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MY LITTLE PONY

"A Bird in the Hoof"

EP022

Outline by
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Outline: March 8, 2010
Notes Due: March 9, 2010

TEASER

Open on FLUTTERSHY in her home, finishing up healing an injured little (non-speaking) MOUSE. He has a tiny cast on his leg, and Fluttershy is checking him out of the hospital so to speak, using her nose to nudge him along in a teensy wheelchair towards his MOUSE FAMILY waiting for him on the other side of a mouse hole in the wall.

Fluttershy's pet rabbit ANGEL comes hopping in and holds up a stopwatch to remind Fluttershy she's late (ala the White Rabbit from Wonderland) for the big brunch with PRINCESS CELESTIA at the sweet shop, SUGAR CUBE CORNER. The Princess is here in Ponyville to spend some quality time with her prized student, TWILIGHT, and to get to know Twilight's friends better. Fluttershy had better get going or she's going to miss it!

ACT I

The Princess' royal GUARDS - two big PEGASUS CLYDESDALES in SHINING ARMOR - guard the entrance to the party. RAINBOW DASH tries to ask the guards what you have to do to get to be a guard but they don't say a word. They just stand there on alert like the famously stoic guards at Buckingham Palace. After razzing them for a beat, Rainbow loses interest and goes back inside. When Fluttershy arrives, the guards cross their wings like spears/flags to block the doorway. Twilight pops her head out from inside and tells the guards that it's okay; she's on the list.

As Twilight walks Fluttershy over to the table, it's clear that she is anxious that the party goes well. The Princess has met Twilight's friends before and read about them in her letters, but this is the first time she has spent any quality time with them.

Fluttershy takes her place at the table and sees that Twilight's worries are well founded. RARITY is totally overdressed for this casual get together. APPLEJACK is so worried about making a false move in her table manners that she has not touched anything on her plate. And PINKIE PIE is unusually hyper from eating so much of the sugary confections, even eating a cupcake right off the Princess' plate! ("You gonna finish that? ") Meanwhile, Cupcake and Carrot Cake are bustling around serving the guests, paying extra super special attention to the Princess. Every single sip the Princess takes, they refill her teacup. Sip, refill. Sip, refill. Despite all of this, Princess Celestia appears to be having a wonderful time.

The same cannot be said for Celestia's pet bird, PHOEBE. The scrawny dodo-like bird is sickly-looking with a patchy-feathered appearance. She seems entirely out of place in her GILDED CAGE, which rattles every few seconds as Phoebe let's out a comically over-the-top cough, gagging in a pathetic, funny, gross, silly way. The Princess keeps talking about how much she cares for all her subjects great and small - punctuated by her own pet's hacking cough! Fluttershy cannot take her eyes off of Phoebe, even when the Princess addresses her directly.

One of the armored guards comes in and whispers something to the Princess, who suddenly has to go: the MAYOR has requested to see her. The party breaks up when the guest of honor leaves. After everyone has left, Twilight leans on SPIKE with a sigh of relief. She doesn't know for sure how things went, but at least no big disasters happened. SWISH PAN TO: The bird's open empty cage!

ACT II

Fluttershy has taken the bird to her house to nurse it back to health, as a favor to the Princess who is obviously far too busy to care for it properly. She is sure Princess Celestia will appreciate the help. But everything Fluttershy tries actually ends up making the bird worse:

Fluttershy tucks Phoebe into bed, but as soon as the blanket covers the bird, she turns beet red and starts sweltering profusely! Fluttershy quickly uncovers her and gives her an icepack, but the bird turns blue and starts shivering uncontrollably! Phoebe has a thermometer in her mouth the whole time that keeps going up and down, as Fluttershy keeps trying to warm her up and cool her off, but just can't get it right.

Fluttershy tries to give Phoebe some medicine, hiding the PILL in a PILE OF BIRDSEED. Phoebe pecks away at the pile, eating all the birdseed... but leaving the one pill!

Fluttershy tries bringing in another bird as a fellow feathered friend to cheer Phoebe up. Fluttershy and the other bird sing a happy little call-and-response with Phoebe, ala Snow White with her bluebird. The other bird chirps it back to Fluttershy sweetly but when it's Phoebe's turn, she coughs and hacks in response. "Um, good try?"

Fluttershy tries to spoon feed Phoebe some homemade soup. But Phoebe keeps turning her head further and further in the same direction away from the spoon, until her neck corkscrews all the way around. Now it looks like Fluttershy has mangled the poor bird's neck!

The end of each bit is punctuated with a bunch of Phoebe's feathers falling off. In desperation, Fluttershy finally TAPES Phoebe's feathers back on! She thought it would be easy to nurse Phoebe back to health, but by the end of the act, she realizes it is impossible!

Twilight shows up at Fluttershy's door and is shocked to see Phoebe! Twilight understands that Fluttershy only had good intentions but they have to put the Princess' bird back quick, before anypony realizes it's missing. As Twilight opens the door for them to go, reveal the Princess' two ARMORED GUARDS standing there!

ACT III

The Guards explain that the Royal Pet is missing and were told they could find Twilight here. Twilight manages to cut their questioning short and send them away without them discovering Phoebe's presence. Having never ran afoul of the Princess herself; Twilight has no idea how Celestia might react if she discovers the truth. QUICK FANTASY SEQUENCE: Of what Twilight imagines might happen to Fluttershy: "She might banish you! Or throw you in a dungeon! Or banish you and then throw you in a dungeon in the place that she banishes you to!"

Twilight is worried about what will happen to Fluttershy; but Fluttershy is worried about what will happen to the bird. "You have to help me get Phoebe healthy before we can return her to the Princess. Look at her!" <COUGH>

Twilight is not a pushover parent like Fluttershy. Tough love, baby! When Fluttershy

hems and haws about how Phoebe won't stay in bed, Twilight says matter-of-factly, "Put her in a cage so she'll stay safe," and does so. When Fluttershy frets about how Phoebe won't take her medicine, Twilight just shovels it in despite the patient's protests. And when Fluttershy laments how Phoebe keeps pulling her own feathers off, Twilight puts one of those dog "lampshade" thingies around the bird's head. Unfortunately, Twilight's tough love approach backfires and makes Phoebe run away! Fluttershy and Twilight chase the bird all over Ponyville, barely avoiding being seen by the two ARMORED GUARDS who are searching for it - in a cutty, Scooby-Doo chase-scene shenanigans kind of way (with Benny Hill-esque background music). Until at last, Phoebe is perched atop the FOUNTAIN in the middle of the TOWN SQUARE in front of EVERYPONY, where she coughs, drops her last few feathers, melodramatically KEELS OVER motionless... then BURSTS INTO FLAMES! All the ponies' jaws drop in shock!

Princess Celestia arrives on the scene and sees the pile of ashes that used to be her pet bird. Fluttershy tries to come clean with the Princess: "It's all my fault." But Twilight wants to help her friend avoid the royal wrath she's imagined and steps in front of Fluttershy: "No, she didn't know any better. It's my fault." They take turns stepping in front of each other. PINKIE PIE, caught up in the moment, shouts: "It's my fault! ... Wait, what are we talking about?" Fluttershy thanks her good friend Twilight for trying to protect her and apologizes sincerely to the Princess: She's the one who took the Princess' pet, but she was only trying to help the poor bird, then she was going to bring it right back, honest. "And if you want to banish me and then throw me in a dungeon in the place that you banish me to, then that's what I deserve."

Celestia addresses the PILE OF ASHES that was Phoebe: "Oh, stop fooling around and scaring everypony." To their amazement, the pile of ashes stirs, then GLOWS with MAGIC, and out of the ashes rises a glorious, colorful PHOENIX! Celestia explains that the 'molting' Fluttershy and Twilight saw Phoebe go through is a normal part of a phoenix's existence.

Fluttershy learns she shouldn't have jumped to conclusions. She should have just *asked* the Princess what was up with her pet before taking matters into her own hooves.

Before Phoebe flies back into her gilded cage, the phoenix plucks one of her beautiful new FEATHERS and puts it behind Fluttershy's ear. A small gift in compensation for the laughs the bird had at Fluttershy's expense, and in sincere appreciation for her kindness.

THE END