed into the pillow.

“Alright, clean up your room and come to breakfast. When you’re ready, show us where you were yesterday.”

“Okay,” the pegasus answered, sliding off the bed.

It was no surprise that their search ended without result. But Dad told her about his childhood in Dodge City and about the benefits of certain mushrooms found at the edge of the forest.

The sun slowly passed its zenith, and the fruitless wandering among bushes and trees had to be stopped. During lunch, Mom said:

“Fine, to heck with that pendant. You can go play, but if I find out that you’re running around who-knows-where alone again, I’ll whip you so hard you won’t be able to sit.”

Bloom didn't know what “heck” was, but hearing such a threat from her mother for the first time, the golden-maned pony shrank into her chair, not daring to ask.

Silence hung until Dad chuckled.

“It’s not funny! Do you know how worried I was?” Mom continued. “We spoiled her, and you first of all.”

“She reminds me of someone.” Looking at her, the father stood up from the table with a smile and headed to the forge, afraid of getting a hoof to the neck.

“Skein is probably waiting for me,” Bloom muttered, trying to flow off the chair.

“And the dishes?” Mom asked sternly.

“Okay,” her daughter answered, already having crawled down. A hoof emerging from under the table grabbed a plate.

“All of it!” Mom said again, not changing the severity in her voice.

Bloom had to stand up to her full height and, with a grim grimace on her face, collect all the dishes from the table. Not the worst punishment for what happened, but not the most pleasant either.

Finished with the chores, the filly was outside again. Wasting no time, she went to her friend’s house. Knocking on the door with a hoof, the filly was greeted by his mom, who said he was sitting in the treehouse.

Climbing up the cobbled-together ladder and poking her head out, she saw Skein with his nose buried in one of the books that cluttered everything around.

“I don’t even remember the last time I came up here. What are you doing here?”

“Reading,” Skein answered briefly, absorbed in the book.

“No, I can see that. Why are you doing it here?” Bloom said, finally climbing up.

“Sitting in the library is harmful, walking is dangerous, so they brought the books I asked for up here.”

“Sorry, you got punished because of me,” the filly said, lowering her nose.

“Ha!” Skein exclaimed, lifting his head. “I don’t recall ever being punished, but if this is what it looks like, I need to get into trouble more often. By the way, what’s this forest headquarters?”

“Long story,” sighed the blonde pony. “I’m here on business. I need to find something out from you.”

“Ask away,” the colt answered in an interested and cheerful voice.

“What do royal penguin children eat?” the filly asked seriously. Skein even lowered his book in amazement.

“Are you joking?” he replied, as if sensing some trick.

“I’m serious.”

“We-e-ell,” he pondered. “Regular penguins eat fish, and they feed their children by…” he paused, trying to think of a softer word, then continued, “…vomiting food into their beaks. How royal penguins are fed, I have no clue.”

Imagining this picture, Bloom froze for a second. Shuddering, she asked anyway, “And how do typhons feed?”

“Who?”

“Typhons.”

“I don’t know what that is.”

“Well, creatures, on four legs.”

This time, the pause hung for a minute. “Ah! Griffons! I read about them in a very old book. They say they ate horses.”

“Who?”

“We-e-ell, they’re like us, only bigger. Their descendants live in Saddle Arabia; maybe ponies descended from them too.”

“And what happened to them?”

“I don’t know, maybe these griffons ate them all.”

A chill ran down Bloom’s spine.

“I see. And Mom said they aren’t dangerous.”

“And she was right to say so; they live in Equestria. It’s strange you haven’t heard anything about them.”

“Wait, I’m confused. They eat certain horses, which, by the way, I haven’t heard of either, and at the same time, they live among us.”

“Well, we aren’t horses,” Skein replied with equanimity. “How should I know? And anyway,

what kind of strange questions are you asking?"

"The less you know, the better you sleep," Bloom replied boldly and headed for the ladder. "I have to go, don't get bored."

"Uh-huh. 'Thanks, Skein, what would I do without you!' You're welcome. You're always bustling about," her friend jokingly mimicked the filly.

Already descending the ladder, Bloom stuck out her tongue in response, and then her head disappeared from view. "Thanks!" came from below.

"So, fish," Bloom thought leaving Skein's yard. *"But where do I get it? Dad caught it for some crafts; unlikely anyone in the village sells it. And I'm certainly not going to..."* Memories of the feeding method made the filly feel sick again.

"No, I won't. Maybe chicks can't eat it whole; they don't have teeth. I just need to grind it into mush."

Thinking about this, she returned home. Mom wasn't there, and Dad was working in the forge. Therefore, she could boldly take whatever was needed. Climbing into the attic, the blue pony found a fishing rod; in the kitchen, a mortar and knife were found, and nearby, under the stairs, grain.

Packing everything into bags, she headed to the river that flowed nearby. Finding worms turned out to be much harder this time, but she managed to pull a couple out from under some stone. Even though the worms themselves didn't cause such disgust anymore, baiting them on the hook turned out to be incredibly repulsive.

Understanding nothing about fishing, she cast the line. Maybe she was lucky, or the local fish were so used to a carefree life, but within ten seconds the float jerked sharply downwards.

Remembering Dad, the pony pulled the line and fished out a small fish. Taking it off the hook, she repeated everything again. This time, the bite took longer; she had to stare at the float bobbing with the waves for about three minutes.

Now the pegasus had two fish; this should be enough, especially since the sun was already leaning towards sunset.

Turning off the road, already approaching the Mill, the pegasus heard a squeak—*"Oh, has she been yelling like this all day?"*

Approaching the tent, Bloom unzipped it; sitting on four paws in the unwrapped blanket was the creature familiar to her. But in daylight, it didn't look as disgusting as before. The skin was covered with a small, barely noticeable yellowish fuzz.

Seeing the pony, Beaky quieted down.

“Look what I brought you,” Bloom said, taking a fish out of the bag.

Smelling the fish, the bird began to scream again, sticking its beak up. *“Oh, I should have prepared everything right away!”* Bloom thought to herself and reached for the mortar.

After some time, while the filly prepared the fish, the endless bird crying ceased. The fish was bony, and Bloom, not knowing how to clean it, cut it into pieces along with the scales. Now she had to pick the bones out of the meat. *“Seems like I’m turning into a monster now. Poor fishy…”* the pegasus thought to herself.

Finishing, she ground everything in the mortar and slowly fed it to the bird. There was not the slightest desire to cook the second fish, so she hid it above an empty millstone.

Returning to Beaky, she tried to feed him ground grain, but he almost immediately refused to eat it.

“Eh, you only want gross stuff,” the filly sighed.

Beaky stood up, took a couple of awkward steps, and leaned against her front legs, letting out a squeak. Touched, the filly tried to stroke this clumsy creature with a free hoof. She had always wanted a dog, or at worst a kitty, but she wasn't allowed to have even a mouse.

Mom definitely wouldn't let her keep… this. *“I hope Wheeler wasn't mistaken, and it’s a penguin.”*

“I’ll need to buy a mortar and knife with that money, or my parents will notice they’re missing.”

Bloom was still ashamed that she lied to her mom, but there was nowhere to go now. Waiting until Beaky fell asleep, the pony returned him to the tent and went home, taking only the bag.

Understanding that now another tiny life depended on her, she would try to treat everything with greater responsibility.

The holidays were ending and school began; every day after classes, Bloom performed the daily ritual of catching fish, feeding, and caring for the little creature.

Every time she came to the mill, the filly heard pitiful squeaks. At some point, she decided to tell Skein about it; after all, it was evident that a single meal was insufficient, and her friend studied in the second shift.

“A griffon?” Skein pronounced in surprise when he saw the creature.

“Definitely not a penguin?” Bloom asked with fading hope.

“Look at him, where have you seen a penguin with four legs?” he said, peering at the griffon.

The body and hind legs of the creature were covered with yellowish fur with black spots; the front paws and beak were avian. Wings, not yet covered with feathers, flapped at his sides now and then.

“As if you’ve seen one,” the filly snorted. “Are you absolutely sure?”

“Definitely, and you’ve been hiding him for…” he pondered. “Three weeks?”

“What else could I do? Look at how she… he…” Beaky no longer looked like the disgusting creature the pony saw in the egg.

“Strange.”

“Of course, it’s a griffon,” after studying him a bit more, he added. “And it’s a boy.”

“What? How did you figure that out?” the filly asked in surprise.

“Just trust me,” Skein said, embarrassed, deciding not to tell the young pegasus how the gender of dogs and other animals is determined.

“And what do you plan to do with him?”

“Take care of him. Besides me, she… he has no one.”

“Gonna be his mom?” Skein asked sarcastically.

“Yes,” Bloom answered honestly, not understanding the mockery.

“But what about his parents? They are surely looking for him.”

“I told you I bought him from a merchant. Where are we supposed to look for them?”

“True. Come to think of it, the Griffon Kingdom is on the other side of the Celestial Sea. That’s very far.”

“Kingdom?” Bloom asked, trying to grasp the meaning.

“Yes, why does that surprise you?”

“I thought he was, well, like a dog.”

“Hahahaha!” Skein laughed good-naturedly. “No, they are sapient. Alright, I’ll help you look

after him. But if we see his parents, we'll give him back immediately, agreed?"

The filly nodded. Beaky, who had listened to everything attentively, waited for a pause and inserted his "Peeeep!", hinting that it was time to feed him.

Bloom showed Skein how to properly clean the fish and how to feed Beaky. What was disgusting to her, Skein perceived with the curiosity of a researcher. He kept asking various questions to which Bloom had no answers.

And so spring ended, in caring for the chick, in attempts to combine this with homework, which, it felt, was only becoming more abundant every day.

In the summer, Beaky became more active, even started to play and run. Bloom forbade the griffon from leaving the mill, for which Skein kept calling her 'Mom'. She really didn't like this, but she had to put up with it; anything was better than 'Bravery'.

With the remaining money, she bought a bunch of different toys and crafts for Beaky, and dragged a heap of odds and ends from home. Skein brought a couple of books which he read aloud to the griffon. They spent entire days at the mill, which was no longer as abandoned as it might have seemed at first glance.

Bloom's mother didn't like that she disappeared somewhere all day, but seeing with what diligence and speed the pony began to do all the chores around the house, she didn't forbid her anything. Skein's parents, on the contrary, were happy that their son wasn't sitting with books all day, although the colt's changed behavior caused them concern.

Summer flew by much faster than Bloom would have liked; the first yellow leaves began to appear on the trees, and eventually, rainy autumn arrived.

At this time, a fair with a circus came to the artisan village. Passing from Dodge City to Baltimare, it stopped here for only one day. This was the only entertainment in the area, so the school declared a holiday, understanding that the children wouldn't be up for lessons.

So it was for Bloom and Skein; they spent the whole day at the fair, only peeking into the mill in the morning. Despite the overcast weather, the fair worked until the evening. Returning home and having dinner, Bloom tried to go out again.

"Where are you going, Brave?" Mom frowned.

"I... I need to run to Skein's," said Bloom.

"It's late and rain will start soon, go tomorrow," the blue pony replied.

“It’s just about tomorrow’s lessons, I didn't finish anything again. Just for an hour, one hoof here, the other there. Please!” Bloom found an excuse.

“Fine, but no longer,” Mom reluctantly agreed.

Of course, the filly wasn't going to any Skein. The griffon, left alone all day, was surely terribly hungry.

Approaching the mill, Bloom was alerted by hoofprints in the wet earth, and also, no squeaking was heard. Carefully, she went inside, but there was nothing there. Beaky was gone, and along with him the blanket and some toys.

Shock seized the filly; Bloom didn't understand what was happening.

“Could he have been stolen?” the pony thought. *“But by whom?”* Finally putting two and two together, the filly realized who could be walking along this road in the evening.

“No, no-no-no,” she thought with horror at her conclusion. *“The circus? Did they take him to the circus? Fool! I told him not to leave here!”*

In horror, the pony rushed along the road leading to Baltimare, just as she had once run after the merchant. To top it all off, a downpour began. Trees along the forest road saved her a little from the rain, but stumbling in the dark, she fell nose-first right into the mud several times.

“Why do they need him? To display him for the amusement of the public like other odd animals,” thoughts were distracting; she needed to calm down and focus, she didn't want to fall anymore.

About an hour later, the tired, breathless, and wet pegasus caught up with the fair caravan, which had decided to wait out the downpour. There was no one outside; apparently, everyone was sitting in their wagons.

Wasting no time, she headed to the long string of trailers; among them here and there were cages in which unusual beasts had been shown today. Reaching the first one, the filly saw a funny bird with a long neck. A large egg lay there too, but not as huge as the one from which the griffon had hatched.

“And why didn't I bring him home right away? Then everything would have definitely turned out fine, at least for Beaky.”

Walking a bit further, she saw a large bear peacefully sleeping, hugging a similar white lump.

“I only thought about myself. If I hadn't left him, nothing would have happened.”

She remembered only three such cages at the fair, which meant Beaky would definitely be in the next one. But there turned out to be only brightly colored bats. *“What if I was wrong, and*

Beaky isn't here? Or he's somewhere in one of these houses on wheels? How will I find him then? They definitely won't give him back nicely." Panic seized the filly again.

But she couldn't retreat; she accelerated and ran to the head of the caravan. Nothing resembling those carts with beasts caught her eye anymore.

"This is it. How brave I am, couldn't even find my friend, now he..." she suddenly stopped without finishing the thought.

A large barred box was nailed to the back of one of the vans. Huddled in the very corner lay Beaky, curled up in a ball. There was no time for thought; the rain was subsiding, and voices were heard somewhere. She needed to take him and run into the forest.

Sliding the bolt, the filly pulled the grate toward herself, but it didn't yield; a black padlock hanging below prevented this. Not knowing what to do, Bloom grabbed the first stone she found lying by the road and struck it.

A loud clang rang out, but the lock didn't even think of opening. She struck again and again.

"What are you doing?" the pegasus heard a voice coming from behind and turned around in horror. Two sturdy stallions stood behind her.

"That's my griffon!" Bloom blurted out immediately, stepping away from the cage. "You stole him!"

"Stole him?" one of the ponies laughed. "He walked out to us himself, and hungry by the looks of it, so we fed him."

"I... I'm taking him back!" she shouted.

"Why's that? Who are you anyway?" said the stallion with a spot on his forehead; he took a step forward to get a better look at the filly.

"That's my griffon, and I won't leave him, take me with him if you have to!" Misunderstanding the stallion's intentions, she backed away.

"That's unlikely," chuckled the stallion with a long beard.

It seemed she had already seen them at the fair; the sturdiest of them, with a white spot smeared like a blot on his forehead, was the strongman lifting hundred-pood weights like a feather. And the stallion whose beard, braided into a pigtail, almost touched the ground, showed children unusual beasts.

"But I... I found him..." not knowing what to say, Bloom continued in a timid voice. It was unlikely they remembered just another little pegasus coming to their fair. Realizing that she

seemed to have lost Beaky forever, the filly burst into tears.

Meanwhile, hearing a familiar voice, the little griffon stuck his head out of the cage and shouted in a voice sounding more like a squeak, “Mama!”

“Well, how about that,” said the stallion, scratching his beard with a hoof.

“Is she... his mom?” the strongman’s voice, which had initially seemed threatening to Bloom, now sounded rather childishly surprised, and even confused.

“Don’t talk nonsense! Next you’ll say you and that bear are brothers,” his friend laughed into his beard at a joke only he understood.

“Mama!” the plaintive voice of the griffon rang out again.

“I don’t know what’s going on here, but so be it,” the strongman took keys from his belt and began to unlock the padlock.

Bloom watched this, not believing her eyes, afraid to utter a word.

“Hey! What are you doing?” his friend said, apparently also not believing what was happening. “He’ll bring us a fortune!”

“Yeah, and a heap of problems; it’s a griffon. They are all a real ‘gift’. We raise him, and then what? He’ll ditch us at the first opportunity. And too many questions will arise. I deal with this later? I have enough other worries without defending the caravan from a griffon,” it seemed the disgruntled monologue continued for some time.

But Bloom didn't care about that, because as soon as the grate opened, Beaky ran out and rushed into Bloom’s embrace.

“See?” said the first stallion. “Money isn't worth this.”

“Fine, to heck with both of you,” Bloom heard the familiar word from the second stallion’s lips again.

Squeezing the little griffon in her embrace, Bloom decided that she was no longer going to hide him from her family. She would find a way to explain everything to her parents. The little ball of fur pressed firmly to her chest with a hoof was her responsibility, and she would never expose him to danger again.

Sniffling from the cold, but with a broad smile on her face, the little pegasus marched back to the village, and from under the mud on her flank, a scarlet flower in a gold setting shone beautifully.

Under the supervision of the Mare in the Moon, Bloom reached home only late at night, where the light was still on. The door seemed terribly heavy to her; she understood with her heart how worried her parents were and what a scolding would follow, but everything was decided.

“The circus? Oh, come on, she’s not like you at all...” *“Scree-e-ak,”* came the noise from the door.

“Brave, Brave is that you?” came her mother’s anxious voice and the accelerating tapping of hooves on the floor.

“Y-yes, and I’m not alone,” the little filly began uncertainly, but before she could say her prepared speech, she was in an embrace.

“Never, never scare us like that again!” Mom said, and pulling away from her slightly, looked her straight in the eyes.

“Of course,” Bloom replied, not noticing sudden tears rolling down her cheeks.

Her mother’s gaze slowly moved behind the pegasus’s back. “And who is that? A griffon? Where did he come from?”

“I... I’ll explain everything,” Bloom answered, wiping a tear with a dirty blue hoof.

“Well of course, but first you... you both need a hot bath, you’re soaked through and dir...” Mom’s gaze caught on the image on her daughter’s thigh, and a slight smile touched her dark blue lips.

Epilogue

“Oof,” exhaled the gray earth pony, placing a new batch of boards at the roots of a huge oak.

High above it was noisy; a hammer banged, a saw worked nearby, and a huge wooden structure spread out on the massive branches, wrapping around the trunk like a bagel. Rolling from two lower branches to higher ones, the future house promised to be at least strange. Initially, the project wasn't supposed to be so big, but getting carried away, the friends settled on this very plan.

Deciding to take a break, Smith went to a small folding table, leaving shallow footprints in the snow. Winter was ending, and very soon there would be no time for such amusements. Approaching, he took a thermos and poured himself some tea.

“Want some?” the stallion asked a blue nose wrapped in warm clothes.

“No.” Indignant ruby eyes appeared from under the hat. “But you didn't build *me* a house.”

“What do you mean I didn't build one, look,” laughing good-naturedly, the gray pony pointed

to a small two-story building three hundred meters away from them.

“You should have built it on the tree right away! There’s just a spare room left there.”

“Don’t be mad, Bloom, we didn't know back then that you’d have wings,” the stallion extended a hoof and lightly poked the interlocutor’s warm nose. “Anyway, Mom still won’t let you climb up there until you learn to use them; you can see yourself how high we had to build.”

A smile appeared on the little pegasus’s rosy face.

“I forgive you.”

“Forward, Aunt Olivia!” a voice rang out in the distance. From their home, with paws outstretched and wings spread, the little griffon was flying toward them.

Well, or almost “flying”. Deftly moving three hooves, a gray pegasus with a golden mane was running toward the table; the fourth was raised high above her head, where Beaky was positioned.

Over the winter, the little griffon had grown; his body was completely covered in bright yellow fur with contrasting black spots, and feathers began to appear on his wings.

Approaching, the mother lowered the griffon to the ground; Bloom leaned down and extended her folded front hooves, calling Beaky. Wincing from the cold snow under his paws, the little flyer marched, funnily moving both left then both right legs alternately.

“Just look at him. Pity no one ever answered our letters.”

“But I haven’t seen you so happy since Bloom’s birth.”

“That’s until the loom in my workshop, which is on its last legs, finally falls apart, because the new one has turned into *this*,” she raised her head and looked into the tree crown. “Couldn't you have made the floors straighter?”

“Just right for a cat house,” Dad joked, finishing his tea. “Besides, we don’t have much time left; soon you won’t have time for work at all.”

“Yes-yes, I think I can guess which foals will be gathering there to drink cider while Beaky grows and I babysit at home.” She cast a judging glance at her husband. “I don’t have enough hooves for you two.”

“A foal in every hoof!” laughing, the gray pony went for the last batch of boards.

Fanfic: Beaky (Part 2)



A yellow streak of lightning tore through the rooms, winding around the branching trunk, deftly leaping over thresholds and maneuvering among scattered belongings.

Round and round, the floorboards, unprepared for such trials, shuddered now and then under the stomping of fast clawed paws.

And so it went, again and again, time after time. This could have gone on forever had the hatch in the living room not opened, revealing a blue muzzle with golden hair.

Keeping the pace, the bright spark made a jump and, flipping in the air, landed facing the guest, sliding backward another ten centimeters on his paws.

The pony ducked for a few seconds to avoid the clouds of dust spreading in all directions.

“Still running?” said the pegasus, reappearing. “A little more and you would have knocked me over.”

“Sorry, Mom,” the griffon replied, shamefully lowering his beak and closing his eyes.

“I asked you to call me Bloom. And look at this dust, who’s going to sweep up after you?”

“Bloom!” Beaky answered smiling without raising his head, then one yellow eye opened and looked merrily at the pony.

“Cheeky!” the filly blurted out and theatrically puffed out her cheeks.

Seeing this, the griffon tucked his front avian legs under his white belly, keeping his hind legs raised, preparing to pounce like a cat. Waving his tail from side to side, he signaled that he was about to attack the defenseless pegasus.

“I surrender!” exhaled the pony, raising her hooves up, and immediately leaning on them, she climbed inside.

Like all the rooms in this house, the living room was narrow; a wide balcony door took up most of the useful space. If not for the two armchairs standing on either side of it, this place could well have been called a hallway.

“If only your energy could be channeled in the right direction.”

“And which one is that?”

“We-e-ell, if the river gets shallow, we’ll know who to use to spin the water mill.”

“Oh no, then there won’t be any fish, and without it, I’ll get weak and won’t be able to run so fast.”

“Actually, that’s why I came. I’m going to cook wheat porridge for breakfast. Do you want some?”

“Maybe fish instead?” he said in a pitiful voice, knowing what answer he would get.

“Until you catch it, be content with what there is,” saying this, the pegasus backed toward the balcony. “Last one there washes the dishes!”

“Hey, that’s not fair, I still don’t know how to…” Too late; left alone, he sighed, grabbed something from the next room, and headed for the hatch with the golden feather hanging in a frame above it.

Descending the ladder nailed to the huge oak, Beaky reached his original home, from which he had moved a couple of years ago. Back then, he didn't want to move, but Bloom’s room had become too small for the growing griffon and the filly.

Now, walking past the forge attached to the building, Beaky was actually glad for it. The forge couldn't be extinguished even at night, so in such hot weather as now, summer in the house

was completely unbearable.

Overcoming himself, the squinting griffon quickly opened the door and greeted Uncle Smith. Receiving wishes of a good morning, he went to the kitchen where hot porridge was already waiting.

“Eh, and you call yourself a cheetah,” said the filly standing by the sink with mockery, finishing washing the pot.

“Just wait until I learn to fly, then we’ll see who’s the fastest.”

“Learn to catch fish first,” sighed the pegasus, sitting down at the table.

“Well, I can’t do it, what can I do about that?”

“Patience and labor! As Dad says, otherwise you’ll be drinking porridge from this silly mug all your life.”

“It’s not silly at all,” Beaky retorted, looking at the sippy cup. “If it weren’t for Aunt Olivia, I would have had to wash my beak every time.”

“At least something forced you to wash up in the mornings,” Bloom inserted a barb, laughing. “Your habit of slobbering on your paw still haunts my nightmares.”

Demonstratively raising his front paw and bringing it to his slightly open beak, he stuck out his tongue and… got hit on the forehead with a crumpled napkin.

“Alright, that’s enough fooling around, eat up.”

Finishing the meal, Beaky took a small figurine from under his wing. Despite the chips and notches, the curves of the mane and wings in the wooden pony resembled the pegasus sitting across from him.

“This is for you,” the griffon said, slightly embarrassed.

“Wow! What a beauty! Even the hairstyle is exactly like mine, did you make it yourself?”

Beaky was happy to hear this. Watching with a keen gaze how interestedly Bloom examined the figurine, he wanted to make the same ones for Pancake, and for Uncle Smith, and even for Aunt Olivia.

Despite his mom’s delight, he understood that he could do even better. Beaky sighed sadly, and then continued:

“Yeah, and I sharpened my claws at the same time… several times. Now I have to wait for them

to grow back. If only I had a knife," he drawled pitifully.

"So that's why you needed it. Why didn't you say so right away?"

"I wanted it to be a surprise."

"Oh, you bird brain, I'll buy you a whole set for this!"

"R-really?" Beaky jumped up from the table, ran around it, and hung on the filly's neck. "Thanks, Mom!"

"Okay... you sharpened your claws alright," Bloom had to hug the little beast so that he would loosen his grip.

"Oh, sorry," the griffon said with sincerity in his voice. Once he accidentally hurt a school friend, after which she was offended at him for a month. "Will you really buy me a whole set?"

"Of course. You know what, let me ask Dad if he needs help, and if not, we'll go to the carpentry shop. Right after you wash the dishes."

"Deal!" with uncharacteristic enthusiasm, Beaky gathered the plates from the table and, walking to the sink, began to rub them furiously with a sponge.

"Use water!" came the voice of the departing filly from behind.

Already with less willingness, a paw opened the tap, from which a thin stream poured.

When almost all the dishes had taken their place on the shelf, the front door opened, and Aunt Olivia entered with a small earth pony, **Pancake**. They had returned from the doctor who was treating the tiny white filly's nose.

"We're home!" rang out the foal's thin voice.

Hearing the clatter of plates, the young pony stomped through the living room into the kitchen.

"Beaky!" she shouted just as loudly. "Will you give me a ride?"

Putting the last plate in the dryer, he thought for a second; he wanted to go to the shop as soon as possible. However, Bloom had clearly been delayed by her father, and he shouldn't expect her in the next few minutes.

So answering cheerfully, "Let's do it!" he crouched down, letting the filly climb onto him.

When the hooves pressed tightly against his sides, Beaky stood up and, with a small running

start, began to run around the table.

Pealing laughter rang out, to which someone immediately reacted from somewhere in the hallway:

“Run outside!”

“Good morning, Aunt Olivia,” said the griffon, and, finishing another lap, jumped out the door into the street. “How’s your runny nose, Pancake?”

The filly demonstratively went “sniff-sniff” right in his ear. “Gone! Will you jump over the tree?”

“Are you scared?” Beaky asked, accelerating faster.

“Last time you didn't warn me!” came the indignant reply.

“Well then hold on tight.” Reaching the pine tree that had fallen in last year’s hurricane, the griffon tucked his limbs and made a jump.

“Wheeee!” shouted the little ball pressed into his neck. “Oh, it’s good to be a griffon! I want to run fast and jump high too.”

“It’s good to be a pony; you’re a year and a half younger than me, and you don’t have to blush in school when the teacher asks you something,” Beaky answered on the run.

“I haven’t seen you blush; usually you just fool around.”

“It’s just not visible behind the fur.”

“Uh-huh, let’s do it again!”

Making a turn, Beaky jumped over the pine again. Seeing the blue filly coming out of the forge, he ran back to the house.

“Are we going back already?” came from his back.

“Sorry, Pancake, Bloom promised to buy me woodworking tools, so I’m busy today.”

“Don’t tell me you also want to make things with your hooves,” she cut herself off, “paws.”

“You say that like it’s a bad thing.”

“Well, when I grow up, I’ll become a traveler and see all of Equestria! Did you ever want to see other cities?”

“I was in Dodge Town, I didn't like it there.”

The filly wanted to object, but Beaky had already run to the backyard and sat on the ground, hinting that it was time to get down.

So she simply said: “Bye,” and ran inside the forge. Immediately from there came: “Pancake! Don’t sneak up on me when I’m working!”

Entering the house, the little griffon saw the golden-maned pony examining the figurine. With hope in his voice, he asked: “So, shall we go?”

“One second,” the filly took the figurine from the table and, going up the stairs, disappeared onto the second floor.

Returning a minute later with saddlebags on her back, Bloom answered: “Let’s go!”

Walking along the quiet street, they turned onto the central square, where life was bustling. Greeting Wheeler, who occasionally visited their village with his goods, they headed to the carpentry shop.

“Look who it is!” the gray-bearded pony standing behind the counter proclaimed loudly. Looking at the spotted griffon, he winked: “If you’ve already done what you intended, then I guess the purpose of your visit.”

Not letting him answer, the brown pony shifted his gaze to the yellow-haired filly and, theatrically tipping a non-existent hat, continued: “Miss Bloom, I was starting to forget how lovely you look! Looks like your father locked you at home for life.”

“Nonsense, **Rasmus**, you know yourself, in our business it’s feast or famine. How’s life treating you?”

“I just recently finished a horse head myself, look!” the carpenter pointed to the corner of the room where a pony-sized statue stood. “And I’ll be leaving you soon. My brother is calling me to work in Canterlot.”

“Wow, so that’s what they look like,” Bloom said, thinking about something of her own. “Pity, we’ll miss you…”

“These ones,” the little griffon interrupted their dialogue, pointing a finger at something behind the counter.

“Good choice, straight from Canterlot, a pleasure to work with,” the earth pony said approvingly.

Looking at the price, Bloom looked into her purse and said with a sigh: “Someone has been

behaving too badly lately, so we'll have to look for something cheaper."

"Oh, Bloom, I'll be good, I promise!"

Understanding what was happening, Rasmus intervened:

"Well, he doesn't need the whole set of tools, and Smith can make some of it; I'll drop by later and tell you what's what."

Hearing the new price, the filly nodded approvingly:

"But watch it, if I see so much dust at your place again, I'll return everything immediately. By the way," Bloom turned to the craftsman again, "when are you leaving?"

"Somewhere at the end of autumn," Rasmus said, collecting the purchase. "Why?"

"Maybe you could teach this feathered one your trade while you're here; he has nothing to do in the summer anyway."

"Take him as an apprentice? He's just a little kid; making a figurine is one thing, but carpentry is a completely different story." Looking into the lit-up yellow eyes, the gray-bearded pony suddenly remembered himself in childhood.

When he leaves, there will be no one to teach the younger generation, and the village could use at least some woodworker.

"Alright, so be it. But you'll have to come early in the morning; I like to start work at sunrise."

"Oh, that's easy; in childhood, he replaced our rooster."

Realizing that Bloom had managed to reach an agreement with the old man who previously only helped him with advice, the little griffon pricked up his ears, not believing his luck.

Making sure he wasn't imagining it, unable to contain the surging emotions, he hopped around the small shop, miraculously not knocking everything over. Rejoicing that he would be able to learn to carve figurines even more beautifully, Beaky shouted:

"Hooray! Hooray! Hooray!"

"Oh, I hope I don't regret this," Rasmus said with less confidence. "Alright, stop jumping, you'll knock all my goods off the shelves."

"Thank you, Uncle Rasmus, you won't regret it!" the little griffon said, calming down.

And indeed he didn't regret it; throughout the summer, the apprentice arrived on time and helped the business in every way. Of course, hyperactivity isn't the best aid in woodworking,

but the nimble fingers on the griffon's paws compensated for the desire to do everything quickly. He clearly had talent, and perhaps when he learned creation, he could even outdo old Rasmus.

On the very first day of autumn, an incident occurred.

"Open up!" a voice rang out from under Beaky.

"No!"

"Fine then," jumping off the ladder, Bloom performed a clumsy somersault in the air, then fluttered and landed on the balcony.

On the hatch before her sat the griffon, frowning.

Knitting her brows, she continued. "Why did you skip school?"

"Because school is stupid, and Uncle Rasmus teaches me what I like."

"And what did you tell him?"

"That you allowed me," Beaky answered less aggressively.

"You feathered brain. If it weren't for Pancake, who lied to the teacher that you were sick, we'd both be in trouble."

"So what! I don't like school, and the teacher doesn't like me; she always calls me 'griffon' as if I don't have a name."

"And the fact that if Aunt Olivia finds out about this, kiss your lessons with Rasmus goodbye. I should punish you, but you are so stupid that you punish yourself," the filly sighed. "Okay, let's do this. You will go to school regularly, and I'll arrange with Rasmus to teach you in the afternoon. I'll bring you lunch, and help with homework in the evening. Just never lie to me again, or I won't be your friend anymore."

"Sorry, I just didn't know how to make you let me go, Mom," Beaky said in an apologetic voice.

"Stop calling me that, I'm Bloom."

"Mom!"

"Bloom!"

"Mom!"

"Bloom!" the filly said angrily.

“Mom-mom-mom, always were, are, and will be!” the griffon blurted out, spreading all four paws wide, spreading his wings, and ruffling his feathers.

Seeing this, Bloom was suddenly taken aback, and then, barely holding back laughter, asked: “What are you doing?”

Not understanding what was happening himself, the yellow-white ball of fur answered:

“I don’t know.”

The filly couldn't hold it in, and ringing laughter rolled out, scaring the birds sitting on the branches of the oak. Still not understanding what was happening, but feeling relief, he laughed too.

“How can I be mad at you,” the filly said, wiping away tears. “Alright, just never call me that in front of Aunt Olivia.”

The filly didn't tell Beaky about her conversation with her mother. Olivia believed that the griffon should know that his life was in his own paws, and no one would take care of him forever. Of course, she considered him a family member, but rather a relative, and not, Celestia forbid, Bloom’s son.

Despite the fears, the teacher didn't attach importance to Beaky’s absence on the first day, and the rest passed for him as if in a dream. Almost literally; the griffon often had his head in the clouds during lessons, for which he often got a ruler on the beak.

Not painful at all, but extremely humiliating. With classmates, on the contrary, he almost never had problems, despite the fact that he was the biggest black sheep possible. Yes, it didn't save him from nicknames and jokes, but he grew up among these children and managed to make friends with almost everyone even before school.

Therefore, he was often called on various adventures, for which he periodically got into trouble with Mom.

On one of the sunny days closer to the end of autumn, while carving another figurine for his pals during lunch, he was called out:

“Hey, Beaky, coming to the caves with us?” came the voice of a white earth pony.

“He can’t hear, let me try,” this was the voice of a green unicorn filly, who launched a piece of cheese with magic right between his eyes. “Hey, yellow-mouth, are you coming to the rocks with us?”

Beaky sharply caught the food that hit him with his beak, and then realizing what it was, spat it out:

“Yuck! Cheese! Where? No, you know I have classes after school.”

“You haven’t hung out with us since summer, Beaky, come on, you can’t study with that old man forever,” said a chubby colt named **Eaglet**; for some reason, he always treated the griffon respectfully.

“He’ll be leaving soon, then you can tear me to shreds,” Beaky answered jokingly, continuing to carve wood.

“Oh, forget him, he apparently decided that he’s not a bird-cat, but a timberwolf,” the unicorn laughed at her own joke, but the griffon was no longer listening, immersed in his thoughts.

The rest of the day went as usual, except that Mom didn't bring lunch; this happened to her when she stayed up late in the forge. Rasmus’s stew was inedible, so having endured as long as he could, the hungry griffon returned home earlier than usual.

“Who’s home?” entering the hallway, out of habit, he wiped his paws on the rug.

“Beaky?” Bloom’s voice rang out from the kitchen. “You wouldn't happen to know where Pancake is?”

“I do, they went to the caves,” he answered without hesitation, walking through the living room.

“To the caves?!” Aunt Olivia’s voice was simultaneously indignant and panicked. “Oh, she’s going to get it from me!”

Realizing that he had completely ratted out his little sister, the griffon said “Oops,” and rushed back to the door.

“Beaky, wait,” was all he heard from the voices of the two worried moms. Without stopping, he ran to the caves in the northwest.

He needed to warn the foals; if they were found inside one of the caves, things would be really bad, and punishment would be unavoidable.

“I should have gone with them!” Beaky thought to himself. Oddly enough, he usually acted as the voice of reason in their adventures, sensing danger stronger than the ponies. *“But why didn't they return earlier? Maybe my friends really got into trouble?”*

Feeling himself slowing down on the stony road, the little griffon used a trick he learned on one of his runs. Giving it his all, he accelerated, jumped, and spread his wings; landing, he accelerated and jumped again. This way he managed to maintain maximum speed.

“Bird brain, why did I tell Aunt Olivia, I should have run here immediately!” He was already rushing past the caves, looking into each one in turn; his vision allowed him to see what lurked

behind the dark gaps in the rocky walls.

“We need to go to the village, we won’t be able to pull her out,” rang out in one of the halls.

“Do you know how much trouble we’ll be in?” running closer, the griffon recognized the voice of the green unicorn.

“What happened?” Beaky asked, flying into one of the holes. Two foals stood at the edge of a cliff.

“What? Yellow-mouth?” the green unicorn was surprised. “Pancake didn't see the pit and fell right in.”

“Why didn't you call anyone?” Beaky said indignantly, approaching the gap.

“We wanted to do it ourselves, and, well, we called her, but she didn't answer, we tried to find a rope, but there isn't one anywhere, and we were about to...” Eaglet began to make excuses.

“Why are you explaining to him, we need to...”

“You can create light,” Beaky said, interrupting the unicorn.

“Yes, but I already shined it, nothing is visible.”

“Do it again, just come to the edge. And you, Eaglet, hold her so she doesn't fall.”

“Eaglet holding me? I’d sooner...”

Not wanting to argue with them, the griffon grabbed the edge and, scraping the stones with his claws, began to descend the steep slope.

A second later, light appeared, but there was still no hint of the white earth pony below. The crevice gnawed into the rock much deeper than it seemed from above. The walls converged so tightly that gliding would have been impossible.

At the bottom, the pit widened, turning into a cave. Peering into the darkness, Beaky saw the pale, blurry outlines of a figure resembling a foal, and a few moments later it seemed that some shadow moved next to her.

“Pancake? Is that you? Are you okay?” shouted the worried griffon.

In response, he heard only a terrible hissing and grinding. Now he saw more clearly long, thin shadows moving over the white lump, converging into a large black spot in the middle.

The creature’s legs moved methodically, weaving the filly into a cocoon. *“Spider!”* the thought

flashed through Beaky's head.

The fur stood up on the griffon's scruff when he realized what was before him, but he was even more scared for his sister.

"Need to get her out of here and as fast as possible!" the thought raced through his mind.

"What's going on here?" a barely distinguishable voice came from above, distorted by the cave. After which the darkness thickened.

"Light!" Beaky shouted with all his might. Not waiting, he rushed to the barely discernible silhouette of the filly.

Jumping down, he felt his hind paw step into something sticky. He had to exert effort to free his leg, and judging by the sensation, he gave up a tuft of fur in exchange.

Raising his head, he saw a black shadow looming over him. Miraculously jumping away from the spider's sharp leg, Beaky grabbed the sticky body. Throwing it onto his back, he raised his wings so as not to drop his burden.

Light appeared again; it seemed there was more of it, or his eyes just began to get used to the pitch darkness. Seeing the spider better now, the griffon ran around it in an arc, trying not to get caught in the web again.

Shifting the filly into his paw, he jumped and, clinging to a stone, began to slowly climb up. Quiet clicking sounded below him; the spider clearly didn't intend to part with its prey.

To speed up, Beaky threw Pancake onto his scruff; in this place, the slope was steeper and climbing was becoming more difficult. The spider's legs were already striking at his very tail when long-awaited salvation arrived in the form of a coiled rope hitting him right in the face.

A bit confused, he shouted: "Pull!"

Grabbing the rope with his front paws, he initially regretted his decision; almost losing the footing from under his hind legs, he tipped head down. A moment later, the rope sprung and pulled the griffon with it. Continuing to scramble over the stones with his hind legs, things went faster, and finally, he emerged onto the surface.

Bloom, Olivia, and the foals stood there holding the rope.

"We need to run, there's a giant spider," the griffon said and leaped out of the cave.

Rushing another couple of meters, he stopped and put the filly in the unfinished cocoon on the ground. With one of the claws sharpened while working in the workshop, he carefully cut the web; it seemed Pancake was intact, apart from being unconscious.

Catching up with Beaky, a worried Olivia began to silently examine her daughter. From the other side, Smith ran to meet them; the earth pony was clearly slower than the rest.

“It was me...” deciding to protect Pancake, the griffon began to make excuses, but was immediately interrupted by his aunt’s strict voice.

“You!” The mare pointed at her husband. “Carry her to the doctor, she might have been bitten by a rock spider, but I hope not. I’ll catch up with you in a minute.” Picking up the filly, the stallion ran away.

“You!” pointing a hoof at the foals. “March home, and don’t you dare play in such places again.” Glancing at each other, the children rushed away, vainly hoping that their parents wouldn't find out about what happened.

“You!” the stern gaze of purple eyes shifted to the griffon. Understanding what was coming, he decided to seize the initiative.

“It’s all my fault, I should have gone with them and protected her, please don’t punish Pan!” he began with remorse in his voice.

“Actually, I wanted to say thank you, and that you shouldn't go saving someone alone. But that works too.” After which she turned and ran after her husband.

A sudden cuff on the back of the head made him turn around.

“And don’t you want to apologize to me?” a stern gaze of now ruby eyes looked at the griffon.

“What for? I saved her!” Beaky answered indignantly.

Puffing out her cheeks, Bloom kicked the griffon on the paw.

“Hey! Don’t fight!” the little griffon jumped to the side.

“Do you even realize that I was worried too, both for Pancake and for your bird head. He jumped after her, the feathered hero,” the filly advanced on him, causing the little griffon to back away.

“Sorry...” he began in an apologetic tone, and then closing one eye continued mockingly: “guess that’s how I was raised.”

The filly lunged forward, but the agile Beaky was already running down the road.

“I’ll catch you anyway!” the pegasus’s voice was heard from above.

“Ha! I can do that too,” and applying the recently tested trick with jumps and wings, Beaky

began to pull ahead.

“Wow, cool! But then you won’t get any fish!” Came from somewhere behind.

“Fish?” the little griffon stopped and crouched, knowing what would happen next—a moment later he was in a tight embrace.

A strand of golden hair hung before his beak, and slightly tilting his head back, he rubbed against his mother’s cheek.

“The river will freeze soon, so I’ll catch some for you one last time. But first, let’s check how Pancake is,” Bloom said with emotion in her voice. Standing up, they walked to the village.

When they reached the doctor, the white filly had already regained consciousness; the spider indeed hadn't had time to bite her, but the fall was hard, and from the impact Pancake had lost consciousness and earned several bruises.

She had to spend the next week at home, but a few days later she was running around as if nothing had happened.

Rasmus left, and winter slowly encroached on the town.

Epilogue

“Listen, did you always want to become a blacksmith like your father?” asked a yellow griffon to his equally yellow-haired friend.

They were sitting on the branch of a huge tree. The rising sun illuminated the numerous houses below them; this village with a huge town hall in the center was much larger than their native one.

“Well of course not! That’s actually your fault!” The blue pegasus answered him.

“Mine?”

“Well of course, otherwise you would have eaten me.”

“Hahaha, the horror, and what does that have to do with anything? Besides, you’re stringy, try eating someone like that.”

“Once I was completely different, anyway, that doesn't matter, do you remember when I first brought you home?”

“Vaguely, mostly from your stories.”

“Doesn't matter, winter was just coming then, and Mom asked me where I would find food for

you, since you hardly eat vegetables, you only want fish. And how would I catch it from a frozen river?"

"Not true, I also love nuts and grains very much," Beaky demonstratively put a paw into the saddlebag, took out a couple of nuts, and, demonstratively tossing them up, caught them right in his beak.

"Yeah, we didn't know that back then, and although Mom had seen a couple of griffons in her life, she didn't know what you eat. Except maybe carcasses of dead animals," Bloom said reproachfully.

"What's with you today, you know perfectly well that meat is just as disgusting to me as it is to you. I don't know if my other kin eat it, but I definitely won't touch it."

"Sorry, it's just that it really wasn't easy back then; anyway, I said then that we would buy fish in the city, to which I immediately got the return question: at whose expense?"

"Hmm, I didn't think you had money problems."

"We didn't, and we would have found money for your fish, it's just, I felt responsible for you, and offered to help father myself. And then, I don't know, I even liked it."

"Family business and all that?" the little griffon said jokingly.

Immediately he felt himself being pushed off the branch; he had to start flapping his wings so as not to fall completely. A smile adorned Bloom's face.

"Hey! What are you doing, who will buy all these bolts and decorations for wood from you if I fall?"

"As if you take much for your carpentry work and wood crafts," the filly snorted. "Ruined my whole life," she continued in a feigned voice.

"Haha, you know," said Beaky, sitting back on the branch, "I have something for you, I wanted to wait for the right moment, but I can't imagine a better one."

"And what is it?" Bloom asked with interest.

The little griffon began to dig in his bag for a long time, then passed first one paw behind Bloom's head, and then the other.

"W-what are you doing?" asked the filly, not understanding what was happening.

"Look," he said, and a blue stone in a silver setting descended on a chain before the filly's nose.

“My pendant! But where? Where did you find it?”

“You won’t believe it, from that same merchant, Wheeler. He wore it as a talisman,” asking as he put the amulet on the filly’s neck, Beaky said, “did you even know what this is?”

“N-no.”

“A stone that creates a protective field. In general, it’s unlikely to help against something strong, but for a little filly in our village, it would have been quite enough. Seems it didn't come in handy for him either.”

“So, parents just wanted to protect me, but why didn't they explain everything to me then?”

“Yeah, and the first thing you would have done is start testing it or just rely on its protection in any situation. Considering that its power runs out after the very first brick falls on you, everything could have turned out even worse if you were without it.”

“True, hmm, I shouldn't have been offended at them back then.”

“That’s for sure, it didn't cost me cheap; as I understand it, such magic is rare, however, this is only a small fraction of what I owe you. Thank you.” After being silent for a bit, he added, “...and thank you for flying with me.”

“Don’t mention it, you know,” she said quietly, and continued in a more lively voice, “besides, if I let you go alone, you’ll either break your neck or won’t return at all, stay living in your griffon kingdom, maybe you’re a long-lost prince there, and such connections won’t hurt me.”

“Hahaha,” he laughed, and continued in the voice of a court orator, “Prince Beaky, the great ruler of Griffonstone, has arrived to collect your gold for one very cheeky pony.”

“Eh, get ready, Prince, we need to fly on, I don’t like sitting in trees like you birds, now my croup will hurt the whole flight.”

“As if it was my idea.”

“But the view of the surroundings is beautiful from here.”

Fanfic: Family (Part 3)



They say that flight is in the blood of pegasi. Spreading their wings, they are ready to rush forward, piercing the clouds, to meet new adventures.

Free as birds, for whom there are no barriers or distances. In fairy tales, pegasi flew to the ends of the earth, fought terrible monsters, and returned home as heroes, finding glory and treasure.

Of course, Bloom didn't believe in fairy tales, but she was always sure that, if necessary, she could easily overcome the path from her native village to Canterlot. After all, Equestria isn't such a big country, and on a clear day, from Beaky's treehouse, with the help of a telescope, one could even distinguish the mountain on which the royal castle stands.

Now, in the sky above Ponyville, the capital was already visible to the naked eye, but the young filly didn't feel any easier because of it. Heavy saddlebags rubbed her sides, her blue wings, which hadn't had time to rest overnight, had lost all their agility, and the griffon, as if knowing no fatigue, constantly loomed as a yellow spot in front of her nose.

He could be understood; he was flying to meet his real parents, full of confidence that he would easily find them. Olivia sent out letters about the foundling every year, from the nearest towns to Griffonstone. She didn't like that her daughter considered the griffon her son, even asked her never to call him that. But when Beaky grew up and began to help the family

himself, the attitude towards him changed.

Learning a lot of new things about griffons during this time, Bloom gradually began to understand her mother's fears. These creatures were famous in Equestria for their bad temper, selfishness, and greed. The harsh conditions of their rocky homeland left an imprint on the upbringing and mentality of griffons. The very last thing to expect from them was loyalty and hospitality.

And because of that, Bloom was afraid. Afraid, like a mother, that Beaky would find his long-lost family, and it would separate them forever. Afraid, like a friend, that he would find something completely different from what he was looking for in his journey, and it would break his heart. That's why she went with him—to say goodbye or to support him.

Although Beaky assured her that he would never leave her, and even tied a feather of his parents into the filly's golden mane as a sign of this, all these thoughts gnawed at the filly. She tried to drive them away; a spoiled mood is not the best aid in a long journey.

Meanwhile, the griffon was moving further and further away from Bloom; he was too absorbed to worry about such things, and flew carelessly forward. Realizing that she wouldn't be able to keep the same pace throughout the route, an idea came to the filly's mind, and she shouted:

"Hey! Bird nose, wait!"

Beaky did a small somersault in the air and hovered, flapping his yellow wings:

"What happened? A break? We just took off." By the griffon's intonations, it was clear that he didn't want to waste time.

"Look," a blue hoof pointed down, "see the railway going from that village into the mountains? We can save some time if we go by train."

"By train? Just like the one we saw in Dodge City?"

"Uh-huh! You want to take a ride, don't you?"

"You bet!" Beaky peered at the rails going into the fields, but he saw no train, nor even smoke.

"And when will it arrive?"

"That's what we have to find out," folding her wings, the pegasus dived into a cloud passing below her. "Catch up!"

Hoping to cheer him up, Bloom pretended to play tag, letting him overtake her. Almost flying up to the roofs of low buildings, Beaky stopped in the air, flapping his wings, and stared somewhere to the side.

“Strange, he never lets me win,” the thought flashed through her mind. *“I wonder what he’s looking at?”*

It turned out not to be difficult to understand; his beak, like a giant arrow, gave away the direction of the feathered one’s gaze. Along a small street between the houses, a huge cat with an eagle’s head was gracefully striding.

This was exactly how griffons were depicted in all the books Bloom had ever read about this race. Flying closer, she heard:

“L-look,” Beaky said in an uncharacteristically timid voice.

“Wow, I was starting to doubt that your kind really lives in…”

“Let’s ask about my parents,” interrupting her mid-sentence, he rushed like lightning to intercept the figure moving away towards the edge of the village. Another moment, and he was already braking with his paws on the ground, dousing the other griffon with roadside dust.

“Oh, what a fool,” Bloom said condescendingly, heading after him.

“What the!..” the silhouette in the grayish cloud said, coughing and waving away the dust with a paw.

When the clouds of roadside dust began to disperse, Beaky was able to make out long eyelashes, purple feathers on the head, and a yellow pair of angry eyes. He wanted to apologize for what he had done, but a lump rose in his throat when he realized that a girl was in front of him.

“What the hay? Who are you anyway?” coughing from the dust, discontent sounded in the girl’s voice.

“I-I’m a g-griffon, just like you…” Beaky squeezed out.

In greeting, he extended a paw clenched into a fist forward. Not the slightest bit surprised by the obvious differences in their appearance, she looked at his gesture with disgust.

“I see you’re not a Cyclops. What do you need… griffon?!”

“Did y-you happen to see my parents? They look roughly like…” remembering the feather, he pointed without thinking at the blue pegasus flying up to them.

“Like… a pony?” laughing homerically, she no longer heard the explanations about the feather.

“What’s going on here?” Bloom intervened in the conversation.

“I’m trying to explain to her that this feather,” Beaky pointed again at the golden mane, “belongs to my parents, whom I’m looking for.”

Wiping away tears, the eagle-headed lioness still found the strength to answer:

“S-sorry, never seen other bird-headed cheetahs. And why does she have your ancestors’ feather on her head? Is she really your mom?” the laughter repeated.

“Let’s go, Beaky, no point wasting time, I think I hear the train.” Seeing the spotted fur begin to bristle, she took him by the paw and dragged him towards the alley.

“B... Bea-ky? You even have a pony name? Seriously?” unable to contain herself, she fell to the ground, rolling with laughter.

“So what!” Indignant, Beaky tried to break free, but the strong hoof of the blacksmith pegasus continued to drag him along.

“Let’s go, I warned you they have a bad temper.”

Clumsily dragging him around the corner of the house, she released his paw.

“Sorry...” calming down, Beaky bowed his head in apology, and looking from under his brow added, “Didn't think the very first griffon we met would mock us.”

The filly snorted.

“Don’t apologize and lift your beak higher. What do we care what that rude girl thinks. And now we really should hurry.”

Reaching the station, they realized there was nowhere to hurry; the train leaving for Canterlot arrived in two hours. Not wasting time, Bloom bought sweets for the road at a local bakery, where preparations for a holiday were in full swing. Following a tip from there, they even managed to get some fish for Beaky from a shy pony.

Returning half an hour before the train’s departure, they heard from the conversation of a unicorn and an earth pony about what happened to the missing Mare in the Moon. It turned out she was Celestia’s own sister, who had spent a thousand years in the night sky. This was terribly interesting to Bloom, but the arriving train didn't let her question the mares in more detail.

All the way, Beaky looked out the window. Since birth, he had lived in a small village, and the scale of Equestria impressed him. Bloom, however, wasn't up for it. Convinced of the bad character of other representatives of his race, she thought about how to avoid conflicts in

Griffonstone:

“First, don’t call Beaky by name; it seems it was a mockery, or something like that. Second, start the dialogue myself. Third, pull the feather out of…” already reaching for her mane, she stopped herself. Beaky cherished this gesture, and honestly, she herself was pleased. *“So be it, I’ll have to remember to take it off when we get there.”*

A painful peck on the shoulder distracted her from her thoughts.

“Ouch! What was that for?”

“Checking if you were swapped. I’ve never seen such a sad Bloom.”

“Couldn't find a better way to cheer me up?”

There was a screech of brakes; beautiful white stone buildings flashed outside the window.

“Actually, I did. I think I saw Rasmus’s brother’s workshop when we were entering the city.”

“Aren't we rushing to Griffonstone?”

“What?” Beaky was clearly surprised by this question.

“Well, to find your parents.”

“No, where did you get that idea?”

“You were rushing all the way as if a huge bird was pecking your rear,” Bloom said with indignation, rubbing her shoulder.

“We’re on an adventure! So many new things! And I also wanted to visit my teacher and Skein at the same time.”

“Skein?” now it was her turn to be surprised. “You still remember him? He went to study here before you even started school.”

“Of course! I’m still ashamed that I broke his glasses.”

The filly giggled, remembering that situation. “That’ll teach him to step on cats’ tails.”

“Back then you told me something completely different,” Beaky said, frowning.

“Back then you were an ill-mannered chick with dangerous claws. Pity I never managed to break you of pecking. Let’s go, feathered head, looks like we’ve arrived.”

“I… it happens by itself, you know,” the little griffon tried to justify himself, getting up from the

bench.

“I know, that’s why I’m not angry. So where did you see the workshop?”

The capital amazed with its magnificence. Bloom had been here only once, on a school trip for the Summer Sun Celebration. She was impressed by the ruler of Equestria, and now, if that pony with the lyre cutie mark on her flank was to be believed, a second princess had appeared. She wanted to see her today, at least with one eye. Rarely do you meet someone who returned straight from the face of the moon.

Thinking about this, they wandered to the outskirts, where Beaky had seen a carved wooden house. A sign visible from afar in the form of a chisel and cutter spoke for itself.

Entering inside, Beaky almost immediately shouted:

“Uncle Rasmus!” not waiting for an answer, he jumped over the table and hugged the surprised old man.

“Beaky? What are you doing here? I see you still haven't learned to be more patient; can’t you see I’m working?”

“And I still have to apologize for him to everyone. Glad to see you in good health.”

“Miss Bloom? And you’re here? You’ve become so pretty that if it weren’t for this ball of feathers, I wouldn't have recognized you.”

“Mrs. Or rather, I will be soon.”

“Who got so lucky?”

“We-e-ell...” Bloom hesitated, lowering her head, and a lock with a woven golden feather slipped onto her muzzle. “You won’t believe me.”

A pause hung; Rasmus finally managed to detach the griffon from his beard, then said displeasedly: “Well, don’t keep me in suspense.”

“**Acrylic**,” unable to hold back, Beaky said.

The old man laughed loudly.

“Indeed, I don’t believe it; you were like cats and dogs in childhood. I remember the whole village figuring out how to wash you clean of that paint of his. I thought after that nickname, you wouldn't talk to him at all.”

“He... grew up. And I changed.”

“What nickname?” Beaky intervened in the conversation again.

“I don’t even remember, it was a long time ago,” the filly tried to lie, looking away; the fur on her cheeks stood on end, betraying embarrassment.

Rasmus meanwhile whispered something in the griffon’s ear, who immediately blurted out everything:

“Turkey? Isn't that the cute nickname he calls you now?”

The old man laughed again. Bloom pursed her lips, and, completely embarrassed, stomped her hoof on the floor:

“It’s none of your business!”

“Sorry, Bloom,” Rasmus began, “you don’t often see old acquaintances here. And how are the rest doing?”

“Well, in general, nothing has changed in the village. Mom still works in the weaving mill, I help father in the forge, except Pancake left for a year to visit a pen pal. Going to learn adventuring, whatever that means, from some writer. There was quite a scandal at home. And how are you doing?”

“Just great! Of course, there’s incomparably more work here than in Craftville, but my brother and I quickly worked well together. But the orders are much more interesting; if it’s a wardrobe, it’s all carved, they even order dressers with portraits! Sometimes I feel like an artist, not a craftsman. Pity I can’t show my paintings.”

“No need. Our house is also slowly turning into a museum of wood. In both the literal and figurative sense,” the filly giggled at some joke of her own.

“I see Beaky isn't wasting time. Wait a minute, I have just the thing for you,” Rasmus went into the pantry, then returned with a weighty stack of books. “Here, my brother has a whole library here; we don’t need them anymore anyway, and they’ll be useful for the younger generation.”

Carefully examining everything, the little griffon sighed, “We are going to Griffonstone, the way there is not close, so I can’t carry even a part of it. But next time we meet, I’ll definitely take them. Except maybe ‘Wood is Magic’ I would take.”

“Oh, a book about rare varieties of trees, good choice. One hundred gold bits,” the old man said calmly, scratching his beard; waiting for the surprise in the guests’ eyes, he laughed and continued. “I’m kidding! I’m kidding! Let’s have some tea, standing here in shavings like strangers.”

When the tea was ready and everyone was seated at a small square table on the second floor, Beaky took his favorite sippy cup out of his bag. Tilting it, he caught a bundle which contained a wooden pocket watch with an intricate pattern. Checking the movement, he handed it to Rasmus.

He took the souvenir, examined it for a long time from all sides, and then brought it to his ear:

“Hmm, excellent work, and the mechanism inside is metal.”

“Ye-eah, I tried to make it out of wood, but nothing worked, so I had to buy a broken mechanical one from Wheeler. True, now it lags about a minute a week...”

“Still very good, you’ve learned a lot, and you know there’s still room to grow. I’m proud of you,” adjusting his mustache, he handed the watch back to Beaky.

“No, it’s a gift, a token of gratitude. Without you, I wouldn't even know where to start.”

Rasmus thought for a moment, and then answered, “Thank you, I’ll keep it as a memory. Come here this summer when you finish your business; maybe I can teach you something else.”

“By the way,” the filly began, pouring tea, “do you know where Skein is now? When he wrote to me last time, he said he was working at the academy.”

“Of course! By the way, remind him to drop by; I haven’t seen him for a year despite the fact that we live in the same city.”

They talked a little more about life and, saying goodbye, went to a high domed tower.

A bored guard was waiting for them near the entrance. Inquiring about the purpose of the visit, he reluctantly went inside for Skein. Soon, a light cream unicorn head stuck out of the upper window, to which a lightning rod was attached for some reason. Looking at them, he shouted:

“What are you standing there for, come up!”

Beaky tried to take off, but the filly stopped him: “Through the door.”

Entering, they found themselves in a huge library that occupied the entire space. A spiral staircase in the center of the tower led through the floors, which were nothing more than round rooms where various scientific researches were conducted. Climbing almost to the very top, they found Skein, who was digging into some strange mechanism.

“‘How glad I am to see you, Bloom, sorry I didn't write, Bloom,’” the filly parodied Skein’s typical manner of speaking.

“Really?” the stallion answered without raising his head from behind the metal box. “Seems like I received a letter from you quite recently.”

“That was in the summer; now it’s spring. Do you ever come out of here?”

“Yes, of course.”

“Your mom is worried, despite the fact that it’s normal for you not to answer for six months.”

“She came for the Summer Sun Celebration,” he replied imperturbably, continuing to do something.

“Skein, do you hear me? Distract yourself for at least a minute; Beaky and I plan to fly to Griffonstone today, and the sun is already starting to set.”

“Sorry,” the stallion finally looked at them. “Wow, Beaky! How you’ve grown!”

Beaky extended a clenched front paw, “Hello, Uncle Skein.”

“Remember how I taught you that gesture?” Skein walked over and bumped his hoof against the paw. “So much time has passed, but it seems like yesterday.”

“To be honest, vaguely; I remember more how you taught me to read and pronounce letters.”

“Learning is light,” he declared, heading towards the device.

“I see,” said Bloom, stepping on his tail with a hoof. “I saw excellent ottomans downstairs that won’t distract us from the conversation.”

“But what about…” the stallion tried to fight back, but looking into his childhood friend’s eyes, he changed his mind.

Already sitting on the soft ottomans below, the filly continued:

“And what is this important thing you are doing that you didn't even bother to answer my last three letters?”

“You see, about a year ago, Professor Wonder and I found a way to create a magic field that protects one type of creature from others. Processing lightning from clouds, it…”

He began to use expressions completely incomprehensible to them, so Bloom stopped him with a gesture. “Shouldn't have asked. You haven’t forgotten that you need to come in the summer?”

“Where?” the unicorn answered, immersed in his thoughts.

“Home. You didn't even read the letter, and you call yourself a friend. That’s it, I’m not talking to you anymore.” The filly crossed her hooves on her chest and turned away.

“Why?”

Pretending to be offended, Bloom didn't answer.

“She’s getting married,” Beaky interjected.

“To whom?” Skein continued to ask just as briefly, not noticing the offended friend.

“To Acrylic. The one who calls her a turkey,” the griffon giggled restrainedly.

“Beaky!” Bloom couldn't stand it. “And I’m not getting married, I’m getting *married*.” (Note: Russian uses different verbs for men/women getting married, English doesn't distinguish, but the context implies correcting the phrasing/focus).

“Wow!” The stallion’s gaze came alive again. “That I didn't expect. I thought Beaky would be offended that Acrylic calls you that. Doused you with black paint, and nicknamed you a brooding hen too.”

“Well thanks!” The filly jumped up from the ottoman. “What kind of day is it today?”

“Saturday, I think.”

“Fool! If you don’t come to the wedding, don’t come at all!” Bloom blurted out with resentment in her voice. “I already understood that you are ve-e-ery busy, so tell us the best way to get to the Griffon Kingdom, and we won’t bother you anymore.”

“Come on, don’t be offended, Bloom, this project is really very important to me. I wanted to come closer to winter, but so be it.”

“Well thanks,” Bloom continued in a calmer voice.

“And about Griffonstone, there is a map somewhere here,” the stallion got up and went to the bookshelf with tubes. Rummaging through them, he pulled one out and spread the map on the table near the ottomans: “Here, look.”

While the filly examined the map, Beaky took a small wooden figurine out of his bag. It was a light cream unicorn with a dark red mane; on his nose were large round glasses. Only the hairstyle distinguished him from the disheveled Skein. Checking that everything was in order, a paw slipped the figurine under the stallion’s nose.

Looking at his small reflection, he gasped:

“Wow, made it yourself?”

“Uh-huh, like it?”

“You bet! Bloom wrote that you carve wood, but I thought patterns or something.”

“Thanks. That’s what I usually do, but this is a gift, as an apology for the broken glasses; we haven’t seen each other since then.”

“Trifles, replacing lenses isn't a big problem, especially since I already bought new ones,” he mechanically adjusted the glasses on his nose, indistinguishable from the old ones.

“Your own fault,” came the thoughtful voice of the filly, still examining the huge sheet of yellowed paper.

The path turned out to be long and winding. It was easiest to use the railway; passing through all of Equestria, it went into the snowy mountains, after which, passing the Rainbow Falls, it went straight to the Griffon Kingdom.

“I’ll borrow the map,” Bloom said, unceremoniously rolling it into a tube and putting it back in the case.

“You can’t, according to the rules you need to make a copy and...”

“We don’t have time, take it in the summer, if you deign to come. Let’s go, Beaky.”

Putting the map in her saddlebag, Bloom headed for the exit.

“Yes, yes, ‘Thank you, Skein. You won’t have problems with this, Skein.’”

Turning her head on the go, the filly squeezed her eyes shut and stuck out her tongue.

“Just like old times. Thank you, and don’t forget to come.”

“I won’t forget,” Skein said in an upset voice, and went up the stairs.

Catching up with the filly at the exit, Beaky inquired:

“So, where to next?”

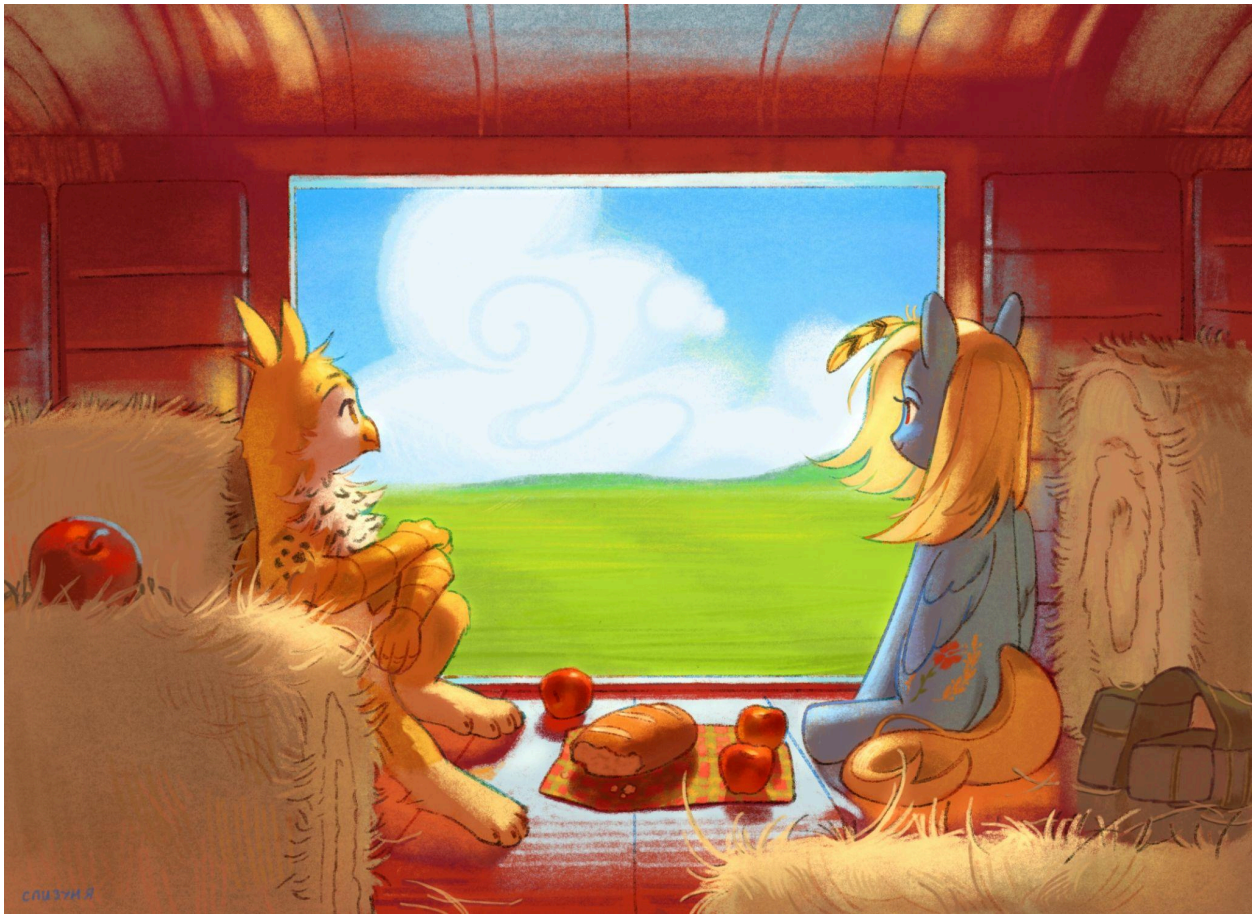
“To the station, we need to find out if we can go directly to Griffonstone; flying from here wouldn't be the best idea.”

Reaching the platform, they found the station master. An elderly pony regretfully informed them that there would be no direct passenger service to Griffonstone in the coming months. However, he knew a driver on a freight train going in that direction that night.

Going across the country in a car filled to the brim with boxes is a so-so idea; flying through unknown lands is even worse. They had to agree to at least such an offer.

Waiting for night, they bought supplies for the long journey. The freight train driver, a green pony with a brown mane, wasn't thrilled with the uninvited passengers, but after listening to the story of the griffon and the pony, she still agreed to help them.

The couple was placed in a covered car; there wasn't much cargo, which dispelled Bloom's fears about boxes that might fall on her head. The driver even allowed them to leave a small crack in the door, propping it open with a peg.



Morning greeted them with the cry of a dozen roosters. Beaky wasn't too worried about this; he was used to getting up even earlier, but Bloom seemed to have a harder time; she lay there until the day stop, almost without changing her position.

To all his questions, she answered that everything was fine, but her voice betrayed her condition. Blaming himself for what was happening, Beaky even offered to get off the train a couple of times, but the filly adamantly answered "no".

Not knowing what to do, the griffon resigned himself and lay down next to her, hugging her.

So they traveled all the way to Vanhoover. When the train finally stopped, Bloom got out of the car, and after a while returned cheerful, as if nothing had happened.

“Are you sure you’re okay?” Beaky asked with anxiety in his voice.

“Yes, I told you, just got motion sickness.”

“We still have to ride until morning; maybe we should go on foot?”

“From here? Silly, we are on the other side of the world, besides, I think I feel better already.”

“Really? Then maybe we should eat?” the little griffon took muffins wrapped in pastry paper and fish from a salted bag, left over from Ponyville, out of the saddlebags.

“Let’s... later, I’ll breathe some air for now,” memories of the smell of fish embarrassed her a little; wishing not to risk it, she remained outside.

After some time, the driver came to check on them. While they were talking, a couple of ponies unloaded the chickens from the car. Beaky, feeling some guilt for the birds in temporary captivity, helped the loaders, carefully carrying the boxes to the cart.

The uninvited passengers rode the rest of the way in silence. The griffon, dangling his paws from the car, looked at the surroundings, mechanically carving something out of wood. Bloom tried to tidy up the bags, occasionally swearing at how many useless pieces of wood they had to drag with them.

By evening, the cold mountain wind forced them to close the door; left in the dark, they lay down, trying to sleep. The methodical noise of the wheels contributed to this as best as possible. Already on the edge of consciousness, Bloom heard:

“Do you think they are the same as the others?”

“Who?”

“My parents.”

“I don’t know, but in any case, you will find a common language with them,” the filly yawned. “You are their son, after all.”

Hearing this, Beaky for some reason became even more upset.

“Theirs? They aren't the ones traveling across all of Equestria to find me.”

“Let’s not judge prematurely; a lot could have happened, and now... let’s sleep, we have to get

up early tomorrow."

The filly opened her eyes only the next morning, when Beaky was putting on his bags. She felt nauseous again, but much less so than yesterday. Trying not to show it, she asked:

"Are we there yet?"

"Uh-huh, look, you can see the capital from here." A paw pointed somewhere up through the open door.

Standing up, Bloom saw a village on top of the mountain; unable to restrain herself, she giggled and said, "Griffon Nest." (Likely a pun or direct translation of a name, kept literal).

Beaky looked at her with a judgmental gaze, tilting his head to the side and, saying nothing, jumped out of the car.

"Are you awake already? Great. Your stop." came the driver's voice.

"This is for you, and this..." the clink of coins came from outside, "Thank you for giving us a ride."

"Wow! Thank you, I wish I always drove such passengers to Griffonstone. If you need anything, just ask."

"Thanks!" Bloom shouted from the car, trying to cope with the fasteners on the bags.

Combing her hair, she came out, holding out the feather she had pulled from her hair, "Here, Beaky. You'll be showing it to everyone anyway; better if you have it."

"Good idea. Well, shall we fly?"

"Let's fly," Bloom nodded, glad that he didn't suspect anything.

After making a not too long journey to the top, they landed near a beautiful ancient arch, which apparently was the remnant of the grandeur of bygone times. The city itself resembled a village that had seen better days. Griffons in fancy hats walked here and there.

Attempting to find out from one of them about Beaky's parents, they saw a gesture like a merchant asking for money for goods. Putting a coin in the paw, they received the answer: "Don't know them," and a contemptuous look. The same story repeated the second, third, and fourth time, until they completely lost count.

Already despairing, they decided to sit down for lunch under one of the trees. Suddenly they heard a voice.

“Wow! New faces! Where are you from?”

“From Craftville, Equestria,” Bloom answered with distrust in her voice.

Turning around, she saw a joyful bluish-gray griffon with a bunch of feathers on her head tied in a ponytail with an elastic band.

“You’ve come a long way! And you too?” she shifted her gaze to Beaky. “Oh, completely forgot to introduce myself, my name is **Gabriela**, but you can just call me Gabby.”

“I’m Beaky, nice to meet you, and this is Bloom.”

The yellow griffon extended a paw clenched into a fist. Looking at it with surprise, Gabby extended an open one in return, and then squeezed it and opened it again. Realizing what was happening, Beaky did the same, and they shook hands/paws.

“What a strange name, and this gesture…” the griffon gasped. “Did you grow up among ponies? And do you have a cutie mark?”

Bloom, still distrustful of the overly enthusiastic acquaintance, took this question as a mockery, and for some reason answered:

“Yes,” taking out the coin with the feather, she held it out asking, “We are looking for his parents; did you happen to see similar griffons here?”

She looked at Bloom exactly like Beaky did that morning, and taking only the feather from the hoof said, “No, but I think I know who can help you, let’s go.”

Reaching a low two-story house nearby, she knocked on the door. “Uncle **Gruff**, open up.”

After some time, a window above opened, and a griffon head with a scar on one eye appeared. “What do you want?”

“This griffon is looking for his parents; did you happen to know them?”

The old man narrowed his seeing eye, and then slamming the window said:

“No.”

“Pay no attention,” said Gabby, and then knocked on the door again. “He is looking for his parents; we have to help him.”

“What’s it to me?” rang out through the closed window.

“For my sake, we-e-ell ple-e-ease,” their new companion drawled in a plaintive voice.

A few seconds later, a disgruntled answer was heard:

“You owe me.”

“Of course! I won’t remain in debt; you know me!”

A minute later, the door opened, and the griffon came out with a large book in his paw.

“Cheetahs,” he said, peering into the book. Looking up, he looked at Beaky’s head, and then began to turn the pages. “Found it! Owners of a haberdashery in Fillydelphia, left twenty years ago. **Gesta** and Mrs. **Nestor**. They live on Wing Street seventeen, apartment twenty-five.”

“Thank you!” both griffons shouted joyfully.

“I don’t even know how to thank you, Gabby,” said Bloom.

“Very simple. Can you tell me more about Equestria?”

“Of course!” Beaky, almost jumping with joy, went to the nearest place where they could sit down.

Oddly enough, it was he who told the other griffon about the world in which he grew up. About how Bloom raised him and about his life in a small village. Good-natured Gabby was so welcoming that she was perceived as someone close, so he fearlessly told her about his childhood.

When he started talking about nearby cities, Gabby suddenly shouted:

“Completely forgot! A ship leaves today going to Baltimare! You must catch it; the next one will be only in a week.”

“But what about...” Beaky began.

“Nonsense, I’ve heard enough anyway, I’m only delaying you. You need to fly to the foot, and then get to the port; however, you’ll see it from above. Good luck!”

“Thank you!” Moved by all this, he hugged his newfound friend.

“Visit us if you get the chance,” Bloom said standing up, “well, let’s not waste time.”

Already approaching the port, they saw sails moving into the distance; there was nowhere to go, they had to catch up and land right on board.

A white-furred griffon with a long beak stood at the helm. When Bloom landed, she felt the pendant on her neck tremble; a second later she realized that the blade of a sword touched

her neck:

“You are either idiots or you don’t value your life; what are you doing on my ship?”

Beaky landed behind the filly and, overcoming himself, stepped forward. The tip of the sword slid to his neck.

“W-we just need to get to Fillydelphia, that’s all.”

“So you decided to stow away on my ship?”

“We have money!” the filly shouted, recovering from the shock. She took a purse from her belt and held it out. “H-here.”

For the third time today, Bloom saw that look; the white head bowed in judgment. The griffon put away the sword and took the purse; pouring out about half, he returned it.

“With a surcharge for not throwing you overboard. Yellow-mouths like you don’t belong in these lands; I’ll take you to Baltimare, and then you figure it out yourselves. Hey! **Sprat**,” the captain shouted to one of the sailors on deck, “show these landlubbers their cabin!”

Left alone in a small room with one hammock, Beaky said with trembling in his voice:

“And yet all griffons are different; there are evil ones, greedy ones, but there are kind ones and even real pirates with a code of honor.”

“Who? Him? You’ve read too many books. To me, he’s just a conceited petty captain.”

“Come on! Did you see that saber of his? Now I understand why Pancake wanted to travel.”

“Well, I don’t really,” Bloom rubbed the spot where the blade touched.

“I thought you were brave,” the griffon answered jokingly.

“Brave? I don’t know, it seems to me that I’ve been afraid of something all my life.”

“What’s that?” Beaky clearly didn't expect such an answer.

“In childhood - that something would happen to you, then - that Mom would find your parents or just send you away if I didn't listen to her. And now - that I’ll lose you.”

“Lose me? But I’m right here.”

“That’s for now,” Bloom said with longing in her voice.

“Eh, I knew you were worried about this all the way; I told you I’m looking for them not to

leave."

"I know, but still..." reaching for her mane with a hoof, she suddenly exclaimed, "The feather!"

"Isn't it with you?"

"No, I think... I think I left it somewhere in Griffonstone. Sorry, I know how much it meant to you."

The little griffon snorted, raised a wing, and grabbing with his beak, sharply jerked his head, pulling out the longest feather.

"Here," with a tear on his cheek, he held it out to Bloom.

"Are you crazy! You can damage the wing like that!"

"So what, anything is better than seeing you like this. A new one will grow."

"Are you sure you aren't angry that I lost your parents' feather?"

The little griffon looked at her, and then showing the second wing with a missing feather, giggled, "Of course not, you lost it back when we stopped on the train in Vanhoover. It's practically the same as all these. I don't know why I decided to take it with me; ever since meeting the first griffon, I realized that my coloring is more indicative."

The filly covered her mouth with a hoof, remembering something, and then giggled too, "And I was afraid to tell you that you have the same ones, and showed it to everyone, afraid to offend."

Seeing the smile on Bloom's face, the little griffon hugged her:

"Don't worry, I'm not going anywhere... Of course, as long as you have fish."

"Catch it yourself," continuing to giggle, Bloom replied.

Settled on the wooden floor, Beaky slept peacefully, curled up in a ball. He dreamed that he and Bloom were sailing to Griffonstone on a small sailing ship, rocking on the waves. For some reason, the calm sea rocked the schooner harder and harder. Anxious Bloom began to shout his name:

"Beaky. Bea-ky! Beaky! Get up already finally!" opening one eye, he saw the golden-maned filly shaking him by the shoulder, "You sleep like the dead! I was starting to worry."

Turning his head, he pecked the blue hoof in front of his nose.

“Ouch! What for?”

“Checking if I’m dreaming. Looks like not; how did you get up before me?”

“You should peck *yourself*, dummy! Let’s go, we’ve almost arrived.”

Coming out on deck, they saw the first rays of the rising sun. Sailors were already scurrying about the ship. Waiting for arrival in port, the stowaways settled in the only quiet place: on the bow of the ship.

While Bloom admired the dawn, Beaky finished the remains of the fish, which was slowly starting to spoil. He liked it that way, but other ponies, on the contrary; only Bloom calmly tolerated this smell. He rarely had the opportunity to eat such fish even in the treehouse; the smell spreading through the neighborhood annoyed the neighbors, and Beaky, raised like a decent pony, didn't want to offend anyone.

Thinking about this, he looked at Bloom, but she didn't even wince; catching his gaze, she asked:

“So, finished? We don’t have to wait until they dock in Baltimare; the sooner we fly out, the faster we’ll be in Fillydelphia. Probably get it done around lunch.”

“Great, race you?”

“Yeah right! You have an important day today, or do you want to fly to your parents like a disheveled chicken?”

“Well, at least not a turkey,” saying this phrase, he jumped up and flew towards the city, expecting a chase.

“I’m serious!” came the voice from behind.

“Okay, Bloom,” realizing that no race would happen, he said in a boring voice, slowing down.

From the height of a pegasus flight, their goal turned from a small dot on the horizon into a large city. A couple of small breaks on the way, and they were there. The capital seemed like a grain of sand compared to this city. High buildings stretching to the sky resembled an angular mountain, in the cracks of which walked dozens of multi-colored ponies.

Landing at the foot of the high houses, they tried to figure out where to go:

“Old lady Antique talked about this place; try not to lose sight of me, or we won’t find each other later.”

“In such a big city there must surely be a shop with fish!”

“Maybe, we’ll look for it on the way to your parents. But first we need to find the street; through it, we can find the house we need.”

The first sign they managed to find read “Akhal-Teke Street”, which gave them absolutely nothing. Going a little deeper towards the city center, they saw another “Hackney, house 35”. Deciding that searching on their own was a stupid idea, Bloom asked for directions from the first pony passing by:

“Hello, do you know where...”

“Sorry, in a hurry,” threw the stranger, quickly walking somewhere on his business.

Smelling a pleasant scent coming from somewhere, Beaky suggested, “Maybe we look for a place to grab a bite, and ask the way there?”

“Great, but where? There are many shops here, but I don’t see a single cafe.”

“There is a wonderful bakery around the corner,” said a spotted mare passing by with a stroller.

“Oh!” Bloom exclaimed. “Maybe you know where we can find Wing Street?”

“Of course, it’s the central street of Fillydelphia; are you here for the first time?”

“Uh-huh, we’re from Craftville,” said the griffon.

“I see, just go straight to the central square; when you see the statue of Celestia, look for the biggest road, that will be Wing Street.”

“Thank you so much,” said Bloom. “Well, Beaky, let’s go buy a couple of pies?”

Of course, there were no fish pies; Bloom didn't know what Beaky was hoping for, but the rest of the pastries were amazing. The mare didn't lie about the road either; reaching the square, they immediately found Wing Street.

On the way to the house they needed, the little griffon slowed his pace more and more; when they reached house number 17, Bloom asked:

“So, ready?”

“Maybe find a fish shop first? Or else we’ll arrive with empty hooves?”

Seeing how Beaky was worrying, the filly took him by the shoulder:

“Don’t worry, if anything, I’ll be near.”

Though not immediately, the griffon nodded. Standing a little longer, they went inside.

Going up to the second floor, they knocked on door number 25. Almost immediately it was opened for them. Beaky stood before them, or rather not quite; for some reason, he was wearing black sunglasses. A little taken aback by what he saw, he lifted the glasses with his thumb and forefinger.

“Is this some kind of prank? Who are you?”

“I think that’s your brother,” said Bloom.

“Brother?!” the griffon in glasses came out to them, closing the door behind him. “I don’t know who you are or what you need, but you better leave.”

“Why’s that?” asked the filly.

“Whatever you’re planning, my family doesn't have money to pay some rogues.”

“I don’t need your money,” said Beaky, “I just want to know about my parents.”

“Yeah, right, I don’t even know who you are; the ancestors never said I have a brother, why should I believe you?”

“No reason,” Bloom answered in a less polite voice, “let’s better ask them; maybe we were mistaken ourselves. We traveled across all of Equestria to get here; one way or another, we will meet them.”

The griffon measured the filly with a look; seeing the feather on her head, he smirked:

“Alright, Golden Mane, looks like you’re serious, but I warned you.”

Turning around, he went inside. Judging by the decor, this family hardly had any money problems; the apartment was simply replete with gold, carving, and expensive furniture.

“Mom, Dad, there’s someone for you,” the griffon chuckled, “your lost son has shown up with some pony.”

“What?” came from the living room.

When they entered, they saw two griffons, very strongly resembling Beaky in coloring. The father, lowering his newspaper, sat in an armchair, and the mother lay on a couch, holding a glass of red wine in her paw. Seeing those who entered, she put it on the table and said:

“It can’t be.”

“Hello,” Beaky began timidly, “I’m Beaky.”

“Beaky?” the father asked again.

“Yes,” he answered briefly, and lowered his head as if he was guilty of something.

“Maybe Terrible Beak, or Thunderous Beak at the very least. A griffon’s name simply cannot start with the letter B,” said the mother, sitting up. (Note: In Russian, 'Beaky' is 'Klyuvi', starting with K. I kept the English localization flow).

“You see,” Bloom began, “I gave him this name. When I bought him, I didn't know your customs and raised him as I could.”

“Bought?” the father chuckled. “Well, we aren't going to pay for him, if that’s what you came for.”

“What? No! It’s not like that at all,” the filly was a little indignant at these words, but didn't want to create a conflict. “Let’s sit down and tell you everything in order.”

“Of course, forgive our manners, I’ll pour you some tea now. **Gavor**,” she turned to her husband, “move those chairs closer to the table?”

“Of course, Gesta.”

Sitting in the chairs, Bloom saw Beaky clenching and unclenching his front paws on his knees, making his fur stand on end. Reaching out a hoof, she touched his shoulder. Beaky looked at Bloom in search of support; she smiled and nodded approvingly, helping him calm down.

It helped; after some time Gesta brought tea, and Beaky began his story. Bloom didn't interrupt him, only occasionally correcting a couple of places; memories of days lived together brought a smile, joy, or shared sadness to them. It was nice to hear many flattering reviews about herself from Beaky. But something alarmed the filly.

The parents were polite and courteous, even smiling at times when Beaky and Bloom laughed remembering something. Which couldn't be said about the previously seen griffons. But they behaved somehow detachedly; their eyes seemed to look through them.

At some point, Beaky felt it too; the story became drier, the last two years he shortened to one sentence altogether.

“Very interesting,” the father answered. “Sorry, you caught us at a bad time; the filly behind the counter is leaving for lunch now, and we need to relieve her. If you don’t mind, I would suggest meeting another time, say...” taking out a notebook, he leafed through it and continued, “on Sunday, next week.”

Gavor’s words confirmed her guess; indifference, that’s what it was. Bloom was ready for

anything, that the “pony-raised” wouldn't be accepted, that he wouldn't like their harsh temper, but indifference?

“I see,” Beaky said in an upset voice. “Before we leave, tell me, did you never look for me?”

“Of course we looked,” Gesta answered slightly indignantly. “We turned to the guard, but apparently they, like everyone else, dislike our race, since they couldn't even find you.”

She had never seen Beaky so sad; after these words, he sat as if lowered into water (idiom for downcast), although this term doesn't suit him. Remembering how she tried to drag him to bathe in childhood, she smiled for a second.

And just as sharply anger filled her: *“This is their son, how can they be so indifferent? Do they not even care that he is alive? That he is okay? That he lives in a family, albeit a pony one? That he found them?”*

“And you won’t go after your... son?”

Gesta’s voice tore her from her thoughts; only now did the filly realize that Beaky had left. She pierced the parents with a gaze; she wanted to scream at them, but instead, with anger in her voice, separating every word, she uttered:

“Shame. On. You.”

This produced absolutely no effect, only the brother, who had been standing in the corner leaning against the wall all this time, snorted and turned away.

Bloom got up and tried to catch up with Beaky. Not seeing him on the street, she anxiously turned her head from side to side, feeling her heart beating faster. A yellow tail with a black tassel, as if noticing the filly’s gaze, immediately disappeared into an alleyway. Guessing what would happen next, she followed.

“Hey, are you okay?” Bloom asked, seeing the yellow griffon sitting on the ground.

“Yes,” Beaky answered with anger in his voice, forcefully carving something out of a blank resembling a griffon.

“It’s dirty here, maybe we should go somewhere?”

“No, I’m fine here.”

“I see,” the filly walked over and sat next to him.

Remaining silent for a minute, watching Beaky carve an exact copy of himself out of wood, she asked:

“What are you doing?”

“Myself,” the griffon answered just as angrily. “I wanted… wanted to give them… their figurines.”

He took another blank out of the bag and forcefully threw it at the neighboring wall.

“And now, I’ll give them this one… as a keepsake.” The next movements of the knife seemed uncertain—the griffon’s paw was trembling.

Bloom looked up and saw trails of tears on the white cheeks. Saying nothing, the filly hugged him and pressed him to her chest. Trying to calm him down, she began to stroke his feathered head with a hoof.

“I thought,” Beaky sobbed, “that they… that they would at least be happy, but they…”

“Hush, everything will be fine.”

They sat like that until Beaky calmed down. Then Bloom said:

“Come on, let’s find a shop with fish, find you the tastiest and fattiest one.”

“Okay, I’ll just take this to them,” opening his palm, Beaky showed the barely finished figurine.

Bloom took it from his paw.

“Wait here, I’ll take it to them myself.”

On the way up, anger seized her again; thoughts began to swarm in her head about how to call them something more offensive. Beaky’s brother opened the door for her; the filly silently entered, pushing him aside with a hoof.

“They already left,” he said.

“Pity,” the filly turned around and gave the figurine to the brother. “Then give it to them, as a keepsake.”

Leaving, he called out to her, “Wait, I want to talk to him.”

“What for?”

“Maybe my parents don’t care, but I do; I didn't even know I had a brother.”

Anger instantly left the filly; she turned around and said, “Sorry, I didn't mean to be rude, it’s just…”

“I understand, no hard feelings.”

“Let’s go, Beaky will be glad to see you.”

Going outside, they found Beaky standing near the house. Seeing his brother, he tried to turn away, hiding his tear-stained muzzle. He was embarrassed and said:

“I warned you. Let’s go, I know a great joint run by a griffon friend of mine. It’s a dump, but they feed our kind excellently there, and we can talk calmly.”

He rose into the air, flew off a bit, turned around uncomprehendingly, and shouted from afar:

“They speak the truth about the slow life in Equestrian villages, let’s fly already!”

Looking at the approving smile of the filly, Beaky jumped up and flapped his wings.

Reaching the establishment, which turned out to be in the port part of the city, they settled at one of the tables. Only now did it dawn on Bloom and Beaky that they hadn't even learned his name; the griffon in black glasses was called **Hersh**. To the question: “why doesn't he take them off anywhere”, he simply answered that it was an element of style.

Hersh asked them about life in Craftville, about how they found the parents. He was amused by Beaky’s manner of describing many things the way ponies do. However, Hersh was good-natured, and at some point even said:

“Eh, okay, you win, tomorrow I’m going with you to Craftville to see everything for myself. You aren't planning to stay here, are you?”

“No, it’s just that Beaky and I don’t know where to spend the night yet.”

“No problem, I know a place, my buddy works there, he’ll set you up. Only deal is you pay for this dinner. And tomorrow, say around...” he thought, “seven, not too early? Let’s meet at the road leading to Baltimare, deal?”

“Deal,” Beaky answered happily.

“Great, only exactly at seven. I’ll walk you.”

The establishment located on the outskirts turned out to be a flophouse and differed greatly from the expensive city surrounding it. The manager was also a griffon, very rude and not good-natured. But, apparently, the small number of these creatures alien to ponies forced them into some kind of mutual assistance, and Hersh actively used this, if not abused it.

The owner wasn't very happy to see him and even threatened to kick him out, but he whispered something in his ear, after which the guests were silently given a key. The room

they were put in had no amenities, but on the other hand, it was the most comfortable place they had to sleep in for this entire journey.

In the morning, as agreed, they came to the road leading to their home. Hersh was nowhere to be found; waiting a little, they went to the undergrowth, hoping to find him there.

“Look, Bloom, what’s that over there?”

Going out onto the forest road, they saw a cart, a painfully familiar cart. Approaching closer, they recognized it as the abandoned, looted cart on which Wheeler brought goods to their village. He himself was not visible; things, broken jugs, and shards of glass were scattered here and there.

“Is that?..” Bloom said, not believing her eyes.

“Wheeler? Was he attacked? Where is he?” Beaky spun his head, hoping to find the merchant familiar to them since childhood.

“Apparently, there was a struggle here,” Bloom peered into the numerous traces of a fight on the ground. “We need to try to find him, in case he’s wounded.”

Examining the crime scene, they heard a voice behind them.

“This is where it was, yeah, attacked at night, the scoundrels knew I was here... So here they are, came back to take everything they couldn't carry!”

Beaky and Bloom turned around, not understanding what was happening. Wheeler himself was walking towards them, accompanied by two guards. One eye was swollen from a huge black eye; a scar from a clawed paw adorned the other cheek.

“Wheeler, are you okay...” Bloom began in an uncertain voice, sensing something was wrong.

“Kicked me in the face, she did, and now she mocks me; seize them, they attacked me this morning.”

“We... what? No, this is some mistake, you know us!” Bloom began to justify herself, while the guard approached them closer.

“Aren't you ashamed, you were such a good filly, how can I look your mother in the eyes now? And you, Beaky, I didn't expect this from you, but apparently griffons can’t be changed, I bet you put her up to it, huh?”

“What? Uncle Wheeler, what are you saying? We just came here.” Beaky also didn't understand what was happening, not even thinking of running away from the guards who had come right up close.

“Yeah, of course, and whose handiwork is this then?” The old merchant turned to him, showing the scratched cheek.

“I...” Beaky even looked at his paw, not believing what was happening.

“We were framed,” the filly suddenly blurted out. “We came to this city to find Beaky’s parents. And we found them! He has a twin brother; apparently he attacked you. We agreed to meet here this morning.”

One of the guards chuckled, “Nice story. Come on, darling, give me your wings.”

The guard threw a strap with a lock over her, encircling her wings; he tightened it so that the filly gasped. The same was done with the griffon.

“We have witnesses! We spent the night at a hotel on Clay Street and left there about twenty minutes ago!”

“Didn't know Henry’s flophouse is a hotel now,” the guard chuckled again, “of course a griffon will say you had nothing to do with it.”

“We know the address where the griffon who attacked you lives, Wing Street seventeen, apartment twenty-five,” said Beaky. “Uncle Wheeler, go and see for yourself, we aren't lying!”

Thinking, the old man nodded reluctantly, “So be it, it’s hard for me to believe all this too, I hope you aren't lying.”

Bloom wanted to add something, but the guard beat her to it, “Move it, in any case, you’ll be in custody for now.”

Another guard hit the griffon in the rear with the shaft of a spear, forcing him to go forward. Which made Beaky squeak in fright and march down the road.

The old merchant remained behind them, trying to collect the little that remained on the cart. For some reason, Bloom wasn't scared; she was sure that all this would end well. She walked and thought about how else to prove their innocence.

Already walking through the city, she broke away from her thoughts and looked at the griffon. He was clearly frightened by everything happening. Deciding to cheer him up, she said:

“We didn't do anything wrong, don’t worry, they’ll let us go soon when Wheeler sees your brother.”

“And if not?” the griffon said in a trembling voice.

“Then, you will be exiled to Griffonstone, and she will be sent for re-education,” the guard

answered.

“Do you have no conscience at all? He’s scared enough as it is!” Bloom barked in anger.

The guard chuckled:

“Not for criminals, especially raiders.”

“I told you, we were framed! And you haven’t proven our guilt yet.”

“And I said you were caught red-handed. So that old man is your only hope at the trial. Stop chatting, we’re here.”

The guard station looked like an ordinary building; they were led inside, through the reception area, to a corridor at the end of which was a large barred door. Seeing it, Beaky stood rooted to the spot, looking at the bars with horror.

Waiting a couple of seconds, the guard barked:

“Hey, move it.”

He poked the griffon with the shaft, but he didn't move. Already preparing for a stronger second blow, he was suddenly interrupted by Bloom:

“Stop! I’ll do it.” The filly walked up close to Beaky, shielding the door with herself. “Beaky, look at me.”

The griffon, coming out of his stupor, shifted his gaze to Bloom.

“Nothing bad will happen, I promise, it’s only for a while. Come on,” she held out her hoof to him.

Squeezing it, Beaky finally took a step forward. Then another. The filly backed up, continuing to look into his eyes. It seems that incident from his childhood with the circus didn't pass without a trace.

“Just like that, well done, I’m here.”

When they went inside, the door closed behind them, and after some time they were left alone. Bloom hugged him, and stroking his head continued to calm him down. This continued for several hours until the pony felt that the griffon finally relaxed and, it seemed, fell asleep.

Then the filly continued to think about how to get out of this situation; nothing sensible came to mind. Apparently, Wheeler was their only hope for salvation. Her thoughts were interrupted by a guard who slid a tray underneath:

“Lunch.”

At these words, Beaky woke up; remembering where he was, he jumped up and hopped into the corner.

“Wow! First time I’ve seen a griffon so scared.”

“How much longer do we have to sit here?” Bloom asked in an irritated voice.

“Until the trial.”

“And what about Wheeler?”

“The merchant you attacked? He came, said some pony lives there, and she’s never heard of any griffons. So I think you’ll be convicted tomorrow, why drag it out.”

At these words, the filly shivered:

“But we are innocent!”

“Yeah, tell it at the trial, my job is small,” at these words, the guard turned and walked away.

Taking the tray, Bloom brought it to the slightly calmed griffon:

“Here, eat, you’ll feel better.”

Beaky didn't react to this, but only began to look at her intently. Smiling forcefully, Bloom took a muffin from the tray and brought it to his beak.

“You know, when you first hatched, Skein said that birds feed their children by regurgitating food into their mouths. I even seriously considered that I would have to do the same. So, if you don’t start eating this right now, I will feed you the way birds do.”

“Yuck!” Beaky answered, starting to come to his senses. “That’s not funny!”

“Really? Want to risk checking?”

The griffon immediately grabbed the muffin with his beak and swallowed it whole.

Gasping, the filly shouted, “You’ll choke!”

“Well don’t scare me like that, I’m scared enough.”

“I know... Me too, but as I said, everything will be fine, we are innocent, and that’s the most important thing.”

Reluctantly, Beaky nodded.

They spent the whole day telling stories and memories from their childhood. It calmed both of them, allowing them to distract themselves from what was happening. Beaky even told her how in childhood he stole a few coins from her purse to buy a gift for a pony he liked. The last part somewhat surprised Bloom, and she pried the details out of him.

In turn, she told about how in the first years she secretly took the mail and vainly looked for answers from Griffonstone among it, wanting to throw them away. And even got caught doing this, got a bump on her head from Mom.

After dinner, the griffon became sad again; Bloom tried to tell him the story about her turkey nickname, of which she herself was ashamed. But it seemed Beaky wasn't listening anymore; instead, he asked:

“You will visit me in Griffonstone when they send me there, right?”

“What? Of course! I’ll go live there with you if needed.”

“Don’t talk nonsense, it’s a terrible place, you saw it yourself, I won’t let you.”

“Silly! Nothing happened yet. Even if it happens, I’ll walk all the way to Celestia herself; she will definitely help.”

“Thank you, for everything. For finding me, for raising me, I will never forget it,” Beaky’s eyes began to fill with tears, “...and Olivia and Smith, and Pancake.”

“Fool! You aren't dying, decided to say goodbye? Do you think I’m not scared myself? Stop it immediately!” She took the empty tray and threw it at him.

“Ouch! What for? What if we...”

“Silence! Let’s try to sleep, I need to think, I’m sure not everything is lost yet.”

She never managed to fall asleep; all night she thought about how to get out of this situation. Apparently, the pony Wheeler met in the griffons’ house was Hersh’s accomplice, with whom he robbed him. But that gave her absolutely nothing. The situation really seemed hopeless.

Then she came up with another plan; at the trial, she would declare that Beaky was her son. Whatever Olivia said, it was true, and Wheeler would confirm that. It’s unlikely the judge could separate them; it would be wrong at the very least. The rest of the night she was inventing what to say to evoke sympathy for them. She blamed herself more and more for never calling Beaky her son, although she always considered him one.

In the morning, the guards took them to the courthouse. While they waited for their turn outside, they were seated on benches near the entrance. Beaky looked at the ground all the

time, immersed in his thoughts. He didn't even pay attention to Wheeler, who walked into the building, demonstratively not looking at them.

This upset Bloom even more. She even thought about escaping: being on a busy street, one could hide in the crowd. But the guards with spears standing in front of her made this idea pointless. Of course, she didn't think about it seriously, but for some reason, this idea wouldn't leave her head.

Trying to distract herself, she looked at the street, at the passing carriages and the faces of passersby. Suddenly, a yellow griffon muzzle appeared from around the corner of one of the buildings. It was Hersh. He waved his hand at her and blew a kiss.

“Look! There he is!” The filly exclaimed, trying to attract the guard’s attention.

Of course, the yellow head had already disappeared around the corner. Realizing that this was her last hope, Bloom made a desperate decision. Touching the amulet on her chest, she thought to herself: *“I hope it really protects me.”* After which, she rushed forward.

The turned-away guard turned his head; seeing the filly rushing at him, he mechanically stuck out his spear. The filly tried to dodge the blow, but the guard deftly aimed the tip at her chest. A frightened cry was heard from behind, “Mom!”

In the same instant, something hit her ribs painfully, a pop rang out, and the guard was thrown to the ground. Not slowing down, Bloom ran to the corner of the house; her chest almost didn't hurt, which meant the amulet worked.

Another shout was heard from behind: “Get her!”

Running around the corner of the house, she saw the receding griffon. *“The main thing is that he doesn't take off, then all is lost,”* Bloom thought to herself, running onto the dirt road used by carriages and carts. She knew from experience that griffons’ hearing was no worse than ponies’.

Almost catching up with him, she slowed her run slightly so as not to give herself away, getting lost in the noise of the street. A treacherous cry rang out behind her back: “Seize the blue pony!” In desperation, the filly shouted in a voice not her own to drown out the guard: “Fire! Help!”

Puzzled passersby began to turn around, including the griffon. Fortunately, he didn't realize what was happening; this time was enough to run up to him and jump when he just spread his wings.

“Ouch! It hurts! You broke my wing, crazy!”

“I didn't break it, but I will break it if you don’t confess everything!”

“Yeah right! Let go!”

Pressing him even harder into the ground, Bloom continued:

“He’s your brother! How could you do this to us!”

“He’s nobody to me! You were just asking to be scammed!”

Hearing the running of the approaching guard, the filly pressed painfully on the wing, “Scammed? You couldn't even do that, pathetic chicken!”

“You won’t prove anything, two robbed the cart, and I’m alone. Was it me who kicked that old man?”

“Perhaps,” said the approaching guard, “It’s up to the old man to decide now, let him go.”

“Yeah right, he’ll fly away before Wheeler sees him, I won’t move.”

“Indeed, looks like two drops of water. But never mind, we’ll sort it out.” Approaching, the guard took out another strap with a lock and gave it to the filly.

She, understanding the hint, began to forcefully fold the griffon’s wings.

“Ouch! The wing! This is racism! Are there few griffons in the city?”

“You aren't a griffon, you disgrace their honor, take the word of a pony who raised a *real* griffon.”

When the merchant saw the second griffon, he immediately figured out what was what. He himself couldn't believe what was happening, but the robbers who attacked him in the night were too similar to this pair. Now he profusely apologized; however, everyone eventually agreed that it was, albeit very annoying, a misunderstanding.

Pity only that with a witness who changes his testimony, you’re unlikely to achieve anything in court. Beaky wasn't upset by this fact; he felt some sense of pity, he didn't wish his brother anything bad, because it was upbringing that made him what he is now. Not waiting for the end of the investigation, they gave written statements and went home the same day.

Most of the way they flew in silence, thinking about what happened. With half-empty bags, the flight didn't take much time. Already in the rays of the setting sun, landing near the destroyed mill on the outskirts of the village, they wandered towards the house.

Beaky was the first to break this prolonged silence:

“Sorry I dragged you into this adventure, you almost died because of me.”

“I had the amulet,” the filly touched the stone in the setting, which had changed its color to ruby.

“You couldn't know for sure.”

“As if you wouldn't have done the same for me...” pausing, the filly looked at the skeleton of the mill where she hid Beaky from her parents, and smiled, “Do you remember what you shouted when I ran at the guard?”

“Bloom?”

“Nope.”

“Mom!?..” he remembered, and cut himself off, “Sorry, you asked not to call you that.”

“You know, mothers make mistakes too sometimes, so always think with your own head,” making a theatrical pause, she said what she had wanted to say for a very long time: “Son.”

Beaky slowed his pace and stopped, not believing his ears; he was called that for the first time. Bloom had never said before that he was her son. His pupils began to dilate, and a smile slowly spread around his surprisingly dropped beak.

If Bloom hadn't lived all her life with a griffon, she would never have believed that birds could smile so widely. He hugged her and began to rub alternately against the left, and then the right cheek of the filly.

“Alright, enough kissing,” behind laughter, the filly tried to hold back tears welling up, “you’ll poke my eye out with your beak, stop it.”

Fruitlessly, Beaky continued his bird ritual for a long time, moving his beak from side to side, ruffling his wet fur.

This ends the story of the filly for whom a griffon became a native son. And if you don’t believe me, go to Craftville, Equestria, and meet them in person, just hurry, before unpredictable life sends them on another adventure.

The End.

Prologue

On boxes under a large round house on an oak tree, sat a thoughtful griffon. A filly with a

prominent tummy walked up to him.

“Oh, Bloom? What are you doing here?”

“Just, well, decided to check on you,” the filly said in an uncertain voice.

“Worried?”

A squeak came from somewhere, and the filly decided to change the subject immediately, “Oh, what’s that?”

“What? Probably a mouse running somewhere,” the griffon looked around, but saw nothing.

“And why are you sitting here? Look how many boxes of materials they brought.”

“Just thinking about my griffon name. Count Beak, Thunder Beak, Deafening Beak, Bitter Beak... No, all wrong.”

Indeed, all the names were somehow stupid and didn't suit Beaky at all... *“Stupid?”* Bloom grasped this thought. She remembered how she called him that, usually when they were fooling around in childhood, getting into all sorts of stories or just teasing.

“Eh, those were good times,” the pony thought. And immediately a devious plan crept into her head.

“You know, a name isn't invented, it’s given. And I think I’ve already given you a suitable one.”

“R-really?”

“Yes, and called you it hundreds...” estimating something in her mind, she added, “thousands of times!”

The griffon thought, trying to remember something similar.

“Don’t you remember?” the filly continued, going behind the boxes.

“Hero?” Beaky asked uncertainly, surprised at his own audacity. The filly laughed, barely holding back tears.

“Well, don’t keep me in suspense.” The griffon even felt a little offended, but the filly was laughing not at all because of his guess, but because of what she was about to do.

“I named you Stupid!”

“What?”

“A completely suitable name for a griffon, Stupid Beak! From now on I’ll call you that.”

“Hey! Not funny!” the griffon got up and walked around the boxes looking for the insolent one. She, in turn, moved in a circle so as not to get caught.

“Why not, could even be Stoopidbeak, if that’s more convenient for you, I’m sure not a single one of your kin will object.”

“Are you offended because I don’t want to be just Beaky all my life?”

“Nice try, but no.” The filly’s head stuck out from behind the box and showed her tongue.

“Ah so!” the griffon soared upward. “Now I’ll catch you!”

“Catch me? Then what’s the fun in that?” laughing, the filly ran across the field.

The griffon hung in the air flapping his wings, understanding nothing. Bloom wasn't in the condition to play these childish games. Now it would be no trouble for him to catch up with her. Only a few seconds later did he realize what Bloom had said, smiled, and gliding forward, ran after her.

Everything has to be done for the first time sometime, including letting someone win.

Fanfic: The Tailed Duo (Part 4)



Ponyville isn't called a small town for nothing—there's always something to profit from, especially if you know what a certain pony usually has on their dinner table. Like the local jeweler family, a little mouse named **Buttercup** loved cheese very much. She managed to snatch a piece or two from the kitchen while the ponies dined in the hall.

As her mother taught her, this had to be done secretly, tearing off pieces so that no one would even guess. If you annoy the four-hooved ones too much, they might start hiding food, or worse, get a terrible monster, like in the cheese factory or the boutique of the white unicorn.

Waiting for the right time, the light cream mouse sneaked into the house and stuck her spotted muzzle into a small gap between the kitchen cabinet and the wall. There was no smell of cheese; instead, the house was filled with the aroma of fresh pastries.

On an empty stomach, she couldn't be choosy, so making sure no one was around, Buttercup climbed up the carved ornament onto the countertop. Running past a couple of apples, a sink, and stacks of dishes, the mouse descended to the gap in disappointment. Apparently, today she would have to be content with crumbs.

When the mare and the foal went outside, and the head of the family went to the workshop, Buttercup made another attempt to forage. Strangely, the smell hadn't gone anywhere, but

seemed to be coming from somewhere very close.

And indeed, running through the corridor, she smelled it coming from a wooden crate standing by the front door. Approaching it, the spotted mouse stood on her hind legs, pulled herself up, and climbed inside.

There, among a pile of straw and some metal, stood a paper box from which the pleasant aroma of pastries was coming. Judging by everything, these were muffins, and if her nose was to be believed, with chocolate chips.

The lid wouldn't budge; sticking her paw into the gap, the mouse felt her fingers press against something resilient and warm. Squeezing her paw, Buttercup pulled out a sweet lump and sent it into her mouth without delay.

Forgetting about fear, she climbed inside the treat box several more times until she heard the sound of the door opening. Deciding to wait it out, Buttercup hid among the straw; unfortunately, the footsteps were heading towards her.

Her heart clenched when the pony stopped right over the crate, because if she was found, she wouldn't be able to steal food so easily anymore.

But things turned out even worse. The light suddenly went out, and after a while, hammer blows were heard, and then the crate was lifted and carried somewhere. Not knowing what to do, the mouse remained sitting motionless, hoping that everything would blow over.

She heard the front door open, then the sounds of the street, and when the box was set down, a conversation between two ponies:

“Hello! Where to deliver?” asked a young female voice.

“Craftville, to the Smith family home,” a male voice answered her.

“One second,” came the rustling of papers, “that’ll be two bits.”

“Here you go.”

“M-m-m, smells delicious, what’s in there?”

“The one who ordered wood decorations from me asked to send muffins; says he was here recently and really liked the local pastries.”

“Oh yes! Our muffins are the best in Equestria!” at these words, chewing sounds were heard, and a second later, the mare’s voice continued, “Wan’ some?”

“No thanks, good day.”

“Good day!” the chewing repeated, “more for me then.”

Buttercup didn't understand the pony language well, and therefore didn't attach importance to what was happening. Waiting for them to walk away from the crate, she tried to get out, but in vain: the sturdy boards were tightly nailed shut.

Exhausted, the mouse collapsed on her back, frantically thinking about what to do. Nothing came to mind, and the box was carried again; the sound of hooves was replaced by the flapping of wings.

Everything inside was shaking, and at some point, a ray of light broke through the floor. Peeking into the hole, Buttercup saw tree tops below, which were then replaced by a beach.

Realizing that she was being taken away from the city, the mouse got scared and squeaked, so loudly that the pony carrying the box gasped. At first nothing happened, only the surface of the lake was getting closer, then her paws lifted off the floor, followed by an impact.

The crate plunged underwater for a moment, and then just as quickly surfaced; water began to appear from the hole in the floor. When there was no dry place left on the floor, the pegasus’s voice was heard:

“Oh, I’m such a klutz, good thing there’s nothing fragile in there, well okay, still better than last time.”

At these words, the box was picked up again and carried further, and the mouse sat quietly now, afraid that she would be dropped again. Afterward, the cargo was passed to someone else, and transported on a cart; resigning herself to what was happening and drinking from the formed puddle, Buttercup found a drier spot and fell asleep.

She dreamed of a kind yellow pegasus who gave her a small wheel of cheese, which Buttercup rolled into her native hole to the delight of her parents, for not every mouse can boast of such a catch. But when a piece was broken off the cheese, for some reason it smelled like muffins; not understanding what was happening, they tasted it and it tasted like straw.

Opening her eyes, Buttercup remembered what had happened. It was pitch dark, there were almost no sounds either, only the noise of the wind. Seizing the moment, she reached the muffins by touch, unceremoniously gnawed a hole, and ate her fill, since there was nothing left to lose anyway.

She waited an hour, another; nothing happened. Deciding: “Here goes nothing,” she squeaked. No result. Again—the same effect. The mouse squeaked with all her might until her throat went dry, but it seemed no one heard her. Finding the remains of a puddle, she drank and sat down to wait. Nothing happened.

When the birds began to sing, she pleaded for help again, but in vain: only the wind swaying the trees and chirping could be heard. Gnawing on a muffin, she fell asleep again. She was woken by a strange male voice:

“Oh, Bloom? What are you doing here?”

“Just, well, decided to check on you,” a female voice answered.

“Worried?”

Deciding that now was the time to call for help, the mouse squeaked with all her might again, and almost immediately regretted it. Pain seized her throat after the night’s screaming. Wheezing, Buttercup rushed to look for a puddle, but it had already dried up.

When her voice returned, the conversation between the two ponies had already died down. Upset, she decided to eat her grief away, and towards the end of her meal she heard:

“See, I told you I’d catch you! Just like I said, Stupid Beak.”

“Haha, look who’s talking, Turkey.”

The mare’s ringing laughter rang out.

“Speaking of which, Acrylic promised to bring pies for lunch, so drop by.”

“Potato pies?” the male voice asked hopefully.

“Of course! He knows you love them.”

Something confused the mouse about the male voice, but she couldn't understand what. More quietly now, she began to squeak again.

The sound of a winch was heard, and when it died down, it seemed to her that someone silently approached the box.

“Strange, what did I order that squeaks?” a strange voice sounded, and then the box began to shake so much that the mouse lost the power of speech.

“Ah whatever, I’ll figure it out later.”

The crate was carried somewhere again; this time it was placed sideways, so that through the hole it became visible where she was. It turned out to be a house with large windows, behind which clouds were visible. Seeing the owner of this house, the mouse shrank in horror.

It was a cat, painted like cheese, but for some reason with a bird’s head. Neither one nor the other promised anything good. But the creature behaved strangely, almost like a pony, except

it moved differently. It was dragging boxes inside the room.

Finishing, it began to open the crates, one by one, checking their contents. She didn't want to squeak anymore, but hiding seemed like a good idea, and the muffin box was perfect for that.

The sound of prying nails was heard, and then that voice again:

“Oh! Muffins for Bloom! I completely forgot.”

The mouse was lifted into the air again. Hiding behind a muffin, she saw through a hole an orange eye that looked as if it was looking right at her. Her heart went into her heels.

“Strange, seems someone gnawed on it.”

When Buttercup felt that she was put on the ground again, she decided to make a run for it. Jumping out of the hole, she rushed across the wooden floor.

“Hey! Wait!” came from behind.

The mouse ran with all her might, but felt the creature catching up. Seeing a hatch in the floor, she jumped into it without hesitation, thinking she would land in the subfloor and be able to hide there. When she realized her expectations were not met, it was too late—she was flying down towards the tree roots.

It was a high fall; scrambling with her paws trying to reach the bark, she heard:

“Where are you going?!”

Then there was an impact and darkness, but even through it, a viscous pain was felt. It smelled of cheese.

Thinking it was a dream again, Buttercup opened her eyes. Her nose hadn't deceived her; right there with her on the pillow lay a yellow piece of the treat. Behind it, in the distance, with its back to her sat the creature, doing something at a table cluttered with wooden blanks.

The bird-cat paid no attention to her; poorly understanding what was happening, the mouse tried to get to the cheese. Getting up with difficulty, taking the first step, she felt dizziness; on the second, the outlines of the world swam and spun; on the third, she fell into unconsciousness again.

When Buttercup woke up again, the house was already dark and quiet. The creature had disappeared, and her head didn't hurt. Deciding not to risk it, the mouse lay for a little longer. Since the creature hadn't eaten her, it seemed it presented no danger. She didn't want to check this, of course, but didn't want to rush either.

Slowly reaching the cheese, she broke off a piece, ate it, took another, and went to the edge of the pillow. There was a saucer there, with... milk poured into it? She had tasted it only once, from a jug broken on the road. Drinking her fill, the mouse went on.

Suddenly, a voice was heard:

“You’re awake! Don’t be afraid.”

Turning around, the mouse saw the familiar cheese creature; instinctively she rushed to run. Jumping off what appeared to be a nightstand, she hid in the gap underneath it.

“Hello,” a strange male voice sounded, and a bird head appeared in the gap. “I’m Beaky. And what’s your name?”

Receiving no answer, the creature repeated:

“Bea-ky. I’m a griffon, don’t be afraid of me, Bea-ky,” a clawed paw pointed to the face with the beak. “And you?” now the paw pointed at the mouse.

Greatly surprised and realizing what they wanted from her, she uttered:

“Buttercup.”

“Hmm, squeak? Squeaker?” asked... Beaky.

“Buttercup,” the mouse squeaked again.

“**Squeaky**!” for some reason the little griffon laughed. “Sorry, I don’t understand Mouse, you don’t mind if I call you that?”

Poorly understanding what was being said to her, the mouse moved her head.

“That’s great. Want me to take you down?”

An open clawed paw began to reach towards her. Frightened, the mouse stepped back.

“No? Well okay, just don’t be afraid.”

The griffon disappeared for a moment, and then appeared, placing a saucer and a new slice of cheese on the floor. After thinking, he pushed it all into the gap.

“I’m going to sleep, and you make yourself comfortable, make yourself at home.”

After which he left. Checking that he was really gone, the mouse went to the saucer; unfortunately, now there was water in it. However, she didn't want to eat; for some reason, she was sleepy again. Carefully Buttercup got out from under the nightstand and settled for the

night in a hole under the cupboard, where it was safer.

Waking up, she explored the house. It consisted of four rooms encircling the tree. Walking through them in a circle, she didn't see the griffon. Buttercup was looking for a hole from which she could go down.

After some time, one was found behind one of the cupboards, but the hole went straight outside, and she didn't want to fall again at all.

When Buttercup got out, she decided to try her luck in the place where the hatch was, but halfway there, she ran into the cheese creature walking towards her. Noticing her, the griffon stopped, then took a step back, then another, after which he sat on the floor. With his whole appearance, he showed that he was not going to catch her.

The mouse slowly walked towards the cheese, not taking her eyes off the cheese creature. Having eaten and drunk, she, unexpectedly for herself, came out of the gap and squeaked.

“Take you down?” The griffon pointed a paw down, “To the ground.”

Correctly understanding the creature’s speech, the mouse nodded; it was scary, but she didn't want to fall anymore. Leisurely, the griffon walked up to her, turned sideways, and spread his wing, lowering the tips of the feathers to the floor.

“Climb on.”

Deciding, the mouse jerked towards the wing, but then remembered the cheese, took it, and only then climbed onto the waiting griffon. It was both scary and interesting: “Mom and Dad won’t believe it when they find out about this,” she thought while the griffon walked out onto the balcony.

“Hold on tight,” he said, and slowly glided down.

Once on the ground, Buttercup didn't wait, jumped down, and disappeared into the grass, squeaking a goodbye with the cheese clenched in her teeth.

This settlement was smaller than the one she lived in before. But big enough to disappear in it for a long time. The next time she happened to meet this strange creature was a week later. She was near the tree where he lived, in one of the houses.

Sneaking into the kitchen, she saw Beaky talking to a bluish pony with a big belly.

“So, for a month?” said the pegasus.

“Yes, Rasmus writes that he could use my help, besides, I promised to fly over.”

“Aren't you afraid to fly alone?”

“I think it’s you who’s afraid to let me go alone,” the griffon giggled and ruffled the pony’s golden mane.

“Well watch it, if you get lost, I won’t go looking for you,” laughing, the filly rubbed against his cheek.

Not waiting for the end of the dialogue, the mouse decided to announce herself by squeaking. Seeing the mouse, the little griffon perked up, and going to the cupboard began to look for something in it.

“A mouse!” shouted the pegasus.

“Don’t tell me you’re afraid of them,” the griffon took out a piece of cheese and put it in front of Buttercup.

“Beaky! What are you doing?! Did you decide to feed mice in my house before leaving?”

“Meet Bloom—this is Squeaky. Squeaky—Bloom.”

The mouse looked at the filly and squeaked.

“That’s not an answer to my question, you know how hard it is to drive them away later, might as well get a cat. And with Acrylic’s work—can’t even close the windows.”

“Don’t worry, if she bothers you, I’ll deal with her.” The griffon looked at Buttercup and winked.

“Yeah, like with that frog you let live under my bed? That was fun,” the filly snorted.

“Well okay, Squeaky, looks like you’ll have to leave,” pointing a paw at the door, the griffon flapped his wings.

Understanding what they wanted from her, the mouse grabbed the cheese and ran outside.

Over the next month, Buttercup managed to explore the village properly, meet other mice. Food sources here were much scarcer than in her hometown, but she didn't know how to return there. Her kin considered her strange; no one believed her stories about a pony who understands their language. Not giving up hope, she squeaked to passing mares and stallions, but in vain.

When every house was explored, the mouse decided to go to the dilapidated mill on the outskirts of the village. Usually, flour was ground in such buildings, which meant a bag or two might remain. This would allow her to easily survive the coming winter; the leaves on the trees

turned yellow, and she had no supplies, nor a hole.

The griffon had also disappeared somewhere, and she had to rely only on herself. Rummaging through the old ruins, she managed to find only a few acorns, some toys, and a fresh apple forgotten by someone. Apparently, this dangerous place with rotten boards and crumbling stones attracted foals from all around.

While Buttercup gnawed on the found apple, rain began. Moving into one of the holes in the wall, she watched the swaying forest. The wind intensified, and on the horizon, high above the tree lines, a large bird appeared.

A little surprised by the strange behavior of the feathered one, the mouse peered closer until she realized that among the clouds, under the downpour, flew none other than her old acquaintance.

"Strange, usually even ponies don't fly in such weather," thought the mouse, sending another piece of apple into her mouth.

As if hearing her thoughts, at the next gust of wind, the griffon staggered, got tangled in the bags he was carrying, and flapping one wing, flew down.

The strange creature didn't appear again, and waiting a couple of minutes, the mouse decided to go to his aid. Getting out onto the road leading straight into the forest, she went to the crash site near the edge.

Somewhere in the distance, a howl was heard: "Maybe that's why he decided not to descend to the ground?"

From the height of a mouse, it was hard to see the yellow griffon among the fallen leaves; smell and the familiar scent of wet cat helped. Beaky lay motionless, only his chest heaved rhythmically, moving the broken branches on his body.

Climbing up one of the bags, the mouse reached the bird's ear; taking a breath of air into her chest, she squeaked with all her might. No result; lifting the eyelid on the bird's head, she saw a rolled-back pupil.

Somewhere wolves howled again; frightened, Buttercup decided to go all in. Descending, she bit the griffon on the neck with all her might, and immediately found herself in a clenched paw.

Squeaking in a stifled voice, she tried to break free with all her strength. The grip loosened slightly only when she was at the open bird eye.

"Squeaky?" Beaky asked in surprise. "What are you doing here?"

“Wolves!!!” shouted the mouse.

“Sorry.”

The paw stopped squeezing her body but didn't let her break free. The griffon rose with difficulty and strode towards the gap among the trees.

“We shouldn't stay here, I think I heard wolves on the way here.”

Buttercup squeaked indignantly.

“Just don’t run away, it’s dangerous here,” putting his paw behind his back, the griffon put the mouse on his scruff.

The mouse squeaked just as indignantly.

“Sorry-sorry, that hurt, you know.”

Resigning herself to the fact that she wasn't understood, she grabbed the wet fur. The bags didn't stop the griffon from picking up speed, and in an instant, they rushed past the mill. Running past the houses on the outskirts, slowing down, they reached the treehouse.

Moving the mouse to his shoulder, Beaky climbed the ladder, climbed through the hatch, and collapsed exhausted.

“We’re even.”

He said, before falling asleep right on the floor. Feeling a draft, the mouse squeaked, but the griffon didn't answer. Sighing, Buttercup climbed between the tree and the back of the hatch. Leaning with all her weight and pushing with her legs, she managed to slam it shut.

Now the mouse knew where she could always get food, catching the griffon when he went to the house next door. Instincts screamed danger every time she smelled the cat scent and saw the bird beak, so Buttercup left the option of staying with him for the winter for a last resort.

One day, when she went to him for food, the first snow began to fall. The griffon didn't bring cheese out to her from the neighboring house; instead, he took the mouse with him.

Inside it was much warmer than outside; while the mouse ate, the blue filly entered the room, carrying a small foal on her back between her wings.

“Good morning, Bloom, can I hold her yet?” asked the beak-headed one.

The filly yawned.

“Did you trim your claws?”

“Yes.” Sitting on the floor, Beaky stretched his front paws forward, demonstrating them.

The filly’s gaze frowned, falling on the mouse sitting in the corner.

“And who is that?”

“We-e-ell,” the griffon began in an apologetic tone, “it was cold outside, so I brought her here.”

“Then go wash your paws. With soap.”

Beaky hesitated, and rubbed his neck in indecision.

“Now not just paws,” Bloom continued glumly.

A forced smile appeared on the griffon’s face.

“Then maybe another time.”

“You are incorrigible. Speaking of which. Skein is coming to town today, will you tell him to stop by?”

“Wow! I thought after the wedding he wouldn't for another few years...”

Not listening to the conversation she didn't understand, the mouse went about her business. She needed to get to her hole and hide the remaining cheese there, run into the haberdashery and try to find some thread there. establishing a place for wintering in an abandoned workshop near the square, she wanted to make her hole as warm as possible.

It took her another couple of weeks to settle in her new home; during this time, some strange structure appeared on the square, with which a chestnut unicorn with a burgundy mane was tinkering. The mouse cared little about what was happening outside, however, after some time, the griffon and pegasus familiar to her joined him.

Sneaking out onto the street, she heard:

“So, you’re going to test your invention on Beaky?”

“Nothing bad will happen! As I said earlier, it’s just a barrier that keeps out other creatures except ponies.”

“I-I see,” the filly answered with distrust in her voice, “it’s up to you, Beaky, I wouldn't sign up for this.”

“You sure know how to be supportive; Skein didn't spend all these years in that university of his for nothing,” the griffon replied.

“Exactly... not for nothing...” digging inside the square structure, the unicorn replied, “and now step back. I’ll turn it on for a small radius, I’ll stay inside myself, and then Beaky will try to enter.”

The device buzzed, vibrated, so the mouse decided not to approach either, and then there was a pop, and a purple dome appeared.

“It works! It works!” the unicorn shouted joyfully, “and now come in, Beaky.”

Before the little griffon could enter, a snowball from children playing nearby flew into the open door of the device. Something boomed hollowly, sparked, the color of the dome changed to gray, and the unicorn standing inside was thrown out and hit against the wall of the house.

Bloom and Beaky ran up to him, trying to bring him to his senses. During this time, the magic sphere began to expand, slowly swallowing the square.

“Oh, what... what happened?” the unicorn asked uncomprehendingly.

“I think I saw those fleeing foals throw a snowball into your machine, right when Beaky touched the field with his paw.”

“Yeah, it was solid, which means you succeeded!” the griffon began joyfully, “albeit for a few seconds.”

Looking closely at the open hatch through the gray veil of the field, Skein continued scratching his sparse beard:

“Strange, it seems everything froze over there, never seen anything like it. Possibly a reaction of the crystals. I’ll fix everything now and we’ll try again.”

“You want to kill yourself?” the filly snorted.

“It happens, we’ve had wor...” the unicorn began imperturbably, but cut himself off when he couldn't pass through the field, “it shouldn't be like this.”

“How so?”

“It seems it now doesn't let anyone in, and it’s expanding!”

“So what?”

The mouse was distracted by the smell of fresh baking; the shoemaker in the house nearby made her signature cheese puffs again. The pony was inattentive, and she always had many

scraps left on the floor. Deciding to get them, Buttercup went there.

The garbage bucket, as always, stood in the pantry behind the kitchen. Waiting for the mistress to go further away, Buttercup jumped inside and began to look for tasty crusts left over from the cheese. Besides this, there was a whole tuber of slightly blooming potato.

While the mouse was fussing, someone entered the house and said something to the mistress. It seemed to be that unicorn from the square.

“You need to leave, a magic barrier is moving here, we don’t know how far it will expand.”

They talked about something else, but Buttercup was too absorbed in the finds from the wastebasket. When the mouse got out, the door was blocked by a gray veil. It was advancing, gradually consuming everything around.

Deciding to get out another way, Buttercup rushed to look for other escape routes from the house, only not a single slightly suitable crack under the wall came across. The translucent haze had already enveloped half the pantry.

Not knowing what to do, the mouse pressed herself against the furthest wall. The gray wall was approaching; when it came close, the mouse squeezed her eyes shut and...

And nothing happened, the world just lost part of its color, everything just faded. Strange, but livable; deciding to get out onto the street, Buttercup didn't notice anything strange at first, except that the sun was somehow gray.

Running to her hole with the remains of the potato, the mouse realized what else was wrong. There were no ponies on the streets; in the village where life used to bustle, it became quiet. Sounds came only from the end of the road, where apparently all the residents had gone.

In the distance, behind the gray haze, silhouettes of a large group of ponies could be read. Taking advantage of the opportunity, the mouse looked into several more houses, and unceremoniously stole everything that wasn't nailed down.

Satisfied with the loot, Buttercup became curious where all the ponies had gone. Setting off down the road after them, she caught up with them only at the very outskirts. There was something like a big meeting; behind the gray veil, she managed to see the cheese griffon standing next to a group of ponies.

Running through the barrier, the mouse managed to hear the blue pegasus’s voice amidst the general hubbub:

“And what are we supposed to do now? **Saffron** and I will freeze here! What were you thinking!”

“It’s for a month at most, I didn't think it would turn out like this, so for reliability I inserted...”

“You didn't think at all!” the filly barked, and the foal in her hooves burst into tears.

“Don’t worry, Bloom, I have an uncle living in Dodge City,” a brown stallion with white spots answered the filly, “we’ll wait it out there for now.”

“Thank you, Acrylic,” the pegasus kissed the stallion, “that’s actually a pretty good idea, we have relatives there too.”

“You cooked this porridge, you eat it,” (Idiom: You made this mess, you clean it up) came the voice of the mare who lived in the house with the blue pegasus, “I’ll calm Saffron down for now, and you and Skein talk to the village elder and the others.”

Standing was cold, and the mouse squeaked, deciding to attract the griffon’s attention. Beaky turned around and walked up to her.

“Squeaky! I’m glad you got out of there too,” climbing into the saddlebag, he took out a piece of cheese. “Here.”

The mouse didn't want to eat, but cheese always comes in handy. Turning around, she ran to her house. The griffon watched her, and when she ran through the barrier, he gasped.

“Wait!”

Beaky walked up to the gray wall and stuck his paw through it. Clenching and unclenching it on the other side.

“Look!” he shouted.

A clamor of voices rose. Waiting a little, the mouse went to her hole. If she understood correctly, there wouldn't be anyone in the village for a very long time, which meant she could drag everything she wanted home.

Thinking about this, she had already run half the way, when suddenly, a white cat jumping from the roof appeared in her path. Swallowing and dropping the cheese, the mouse began to back away. The cat, realizing she had nowhere to run, slowly advanced on her.

“Fool,” thought the mouse to herself, *“Dreamed that there was no one here and forgot about caution.”*

The white creature came closer and closer to her, stepping with paws on the snow. It had already opened its mouth, demonstrating its huge white teeth. From fear, Buttercup fell, stumbling, and the cat loomed over her.

Already raising a paw, it stopped, and looked somewhere behind her, then bristled and hissed.

At the same moment, something sharply grabbed the mouse and carried her.

“And this is mine!” Beaky’s familiar voice sounded.

Buttercup flew in the griffon’s paw, and behind remained the disgruntled cat, who was still hissing in rage. Showing him her tongue, the mouse squeaked.

“Don’t mention it, two-one in my favor!” said a cheerful voice.

Landing on the square, the griffon put her on one of the barrels standing nearby.

“Don’t come close, it might be dangerous,” he said, and went to the strange box that caused all this commotion.

Taking stones and some straw from the bag, he hit them for a long time, apparently trying to kindle a flame.

“I told them I don’t know how to use them. How else can I melt this? Maybe look for matches?” he asked into the void. “Pity I can’t smash this machine to smithereens, Skein would be very upset then. Eh, okay, I have one idea...”

After these words, the little griffon stood sideways in front of the open hatch where the ice had formed. Lifted a hind paw and...

Epilogue

The mouse sat on the dresser in Bloom’s warm house; on the table before her was a festive dinner. The ponies were celebrating Hearth's Warming Eve with the whole family. There was the cheese griffon, and the blue pegasus, her parents and husband; the foal slept peacefully in a cradle nearby.

“You figured it out,” Bloom said laughing, “can you imagine what fame will go about you in the village?”

“And what was I supposed to do? And I already said, the real hero here isn't me, but Squeaky; thanks to her we learned that the barrier only keeps out ponies.”

“Just like his mother,” laughing, said the light brown earth pony, “Turkey doused me once too, praise Celestia only with paint.”

“Ha. Ha. Ha.” the filly enunciated, frowning, “you deserved it!”

“I don’t argue.”

“By the way, Acrylic, why ‘Turkey’?” asked the cheese griffon.

“We-e-ell,” the stallion hesitated, “I thought you understood yourself, she spent her whole childhood messing with gri... with you. Stopped walking with us, and didn't show you at first.”

“I didn't allow it,” said the filly’s mother, it seems her name was Olivia, “No one knew then what to expect from a dangerous predator.”

At these words, the fur on the griffon’s cheeks stood on end.

“We know, we know, wouldn't hurt a mouse,” the mare continued in a gentle tone, looking at Buttercup, “But back then I wasn't so sure. You can’t even imagine what efforts Bloom made so you could live in the same room with her.”

“Anyway,” the brown earth pony continued, “we quarreled badly back then, she splashed green paint on me, and I splashed black on her. After that incident, we couldn't stand each other. So I came up with a nickname for her, mother hen-turkey. For a long time we didn't communicate, and then she came into my workshop for paints. I thought we had forgotten childhood grievances, and jokingly called her by the nickname—Turkey. You should have seen her face; I thought I’d be walking around green again. I felt ashamed, and I decided to make amends, and I am very glad of this act.”

The stallion took Bloom’s hoof, and gently kissed her on the nose.

“From love to hate is one step, well, or vice versa,” giggled the blue stallion sitting next to Olivia.

“Dad!” the blue filly snorted indignantly.

“I mean that all’s well that ends well.”

“Yeah, and I have to wash the machine,” Skein said discontentedly.

“Be glad they didn't throw tomatoes at you,” Olivia said cheerfully, “and that, only because they don’t grow anymore.”

“There are a bunch of houses there, everyone has stoves, or at the very least you could have tried to find matches,” the chestnut unicorn didn't let up.

“Sorry, Skein,” the griffon said, “I meant well!”

“The road to Tar... is paved with good intentions,” not finishing, Bloom laughed at her own joke. (Note: Reference to Tartarus).

“That’s what I get for saving you,” the griffon snorted.

The door in the hallway opened, letting frosty air into the house. A snow-dusted earth pony

appeared on the threshold. Barely entering inside, she declared:

“I’m back!”

“Pancake!” exclaimed those sitting at the table.

“We started to worry, couldn't you have returned earlier,” Olivia began, but cut herself off, seeing the arriving filly limping as she entered the room.

“You won’t believe where I’ve been!”

The End.

Fanfic: Sivka (Part 5.1)



Prologue

You never know for sure if changes in life will lead to something good, but unfortunately, at times, it is the only possible path. Someone might say that running from problems is a sign of weakness or lack of character, but a mare named **Sivka**, who arrived in Canterlot one summer morning, did not think so.

She decided to give up her former life in noisy Fillydelphia and do what she always wanted.

Since childhood, she had always liked creativity in all its manifestations: drawing, sculpture, music, poetry. Turning a sheet of paper into a bright picture or story, creating a living composition from a piece of shapeless clay, or birthing a melody from taut strings.

Family business affairs didn't give the mare enough time to realize her plans, and her parents

considered it all empty amusement.

Up to a certain point, it seemed to Sivka that she made decisions herself, but after the appearance of her foal, her personal life began to crumble, and only then did she begin to understand that she was blindly following the will of others.

Like a true artist, Sivka decided to start everything with a clean slate, responding to an offer for a part-time job in the capital of Equestria.

The task was difficult: to decorate and equip a newly built kindergarten alone, but the pony saw in this a chance to realize herself.

The unloved part of supply procurement was an everyday task for her, but approaching it from the point of view of creativity and her own vision was a completely different matter.

They paid little, perhaps that's why the employer had to look for a worker through friends.

For Sivka, this was not a problem, and the opportunity to take her little foal to work made the conditions ideal.

Along the way, the spotted mare became friends with unusual wood craftsmen from whom she ordered furniture, often staying with them in the evenings for tea.

Two elderly brothers, and one young griffon who, like her, came here to earn money.

The latter initially seemed very strange to her; besides the fact that he was interested in her project, he also insisted on helping for free.

Sivka, like any resident of Fillydelphia, treated these creatures with caution and suspicion.

There was some catch in such behavior, but the mare couldn't figure out where.

Moreover, unlike other griffons, this one didn't seem shy about his instincts, but put them on display.

Once, right before her eyes, he caught a fly with his beak on the fly and immediately swallowed it.

However, from the first sight of his lunch with live fish, she almost turned inside out, after which she tried not to dine with him.

Soon, all these anomalies in behavior were partly explained. It turned out that the griffon was raised by a pony as a chick, and he didn't really communicate with others of his kind.

Sonya, the mare's son, unconstrained by any stereotypes, immediately perceived this strange

creature as a giant fur toy.

Although Sivka initially forbade him to play with him, she eventually gave in.

This, and the diligence with which the griffon decorated wooden handrails and windowsills, made her change her attitude towards their race a little.

And one might even say, make friends a little.

When Sivka's painting decorated the last white wall of the future kindergarten, the work was finished, and they decided to celebrate this event in the furniture workshop.

Knowing her desire to settle in a quiet place and dedicate her fate to creativity, the mare was offered to buy the house of one of the master brothers in a small artisan village.

The offer looked tempting, and they even offered to pay later, but she decided to limit herself to creating her own workshop on the outskirts of Fillydelphia.

And so...

End of Prologue.

“We’ve arrived!” the driver’s voice rang out, the cart wheels let out a prolonged screech and stopped.

Tearing herself away from her book, Sivka looked into the small window. Silhouettes of small buildings appeared through the veil of frost in the rays of the setting sun.

Getting up from the seat, trying not to wake the peacefully sniffing Sonya, she got out into the street.

The cold wind made her shudder and regret that she hadn't worn something warmer.

“Thank you. Could you help carry the things into the house?” Sivka asked the driver who was stomping in place, as if continuing to pull the cart.

“If you were moving in summer, maybe I would help, but now, sorry, my legs are frozen, I’ll try to find a tavern or bakery to warm up.”

Looking at the saddened white nose on the mare’s face, he added, “You can ask one of the locals, or spend the night at the inn, and sort it out tomorrow morning.”

“I understand, long road, I’ll manage myself, thank you,” the mare took out a purse, and about ten coins fell into the driver's hooves.

Saying goodbye, the mare looked around. The cart stopped at the edge of a square covered with snowdrifts, in the center of which was a stone fountain.

The snow-covered streets diverging from it in four directions seemed empty, although billowing smoke rose into the sky from every house.

Almost every one... Only an old house, with boarded-up windows and paint peeling in places, looked empty and abandoned.

Above the door hung a slightly crooked sign depicting a wardrobe and a saw. It was near it that the cart loaded with Sivka's bags stood.

The conspicuous cold lifelessness of the house prompted the mare to think that it would be nice to light a fireplace there too, and move Sonya inside before it got completely cold in the cart.

Unlocking the door, she went inside, raising clouds of dust that covered everything from the floor to the counters and display cases.

However, what else did she expect, the former shop of the carpenter Rasmus was closed quite a long time ago.

In the dim sunlight, Sivka managed to find a fireplace in the next room, but no firewood for it, or even a lamp.

“Fool, what was I thinking deciding to go here in winter,” the mare cursed.

Only now beginning to realize that she had a lot of work ahead of her before engaging in her favorite business.

Deciding to calm down, she took a deep breath, dust as if waiting for this all these years clogged her nostrils, and the mare sneezed loudly.

“Bless you,” a male voice rang out from behind the door.

“A pony! I’m saved,” thought the mare, going out into the shop hall.

On the threshold stood a stallion wrapped in a fur coat, from whom clouds of steam rose into the frosty air. Seeing the exiting mare, he smiled:

“Hello, did old man Rasmus finally find a buyer for his shack?”

“Good evening. Yes... Or rather possibly, for now we agreed that I would live here for some time. I know it’s strange to start an acquaintance with such a request, but could you help me

unload my things?"

For a second the stallion thought, and then nodded.

"Of course, how could I not help a new neighbor, I'm **Eaglet**." The stallion held out a hoof in greeting.

"Sivka, very nice to meet you, and thank you so much for the help."

The mare took the bags off the cart while the new acquaintance carried them inside.

Sonya had already woken up and was running around the house collecting dust.

Ideally, he should have been scolded, but there was no strength for that.

Reaching for another suitcase, the pony heard the sound of flapping wings. *Pegasus*, thought the mare and sticking her head out from behind the edge of the cart, saw, or rather felt the effect of landing, in the form of a snowball hitting her curious face.

"Sivka, you came after all!" a familiar voice rang out.

While the mare tried to shake off her muzzle and come to her senses, she unexpectedly felt herself being hugged.

"What do you think you're..." the mare began, and cut herself off, realizing who it was, "B-Beaky?"

"Uh-huh," the griffon answered her and unclenched his embrace, "oops, sorry I doused you with snow, let me help."

"No need," still seeing nothing, the mare stepped back.

Despite the joint work in Canterlot, the griffon still made her wary.

When her vision returned, she saw the yellow bird-cat taking bags from the roof of the cart.

The griffon hadn't changed at all during this time, apart from the spotted coloring and two feathers framing his head, he remained just as annoying and no less strange.

Not only did he land unsuccessfully in the snow, he also had absolutely no winter clothes on.

"I said no need, I'm already being helped."

"Oh come on, it's not hard for me," replied the griffon, already entering the house.

“Hi, Beaky,” came from inside.

“Hi, Eaglet.”

Returning, the griffon winked at the cream mare and continued:

“Besides, that’s Eaglet, it’s generally harmful for him to lift anything except his telescope.”

“Hey!” came a muffled indignant exclamation.

Realizing that she couldn't get out of the winged beast's help, the mare sighed and also carried bags inside.

From the stairs behind the counter leading to the second floor, Sonya ran out, and shouting “Beaky!” rushed to the griffon.

He took him by the front hooves and spun around, raising all possible dust that remained in the house.

“I knew it,” the mare thought to herself, *“as long as these two are in the house there will be no peace.”*

She wanted to rest from the long trip in silence; did she move to the ends of the earth from the noisy city for nothing?

Unable to tolerate the increasing hum in her head or the clogged nostrils anymore, she demonstratively sneezed.

A loud echo rang out through the semi-empty room. Wiping her nose with a hoof, Sivka said:

“Alright, that’s it, thanks for the help, we’ll take it from here.”

“Are you sure?” the hapless helpers asked in unison.

“Sure,” recovering a bit from the surging irritation, the mare continued, “just tell me where to find firewood.”

When the firewood was laid, the guests escorted out, and the bags brought inside, the mare lit a match and threw it into the fireplace.

The logs were so dry that a flame flared up from the very first spark.

Tired from the road, the pony and her son settled on the floor by the fire, spreading a rug lying there as a tablecloth.

It became warmer in the house, it smelled pleasantly of smoke, and the sounds of quietly crackling wood lulled them to sleep.

Already falling asleep, Sivka heard a knock on the door. Reluctantly getting up and reaching it, she saw the griffon again.

“What else? I said clearly, help is not needed,” starting to lose her temper, the pony frowned at the interlocutor.

“Um, sorry of course,” the griffon began timidly seeing how angry Sivka was, putting one paw behind his neck, “but are you sure you don’t need help?”

“I already said, we can handle it ourselves.”

“Really?” the griffon looked somewhere up at the door jamb.

Intercepting his gaze, the mare saw wisps of smoke coming from the room with the fireplace.

“Did you open the damper on the second floor and take out the plug on the roof?”

Although Sivka lived in the city, she guessed what he was talking about.

She had experience in firing, and some general knowledge told her how a stove works.

Strange that she didn't think of it herself, opening only the damper on the fireplace itself. Apparently fatigue was taking its toll.

“No,” Sivka answered uncertainly, realizing what could have happened.

“I see.”

Beaky stepped back to get out from under the porch, jumped up, and flew somewhere up.

A couple of moments later he was already standing with a wooden lid, apparently protecting the chimney from snow and water.

Placing it behind the threshold, he walked inside. Already climbing the stairs to the second floor, he continued:

“I only thought later that you don’t have stoves in the city. Besides, you aren't a pegasus to remove the plug. Unless you would climb onto the roof, which is also unlikely, considering the weather. So I returned to make sure everything is okay.”

“Sorry,” began the mare climbing after him to the second floor, “I haven't been myself for the last week... month, had to break away and move here.”

“It’s nothing,” came from somewhere in the darkness, “I know myself that I’m very annoying, and you don’t really like griffons.”

“Not at all,” the mare tried to justify herself.

From somewhere in the depths, a creak was heard, and then something broke.

“Are you okay?” Sivka asked with anxiety in her voice.

“Yes, just broke the lamp, the damper wouldn't open, apparently rusted.”

“How do you even see anything in this darkness?”

Asking this, the mare saw in the dark, slightly smoky corridor two yellow lights walking in her direction; the feeling of fear that appeared even forced the mare to step back.

“Barely,” came from the dancing lights, “we can go down, now the smoke will go into the chimney.”

Going out to the first floor, they headed to the fireplace; smoke indeed began to be drawn into the pipe.

Sonya, as if nothing had happened, sniffed peacefully on a small rug with a bedspread.

Escorting the guest to the exit, Sivka felt ashamed that she got angry at someone who wanted to help her.

“Sorry again, but how did you even know I arrived?”

“I saw from my house that a cart arrived at Rasmus’s old workshop,” Beaky pointed to a tall tree illuminated by the last rays of the setting sun, “so if you need anything, you know where to find me.”

Looking closer, the mare saw a house spread out in the crown. Knowing its owner, from afar it seemed to her a huge nest that someone had woven around a mighty oak.

The snow contributed to this, due to which it was impossible to make out the roof.

“You... live in a tree?” for some reason this made the pony giggle.

“Of course, I’m a bird!” the griffon seemingly heard her chuckle, decided to play along, he clapped his wings on his sides and made a clucking sound.

Other relatives of his would never stoop to clowning, considering such a thing a humiliation of honor.

Beaky, however, went out of his way trying to defuse the atmosphere. All this made his eccentric dance doubly funny.

Unable to restrain herself, Sivka burst out laughing; the oppressive feeling of anxiety that had not let her go for a long time receded. Stopping grimacing, Beaky laughed too.

Wiping away tears, the mare said:

“I thought birds were heat-loving creatures.”

“That’s true, but what wouldn't you do for new neighbors,” as if confirming his words, he shivered for a moment.

“Thanks for coming back, if anything, come tomorrow, I could use some help after all.”

“Definitely.”

Jumping up, Beaky flapped his wings and rushed in the direction of his house.

Thinking what a strange griffon he was, the mare returned to her son's room, threw a couple more logs into the fireplace, and fell asleep.

“More! More!” the mare heard Sonya's voice and the joyful laughter that followed.

Barely opening her eyes, she saw the light from the logs burning in the fireplace; she terribly wanted to sleep, and one might think it was still night.

But the dull shine of early sun rays on the window clearly hinted at morning.

“Hush, hush, you’ll wake mom,” Beaky’s quiet voice rang out.

“Too late,” thought Sivka to herself, getting up from the rug. Walking to the doorway, she leaned against the jamb.

Before her stood a picture of the griffon juggling tubes of paint, and Sonya staring spellbound at this business.

The mare coughed to attract attention. Hearing this, Beaky glanced at her, breaking his tempo, but without dropping anything, continued his number:

“Good morning, Sivka!”

Not understanding how he manages to maintain such a cheerful mood at such an early hour, she answered:

“And good morning to you, violator of private property.”

“Private…” trying to grasp the essence of the phrase he thought for a second, looking at the tubes flying past his beak, “Ah, got it. I didn't violate anything, you called for help yourself. The door was unlocked, so I decided to start while you sleep, заодно поленья новые разжег (lit new logs).”

Glancing at the gutted bag, from where the paints were removed without permission, the mare said:

“I see, what would we do without you,” and already addressing Sonya continued, “Sunshine, are you hungry?”

“Nope!” answered the foal, not taking his eyes off the griffon, “Beaky already fed me.”

An image of the fish the griffon devoured in Canterlot flashed in her head, and memories of the smell made the mare wince and ask with anxiety in her voice:

“With what?”

“Chocolate!” the foal answered joyfully.

Sighing, the mare walked up to Sonya, and looked at his muzzle. As expected, it was all smeared.

“Oh you grief of mine, let’s go wash up.”

“I don’t think there’s any water left here,” the griffon answered her, finishing juggling, “need to melt some snow.”

“Wait, do you not even have running water here?” the mare asked a little dumbfounded.

“Of course there is, only it’s winter now, the water tower turned into an icicle. Nothing terrible, I’ll get some now, it’ll be useful to wash the floors anyway.”

Besides water, there was plenty to do in the house: a thick layer of dust lay everywhere, cobwebs covered every corner, and all the rest of the space was occupied by junk left from the previous owner.

Sending the griffon to clean on the second, poorly lit floor, Sivka busied herself with cleaning on the first.

She even had to chase away a pot-bellied mouse that had made a nest in one of the boxes.

The mare was afraid of rodents, although she felt sorry to chase the creature out into the

frost, the thought of giving it to the griffon for reprisal seemed much more terrible to Sivka.

To save the mouse from such a fate, she had to usher Beaky out to the local bakery for lunch, from which he brought hot bran pies.

This gave the pony another idea:

“Listen, where can one buy provisions here? We can’t eat dry food all winter.”

“Usually a merchant comes in the morning every second Friday to the square, it’s better of course to order something from him in advance, but something can always be found anyway. Today is...” the griffon thought.

“Monday, which means four or eleven days for us to remain without normal food.”

The mare covered her face with her hooves wearily. Everything piled on her at once: a quarrel with her parents, the threat of being left without a roof over her head in the middle of winter, problems with the workshop in Fillydelphia.

Well, the path to her father's house was definitely ordered (closed) for her now; they wouldn't forgive her for destroying the "ideal" family.

And even if she could reconcile with everyone sooner or later, she absolutely didn't want to live with them.

It is a miracle that the unexpected acquaintance in Canterlot came in handy.

As promised, the house was surprisingly cheap and, most importantly, already available for occupancy.

At least the secret of such a low price was now obvious, peeking through the cracks in the logs and creaking floorboards.

Seeing the pony's confusion, Beaky smiled broadly and continued:

“I have an idea. I invite you to dinner at our house, and introduce you to everyone at the same time. You don’t know anyone here, and this way you’ll have someone to turn to. We’ll share food too, we have a small vegetable garden, and we stocked up on flour for the winter, so you won’t be lost.”

“I wouldn't want to impose...” the mare began, rather out of politeness, for she already knew what answer she would get.

“Nonsense! Everyone will be glad to see new neighbors, and Olivia cooks so well you’ll lick your hooves!”

“Olivia is your mom?” the pony asked.

“No, rather grandmother, just don’t tell her that. My mom is Bloom, she will be terribly glad to see you too. I probably need to warn them, I’ll be right back.”

Whether one cleaning was not enough here, or the griffon collected all the dust climbing on the second floor, but in his place only a smoky cloud remained, which began to slowly settle down.

Sighing, the mare reached for another pie; Sonya’s spotted hoof reached there too.

“How many have you eaten already,” the mare asked strictly.

Hesitantly, the foal answered:

“Four.”

“Eating a lot of flour is harmful, you don’t want to be fat like your aunt, do you?”

“No,” with regret in his voice, the foal jumped off the chair and went to play in the room with the fireplace.

The griffon didn't keep them waiting long, and the cleaning continued. Towards evening, the three of them set off towards the house on the giant tree.

At some point, the mare was afraid that Beaky's whole family lived there, and they would have to climb to the top.

Fears were dispelled when they stopped in front of the door of a two-story house. Opening it and going inside, the griffon proclaimed:

“Meet our new neighbor, Sivka!” turning his head to them, he waved his front paw invitingly, “and little neighbor, Sonya!”

“Hello-hello! We are in the kitchen!” came a female voice from the depths of the house.

Hanging up warm clothes and passing through the hall, Sivka saw a blue mare setting the table, and a blue pegasus opening the oven.

“This is Olivia,” the griffon pointed a paw at the golden-haired pony laying out cutlery.

Despite the fact that she stood with her back to them, she reacted to this gesture with confidence in her voice:

“How many times do I have to tell you, Beaky, don’t point your hoof... paw at others.”

Turning around, Olivia looked at the guests, smiled, and said in a more good-natured tone:

“Glad to see new faces, hope you like it in Craftville. Now **Saffron** will have someone to play with.”

At these words, the mare shifted her gaze to the small foal standing behind Sivka's back.

“Saffron?” the spotted mare asked uncomprehendingly.

“My daughter, she’s on the second floor, I’ll bring her down now,” answered the blue pegasus with exactly the same golden mane as her mother, placing the tray and taking off protective kitchen gloves; apparently, this was **Bloom**.

“Nice to meet you, I’m Braveblossom,” the mare walked up and held out a hoof in greeting, “just Bloom for friends.”

“Mutual, I’m Sivka, I’ll be your neighbor for at least the next year.”

The hoofshake turned out to be prolonged; Bloom examined her face. Sivka never liked it when people looked at the white spot on her nose for a long time, so she turned away.

“Sorry,” realizing she embarrassed the guest, the pegasus released the hoof, “have we met before by chance?”

“Unlikely, I only moved in yesterday evening.”

“Smells tasty,” Beaky interrupted their dialogue, who had already taken his place at the table, “Are Acrylic and Smith coming soon?”

“Doubt it, they went to discuss building Bloom’s new house with friends.”

“And didn't invite me,” annoyed by this fact, the griffon lowered his head onto the table.

“Don’t worry, Mom always says that when they go to drink cider,” said Bloom, leaving for her daughter.

“Feh, sour stuff,” the griffon said with disgust, rising towards the oven, he inhaled deeply through his nose, “but the potatoes are sweet, let’s eat!”

When Bloom returned, Olivia had already laid out the potatoes on plates. It turned out soft on the outside, from baking in foil, buttery and sweet inside.

In the city, they didn't cook this kind, preferring corn and other plants.

Saffron, sitting at the common table with everyone, was clearly younger than Sonya, by about a year; despite this, without finishing even half of her portion, waiting for the adults to start chatting, she dragged the foal to play in the hall.

When the first course was finished, Bloom announced:

“And for dessert we have cake.” Hearing this, the griffon buried his beak in the table displeasedly; noticing this, the mare added, “and for you there is fish.”

“Fish?!” Beaky and Sivka shouted simultaneously, only the griffon was happy about this, and the mare, on the contrary.

“Salted,” explained Bloom, seeing the relieved sigh of the red-haired mare, she shifted her gaze to Beaky, “so, did he eat fish in front of you?”

Something in the pegasus's voice indicated that if she told the truth, the griffon would be scolded again.

The mare was already preparing to lie, but Beaky beat her to it:

“So what? You ate grass right from the ground in front of me, but I can’t even eat fish in front of others. Maybe it was unpleasant for me too.”

Sivka involuntarily felt embarrassed, as this not only did not justify the feathered one but was also quite humiliating for his mom.

A pause hung, the blue pegasus did not take her piercing gaze off the griffon, a couple of moments later he jumped up from his seat and rushed through the kitchen door straight into the street, letting cold air into the house.

Bloom rushed in pursuit of him.

Seeing all this, Olivia only smiled, muttering under her breath — such adults, and still such children, — as if nothing had happened, she began to change the plates for clean ones.

When the breathless couple returned, a cake was already on the table, and thin strips of salted fish lay in the griffon's bowl.

As if nothing had happened, they sat down at the table. Not understanding anything, Sivka couldn't stand it and dared to ask:

“Is this normal?”

“This spotted chicken doesn't understand anything otherwise,” in response to this remark by

Bloom, the griffon stuck out his tongue and winked, “see.”

“It seems to me he didn't understand anything anyway,” giggled Sivka.

“Oh, you have no idea what efforts I had to make to force him to wash...”

“And me to teach him manners,” picked up Olivia.

So the dialogue at the table smoothly flowed into stories from the griffon's life, about all his oddities and the scrapes he got into.

Feeling the friendly atmosphere, Sivka herself shared a story from Canterlot, about catching flies with a beak on the fly and so on.

Probably she imagined it, but after that, the fur on the griffon's cheeks turned red; unable to stand it, he got up and said:

“I have a lot to do in the workshop, I’d better go,” already intending to get up, the griffon threatened.

“That’ll teach you to clown around,” Bloom stuck out her tongue, “well okay, let’s change the subject. Sivka, what brought you to our village?”

“Creativity,” she answered without hesitation, “I paint pictures, sculpt from clay, sometimes combine both. I’ll show you now.”

The mare turned towards the hall and shouted:

“Sonya, bring the cockerel.”

Strange, only now did the mare realize that the noise inherent in children was not heard from the next room. More warily, she called:

“Sonya, where are you there?”

A couple of moments later, a foal appeared with his head down, in his hoof was a ceramic cockerel... and its head separately.

“Sorry, Mom...” droplets of tears began to roll down his cheeks, it seems he had already resigned himself to the thought that he would be scolded now.

To his surprise, the mare only sighed, patted him on the short mane, and replying: “Be more careful next time,” took the toy from him.

Taking a cloth napkin, she lowered herself to Sonya and began to wipe the wet furrows on his

coat.

Sniffling, the foal decided to clarify, “You aren't angry?”

“It seems you already punished yourself, hope you understand that I spent a lot of effort on it, and it hurts me very much that it broke?”

In response to this, Sonya hesitantly nodded.

“That’s good, now run along and play.”

Returning to the table, Sivka placed the broken toy in front of everyone:

“Actually, I do something like this. I like making things with my hooves. The cockerel could have made sounds if you blew here, but now we won’t hear it.”

Despite the deplorable state of the whistle, graceful tints could be seen in the cockerel's feathers, and the toy itself, considering the material from which it was made, was striking in its details.

Bloom even whistled:

“Not bad, Beaky could learn a lot from you, seeing as he carves well, but paints terribly. He could sell his crafts much more expensively than now.”

“Not true,” indignant, Beaky got up from his seat, walked to the carved chest of drawers, and took out a statuette, “here, is this worse?”

Carved from wood, a pony with rag saddlebags threw a lasso over a huge black bear.

Sivka even envied the griffon's skills a little, who, devoting all his attention to working with one material, clearly succeeded in his craft.

She herself was good at everything, but not specifically perfect in anything so much.

Despite the elaboration of the carved part, the pony's cutie mark was smeared, spreading over the leg.

The bear's eyes went beyond the eyebrows, and the grass under them was brown rather than green.

“Here, made according to Pancake's stories from her adventures, how do you like it?”

“Pancake is our sister,” explained Bloom.

“Overall not bad for a beginner,” hearing these words from Sivka, the griffon snorted, “no,

really, don’t be offended, but there is room for improvement.”

The mare scratched the back of her head with a hoof. Taking a griffon as an apprentice clearly contradicted her idea of solitude with which she came here.

Thinking a little, she found a compromise solution:

“I could give you a couple of lessons, say, as gratitude for your help with cleaning.”

Now it was Beaky's turn to think; he looked carefully at both figures, and finally reluctantly answered:

“So be it,” taking the statuette back, he continued, placing it on the chest of drawers, “but I would have helped anyway.”

Bloom giggled:

“Oh yes, if he decided to help, you can’t get rid of him.”

After the very first week, Bloom's statement about the griffon's intrusiveness was refuted.

He did help with the cleaning, but cleaning alone was not enough here.

During the owner's absence, the house fell into such disrepair that even months of work would not bring it to its senses.

The boards creaked, traces of rot on some of them indicated a leaky roof, and the wind blew through those that were not on the floor.

Sivka didn't know yet if she would stay here for long, but she clearly didn't want to start spring with a flood.

Beaky, as the most winged creature of all, was appointed responsible for clearing the roof of snow and installing temporary patches.

The mare herself was instructed on how to get rid of creaking boards by driving nails into them.

Sonya got the most responsible job of stuffing hay into the cracks of the house, with which he successfully failed.

The griffon avoided work on the roof as best he could, spending most of the time helping either Sivka or replacing the foal.

He justified this with Sivka's words about the heat-loving nature of birds. In the end, the mare

coped first, and began to settle in, arranging easels and potter's wheels.

To fire clay in the fireplace, the latter needed more work, but they decided to leave that for later.

Spinning underfoot, Klyuvi forced the mare to give painting lessons.

Sivka couldn't get used to the role of a mentor, and the griffon's absurd character didn't make the job easier.

Often Beaky simply refused to admit his mistakes and repeated them time after time.

As a result of all this, the learning process dragged on until mid-spring.

However, it cannot be said that this became a problem; the griffon rather kept her company.

Painting the wooden figures and statuettes accumulated by him, he talked about the village and his life in it.

Along the way, he played with the foal, who was terribly bored in the empty house.

Sivka meanwhile was engaged in paintings, landscapes of the winter village and still lifes.

At times, the griffon dragged all three out of the house, introducing them to the villagers and showing the surroundings to capture them in Sivka's future paintings.

This continued until Beaky finished mocking the last piece of wood at his disposal; thanking the mare for her help, he practically stopped appearing on their doorstep, dealing with accumulated orders in his house.

At first, this did not bother Sivka; the weather outside was excellent, the sun shone longer every day, and the foal could spend most of the day playing in the yard.

The mare decided that the moment of solitude had come, and now nothing holds her back anymore.

She could create for days on end without thinking about external fuss.

Time passed, and with it returned the disturbing feelings pushed to the background for Sivka.

Routine slowly began to take over her again. Cooking was boring, as no one entertained her with dialogue.

Days passed slower, as no one dragged her by the hoof to visit various villagers.

Ultimately, even working on paintings ceased to bring pleasure.

Not fully understanding what was wrong, the mare found a way out for lost inspiration.

Remembering that the griffon lives on the tallest tree, an idea came to her mind.

Since a wonderful view surely opened from there, one could paint hundreds of landscapes of the village and adjacent forests and fields from nature.

The foal could be left to play during the day with Saffron or taken with her, leaving him to Beaky.

And so, one sunny day, Beaky's door was not knocked on.

This was due to the fact that, roughly speaking, a hatch replaces the front door to the treehouse, and also because the mare did not dare to climb the boards nailed to the oak.

Instead, the griffon heard a shout:

“Beaky! Are you there?!”

A small window at the top opened, and a yellow spotted head appeared in it.

Looking at the mare standing at the foot of the tree with an easel and a bag, Beaky asked:

“Hi Sivka, did something happen?”

“No! Nothing! Just I...”

Not knowing how to continue, the mare hesitated, which the interlocutor took advantage of:

“Wait, I’m coming down!”

When Beaky glided down, the mare continued:

“I just wanted to look at the view that opens up from above, and make a couple of sketches at the same time. If you don’t mind of course.”

“Of course not, come in!” at these words the griffon jumped up and flapped his wings.

“Easy to say,” this phrase stopped Beaky, who had managed to fly somewhere to the middle of the oak.

“Scared to climb the ladder?” he inquired.

The mare nodded hesitantly.

“No problem! I’ll lower the winch now.”

Indeed, after some time, a small wooden platform secured on the sides by four ropes descended from the balcony of the house. From above came:

“Stand on it and hold tight!”

Following the instructions, the mare stepped onto the wooden board; there was not much to hold on to here, clutching the easel in one hoof, the pony grabbed the rope with the other.

At first everything went well, the winch slowly rose upwards, but when it reached the middle, a gust of wind began to rock the wooden raft from side to side.

From fear, the mare closed her eyes and shouted:

“Stop! Stop! I’m going to fall!”

Something clicked upstairs, and a moment later, the mare unexpectedly felt the ground completely disappear from under her feet.

Thinking she was falling, she let out a deafening squeal.

“Hush! Sivka! I’ve got you!” rang out from under her right ear, shouting over her.

Barely overcoming fear, the mare opened her eyes, finding herself hanging over the balcony; only now did she feel that she was hugged from behind.

“Oh, sorry,” was all Sivka could utter standing on the hard floor.

“You forgive me, I should have lifted you like this right away.”

Making sure the mare was safe, the griffon flew down and brought the easel that had fallen to the ground.

When he returned, the mare looked into his eyes and asked.

“D-did you save my life?”

This embarrassed Beaky, he looked away, and a second later putting a paw behind his neck answered:

“Not at all. When I flew up to you, you were standing on the platform, it wasn't rocking that much. I decided to play it safe and lifted you up, probably should have warned you, but I was also scared that you would fall. Anyway, it’s such a height here that you wouldn't crash, even the easel is intact, so even good...”

Not letting Beaky finish, the mare, succumbing to a momentary impulse, kissed him on the cheek:

“Still, thank you.”

An awkward pause hung; for some time the mare looked at the dumbfounded griffon, his embarrassment seemed cute to her, as if no one had ever kissed him in gratitude before.

Deciding to defuse the situation, the mare was the first to break the silence:

“Well, since I didn't crash, show me how you live here.”

The griffon's dwelling was clearly not ready to receive guests; dust lay here and there, things were scattered in a chaotic order understandable only to their owner.

In addition to the bachelor mess, things that completely embarrassed the mare were found, in the form of a bucket with fish splashing in it, which, apparently, was destined to become lunch.

Sivka had almost forgotten about this fact in the griffon's life: in winter, local reservoirs froze as expected, which forced Beaky to switch to more humane feeding.

Remembering how he killed poor fish in Canterlot, a grimace of disgust involuntarily appeared on the mare's face. Noticing this, the griffon immediately reacted:

“Sorry, I’ll release it back now if it makes you feel better.”

Grabbing the bucket, he already intended to fulfill what was said, but Sivka stopped him:

“No need. This is what you eat to live,” expressing this simple thought in words, the mare unexpectedly for herself resigned herself to the fate prepared for the fish, and continued, “just, don’t kill it in front of me, okay?”

“Okay,” Beaky agreed easily.

After that, the inspection continued. Leaving aside the tree trunk that replaced one of the walls here, the house could be called a typical workshop with a living part.

In total there were four rooms connected around the oak trunk: a bedroom, a small kitchen, the workshop itself cluttered with a bunch of blanks and sawdust.

The fourth was narrow, more like a corridor due to the standing bookcases, a hatch on the floor and a door to the balcony from which they came.

“Well, I live somehow like this, you forgive the mess,” said the griffon, again putting a paw

behind his neck.

“Stop apologizing, I invited myself,” the mare sighed, “to be honest, I didn't even expect it to be so cozy here.”

“Sorry,” Beaky apologized again, continuing in a joking voice, “probably expected to see a nest here, woven from straw and full of fish skeletons?”

“Exactly!” Sivka answered without embarrassment, playing along with the griffon.

“It’s on the second floor,” he parried in the same calm voice.

Trying to understand if the griffon was joking, she looked at his face, but it expressed equanimity.

Slowly he began to raise his front paw, with a finger sticking out, pointing somewhere up. When the mare followed him, laughter rang out:

“I’m kidding! Fell for it again! Who do you take me for?”

“For a sloppy bird who lives in a tree!” parried Sivka, and laughed too.

When the laughter died down, the mare remembered why she came:

“Let’s go to the balcony, I never looked at the city from it.”

The view was indeed magnificent, small streets of the village flowed to the central square with the fountain where Sivka's house stood.

Here and there small toy ponies hurried about their business.

Fields flowed into the forest, and the tops of trees dissolved into the endless blue sky. On the other side, a view of low mountains opened up.

Having lived most of her life in a huge city, the mare saw from the window of her apartment only the nondescript wall of the neighboring house.

This magnificence fascinated her so much that only the griffon's voice could tear the mare away from contemplation.

“Beautiful, right?”

Turning her head to the griffon, the mare saw him sitting on the roof of the house.

“Very! My hooves are itching to start painting!” saying this, Sivka again fixed her gaze into the distance.

“Then I won’t disturb you, I’ll be in the house, if you need anything, call,” jumping down, the griffon went inside the house.

A minute later, not noticing the interlocutor leaving, the mare answered, “Uh-huh,” and began to set up the easel.

The sun was setting when Sivka saw with surprise a griffon flying towards her with a paper bag in his beak.

Landing in front of her, he lowered the bundle from which pleasant smells came onto the floor.

“How’s progress?” inquired Beaky.

“Oh, I didn't even have time to blink, the day flew by.”

It smelled of pastries, causing the mare's stomach to rumble.

“Help yourself, there are muffins piping hot. Next time take something to eat with you, it’s harmful to stand until evening without lunch.”

Deciding to stop for today anyway, Sivka took the bag and began to eat.

Beaky meanwhile examined her painting:

“Wow! Beauty! Although colors are clearly missing here.”

“It’s not finished yet,” the mare answered with her mouth full, causing a couple of crumbs to fall to the floor.

Immediately the griffon pecked the place where they fell a couple of times.

Such bird nature embarrassed Sivka; it looked funny, but is this his usual behavior?

However, the crumbs from the floor did not disappear anywhere, the griffon only pretended to eat them. Making the mare smile.

“I’m kidding! By the way, Sonya asked when you would return. However, Bloom too, invites you to dinner, since you are here.”

Deciding not to speak with her mouth full anymore, the mare nodded.

Shifting her gaze to the painting, Sivka realized that the change of scenery did her good, and the lost inspiration returned.

Finishing eating, the mare asked:

“You don’t mind if I come here to paint pictures?”

“Of course not! Although...” Beaky thought, “only on one condition.”

“Which one?”

“You paint my portrait,” said the griffon.

Beaky knew that she hadn't had a chance to paint portraits yet, but for some reason, this intrigued Sivka so much that she answered without hesitation:

“I’ll paint it tomorrow.”

“Really?” the griffon asked in surprise.

“Why wait, I’ll paint you so that Bloom won’t recognize you!”

“Mom!” Beaky answered in feigned fright and laughed.

Bloom and Olivia were not against leaving Sonya with them for another day, so the next morning, settled on the balcony, work on the bird portrait began.

Strangely, but to Sivka's surprise, everything turned out well. The griffon's features seemed to be stuck in her head, from which the brush attached to her hoof moved across the canvas like clockwork.

Occasionally she still looked at the object of creativity, which changed his pose every time, causing Sivka to swear.

After some time, the griffon finally coped with himself and froze motionless.

Deciding to finish the background later, the mare focused on the portrait. She even liked drawing all these feathers, uneven fur, and geometric lines decorating his muzzle.

Already finishing, she heard a squeak coming from Beaky's side.

Sticking her head out from behind the canvas, she saw a mouse. The griffon didn't move, but the mouse, contrary to common sense, was climbing up the fur on Beaky.

Frightened, the mare barked:

“Don’t move!”

“Not moving,” the griffon answered her through his beak.

Not believing her eyes, Sivka watched as the mouse climbed higher and higher to Beaky's

head.

Reaching the very top, the rodent descended with its hind legs onto the beak.

Holding onto an eyebrow with one paw, pointing the other towards Sivka, the mouse began to squeak.

Not knowing what to do, the mare just stared at this open-mouthed.

It seems the griffon was listening to her, and the mouse not only didn't fear him but was his friend?

After some time, the griffon, taking the mouse in his paw said:

“I see. Sivka, meet **Buttercup**, it seems she lived in the house you moved into. I understand you didn't chase her away out of malice, but now she has nowhere to stay for the winter with the baby mice. My house is too high up, so could you still find a place for her at yours?”

Not listening to the griffon, Sivka was immersed in her own thoughts. The fact that a griffon is friends with a mouse shocked her even more than if he had simply swallowed the rodent before her eyes.

Feeling a gaze directed at her, she looked at Beaky.

“So, will you shelter her?”

“Yes-yes,” answered the mare, not delving into the essence of the question, “wait, you are friends with this mouse?”

“Yes, I’m saying that...”

“But you are a semi-cat,” interrupted Sivka.

“So what?”

“Usually cats, and birds too, catch mice, not make friends with them.”

“Are you joking?” asked the griffon, and probably for the first time in her life, seriousness was read in his gaze.

“Yes?” the mare answered uncertainly.

“Great,” the griffon said in a dry voice.

Putting the mouse on the ground, he added:

“Anyway, when you finish with the landscapes, you can meet the baby mice. She has a nest under the tree. And I’ll work in the workshop for now, we’ll continue with the portrait sometime later.”

Seemingly already understanding what she had done, the mare remained standing silently.

Until this moment, although she considered Beaky a friend, she couldn't stop seeing him as a creature alien to herself.

Now, she imagined herself in his place. She felt more and more uneasy from what was said.

Several minutes passed before she decided to follow Beaky into the house.

Passing the workshop, she found him sitting on the bed in the bedroom.

For the first time she saw him so depressed, it seems she managed to touch a nerve.

Swallowing a bitter lump that rose to her throat, she sat on the edge of the bed, and timidly began:

“Listen, I’m really very ashamed of what I said, please forgive me.”

Looking at Beaky's face she saw no reaction, he just continued to stare into the void in front of him.

“No, really, I would never in my life want to offend you, just never in my life met such a griffon as you. And the more I get to know you, the more I like you.”

This managed to cause a reaction from Beaky, he sighed deeply, and answered without changing his pose:

“You too. My own fault, I for some reason thought that you wouldn't see me as some monster like the others.”

Sivka never liked watching someone pity themselves, let alone participate in it, so this phrase threw her off balance a little.

Deciding not to be sappy, she took matters into her own hooves. Pulling him by the cheek, the mare turned the griffon to face her.

“So, listen, I don’t consider you a monster. Eaters you mice or not, it won’t change my attitude towards you. You are cheerful, kind and responsive, and I appreciate it, really, so stop pitying yourself, please.”

Clearly not expecting such a reaction, Beaky could only blink and look at Sivka.

This continued for a few seconds, and then a smile appeared on his face and he, approaching, started to rub his cheek against her cheek.

Still, many habits of the griffon seemed mysterious, but it seems this one meant that she was forgiven.

Involuntarily giggling at this strange gesture, the mare pulled away with the words:

“Alright, stop it. If you aren't sulking anymore, we can finish the portrait, if you want of course.”

“Of course I want,” the griffon answered in a habitually joyful voice, and they went to the balcony.

Fanfic: Sivka (Part 5.2)



Quickly concluding that finishing the resulting sketches in her workshop was much more difficult than from nature, Sivka literally settled in the treehouse.

Feeling some guilt for taking advantage of Bloom's hospitality, the mare began to take the foal

with her.

The griffon got along great with the little fidget, and had a stock of various wooden trinkets that he gave to Sonya to tear apart.

Almost immediately, Beaky began to invent all sorts of toys in the form of moving carts, gliding long-winged creatures, jumping frogs, and other amusements.

In a sense, he drew inspiration from her son, and, one might say, was not at all against spending time with him.

Although the foal was forbidden to go out on the balcony, the door to it was always open.

Sivka tried to convince herself that this way she was watching what was happening inside, but in reality, she just liked being in company and working alone at the same time.

As gratitude, Sivka decided to arrange dinner every evening in the griffon's house, having previously found out his favorite dishes that were not fish.

Such a pastime had its price. Although the weather outside was warm, there were enough drafts at such a height.

The griffon was protected by his natural thick fur, but the foal, not possessing it, caught a cold.

For a while, Sivka had to postpone her visits and take care of her son.

The foal didn't want to lie in bed; a common cold and a sniffly nose were not a serious argument for him to leave his favorite toys.

Therefore, Sivka had to keep him under supervision continuously. Settled in the room with the fireplace, she read fairy tales to him.

True, he still spent most of the time with his toys, but at least without getting out of bed.

At this time, the mare tried to finish the painting, placing the easel in the room with the foal.

However, without nature, it was not the same.

When night came, Sonya refused to fall asleep in a manner unusual for him, tossing and turning from side to side now and then.

Apparently, the whole day spent in bed took its toll.

In the morning after breakfast and a portion of fairy tales, he became drowsy and fell asleep.

Sivka, returning to the painting, made a new attempt to complete it.

Inspiration left the mare, and it all ended with her starting to read fairy tales in an attempt to kill time.

Until there was a knock on the front door.

Beaky stood on the threshold of the house, holding a paper bag under one of his wings; judging by the familiar smell, there were muffins in it.

“Hi. Is everything okay with you?” the griffon asked with a concerned look.

“Yes, Sonya caught a cold, but nothing serious, apparently caught a draft while playing in the treehouse.”

In a habitual gesture, the griffon reached his front paw to his neck.

Knowing what would happen next, the mare smiled and without waiting for an answer continued:

“Don’t apologize, my own fault, saw what a wind tunnel you have there.”

The griffon was embarrassed, freezing with his paw behind his neck; it seems he genuinely felt his guilt in what happened.

“Maybe you need help?”

“No, I can handle it myself, thanks for coming to visit us.”

Apparently not knowing what to say, the griffon stood for a couple more moments, then remembering the package under his wing, cheered up and continued:

“Here, I brought you fresh muffins.”

“You know, eating so much pastry is bad for the figure,” answered the mare, but accepted the bag from his paw.

“Nonsense! I used to eat them every lunch until...” something incomprehensible to Sivka flashed in his gaze, “anyway, never mind, get well.”

The mare wanted to say goodbye, but something stopped her; instead, she pronounced:

“Since flour doesn't scare you, you can help with this. Sonya fell asleep, and I could use the company.”

The day passed in conversation with the feathered interlocutor, but the foal still wouldn't wake

up. It was getting dark outside, and rain began to drizzle.

By evening, the mare began to worry; she was even more alarmed when she saw a rash under Sonya's coat. Seeing this, Beaky suggested:

“Maybe I should go for our healer? In childhood, Bloom took me to her now and then.”

“You’re probably right, something about this feels wrong.”

“Do you happen to have an umbrella?”

“Don’t think so, why?” Surprisingly asked the mare, noticing rain drops rarely hitting the glass, she decided to clarify, “does she live far?”

“No,” Beaky answered uncertainly, and already in a cheerful voice continued, “nothing terrible, I’ll be quick.”

Something was wrong, but right now the mare was more worried about her son than the usually strange behavior of the griffon, so she didn't even pay attention to it.

When the rain drummed on the roof in full force, there was a knock on the door.

On the porch stood an elderly mare with wrinkles on her greenish face; folding an umbrella under the porch she asked:

“Hello, Sivka, right?”

The mare nodded.

“Why didn't you contact me immediately,” the healer went inside and stamped her dirty hooves on the rug, “Beaky told me everything.”

Sivka's heart stopped, the feeling of anxiety that overwhelmed her made her blurt out:

“Told what? What’s wrong with him? Is it not a cold?”

“Don’t worry so much, nothing irreparable, where is he?”

“There,” the mare pointed to the door.

Leaning on the umbrella instead of a cane, the elderly healer walked inside leaving rain drops along the way. Examining the foal she sighed.

“Thought so. Recently you swam in our river, didn't you?”

“Yes,” answered Sivka with horror in her voice, and sank down sitting on the floor.

The healer looked into Sivka's eyes, and smiled.

“Don’t worry so much, if you had dragged it out for a week, then maybe something would have happened,” the healer thought for a moment about something of her own, “although even then unlikely.”

“The infection is nasty of course, but not fatal, and we know how to treat it.”

Extending a hoof, the healer helped Sivka up.

“And treat with what?”

“Decoction of fresh herbs, I already gave Beaky a list, I think he will collect them,” the healer grinned at something looking at the window, “true, will have to wait until the rain stops. Probably stuck somewhere under a canopy, you know how he dislikes water.”

“In such darkness?” asked the mare.

The healer just waved it off.

“With his vision, he’ll manage. Just remember, need to boil for ten minutes without bringing to a boil, and if it doesn't help by tomorrow evening, come to me.”

“Maybe you’ll stay for tea,” remembering the norms of hospitality began Sivka, “it’s pouring outside.”

“No, mine is getting cold, and it’s late.”

“In any case thank you, do I owe you anything?”

“No, what are you saying, I’ve been treating visitors for this infection for a long time.”

Saying goodbye, the mare returned to the foal, who was not waking up. Trying to calm herself with how calm the healer was, the mare did not stop looking out the window, where the rain only intensified.

Minutes lasted an eternity, and anxiety took over the mare more and more.

“Fool, why didn't I go to her earlier.”

“Mom,” the foal reacted to the voice in his sleep.

“It’s okay, honey,” the mare kissed him on the forehead, to which he only sniffled.

Putting her muzzle on the bed, unable to do anything, the mare could only wait.

Closing her eyes, she didn't notice how she fell asleep. She was woken up by a loud clatter of

dishes. Outside the window, the rain had turned into a downpour.

Going out into the hall, she saw a wet trail leading to the kitchen. Going in there, Sivka at first didn't recognize the standing creature as a griffon.

Wet fur stuck to his body, and Beaky, who seemed quite large to her, now resembled a very long pony.

Water flowed down his paws, forming a puddle on the floor. He himself virtuously cut the grass, using sharp claws on his front paw.

Почувствовав взгляд, на неё обернулась приплюснутая голова с обвисшей шерстью. (Feeling a gaze, a flattened head with drooping fur turned to her.)

“Sorry it took so long, I wanted to wait until the rain ended, but looks like it was in vain.”

Sivka had never seen these creatures wet, but his appearance now didn't scare her, but rather evoked pity.

Not a trace remained of his former fluffiness.

“Bloom said that you are afraid of water like fire.”

At these words, the wet body of the griffon shuddered.

“Nothing terrible,” he answered, starting to throw the grass into the pot.

“I see,” at these words the mare went to the bathroom for towels.

When she returned, Beaky threw the last stalks into the water.

“Here, dry yourself and go to the fireplace, I don't need you getting sick too.”

“But what about...” the griffon tried to object.

“The healer told me everything, I can simmer the potion myself.”

Waiting ten minutes, the mare extinguished the fire, and poured the contents into a mug. Placing it in water, she let the liquid cool down a bit.

Going into the room, she saw an already more familiar, and slightly fluffed up Beaky. Approaching the bed, she lightly shook Sonya.

He opened his eyes, understanding nothing.

“Drink this,” said the mare, seating her son more comfortably.

Understanding nothing, the foal began to slowly drink from the mug.

“Not tasty,” he answered almost immediately.

“It’s medicine, drink it,” she objected to him peremptorily with notes of severity in her voice. After which the mug was emptied.

Tucking Sonya under the blanket, he reluctantly looked around the room.

“Beaky. You came to visit?”

“Yes, little one,” answered the griffon.

“Will we play?”

“Definitely, when you wake up. Main thing is get well.”

Sniffling, the foal answered: “Okay.”

Covering Sonya with a blanket, the mare put the mug on the nightstand, and sat next to the griffon by the hearth.

“Thank you,” uttered the mare.

“Trifles,” the griffon waved off the gratitude, yawning loudly.

“Not at all, don’t even know what I would have done if you hadn't come.”

“You would have gathered herbs in the morning, the healer said one could wait out the rain.”

“Then why didn't you wait it out?”

To this question, the griffon only silently shrugged his shoulders.

Looking at the crackling logs in the fireplace, Sivka pondered this answer.

“Worries just like me, only doesn't show it, how strange he is. And yet sensitive.”

This made her smile.

Sitting like that for some time, she felt the griffon lean on her.

Already wanting to push the impudent griffon away, she realized that he had simply fallen asleep.

The rain didn't stop, and there was no desire to kick him out.

Not intending to disturb him, she only lowered her head onto his shoulder, and didn't notice herself how she fell asleep.

A sudden clap of thunder forced her to open her eyes. It was dark, only embers from the fireplace barely illuminated the room.

Lying on the floor, she felt the griffon hugging her in his sleep.

Previously, she couldn't even imagine that she would end up in the arms of a creature she had treated with apprehension since childhood.

Now, greater anxiety was caused by the fact that she liked it. Beaky was different, different enough to be practically the exact opposite.

If others were greedy, evil, and proud, he always strove to help, was friendly and timid.

His quirks were funny, and he always tried to cheer her up, even if he became the butt of the jokes himself.

The catch she had been looking for in him all this time simply wasn't there.

Outside the window, a clap of thunder rang out, and the embrace tightened, Sivka felt claws unpleasantly digging into her shoulders.

Not frightened, she only buried her muzzle in the fluffy chest and uttered:

“Everything will be fine.”

These words calmed the griffon, the embrace loosened, and the pain from the claws disappeared.

“Appearances really are deceptive, so big, yet afraid of lightning,” thought the mare before falling asleep again.

Feeling something trying to be pulled out from under her, the mare woke up. Reluctantly opening her eyes, she saw Beaky's embarrassed face almost right next to hers.

Catching her gaze, he looked at the mare not knowing what to say.

A pause hung, they probably would have continued looking at each other if not for Sonya's voice coming from behind.

“When is breakfast?”

“Coming, honey, we just woke up,” answered Sivka, getting up.

Thus days returned to their usual course, except that day by day Sivka became more attached to the griffon.

Beaky began to appeal to her so much that she wanted to spend as much time with him as possible.

Very soon they began to walk together, go for groceries, and engage in other routine.

The fact that this was wrong was discarded by the mare as insignificant.

All her life she was told what to do and how, which didn't lead to the best result.

Having already decided to do everything as she wants herself, Sivka decided not to turn off the intended path, trusting her heart.

Slowly she began to flirt with Beaky, hugging and kissing him on the cheek more often for any reason and without.

As expected, in response to this, the griffon began to preen even more, demonstrating his sympathy in every way.

Despite the fact that he clearly liked it, he seemed to deliberately turn any romantic moments into a joke, while often blushing or creating awkward pauses.

This baffled the mare; one could assume that he has no feelings for ponies, but his reactions spoke otherwise.

The matter was in something else, in something the mare didn't know about.

Then Sivka decided to take the next step herself. In the first month of summer, the mare had a special day, her birthday, which no one here knew about yet.

Deciding to combine business with pleasure, on this very day Sivka, contrary to the daily tradition, did not go to visit the griffon, at least immediately.

Asking the latter to fly in the evening, she busied herself with cooking. Products ordered from the merchant, among which were wine and treats for the griffon, came in handy, although originally it was planned to use them for a general celebration, not a tête-à-tête date.

When everything was ready, she spent the rest of the day playing with Sonya; she didn't plan to leave him with Bloom, deciding to put him to bed early.

Naturally, nothing came of this idea; when Beaky arrived, the foal was happily running around

the house.

Taking his word to behave well, Sivka still dared to leave him for one evening without supervision.

When they went outside, Beaky, loaded with bags of food and burning with curiosity, couldn't stand it:

“Smells nice, are we celebrating something?”

“You’ll find out,” mysteriously answered the mare, heading towards the treehouse.

Settled on the balcony in the rays of the setting sun, the mare began to lay out the dishes.

The candle, which was destined to become the center of the improvised table, the mare took, but a corkscrew was nowhere to be seen.

Taking out the wine, Sivka asked:

“Do you know what this is?”

“Wine? No-o-o, I’m a savage, how would I know.”

“That’s great, I didn't take a corkscrew anyway.” Shrugging, the mare put the bottle back in the bag.

Sighing that his joke was ignored, Beaky continued:

“If you finally tell me what’s going on, I’ll open it. I’m certainly not an expert, but this all looks like a da...”

“My birthday,” Sivka cut him off mid-sentence.

The griffon gasped.

“Birthday? Today? Why did you keep quiet! We could have called everyone to celebrate.”

“It is *my*,” the mare emphasized the last word, “birthday. And this time I want to celebrate it in peace and quiet.”

The griffon gasped again.

“Sorry, I don’t even have anything to give you.”

To this, the mare only giggled and handed the bottle to Beaky:

“It will sound cliché, but how about your company and a corkscrew.”

“That I can do.”

Taking the bottle, the griffon hooked the cork stopper with a claw and pulled it out with some effort.

“Done!”

When the bottle and most of the dinner were finished, scarlet tones raged in the sky.

Watching the setting sun, the mare rested her head on the lying griffon.

It seems the drink was taking effect, and he didn't even pay attention to it.

“Listen, can I ask you a personal question,” began the mare.

“Personal? What kind?” seems not understanding what they want from him, asked Beaky in response.

“Have you never thought of finding a mate? I mean a griffo...” the mare stumbled, inventing a word that didn't exist before (feminine form of griffon in Russian), “female griffon.”

The griffon was silent for a while, and then sighing heavily answered:

“I’m a stranger to griffons, I realized this back when I was in the capital of our kingdom for the first time.

But back then there was a girl I liked, she was kind and responsive, just like a pony, her name was Gabby.

Returning there, I couldn't find her, the locals aren't very talkative, but I managed to find out where she flew.

Ironically, that place turned out to be Equestria.”

Falling silent, the griffon lowered his head onto the wooden floor.

“And what happened next?” waiting for a pause asked the mare.

“I didn't find her, although I tried,” answering without lifting his head Beaky said, “Equestria is a big country.”

“And other griffons? Did the light converge on her like a wedge?” (Idiom: Is she the only one in the world?)

The mare turned to the griffon, and looked sympathetically into his eyes.

“Other girls at best contemptuously rejected me when I wanted to meet them.

Probably, I seem strange to them, however, I didn't really like them much either.”

“Poor thing,” sincerely said Sivka, and stroked the griffon on the fur on his chest.

Beaky was clearly upset by this dialogue, despite the wine, he now seemed the same as she saw him during their first quarrel.

But Sivka still decided to go to the end.

“And ponies?”

“What ponies?”

“Well,” the mare hesitated in indecision, “did you try dating a pony?”

The griffon thought, apparently deciding whether to talk about it at all, but eventually answered:

“If you can call it that, about four years ago I tried to court Minty (Myatka).

Well you know her, she stands behind the counter in the bakery now.

But when I told her about my feelings, she simply laughed, thinking it was a joke.”

“And you gave up?”

“No, that’s why when I see her I still feel awkward.

She almost broke my beak when I climbed to kiss.

Then I realized it was a bad idea, and Bloom thinks so too.

Says that I need to look for a griffon, and sooner or later I will find the one.”

Tapping his beak lightly on the floor a couple of times, he continued:

“That’s why I’m alone. I haven't found a griffon yet, and no pony will want to date me.”

“But I would like to,” raising herself on a hoof, the mare looked into the griffon's yellow eyes.

He also shifted his gaze to the mare. Sadness on his face was replaced by surprise.

“Meaning?”

“Literally.”

“But you’re a pony?”

“And you’re a griffon.”

A small pause hung, after which Beaky suddenly asked in a timid voice:

“A-are you sure you aren't joking?”

“Check it.”

At these words, the mare began to slowly bring her nose closer to the beak.

She closed her eyes, waiting for a reaction, but at first nothing happened.

Then she felt Beaky lean against her, and begin to rub against her cheek.

He had done this before, but now it felt more tender.

The mare guessed what this gesture meant, but expecting a kiss she still couldn't stand it and asked:

“What are you doing?”

“K-kissing,” surprisedly answered the suitor.

“You kiss with a mouth, and this way you’re just rubbing against my cheek, it’s nice of course, but not at all like a kiss.”

“But I have a beak, how can I do it with it?”

“We’ll find out right now.”

At these words, the mare took matters into her own hooves.

To say that the relationship spun in the following days is to say nothing.

Beaky was ready to carry Sivka in his paws, which she used gratuitously all summer.

The griffon played as he could and flirted with her in every way, which added unpleasant, but tolerable bites with the beak.

However, this added some charm to these unusual relationships. Beaky tried to indulge all her

whims, sometimes even too actively.

He even built future and far-reaching plans for their future life. The latter began to cause some concerns for Sivka.

Everything was developing too well, and there was clearly some catch here, which, as it seemed to the pony, she found.

It seems the griffon, who had never been in a serious relationship with anyone, found them for the first time.

What scared Sivka was that she initiated it. The griffon, who had previously met refusals both from his kind and from ponies, clung to a straw like a drowning man, and clearly didn't intend to let go.

At least that’s how it started to seem to the pony.

She managed to drive these thoughts away as long as she was next to Beaky.

Until the end of summer, when the griffon went somewhere on family business with Bloom.

In this week, Sivka felt like she fell into a cliff, realizing what a stupidity she had committed.

Apparently, the griffon didn't even love her, but simply took advantage of the first available opportunity. Just like Sivka herself once did.

Deprived of choice, she realized too late that she had turned somewhere wrong in her life, which ultimately led to nothing good.

Doubts gradually led the mare to a difficult conclusion, she needed to break up with the griffon before trouble happened.

Sivka liked Beaky, and from this the mare's heart clenched, but as it seemed to her, there was no way out.

Sooner or later he will find the only one he was looking for, and she really didn't want to experience a breakup again.

The first autumn rain was falling outside the window when the griffon knocked on the door of the former workshop.

Sivka, waiting for this moment, shuddered, but having already made a decision, intended to follow it to the end.

Approaching, she opened the door, and let in the bird wrapped in a plastic raincoat.

As always, a wide smile adorned the griffon's face, but Sivka's expression was clearly opposite.

“Did something happen?” seeing the expression on his beloved's face asked Beaky.

“Sit down, we need to talk,” Sivka said coldly, and sat down on one of the stools standing along the shop counter herself.

“Did I do something while I was away?” tried to joke the griffon, but seeing no reaction sat on the stool, putting the suitcase brought with him on the floor.

Sighing deeply and trying not to betray emotions, the mare began:

“Actually, now I did something. Remember I told you how freedom of choice is very important, and you shouldn't put anyone in conditions from which they can’t act independently.”

“Yes,” answered Beaky uncertainly.

“So, it seems to me that you are giving up too early on the possibility of a relationship with other griffons, you need to continue your lineage, and with me...”

“Stop,” interrupted her Beaky, “did Bloom say something to you? You sound exactly like her right now.”

“No,” Sivka's previously cold voice betrayed surprise, “but if that’s her opinion, then I agree with her.”

The griffon stood up and looked carefully into the mare's eyes, in which tears were treacherously gathering, striving to flow down her cheeks.

This could not be allowed, deciding to go on the offensive the mare continued:

“In general, we need to break up. Go, look for your Grabby or whatever her name is.” (Note: The text says "Грабби", which is likely Sivka misremembering Gabby as Grabby, or a typo in source. Given the context of jealousy/dismissal, keeping the slight error or correcting to Gabby is a choice. I'll translate as "Grabby" to reflect the text's spelling "Грабби" vs "Габби").

“No.”

“What does no mean?”

“It means exactly that, no.”

“You can’t answer me no, are we children to play such a dispute,” the griffon's answer

somewhat threw Sivka off balance.

“And I can, I don’t want to and won’t leave you.”

“Stop behaving like a child already.”

“It’s not me behaving like a child, but you, what, you think I’ll leave you for some griffon?”

“Exactly!” couldn't stand it the mare, when Beaky hit the nail on the head.

“I won’t!” he shouted back at her.

“Oh really? It was enough to wave a tail in front of you, and you immediately lay at my feet.”

Stunned by this phrase, the griffon stepped back.

“Y-you aren't serious, Sivka.”

“Really? You just reciprocated the first pony who decided to date you. You don’t even love me!”

The mare stood up, and began to advance on the griffon forcing him out to the exit.

“Not true!”

“Are you sure?”

Strangely enough, Beaky didn't get angry at her hysterics, when he looked at her, offense was read in his gaze.

He turned around, left the house and flew away without saying a word, leaving the mare alone.

Only now tears came to her eyes. She didn't feel the expected relief from winning this stupid argument, her soul felt even worse than before.

Recovering a little from what happened, by evening Sivka found the suitcase left by the griffon.

It was made of carved wood, and on the front side the mare saw her name. Succumbing to curiosity, she opened it.

Inside was a patterned brush holder for a hoof, with an orange stone in the middle, which seemed to emit light by itself.

Under other circumstances, the mare would have started examining the stone, but now her gaze was fixed on the brushes lying nearby.

The carved handles were decorated with a top made of material very resembling the tip of Beaky's tail.

“By tradition, such things are given when they want to make a propo...” not finishing the thought, the mare abruptly closed the suitcase.

“No, nonsense, it’s just another gift.”

The next morning met Sivka with a feeling of emptiness, unable to do anything, she lay in bed, occasionally getting out to feed Sonya.

The foal even thought that mom was unwell, and tried to help her in every way.

It was nice, but she felt it as if at a distance.

Thoughts of the sudden, albeit planned breakup would not leave her head.

“Fool, broke his heart, and now here I am pitying myself,” thought the mare, “need to fix this somehow, maybe he will forgive me?”

“No,” she objected to herself, “it will be better for him, for me and for everyone.”

“I did the right thing.”

However, memories of how they had fun, and what she deprived herself of, increasingly filled the feeling of emptiness in her heart day by day.

“Friendship!” thought the mare at some point, “we can remain friends, and then everything will return to normal.

Hope he isn't too offended for what I said.”

Not immediately, but the mare dared to head to the griffon's house to apologize for everything she said.

“Main thing is not to break down,” approaching the giant oak Sivka tuned herself, “I already messed up enough, and no matter how much I want it, the relationship between us is over.”

Taking a breath, the mare shouted:

“Beaky!” voice treacherously trembled.

However, no one answered. Waiting a little, Sivka shouted again:

“Beaky! Forgive me!”

No result. “Is he so offended at me? That he won’t even answer me?”

Continuing to call the griffon, the mare began to get angry, “Came to apologize, and he doesn't even want to listen to me.”

Deciding not to wait for an answer, Sivka in disgrace began to climb the ladder, which she previously lacked the courage to climb.

Trying not to look down, she fearlessly climbed into the house. With the thought — now I’ll pluck all your feathers, — she began to look for the griffon.

But to her surprise, the house was empty.

“So be it, I’ll wait for you here,” plopping into one of the armchairs, Sivka began to wait.

Everything here was so habitual, familiar and already become native.

When Sivka caught herself on this remark, anger left her, — what is happening to me?

Uncomprehendingly, she tried to calm down.

After an hour, no one flew in. Wishing to leave the place, which rolled sadness onto her in waves, the mare walked to the hatch.

Looking down, Sivka stepped back, it was scary to go down. Not knowing what to do, she decided to wait a little longer.

Walking through the rooms, she started getting angry again, — Everything was so good, what is wrong with me?

Reaching the kitchen, the mare looked at herself in the mirror, on the other side a sad spotted muzzle looked at her, — Maybe I myself just don’t want to live happily?

Walking through a couple of rooms she continued aloud:

“As if he is better, instead of hugging me, just flew away.”

A wooden toy came under the hoof, and the mare kicked it with anger. It became a little easier.

“Some griffons, call themselves predators too, as soon as something happened they immediately run away with their tail between their legs.”

Getting even angrier, she knocked some blanks off the table in the workshop. Suddenly, she felt a little easier.

“Now I’m stuck here, Sonya is probably sitting there hungry.”

Deciding to continue, she forcefully turned the chair on its side.

“Serves him right! Shouldn't have flown away.”

Already preparing to sweep something else off the table, she suddenly stopped.

Among the shavings and dust stood a statuette on which she stood together with Beaky on a heart-shaped pedestal.

“What a fool,” said the mare, but instead of brushing off the statuette, she sat on the floor and felt tears flowing from her eyes.

When Sivka calmed down a little, she heard the sound of wings coming from the balcony.

Deciding that Beaky returned, she ran to meet him wiping her muzzle with a hoof.

“Sivka?” sounded Bloom's surprised voice.

“Bloom?” just as surprised asked Sivka.

“Do you happen to know where Beaky disappeared?”

“No.”

Looking at the tear-stained face of the mare, the blue pegasus asked with anxiety in her voice:

“Did something happen?”

Sivka sniffled, already intending to answer that nothing happened she thought, after which she answered:

“I don’t know. We... quarreled a little with Beaky, and I came to apologize... In general, I climbed up here to find him, and he isn't here... And descending without him was... for me...” for some reason tears poured again.

It always seemed to Sivka that Bloom was against their relationship, although she hadn't spoken about it directly before, but their relationship changed since they started dating.

Despite this, she felt herself being hugged.

“There-there, don’t get upset over that fool, probably went to pick flowers for you or something. I’ll help you down.”

“He isn't a fool,” unexpectedly for herself answered Sivka.

In response to this, Bloom only sighed.

When the mare calmed down, the pegasus helped her go down.

“Listen, Sivka, we didn't talk about this, but just so you know, I’m not against your relationship with Beaky.”

These words forced the mare to look away. For some reason, she was scared to admit to Bloom that they broke up, so she simply answered:

“Thank you.”

Beaky didn't appear after a day, nor after two. At some point Sivka seriously began to worry about him.

Now for some reason losing him became scarier than the fact that he would leave her.

No longer trying to sort out her feelings, she just waited for when he would return, and she would try to fix everything.

The mare was washing dishes when the sound of an opening door rang out. Someone entered without knocking. Turning around, the mare saw two griffons standing in front of her.

One of them was a gray cat with a pigeon head, and the second was a disheveled Beaky.

Not waiting for the mare's reaction, the red/orange griffon began:

“Meet Sivka, this is Gabby. Gabby, Sivka.”

It pricked in the chest from these words, and the mare froze dumbfounded.

“Nice to meet you,” said Gabby in a slightly embarrassed voice.

“Thank you for flying in,” Beaky took Gabby's hand and shook it, “and now goodbye.”

“Don’t mention it, hope I helped.” Gabby answered in an already somehow more cheerful voice, and headed towards the exit.

Watching her leave, the mare shifted her gaze to Beaky, who was already sitting on the floor, tucking one hind leg under himself, and extending the front one before her.

Catching her gaze, he began:

“I flew over half of Equestria and found her, and you know what?

Neither she, nor any other creature will make me change my mind. I love you, and only you.

You said that it wasn't my choice, but I liked you from the moment we met in Canterlot.

I... — hesitating, Beaky sighed and continued, — was afraid, afraid that if I make the first move, I won’t even be able to be friends with you.

And now, it seems to me that you are also afraid of something, so I promise you that I will never leave you.

Sivka, will you agree to marry me, and accept this...” the griffon cut himself off, the last part of his monologue was a tradition in which something had to be presented, but his paw was empty.

Looking around, the griffon pulled a feather from his wing and continued:

“Accept this feather.”

This slight mishap brought Sivka out of her stupor, the heart clenched by this whole scene let go, everything ended well, and from this she wanted to laugh.

Trying to hold back, she brought a hoof to her mouth.

Only a tear running down Beaky's cheek forced the mare to calm down a little.

Still holding back, she walked up to him, and according to tradition, lowered her hoof onto his paw and uttered:

“Only if it will be all the feathers.”

“Agreed.” The griffon answered full of seriousness in his voice, and was about to reach to pull the rest, but the mare hugged him, not letting him commit such stupidity.

Epilogue

“Can I open yet?” uncertainly asked Sivka, feeling her hooves touching grass.

“Yes, you c-can,” rang out Beaky's breathless voice over her head.

When the mare opened her eyes, a green mountain meadow rushed under her feet.

They were still flying, rising to the top of the slope, but the height was no longer so frightening.

Looking up, Sivka saw a lonely tree with a yellow crown, encircled by bushes, and a picnic basket standing under it.

Feeling how hard this climb was given to her companion, she decided to suggest:

“Listen, maybe we just walk, there’s barely anything left.”

“No, I’ll carry you,” stubbornly uttered Beaky, flapping his wings even harder.

A minute later they were there. Landing, the griffon immediately collapsed on the grass, breathing heavily.

Approaching him, Sivka leaned down and kissed her beloved on the forehead, lightly placing a hoof on his chest.

She felt how loudly his heart was beating.

“Rest, and I’ll set the table.”

“No, I...” attempted to object the griffon, getting up, but felt a hoof pressing him back to the grass.

Seeing the uncomprehending bird gaze, the mare smiled and winked, “Don’t argue. Now it’s my turn to take care of you.”

When the grape juice was finished, and the last fish eaten, they just lay looking at the clouds.

The sun had long passed the zenith, casting long shadows, and a yellow leaf broke from the tree.

Slowly falling, it glided straight onto Sivka's muzzle. Taking it in hooves, she looked at it, and said with sadness:

“What a pity. Probably, this is the last warm day of autumn.”

“And nothing terrible, but look how beautiful! How many landscapes you can paint!”

“A yellow forest with a yellow griffon under a yellow sun painted with yellow paints by a yellow mare...” she said thoughtfully peering into the leaf.

“On yellow-yellow sand,” in beat with her spoke the griffon.

“Exactly!” remembering something said the mare and turned her face to the companion, “you and Bloom went somewhere this summer.

Somewhere to the south?”

“Yes, went to help our sister Pancake.”

“Won’t you tell?”

“We-e-ell,” the griffon looked at the setting sun, “maybe later, it’s a long story. And I also promised a surprise.”

At these words Beaky stood up, and headed somewhere to the bushes.

“Surprise?” uncomprehendingly asked the mare, “I thought this picnic is the surprise.”

Rustling in the bushes, and taking something out of there, Beaky explained:

“You know, when a girl is confessed love to, she is taken on a date, to a restaurant, or for a ride in a hot air balloon...”

“Beaky,” uttered the mare with joking reproach.

Paying no attention, he continued to pull some construction out of the bushes.

“Here, look!”

“Is that...” Sivka thought for a second, “a paraglider? In the bushes?”

“Exactly,” answered her the griffon, dragging the huge wing, “I thought what else I can give, and didn't come up with anything better than the feeling of flight.”

“But I,” the mare swallowed a lump approaching her throat, “I don’t handle heights very well.

I don’t know how to fly it! What if I fall, or wrongly...”

“Don’t be afraid,” interrupted her Beaky extending a paw to help stand up, “I’ll be nearby. You trust me, don’t you?”

Sivka looked at the paw, and then at Beaky's face. Fear retreated, and taking his hand answered, — yes.

Sivka looked at the griffon's paw. Previously it scared her with its sharp claws, but now only support was felt in it.

Shifting her gaze to Beaky's face, she saw the one to whom she was ready to entrust everything, including her life.

Putting her hoof in his paw, she sincerely, from a pure heart uttered: — Yes.

Bonus Fanfic: How to Wash a Griffin



A small group of very young ponies walked along the backyards of the tiny town. They were clearly in a hurry somewhere, deftly jumping over rare puddles that came across on the path near the low houses.

In front of the trio marched a creature amazing for Equestria, but already quite familiar to Craftville. It was a yellow-spotted cat with a bird's head, in other words, a griffon. He had only recently been allowed to walk with his friends unsupervised, and today he was leading them not just anywhere, but to the treehouse.

“Beaky, does your mom really let you climb up there?” asked a small green unicorn filly named **Minty**.

“We-e-ell,” the griffon uttered embarrassedly, nervously patting his neck, “she is very busy today. I think we can climb up there and take a peek with one eye.”

Approaching the huge tree, on the spreading branches of which the house was located, a young colt asked:

“And how will we climb up there?”

The unicorn snorted:

“**Eaglet**, haven't you seen how cats climb trees? And we have a half-cat. He’ll climb up and throw the ladder down to us,” pausing, she added giggling, “or he’ll start meowing and asking to be taken down.”

“I don’t know how to meow,” the griffon said with resentment in his voice, “and anyway, I have another plan.”

“Which one?” asked Minty.

The griffon smiled and looked her straight in the eyes, and then poked a finger right at her horn.

“This one! Unicorns can move things with the power of thought. And I won’t have to climb anywhere.”

Hearing this, the filly laughed sincerely.

“What’s wrong?” asked Beaky perplexedly.

“You griffons are so funny: you thought just because I have a horn, I already possess magic?”

“Yes.”

“Then you can fly up there, you have wings, don’t you?” Minty answered, laughing again.

“So what do we do now?” asked Eaglet.

“Have to climb,” said the griffon and jumped onto the tree with a running start.

Claws dug into the rough bark; jerk after jerk, Beaky climbed up.

Of course, he had had occasion to climb trees before, but this oak could not be compared with others.

Therefore, he tried not to look down so as not to disgrace himself in front of his friends by getting scared.

Especially in front of Minty, who had already managed to bestow several offensive nicknames upon him.

A few moments later, the griffon buried his beak in a small hatch in the floor of the house.

Throwing it back with his head, he climbed inside and threw the rope ladder down with the words:

“Welcome!”

From below came:

“Ladies first.”

“You’re such a coward, Eaglet.”

When everyone climbed up, the company found themselves inside a small room almost without furniture.

For Beaky's family, this was something like a summer house where they arranged small picnics from time to time.

Bloom said that this house was intended for him, but until he learned to fly, he would have to live with her.

On the one hand, he would like to live in such a place, on the other, he didn't want to move away from his mom.

However, it wasn't worth thinking about right now.

From the small balcony stretching between the mighty branches, a wonderful view of the surroundings opened up.

The roofs, already dry after the morning rain, were now basking in the yellow rays of the sun rolling towards sunset; ponies scurried along the streets, busy with their affairs.

From here one could see the abandoned mill, and the small river flowing through unseeded fields, and even the school.

The mountains in the distance seemed to have become closer; it seemed that if you looked closely, you would see the capital itself on the slopes shrouded in reddish haze.

Mesmerized, the friends stood for a long time and examined everything around.

“And it’s true, it was worth climbing, I can even see my house from here,” said Minty, pointing a hoof to the outskirts of the village.

“And mine!” said Eaglet, pointing somewhere to the center.

“And mine,” giggled Beaky, pointing a finger at the nearest house below.

“There’s your mom, Minty,” said the colt.

“True!”

“And there’s my Aunt **Antique**, and it seems **Bloom** is walking away from her.”

“Bloom?” the griffon gasped, peering.

And indeed, a young blue pegasus loaded with various bags was walking away from the antique shop. She was walking in their direction.

Beaky, swallowing a lump rising to his throat, said:

“Let’s go down fast, before we are seen.”

“Eh, okay,” Minty sighed with sadness and headed for the ladder.

When the filly disappeared into the hatch, Eaglet should have followed her, but he hesitated, not daring to take the first step.

“It’s k-kind of high,” said the colt and stepped back.

“Just don’t look down,” Beaky lightly pushed the hesitant pony towards the ladder.

Another attempt by Eaglet to descend ended like the previous one, only he moved even further away from the hatch.

“We don’t have time for this,” the griffon said, starting to get nervous, “you climbed up here somehow, so you can climb down!”

A minute passed, but the colt still didn't dare to even approach the open hatch.

But a green head with a horn appeared from it again:

“Well, where are you?” Minty turned her head and looked at them, “ah, I see, I’ll help now.”

Climbing out of the hatch, she went around the colt from behind and, burying her horn in his croup, began to slowly push him forward.

“Ouch, that hurts!” grumbled the colt.

“We’ll all get in trouble if you don’t go down. Come on, climb!”

“Okay, okay!”

When the couple of ponies went down, the griffon rolled up the thrown ladder and got out onto the tree trunk.

Using his beak like a hook, he hooked the hatch door, closing it. Descending turned out to be harder than he thought, but he had to hurry.

Moving another paw down, he unexpectedly heard Bloom's distant cry:

“Beaky!”

His heart skipped a beat, and his hind paw unsuccessfully caught on a dried piece of bark and fell into the void, breaking off several splinters.

Under the weight of his body, the claws on the front paw slid along the wood and the griffon began his fall down.

Fortunately, bird instincts worked; Beaky began to flap his wings with all his might. But the cat instincts failed.

Instead of landing on four legs, the griffon painfully flopped sideways into a puddle.

“Beaky!” The worried voice of his friends rang out. “Are you okay?!”

Ignoring the bruise, the griffon jumped up and began to look around.

“Beaky! Home!” a voice rang out in the distance again.

Realizing that they hadn't been noticed, the griffon exhaled:

“Yes, everything is fine. I’ll go, Mom is calling.”

“Yeah, it’s probably time for us too. What a day: almost got caught, and then you fell like that! My heart is pounding,” Eaglet said excitedly.

“Typical boys,” snorted the filly, “climbed a tree and it’s already an adventure. Boring.”

Saying goodbye, Beaky went home. His side ached, but that worried him least of all. He got dirty again, which meant only one thing.

That today he would have to wash. Usually he tried to postpone this as far as possible, making excuses to his mom in every way, but a dirty side can’t be hidden.

“Although…” a cunning plan crept into his head on how to avoid water procedures.

No, he didn't plan to lick himself clean after that case when he lay in bed for three days with poisoning.

But the idea to pretend to be tired and hide in a cozy bed seemed good.

Entering the house from the kitchen side, he immediately saw Bloom.

“I thought I’d have to search for you. Sit down, I brought some fish.”

“I don’t want to,” said the griffon, trying hard not to swallow the saliva filling his beak.

“What?!” the filly asked again, not believing her ears. Usually she didn't even manage to start a phrase before Beaky pounced on the bags, smelling the fish.

“We ran around so much that even I got tired. I’ll probably go straight to sleep, and eat the fish in the morning, okay?”

“Okay,” answered Bloom, still in shock.

Trying not to show the dirty side, the griffon made his way to the second floor, went into their room, and hid under the blanket.

He didn't want to sleep. He wanted fish, the smell of which was felt even from here. But the fear of the bath was stronger.

Previously he wasn't as afraid of water as he was now. With his mind, he understood that there was nothing terrible in it, but something inside him seemed to break.

After some time he still managed to fall asleep, and when he opened his eyes, it was night in the house.

Roosters were not heard yet; a glance out the window—and it became clear that dawn would start soon.

Bloom slept peacefully on the neighboring bed. The mare's yellow tail hung from under the blanket as always.

It was quiet, and lying there became increasingly painful. He wanted to jump out into the street and run properly.

So, basically, Beaky did. Everyone was already used to him getting up earlier than everyone else and, most likely, they wouldn't even wake up.

Running this morning, however, was not so pleasant: the sore side reminded of the inevitable bath.

Trying to drive these thoughts away, he ran until it became completely light outside, and his stomach rumbled.

Reluctantly, the griffon went to the house. Barely entering inside, he heard:

“Beaky!”

Turning his head, he saw Bloom's angry gaze. In her hoof she held a sheet from his bed with a large dirty stain in the center.

Realizing what had happened, the griffon jumped out into the street again and bolted.

“Stop right there!” a voice rang out from behind. “I’ll catch you anyway!”

Ignoring his mom, the griffon rushed with all his might across the field. Usually such a chase turned into a game, after which Bloom stopped being angry, but not this time.

Barely overcoming a third of the usual distance, he heard the flapping of wings above him. A formidable voice from the sky uttered:

“Home. Now!”

Landing in front of him, the filly continued:

“I have a lot to do today, and here you also dirtied all the linen. Smart move: going to bed in the mud.”

“Sorry,” the griffon said in an apologetic voice.

While they walked to the house, Bloom, without stopping, told him how she would have to wash everything now.

And about what a slob he is. Leading him to the bathroom, she said:

“Today you wash yourself, I need to prepare for tests now, not mess with you.”

“B-but how can I do it myself,” the griffon tried to object, but the bathroom door closed right in front of his nose.

From the other side came:

“I don’t even want to hear it.”

Feeling guilty for what happened, Beaky didn't argue further. Climbing into the bathtub, he stuck in the plug, then turned the tap.

Water gushed in a turbulent stream. In the same instant, the griffon deftly twisted and jumped out of the bathtub back onto the floor, without even wetting his paws.

He poured shampoo and began to watch the rising foam. A couple of minutes later, reaching the tap with difficulty, he turned off the water and stared at the bubbles bursting here and there in the foam drifts, not daring to go further.

The first idea was to gradually immerse in the water. Climbing onto the edge of the bathtub, he lowered his hind legs down.

But as soon as they touched the water, he pulled them back as if scalded.

Then Beaky decided to dive, but never gathered the courage.

Descending to the tiles, he decided to jump in with a running start, but here too courage failed the young griffon.

There was a knock on the door:

“Beaky? You alive in there?”

Answering nothing, the griffon opened the door with his head down so as not to look into Bloom's eyes.

Contrary to expectations, the filly didn't get angry, but lowered herself down and hugged the griffon.

“Poor thing. I know you’re afraid of water, but I can’t wash you every time, understand?”

“Uh-huh,” was all the griffon could squeeze out of himself.

“Okay, let me help you.”

He was ashamed of everything. That because of his fear he dirtied the sheets, and now, that he couldn't even wash himself.

To top it all off, they aren't even angry at him, but pitying him.

Remembering how brave he felt with his friends, he unexpectedly decided to overcome his fear of water at all costs.

When the filly loosened her embrace and was about to pick up the griffon, he stepped back. Misunderstanding this, Bloom said affectionately:

“The sooner you wash, the sooner you can eat the fish.”

“I’ll do it myself,” the griffon answered confidently.

“Do what yourself?”

“Wash, just stay here, okay?”

“Okay,” surprise flashed in the filly's voice again.

Gathering his courage, Beaky climbed over the edge of the bathtub and plunged headlong into the water.

The dislike didn't go anywhere, but the fear filling him passed. Some kind of lightness was felt.

Confident in himself, he grabbed the sponge, soaped it and went over his fur a couple of times.

He cleaned his feathers with a soft brush, as his mom taught, and finally rubbed his beak and front paws with a hard washcloth.

Getting out of the bathtub, he saw a smiling Bloom. Proud of himself, he climbed out and reached for the towel.

But immediately a hoof stopped his paw.

“I am very proud of you, really. But now let’s wash properly.”

“But I washed?” the griffon uttered perplexedly.

“Yes? And what is this?” the filly poked her hoof into the griffon's side, where pieces of dirt remained.

Among other things, there was also a bruise there, so the griffon, unable to restrain himself, let out a cry of pain.

“What is it? Does it hurt?”

Not waiting for an answer, Bloom carefully looked at the place where she poked with her hoof. Lifting the wet fur, she examined the entire bruise site.

“Wow! Did you fall from an oak tree or something?” she said, starting to suspect something. (Note: Russian idiom "с дуба рухнул" implies "are you crazy", but literally "fell from an oak", which is exactly what happened).

“Y-yes,” the griffon lowered his head again.

Unable to restrain herself, she giggled at her own pun.

“You know: Olivia forbids climbing there until you learn to fly.

And if she finds out, she’ll wring your tail, and my head.”

“Sorry.”

“Alright. Since thanks to this you learned to wash yourself, I forgive you. But promise that you won’t climb there again without me.

And also, gather some plantain leaves. Later I’ll apply ointment so it heals faster.”

“Okay. And what were you saying about the fish?”

“I said that until you wash, you won’t get it,” said Bloom in a cheerful voice, scooped up the wet griffon and jumped into the bathtub with him.

The End.

Bonus Fanfic: The Ladybug's Pearl (by Jagora)



Golden feathers obscured his vision. They lay on his forehead, on his eyes, on his beak. It seemed they were about to swallow him whole. The barbs of the feathers, fluffed up after drying, tickled his cheeks, climbed into his nostrils, preventing him from breathing normally. The down pressed on his whole body like a warm, suffocating veil. An attempt to remove the feathers from his face was unsuccessful. His whole body felt somehow sluggish, weakened, as if the suffocating heat of the feather down was sucking out all his strength, plunging him into a sleepy torpor.

“Bea-ea-ky-y,” rang out from somewhere to the side of the unfortunate one. Turning to the call, he blew away a feather that was intrusively climbing into his eye and managed to make out a turquoise pegasus. She was half-submerged in a bathtub. Standing on her hind hooves, the mare leaned one on the edge of the tub, holding a fluffy towel in the other. Water flowed down her coat and mane, dripping onto her hooves and shoulder blades. But the towel seemed absolutely dry.

“Bea-ky,” repeated the pegasus in an already more threatening voice, making him swallow involuntarily. “Time to dry-y-y off,” the mare reached out again, and the unfortunate one began to be pulled towards the tub into the hooves of the terrible pony, who was about to wipe and ruffle his already fluffy feathers again.

“No!” Beaky screamed. “No way! Bloom!.. Help!”

But despite all attempts to somehow break free from the force pulling him to the tub, due to weakness and the heavy weight of the pressing feathers, he couldn't even lift himself up.

Feathers covered his muzzle again, clogging his nostrils with down. Breathing became harder and harder.

Powerlessly kicking, trying to crawl away from the tub, he kept getting closer to Bloom, who, smiling, held the hated towel in her hoof.

“Bea-ea-ky,” the mare sang again, already very close.

“No, let go, d-don't, I don't want to!” The unfortunate one wailed, trying to break free from captivity.

In vain: the tub, like a white block, inexorably approached, ignoring the pleas of the feathered one.

“Beaky! Time to get up. Wake up already, silly!”

Rang out right above the griffon's ear, and he finally awoke from his dream.

He was lying on his side, tightly hugging a pillow and pressing it to his beak. With his wings, he covered his muzzle, trying to hide from the morning sun that had crept into his bedroom.

Tearing his beak away from the pillow and throwing it to the other edge of the bed, he inhaled the fresh air with pleasure.

“What do you mean ‘no way’?” asked the sleepy griffon a pegasus, looming over his muzzle and beginning to slowly spread his wings.

“Come on, sleepyhead! I made fish for you. You slept in today.” Bloom looked at the griffon with concern. “Usually you get up earlier. Are you feeling okay?”

At the word “fish,” the chick froze and woke up completely. The thought of his favorite treat burst into his mind like a fresh breeze, blowing away the confused feelings after the recent dream.

“So I dreamed it, so what. The main thing is that fish is waiting for me,” thought Beaky, stretching sweetly.

His hind legs stretched out and drummed on the mattress like drumsticks.

“Everything is fine, Bloom,” the griffon reassured her. He couldn't tell her that he couldn't

sleep all night again because of the thunderstorm.

However, it seems Bloom understood the reason anyway.

“You’re turning ten soon, and you’re still afraid of lightning outside the window?” Bloom sighed, getting up from the bed.

“You’re my sleepyhead. Get up already, or the fish will get cold,” the mare ruffled the griffon's bangs, and kissing him on the forehead, headed for the door.

“She’s in a great mood today,” Beaky noted to himself.

“Yes Bloom, just a sec,” the griffon rubbed his eyes with his paws and, sitting up on the bed, spread and closed his wings again, yawning sweetly and stretching.

“Come on. Tidy yourself up and wash your face. I give you ten minutes, otherwise your fish will go to Dad!”

The mare jokingly threatened him and left the room, not completely closing the door.

Still yawning sweetly, the griffon got out of bed, lowering his paws onto the fluffy rug. Soft slippers stood lonely to the side.

Why lonely, you ask? Because Beaky almost never wore them.

Only after a bath did Bloom sometimes make him put them on his hind legs.

However, she soon realized the futility of her attempts to accustom her child to slippers and left everything as it is.

Why Beaky didn't like walking in slippers, he didn't know himself. He just liked standing on the floor with his paws. Feeling that nothing interferes with his claws. How the pads silently and softly step on the surface.

Walking in slippers was more like walking in socks half-pulled off hooves. Uncomfortable, something constantly drags behind, strives to fly off the paw. And these slippers simply held worse on griffon paws than on pony hooves, so they didn't find popularity with the griffon.

Making sure by the sound of footsteps that Mom had already gone down to the kitchen, Beaky stood on all four paws and, arching his back, dug sharp claws into the pile rug.

Bloom usually didn't like this, and she often scolded Beaky when he began to sharpen his claws out of habit. Therefore, the griffon tried not to catch her eye with these “terrible acts of vandalism,” as Aunt Olivia said.

Scratching the rug with his front paws and stomping with his hind ones, the self-satisfied

griffon headed to the bathroom.

Cleaning his beak, he quickly splashed water on his face, not wanting to mess with it for long, and, wiping his muzzle with a towel, went down to the kitchen where Bloom's entire family had already gathered.

Entering the kitchen, the griffon saw an unusually lively picture. Aunt Olivia was washing dishes. Uncle Smith sat at the table reading some newspaper about blacksmithing he subscribed to. Bloom was sipping tea with cookies.

Beaky immediately saw his portion. Fried fish with bunches of greens lay on the plate.

He preferred raw fish... with the head. But at Aunt Olivia's table, he wasn't allowed to do such things.

But what attracted his attention was **Pancake**.

Barricades of glasses and spoons were built around the griffon's plate. Rows of toothpicks surrounded the fish in even rows and crept up to the spoon which, like a siege ladder, was thrown over the edge of the plate.

Pancake had staged a real siege of his hearty breakfast. She enthusiastically pushed one of the cups filled with toothpicks closer to the plate. And a cookie, flying over the “castle,” played the role of a dragon.

“Oh no! The Dragon Lord has returned!” shouted the little filly, noticing Beaky. “We won’t be able to save Princess Fish this time! Retreat!”

With these words, Pancake gathered all the toothpicks laid out around the plate and poured them equally into the glasses, which began to move slowly back to the center of the table.

“Captain! We are being pursued by a dragon!” The filly took a cookie and circled it over one of the cups.

“Pancake!” The filly's mother, Olivia, shouted displeasedly. “You are crumbling cookies on the table! Come on, stop your fooling around already.”

The little one just puffed out her cheeks displeasedly and, quietly muttering something about a witch, put the cookie back in the basket, removing the glasses.

“Beaky! Food is on the table. I thought we’d have to give it to be torn apart by this restless filly,” Aunt Olivia addressed the griffon. “Come on, sit down faster and eat.”

The griffon didn't need much persuasion. Like a yellow lightning bolt, he rushed to the table, already anticipating how he would eat the fish.

“I’m afraid this time the fish can’t be saved, Pancake,” laughed Beaky and was about to reach into the plate with his paw, but immediately got hit on it by Bloom's hoof.

“Ouch!” The griffon cried out and, grumbling, took a fork in his paw.

Of course, he knew how to use it: Bloom had accustomed him to cutlery. But sometimes, when he was particularly excited, as he was now at the sight of fish, he hurried and forgot about everything, wanting to put a tasty morsel into his beak as quickly as possible.

Breaking off a larger piece with the fork, the griffon brought it to his beak, but it was too big and began to fall off the fork. Not thinking long, the feathered one hooked it with a claw, pressing it to the fork, and quickly shoved it into his mouth so that Bloom wouldn't see anything.

And then, licked the claw.

“You haven't forgotten that tomorrow is you and Brave’s birthday?” asked Olivia, approaching the table and taking the griffon's plate when he finished the fish. “Go to the market together now and buy groceries. I’ve already made a list for you.”

Bloom snorted displeasedly at the sound of her incomplete name. Beaky joined the snorting but for a completely different reason.

He wanted to run outside today, climb trees in the park, and hunt parasprites. He had such a busy schedule! And he simply couldn't waste it on boring trips to bazaars.

“Well, if you don’t want to, you can weed the beds,” Aunt Olivia added, seeing the skeptical expression on the griffon's face, from which he immediately changed.

Jumping up on his paws and flapping his wings, he blew all the crumbs near the cookie basket onto the floor, causing Aunt Olivia to gasp with indignation and stomp her hoof.

“We’re ready!” The griffon declared running to the door, starting to put on the bags. He wanted to get away from the hated beds as soon as possible.

“Hold it right there!” The elderly mare narrowed her eyes. “First sweep up the crumbs you blew off. I told you not to wave your wings at the table. If you litter like this, we’ll get mice!”

The griffon sighed and, taking a broom and dustpan, quickly swept up most of the crumbs.

“Done!” shouted the griffon, putting the dustpan and broom back.

“Okay, okay, now you can go,” sighed Olivia, noting the places with remaining crumbs and added for the road, grinning, “And watch that Brave doesn't mix up the eggs for the cake again.”

“Mom!” Bloom squeaked indignantly, causing everyone to just laugh.

Rolling her eyes and trying not to betray a smile herself, Braveblossom left the house and Beaky immediately ran after her.

“So,” the mare read the briefing for Beaky, walking down the street, “you need to buy vegetables, cabbage, flour, and sugar. I’ll buy everything else. Here’s a bag of coins for you, it should be enough.”

“But Bloom!” Whined the griffon, “I want to go fishing!”

“I already caught some fish in the morning, sleepyhead. Should have slept more,” the mare lightly flicked the beak with her wing.

The griffon lowered his beak, snorting with annoyance. Taking his bag and the shopping list, he threw everything into one of the bags hanging on his belt and slowly walked towards the vegetable part of the bazaar, showing Bloom his displeasure with his whole appearance, slowly moving his tail on the ground from side to side.

“Watch out so your tail doesn't get stepped on!” Giggle the mare shouted after him and went to the nearest stalls.

Walking along the stalls and examining the counters bursting with baskets of carrots, the griffon thought about what to give Bloom for her birthday.

There were always problems with this. Just remember her expression when once Beaky gave her the “most beautiful,” in the griffon's opinion, worm he found.

This worm glowed in the dark and was of a creamy-purple hue. The griffon poured some wood chips with earth into a jar and settled the worm there, thinking that Bloom would be very happy with the new night light.

However, she didn't share his enthusiasm and he had to catch the jar thrown out of the screaming mare's hooves on the fly when she made out what was inside. Beaky was offended by her reaction and returned the worm to his personal collection.

Another time he wanted to weave a wreath of beautiful flowers for her. But it turned out that the mare was strongly allergic to one of them, and a couple of hours later she was already walking around with a completely swollen nose.

Therefore, this time the griffon didn't rush, carefully thinking over what gift to make for the mare so close to him.

Everything necessary had already been purchased, so there was nowhere to hurry.

“Maybe buy her a soft toy?” Thought the griffon, glancing at the counter with plush mice.

“No-no, she’s already an adult and unlikely to appreciate such a thing,” the griffon continued to reason.

“How about some brooch for her mane? Eh, pity I can’t afford something expensive. Hmm...” Beaky thought, drilling a head of cabbage on the counter with bird eyes, and almost crashed into a mare standing nearby.

“Hey, watch where you’re going!” Snorted a young unicorn filly. “Oh, Beaky? Are you sleepwalking?” The mare was surprised.

Emerging from his thoughts, the griffon recognized his friend, **Minty**.

“Hi Minty. Just... thinking about what gift to give Bloom.”

“What’s there to think about. Give her what you would like to give yourself. A ball of yarn for example,” laughed the filly, shoving the griffon in the shoulder with a hoof in a friendly way.

“I already tried giving her gifts like that. Didn't turn out very well,” complained the young griffon.

“Well, what if you think? What would you, for example, like personally for yourself right now?”

“Well... I don’t know. Fish?” The filly looked at him skeptically. “Um... A knife?”

“A knife? Why do you need a knife?” The unicorn was surprised.

“What do you mean why? You can do so many things with a knife! Cut twigs, whittle wood, draw something, sharpen, cut. And also I’ll just look cool with it.” The griffon sighed.

“Bloom's parents definitely won’t buy me one,” complained Beaky. “They say I’m still small, I’ll hurt myself inadvertently. And tomorrow I’ll be ten years old already!” The griffon jerked his wings indignantly.

“Uh-huh... A knife then,” Minty drawled thoughtfully.

“Yes. But I don’t think Bloom will like it if I suddenly give her such a gift. She’s seen enough of these knives and nails in the forge that she probably doesn't want to see them anymore.”

“Well, suit yourself, suit yourself... alright, see ya.”

“Hey wait, where are you going?” The griffon was surprised by the filly's haste.

“I need to meet a friend, she’s waiting for me,” threw Minty and saying nothing more, ran somewhere down the street.

The griffon only shrugged in surprise and continued to think, walking back to the house.

“I don’t have money to buy her some beautiful jewelry, or a hairpin... but... I can quite possibly make it myself!”

Beaky estimated whether his knowledge, picked up while watching Uncle Smith handle a hammer, would be enough, and regretfully had to admit that no, it wouldn't be enough.

And then his gaze fell on the flea market.

The small old shop was littered with some rusty samovars, tools forged probably back in Celestia's grandfather's time. Some dishes, picture frames, gardening supplies. A huge, ridiculous-looking old raincoat.

But most importantly, on one of the display cases stood an open jewelry box filled with all sorts of costume jewelry, buttons, and trinkets.

Behind the display case sat an elderly donkey mare, slowly puffing on a mouthpiece. Seeing the interested eyes of the young griffon looking straight at her precious belongings, she grunted, half-rose, reaching for a rolled-up newspaper, grumpily lamenting about juvenile thieves and magpies.

“Shoo from here, you winged blockhead! Look at you, striving to snatch something from me,” threatened the old donkey, shaking the newspaper in front of Beaky.

“N-no! What do you mean, grandma. I was just looking at your brooches!” The griffon began to justify himself frightenedly and slightly offendedly.

“Yeah, right,” the old woman continued distrustfully, “I’ve seen so many of you in my life, ptui,” the granny spat under the counter, but put the newspaper away. “Look with your eyes, don’t touch with your paws. Or I’ll tell on you!”

The donkey threatened and fell heavily back into her wicker chair, poking the mouthpiece towards the griffon, “I’m watching you!”

Beaky only snorted irritably, offended that he, an honest noble griffon, could be accused of theft, and began to examine the contents of the box.

It was filled with a bunch of hairpins and brooches. The griffon could well buy one of them here, fortunately, the prices for this junk were low.

The main thing is that the setting should be beautiful. And then he would pick out the jewelry

with a claw and insert something of his own.

Already reaching with a paw to the box to rummage in it, he was stopped by the granny's exclamation.

“Where to!”

“Grandma!” The griffon ruffled up displeasedly. Due to indignation, his feathers began to stick out, forming a funny fluffy collar, “I’m not going to steal anything from you! I’m looking for a gift, for a mare.”

Hearing this, the donkey calmed down a little and her gloomy gaze softened. “A gift?” The old woman said thoughtfully.

“So that’s it... Okay, dig in. But watch it, be careful there,” muttered the granny and sucked on the pipe again.

Rolling his eyes, the griffon began to rummage through the pile of trinkets, picking the most beautiful one.

Finally, his gaze fell on a neat hairpin to which a ladybug was attached.

Its wings were half-open, and instead of the abdomen and back that should have been under them, there was a gaping hole for a stone.

Apparently, the stone had been lost long ago. The whole hairpin was made of brass and looked quite beautiful. And it shouldn't cost much.

“Here,” said the griffon, taking the hairpin out of the pile of trinkets.

“Two bits,” answered the donkey, chewing on her pipe.

Beaky had just a couple of coins left after buying groceries, so he quickly paid the junk dealer, threw the hairpin into a separate bag, and hurried to leave the nasty granny as soon as possible.

Reaching the house, the griffon began to plan how to bring in the bags and slip away quickly before he was assigned to some work again.

After all, he still had to find a stone for Bloom. Taking off the bags, he took out the hairpin and, quietly opening the door a crack, put the bags against the wall.

Fortunately, Aunt Olivia and Bloom were busy cooking right now and didn't notice Beaky.

Carefully closing the door, he crouched down, went around the house so that he wouldn't be

seen from the window, and shoved the hairpin under one of the flower pots.

When the griffon wanted to leave, the front door opened and Bloom's muzzle stuck out into the street.

Thinking quickly, the griffon rushed with all his might to the side streets, straight through the beds, miraculously not stepping with his paws on the carefully planted saffron flowers.

“Beaky!” The mare shouted after him, but the griffon was already far away. “Hey! You lazy blockhead! Do I have to cook everything here alone?” The mare looked angrily at the back of the retreating scamp, promising him nothing good upon return.

Running off a sufficient distance from the house, and turning onto a street, the griffon finally slowed down, stopping.

Breathing intermittently, he began to shake off the soft, plowed earth from his hind legs, over which he had to run to escape from Bloom.

Recovering his breath and shaking off lumps of adhering dirt from his paws, the griffon headed down the street thinking where to start his search for the stone.

It is unlikely that he will find anything interesting on the streets of the town, so he should go look outside the settlement.

So, looking around, fearing the angry mare, Beaky left Craftville and, passing by their treehouse, trotted cheerfully to the forest path.

The sun pleasantly warmed his feathers, the sand tickled the pads of his paws, and a light breeze caressed the wings and sides of the griffon. The day was amazing.

Clucking something unintelligible, the griffon laughed and accelerated, rushing along the sandy road and flapping his wings, raising whirlwinds of sand behind him.

Naturally, part of the sand settled on the yellow feathers of the tomboy, however, this didn't bother him now. Finally, he was alone.

No one watched him, told him how to behave, what is allowed and what is not.

Laughing and clucking like a bird, the prankster took a running start and jumped, rolling head over heels along the road and flapping his wings.

Sand flew in all directions, frightened grasshoppers jumped on both sides of the road, and the rascal continued to laugh, making bird sounds.

Raising a cat paw, he covered the sun with it and began to play with the rays warming his

fingers with heat.

After lying like that for a little longer, feeling the warmth of the sand with his back and trying to catch a pesky dragonfly flying over his nose with his claws, Beaky finally got up from the ground.

Shaking himself off and disheveling his bangs, shaking out the sand that got into it, the self-satisfied griffon stomped on.

Turning soon towards a clearing, the griffon stopped. “There must be something here,” the little treasure hunter thought to himself and began to peer intently into the ground, scouring the clearing.

Flowers, mushrooms, pebbles, beetles, all this is not it. Turning his head from side to side, Beaky saw a hollow in one of the trees standing nearby.

Approaching the old oak, the griffon jumped on it, clinging like a cat to the bark, and, reaching the hollow, stuck his curious beak there.

Two large predatory eyes looked at him. A bird's beak, similar to his own, held a mouse by the tail.

One of the eyes blinked and a long "Hoo-hoo" came from the hollow, frightening the curious griffon.

Crying out in surprise, Beaky hit the back of his head on the edge of the hollow and slipped off the bark.

Sliding his belly along the trunk of the oak, reflexively spreading his paws in all directions and trying to catch onto branches, he flopped his butt onto a thick root and hissed, rubbing the bruised spot with a paw.

“Nothing interesting there either,” thought the griffon.

Frightened by the noise of the falling, huge yellow bird, a rabbit jumped out of the bushes and froze in the middle of the clearing, looking around.

The griffon's eyes immediately focused on his victim. Paws imperceptibly turned, taking a more comfortable position.

Wings pressed against the sides, and the head bent down, crouching to the ground to make the griffon less noticeable.

Although a huge spotted yellow bird in the middle of green grass could hardly be called inconspicuous.

Sensing something was wrong, the rabbit turned around and bolted away from the clearing. Beaky broke into a run and ran after the long-eared one.

Hunting instincts took over. And even though he didn't intend to do anything bad to the rabbit, the excitement of the hunt demanded that he catch up and catch his prey at all costs.

So the young hunter chased the rabbit for about a quarter of an hour, driving the poor thing through clearings and thickets.

Finally, the rabbit managed to break away from the pursuer and he lost sight of it.

Turning around, Beaky realized that he absolutely didn't understand where he was. It seems he ran from that side.

Turning his round head from side to side, the griffon began to look for some landmarks that would help him understand where he is.

But all in vain. The trees were the same everywhere and said nothing.

Swallowing a lump rising to his throat and nervously scratching his neck with a paw, trying not to worry, the griffon tried to return by the road he came here.

“So... I think I ran through these raspberry bushes... Or was it those bushes... Damn! There are raspberry bushes everywhere here, this is a raspberry grove, you stupid bird brain!”

The griffon nervously began to gnaw his wing with his beak trying not to fall into panic. “Okay, calm down... What is that over there? A tall pine... Maybe if I climb it, I can look around and understand where I am?”

Beaky didn't like climbing high trees because he was afraid to climb down from them. But he had no choice now.

Running up to the pine, the griffon jumped onto the trunk, digging his claws into the pliable bark, and began to climb up quickly.

“Just don’t look down, just don’t look down,” the griffon repeated to himself, fixing his gaze on the top of the tree and, trying his best not to turn around, climbed up.

Finally reaching a sufficient level to tower over the crowns of ordinary trees, Beaky stopped and looked around. The view was awesome.

A huge forest stretched to the north, crossed not far from where the griffon was by a river. Groves and clearings stretched along the sides.

This view took his breath away and at the same time made his paws shake, and his claws dig

deeper into the bark. No joke, the height was about ten meters.

Turning around, Beaky saw his village in the distance and exhaled with relief. — “Well, I really got carried away,” thought the would-be hunter.

“Ran all the way to the river... Wait a minute!” The griffon peered at the river bank nearby.

His bird vision easily noticed some movement there. “Maybe it’s that rabbit?”

Squinting, the griffon saw a pony of green color on the old pier, or whatever it was.

He was walking on the platform doing something. Continuing to peer at the pony, Beaky realized that it was a teenager. “A filly, familiar green color... Minty!?”

The griffon's curiosity flared up with renewed vigor and carefully and slowly descending from the tree he headed towards the river.

Approaching, the griffon began to practically silently sneak up to the bushes near the shore, carefully stepping on the pads of his hind legs.

Reaching the bushes, the griffon hid behind them looking through the leaves at the shore.

The green unicorn was carrying a bucket to which a rope was tied along the old wooden pier. The other end of the rope was held by a wooden bar of the pier.

The turbulent flow of the river rushed below, carrying countless fallen leaves.

With each step, the boards creaked a little, but overall the pier looked quite strong.

Approaching the edge and taking an iron knife out of her bag, the filly put it in the bucket and began to sprinkle stones from the second bag on top of it.

The wood at the edge of the platform was slippery and covered with moss. Grabbing the railing with one hoof, the filly firmly grabbed the bucket by the rope and tried, leaning over, to lower it to the bottom of the river, when suddenly her hind hoof slid to the side.

Releasing the bucket, the filly flailed her hooves, trying not to fall after it. But in vain. Gasping, the pony flopped right into the river.

“Minty!” The griffon shouted and, jumping out of the bushes, ran to his friend.

Quickly reaching the shore, slapping on the wet sand, the griffon ran onto the platform and stopped at the edge where Minty had just fallen.

The filly was still there. Clinging to the rope with her teeth, the unicorn tried with all her might

not to surrender to the will of the turbulent current.

Her mane stuck to her forehead completely covering her eyes. And only the filly's nose stuck out from under the green bangs, sniffing strenuously with nostrils.

Water poured through the teeth holding the rope into the filly's mouth. She, constantly turning her neck, tried to somehow throw the bangs off her eyes and lift her nose higher, saving it from the rolling waves.

“I’m coming, Minty!” The griffon shouted to his friend and, quickly finding where the rope begins, leaning his paws on the floor, began to pull it, trying to pull out the unicorn.

Unfortunately, the claws on the hind legs were not as strong as on the front ones, with which he clung to the rope. And his paws began to slide slowly along the wet, moss-covered boards.

Leaning one of his paws against a vertically standing bar, Beaky pulled with renewed vigor.

But the strong current was not going to let go of its victim so easily, and the griffon was not distinguished by great innate strength.

“Come on!” Hissed the griffon. He didn't know how much longer his friend could hold on like this.

Waves hit her in the face flooding her mouth and nose.

“Damn, if only Uncle Smith were here. That’s why I wasn't born as strong as him!”

Beaky gathered his strength and once again pulled the rope with all his might and finally felt it give way.

Not slowing down, the griffon continued to pull. Soon the unicorn's entire muzzle was above water.

Encouraged, the filly tried to pull herself up along the rope, clinging to it with her front hooves freed from the turbulent current.

Trying together, centimeter by centimeter, the filly broke free from the tenacious waters of the river and holding the rope with her teeth, threw a hoof over the platform, which Beaky immediately caught and helped the soaked through unicorn crawl onto the floor.

Flopping onto the boards, the soaked filly, shaking from the cold, began to cough up the water that had entered her mouth, intermittently interrupting for deep breaths.

Beaky stood silently nearby, not knowing what to do.

“How are you?” Finally the griffon asked. Minty tried to answer something but only coughed

again.

Finally calming down and clearing her lungs, the filly breathed deeply and rose on her hooves, wiping her muzzle from water and moving the stuck bangs to the side.

“I’m... fine. Thank you for saving me,” breathing deeply, answered the filly, starting to come to her senses.

“What were you even doing there!?” Exclaimed the griffon, making sure that nothing threatened her anymore.

Still, innate curiosity gave him no peace, and he couldn't resist asking questions.

“I... it’s a secret. Or rather, it seems... no longer a secret.” Sadly said the unicorn. “Help me pull out this bucket.”

“Bucket?” The griffon asked uncomprehendingly. “Minty! Why do you need this bucket, you almost drowned because of it!”

“Well then hold me tighter!” The filly snapped irritably, but then thinking better of it, apologized. “Sorry. I’m not myself right now. My hooves are shaking.”

The griffon only obediently sighed and grabbed the rope with his paws. Together with the unicorn, they began to pull it, trying to pull out the bucket.

At first it didn't give way. Although the bucket managed to turn over, and part of the stones spilled out of it, but instead of them silt and mud were added which held it tightly in the water.

Finally, the bucket moved and the couple began to pull it out diligently.

When the bucket fell onto the boards spilling out silt, stones and water — Minty immediately rushed to it starting to dig in all this mud looking for something.

“Oh well... lost the knife too,” the filly exhaled sadly.

“What knife?” The griffon was surprised.

“Knife! For you. Birthday present,” explained the filly, continuing to dig in the mud.

Finally realizing that there was nothing there, the filly flopped back onto the floor exhausted, and her eyes began to water.

“I wanted to give it to you... by hiding it here. Came up with a whole series of ‘quests’, games like we played at Skein's, but...” The filly couldn't stand it and cried.

“I ruined everything! Lost your gift! Almost drowned myself! Fool! Cross-eyed fool!

Blockhead!”

Beaky didn't know what to do, so he just sat next to her, trying to somehow support the filly with his presence.

Maybe it would have been more correct to hug the filly here, as it was in those books that Bloom liked to read, but the griffon was shy to hug the unicorn, not knowing how she would react to it.

“Minty, everything is okay.. You are alive. You are not a fool. It’s all that slippery board,” the griffon tried to comfort her.

Still gathering his courage, he put his paw on her hoof.

The filly didn't react to this in any way, only falling silent and continuing to sob quietly.

A couple of minutes later the unicorn calmed down and squeezed the hoof with the griffon's paw. “Thank you Beaky. If it weren't for you... I’m afraid I wouldn't have gotten off so easily.”

“Trifles,” he was embarrassed. “I couldn't have done otherwise. Everything tightened inside me when I saw you fall.”

“Really?” Asked Minty and for some reason was embarrassed.

“Yes! Promise me not to do anything like that again!” The griffon looked confidently into her eyes, ignoring her embarrassment.

But behind his confidence hid fear for this bold, self-confident unicorn.

Sometimes she looked so much like Bloom, only smaller and with a horn. Just as stubborn, sometimes rude and purposeful.

That’s what attracted him to her.

“O-okay. I promise,” said the unicorn, looking away and releasing her savior's paw.

It was obvious that her promise wouldn't last long. She didn't have that character, and sooner or later, the filly would be drawn to another dangerous adventure.

But Beaky couldn't do anything about it.

“Look, an oyster!” The filly jumped up, trying to change the subject and poked somewhere into the spilled pile of stones mixed with silt.

“Oyster? And what about it?” The griffon asked uncomprehendingly.

“Open it, dummy!” The filly grinned.

Beaky tried to stick his bird claw into the thin joint, but it turned out to be too big for the small oyster.

The barely visible gap remained tightly closed. The griffon continued futile attempts to shove a claw under it until the filly got tired of it.

“Give it here,” Minty rolled her eyes, and placing the oyster on the floor, gently hit it a couple of times with the tip of her hoof, cracking it like an eggshell.

“Here!” Said the unicorn and shoved the broken oyster under the griffon's nose.

Quickly picking it open with a claw, the griffon opened it, tearing off the upper half and saw inside a small virginally white stone.

“It’s a river pearl,” explained the filly, “you can consider this my birthday gift to you,” Minty smiled sadly. “And... gratitude for saving me.”

The griffon carefully examined the stone. It was small, and quite beautiful. *“Perfect for the hairpin!”* Thought the griffon.

“You like it?” Uncertainly asked Minty, seeing how the griffon began to stare at the pearl, turning it in his claws.

She herself didn't expect him to show such interest in her modest, accidentally found gift.

“Just what I needed!” The griffon exclaimed admiringly, continuing to twist the stone. Its subtle soft shine simply fascinated the bird eyes.

He wanted to collect a whole bunch of such stones and hide them somewhere in his house.

“Oh... I’m glad you like it,” the filly answered, embarrassed again, and felt that she was indeed unusually happy about it.

Sitting like that for about twenty more minutes, chatting about this and that until the filly dried off, the two headed back to Craftville.

Escorting Minty home, the griffon turned to his place. Despite everything that happened, he felt just great.

No joke, he heroically saved a filly! And in addition, he also found a stone for Bloom.

Humming some melody of his own under his beak, the young rescuer headed home, dancing

with his paws along the way.

Reaching the house, he looked around, making sure that Bloom wasn't hiding and waiting for him somewhere in the bushes, intending to punish for the trampled beds.

Silently sneaking up to the entrance, stepping on his hind legs, the griffon took out the hairpin from under the flower pot, and bending the metal grooves with a claw, inserting the stone into them, bending them back.

“Bea-ea-ky,” a sweet voice, boding nothing good, rang out from above the griffon.

The frightened slacker jumped on the spot, croaking in surprise. No need to guess who it was.

Gliding from the roof, the pegasus landed behind the griffon's back. “What do you have there, little rascal?”

Asked the mare turning, seeing that he had recently been digging near the flower pot.

Not knowing what to do, the panicked griffon simply shoved the hairpin into his beak, hiding it under his tongue.

Turning around, he looked at Bloom fearfully, instinctively trying to step back but only buried his butt in the wall. There was no way to retreat.

Examining the griffon's empty claws, Braveblossom narrowed her eyes suspiciously. “Paws!” She ordered.

And Beaky slowly lifted one hind leg after another.

Crouching to the ground, the mare looked under them, still looking distrustfully at the griffon.

“Beak!” Ordered the mare in a voice that brooked no objections, rising.

The griffon panicked, hesitating with the command.

“Beak! Beaky!” Repeated the mare, piercing the griffon with her gaze. It seemed she saw right through him.

Thinking of nothing else, he simply swallowed the hairpin, holding it in his crop, and opened an empty beak.

“I see,” sighed the mare, clearly seeing her negligent griffon swallow something. “Eating worms again.”

The griffon was silent.

“Why did you trample the beds today!? Huh?!” Braveblossom continued to drill the silent bird with a formidable gaze. “Nothing to say, right? Ran away from home, and left me and mom to cook everything ourselves?” The mare sighed, releasing the frightened griffon.

“Oh Celestia, you are so dirty, all in sand. Okay, go into the house, take a bath. I forgive you this time in honor of our upcoming birthday.”

Beaky didn't need to be told twice and he rushed into the house, wanting to hide from Bloom's eyes as quickly as possible before she changed her mind.

“Shake off your paws, Stupidbeak!” The mare shouted after him.

Stopping in the middle of the hallway, the griffon stood on his front paws, and began to back towards the door, holding his hind paws above his head.

Braveblossom almost snorted into her wing with laughter, covering her lips with it.

Reaching the threshold, the griffon fell back onto his hind paws, and shaking off the adhering sand from them, ran to rehide the jewelry.

Bloom only shook her head, wondering where her ward got so much energy.

Running into the bathroom, Beaky, making sure he was alone, regurgitated the hairpin back washing it in water.

He absolutely didn't want to wash, especially after what happened today.

Approaching the bathtub, Beaky looked over its rim looking at the enameled bottom that was soon to be filled with water.

The river appeared before his eyes again, and the turbulent current that was ready to carry away anyone who found themselves in its waters.

Sighing, the griffon plugged the bathtub and began to fill it with water.

Waiting until the water level rose a couple of centimeters, he closed the tap and lowered his paws into the tub.

Thus the danger of drowning was minimal. Sloshing his paws in the water and considering them clean enough, Beaky began to splash in the man-made puddle, splashing water onto his back and wings.

Falling on his back, he wagged his tail scratching his back on the bottom of the tub, and waved his paws.

Unfortunately for the griffon, one of them hit right on the tap opening it all the way.

A large stream of water hit right into the griffon's paws, spraying in all directions.

Startled, he cried out trying to jump up, but because he had to do it lying down, he slipped and flopped back into the water.

Panicking, the griffon tried to plug the tap with his hind paws. Water began to spray in all directions and breaking through his fingers hit right into the griffon's beak, getting into his nostrils.

Jumping up again, coughing and flapping his wings, splashing water everywhere, the griffon jumped out of the bathtub.

The feathers on his scruff stood on end, and his eyes opened wide running from side to side.

Recovering a little and sighing, the griffon closed the tap.

“Well, almost drowned in the bathtub,” sighed the griffon. “Some rescuer.”

“Guess that's enough bathing for today,” thought Beaky and began to wipe himself with a yellow towel which featured embroidered chickens with worms.

Once he and Bloom embroidered this towel together. It wasn't hard to guess who embroidered the worms.

Wiping himself dry, the griffon headed to the room where he hid the hairpin under the mattress.

Finishing with the operation to hide the gift, Beaky flopped belly down on the made bed, blissfully stretching out like a boat and flexing his fingers. He was tired after the whole day.

Peeking into the room, Braveblossom saw the griffon stretched out on the bed to his full height.

Wings, spread out, covered the entire bed from edge to edge, and his cat paws almost hung off it.

Very soon the bed will become too small for him, and another big one won’t fit here.

“Yes, indeed, this room is now too small for us, and he is no longer a child at all. Probably good that soon he will have his own separate treehouse,” thought the mare, and looked sadly at the dozing griffon.

Fear of separation and fear of change still hovered in her heart. Braveblossom understood

that it was necessary.

But she was already so used to living together with this irrepressible, cheerful prankster.

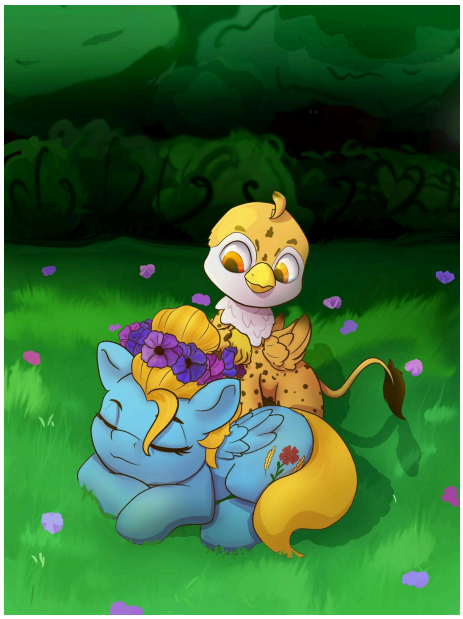
Waking up from his morning running around, putting him to bed, scolding, making sure he washed his paws and beak.

It will take time to get used to this.

The mare looked at the griffon one last time and quietly closing the door began to go down to the kitchen.

Still had to prepare the cream for tomorrow's cake.

Bonus Fanfic: From the Spot into the Ravine (by morozoff7734)



The midday sun generously bestowed its rays upon the ground below. Rare clouds sometimes tried to steal a little bit for themselves, but their presence made this May day even better, because after the fleeting coolness of the shade, finding yourself in the sun again is even more pleasant. It is not surprising that in such weather **Bloom** took **Beaky** for a walk.

The couple: a pegasus and a very young, small, and charming griffon went out to a glade outside their town. This place was not particularly popular due to its proximity to the forest, but this was exactly what the mare needed. Throwing her bangs the color of golden hay to the side, she tilted her head back, shielding her eyes from the sun. If the position of the luminary was to be believed, she had several free hours.

Rubbing her eyelids sticking together from fatigue, Bloom wearily sank onto the grass. Late-night gatherings with this little feathered beast were taking their toll, and a recent heavy lunch inexorably pulled her to the ground. The pegasus yawned widely and lingeringly, not even bothering to cover her mouth with a hoof. Why, if there is no one around anyway? Opening her eyes, she still saw Beaky looking into her mouth with interest.

“Shoo, curious muzzle,” she snorted at him, jokingly clicking her teeth right in front of his beak. The griffon recoiled with a laugh.

What a fidget, he also sat up late with her listening to fairy tales, but not a wink of sleep in his eyes.

“I’ll lie here for a bit, and you frolic. But don’t set a foot off the glade, do you understand me!”

“Y-yes,” the young griffon answered uncertainly, dancing in place.

His golden paws with black spots were ready to break into a run, his eyes were already squinting somewhere and his head followed them.

“Go play already, you little disaster,” Bloom smiled tiredly, put her head on her front legs, and sniffled quietly, instantly falling into a deep sleep.

Among the low grass and flowers, she could now be mistaken for a small bluish stone, as if a piece of the dawn sky decided to secretly run away to lie on the ground to its heart's content.

Beaky, meanwhile, did not waste any time. To begin with, he ran around the perimeter of the glade several times.

When everything began to rotate and sway funnily in his eyes, he began to comb the possessions entrusted to him in a spiral.

He didn't find anything interesting to play with, except for a couple of beetles, which he quickly gobbled up while Bloom wasn't looking.

Remembering that he had left the mare unattended, the griffon returned to her and admired her peaceful sleeping muzzle for several minutes.

When she sleeps and doesn't scold, she looks like a real princess, sweet and beautiful.

Not that she wasn't beautiful when awake, but a certain charm of cuteness and a kind of “princess-ness” was not at all characteristic of her.

These reflections gave Beaky an idea. He spent some time scouring the glade, collecting various flowers.

Then the griffon spent his entire daily supply of perseverance to weave a wreath out of them.

It turned out beautiful and varied, although doing it with claws turned out to be quite difficult.

When a familiar unicorn showed him weaving, it looked much simpler for him. But in the end, Beaky succeeded.

And he laid out the unused flowers in a circle around the sleeping mare, and even tore some into petals over her and scattered them here and there.

But the matter was not yet finished. The crown for the flower princess required a special decoration.

Beaky remembered how Bloom's friend, **Skein**, showed him books with pictures of flowers.

The griffon especially remembered one piercingly blue bud with symmetrical scarlet specks and veins: rare and unusual, growing only in the dark damp forest, away from beaten paths.

There was something magical about this flower. It would be the perfect finishing touch for the flower crown.

Standing at the edge of the forest, Beaky faced a dilemma. On the one hand, Bloom strictly ordered him not to leave the glade.

On the other hand, the griffon terribly wanted to please the mare with his gift.

He tried to weigh all the pros and cons, but it seemed too complicated and tedious to him.

Estimating that Bloom wouldn't scold him too much for his short absence, especially if he gave her a wreath, Beaky resolutely headed into the forest.

Imagination immediately ran wild, painting the world in fairy-tale tones. He was no longer an ordinary griffon named Beaky, oh no.

Now he is **Sir Beakyngton**, the terror of monsters and getter of treasures. Picking up a convenient branch from the ground, the griffon waved it a couple of times, testing it for strength.

His new sword was truly the pinnacle of blacksmithing and could undoubtedly strike down even a dragon.

Proudly lifting his beak and firmly gripping the weapon in his claws, **Sir Lord Beakcis** bravely set out on a campaign in search of a magic flower capable of awakening **Princess Bloomestia** from eternal sleep.

But then an obstacle stood in the way of the brave warrior. Insidious forest robbers blocked the path.

Covering themselves with green prickly leaf-shields, they swayed threateningly in the wind, ready to burn a negligent traveler at any wrong move.

But **Sir Lord Count Beakentius** was not one of the timid ones. He wasn't timid at all.

Bravely stepping forward, the griffon gripped his weapon more comfortably. A fierce duel began between the insidious green villains, one touch of which is capable of defeating the strongest heroes, and **Sir Lord Count Knight Beakrentius**, defender of law and order, savior of princesses, and raider of floral treasures.

The griffon jumped forward, striking blows and immediately bouncing back, dodging deadly

thorns with the agility of a cat.

Time after time he pounced, hit, and escaped from the counterattack.

Once he almost got hooked, the thorns passed dangerously close to his tail, but thanks to his natural instinct and huge combat experience, there were no casualties.

In a matter of minutes, the enemies were defeated. Chopped into cabbage, they lay lethargic on the ground, unable even to beg for mercy.

Sir Lord Count Knight Victor Beakvicus triumphantly jumped over the body of the destroyed enemy, proudly lifting his nose and suddenly, with a piercing screech, rolled down the cliff straight into the ravine, losing a title with each new revolution.

Into the dirty puddle at the bottom flopped just **Beaky**, he even lost the stick somewhere in the process.

All dirty, with tears in his eyes and resentment in his heart, he rose heavily to his feet.

He was no longer up for searching for flowers, nor for fighting nettles.

If only to return to the glade before Bloom woke up. Bristling his fur and fluffing his feathers, the griffon diligently shook himself off.

This didn't help him become much cleaner, but slightly cleared his conscience.

At first glance, nothing hurt, at the second too, even at the third nothing was found except wounded pride.

Only a small heart beat fast, in fear of Bloom's anger. But if he made her worry, it would be even worse.

Pulling himself together, Beaky climbed back up. Finding the way back wasn't difficult: when he fell, he left a quite noticeable furrow behind him.

Tenacious claws largely contributed to his successful path out of the ravine.

The griffon carefully stepped over the fallen nettle bushes, so as not to step on them with a paw, Celestia forbid.

And in a few minutes, he went out to the glade again. Fortunately, Bloom was still asleep.

Surrounded by flowers and with a wreath on her head, she attracted various kinds of butterflies, fluttering in a flock on her.

Beaky settled down nearby and began to wait, replaying in his mind all possible scenarios and

subsequent punishments.

Maybe she won’t even notice anything? Look at what beautiful flowers and be so grateful that she immediately forgives him?

The griffon decided to stick to the version that he didn't go anywhere until the end. He didn't have to wait long.

Bloom mumbled something through her sleep, her eyelids trembled, her ears twitched and she opened her eyes.

Rising to her feet, scaring away the butterflies, the mare sleepily examined the flowers around her, carefully pulled the wreath off her head, and twisted it uncomprehendingly in her hooves.

And then her gaze focused on Beaky. Sleepiness vanished as if by magic.

A storm of emotions swept across her muzzle, from horror to anger, then humble calmness and cold indignation came.

“Did you go anywhere from the glade?” she asked slowly.

Quietly and dryly, which is why it sounded much scarier than if she shouted and swore.

“N-no,” looking away, lied Beaky, shifting from foot to foot.

The dirt on his fur had dried in places and the brown crust began to crack.

“Honestly?”

“Y-yes!”

“And if I spank your bu... ahem!” Bloom, who almost snapped, pulled herself together and, taking a deep breath, and then a long exhale, continued coldly. “And really?”

“I wanted to find a special flower for you, and so I went into the forest and fell into a ravine,” Beaky hastily rattled off, “but don’t worry, everything is fine with me and I didn't hurt myself a bit, only I didn't find the flower for you. So please please please forgive me!”

“What am I to do with you, you walking disaster?” Bloom sighed tiredly.

Looking once again at the wreath, a little uneven, but made diligently and painstakingly, she smiled and placed it on her head.

“Well, it’s decided. As punishment for disobedience, I will thoroughly and mercilessly wash you. Come on, dirty one, the bath awaits you.”

“No-o-o, anything but that!” squeaked Beaky, running around the gloatingly grinning mare.

But she was inexorable.