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MY LITTLE PONY

"Fancy Meeting You Deer" (Revised)

EP TBD

Outline by
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TEASER

TWILIGHT, APPLEJACK, PINKIE PIE, RARITY and FLUTTERSHY look on as ZECORA tends to SPIKE as he lies in bed with a nasty cold. There's nothing more they can do to cure Spike until Rainbow Dash returns with a special medicinal root for dragons that only grows in faraway White Tail Wood. Spike sneezes... and out of his mouth, instead of fire, comes snowflakes. A few more sneezes in rapid succession, and it's literally snowing in the room! Pinkie Pie drops to the floor, and starts making snow angels in the snow that has collected on the floor. "Wheee! Come on, join me!" The other ponies decline, as they all agree that it's kinda gross.

Just then, RAINBOW DASH bursts into the room, full of excitement. She wants to tell them about this really cool thing she just saw in White Tail Wood, but Twilight interrupts: "Quick Rainbow Dash! Hand over the root for Spike." Rainbow Dash stops short in her tracks, jaw slackening: "Oh. Right. The root... uh, heh, heh..." She completely forgot.

ACT I

Twilight and the other ponies are upset at Rainbow Dash. How could something be "so cool" that it would make her completely forget why she went to White Tail Wood in the first place? Her friends disapproval causes Rainbow Dash to embellish her story: "I know I said 'cool', but it wasn't just cool, it was, um, uh... a super-cool monster!" The ponies gasp, and the emboldened Rainbow Dash paints a frightening image of the monster that supposedly made the errand slip her mind.

Some of the ponies believe the story, others are skeptical, but Applejack is convinced Rainbow Dash is out-and-out lying. Rainbow insists that she's not. Twilight recommends that a group of them go out to make certain that the root gets brought back this time. Fluttershy agrees to stay behind to help look after Spike. Spike immediately begins to melodramatically wheeze and gasp, saying that in his "frail" condition he may need someone else to stay, ... like Rarity maybe? Rarity rolls her eyes, but she doesn't much want to go traipsing through the woods anyway... she just got her hooves painted. Twilight, Applejack, Pinkie Pie and Rainbow Dash set out for White Tail Wood.

By the time the foursome arrives in White Tail Wood, it's days later and near dark. They'll have to wait another day to start their search for the lava beds where the Dragonroot plants thrive. Rainbow Dash catches flak from the other ponies for landing them in this fix. Just then a nearby campfire casts a large and frightening shadow on the tree canopy overhead... a shadow bearing striking resemblance to the monster Rainbow Dash described! The shadow shrinks down to pony-size as the very friendly SHAMBI steps out from the bushes to greet them.

The ponies notice something odd about Shambi right away... namely, that he's not a deer, but a pony around the same age as they are with face paint and two sticks tied to his head. When Shambi learns why they're here, he offers to help them find the root they seek and then invites the grateful ponies to his campfire for a snack while they wait for his friends to return. Never shy about being straightforward, Applejack asks Shambi about the sticks on to his head... but Shambi corrects Applejack. They're antlers, and he helpfully explains what antlers are, since obviously his guests must have never seen antlers before. Applejack asks about the string tying the sticks to Shambi's head. Cheerful Shambi looks puzzled: "Hmm, now that you mention it, I'm not sure. No one's ever pointed that out before..."

As Shambi leads them the short distance to the campfire, Rainbow Dash turns to the others: "See - this is the guy I was telling you about!" Applejack's expression suddenly darkens: "Wait - this is your "monster"??? So you were lying!" Rainbow counters that it wasn't lying, it was "embellishing". After all didn't Shambi's shadow resemble the monster she described, or has Applejack already forgotten that particular fact? Applejack grumbles that "embellishing" ain't nothin' but a frilly word for lying, and lying's never okay, not under any circumstances. Twilight asks them both to just let it go. They then see Pinkie Pie chatting Shambi up and taking him completely seriously as a deer. Twilight (sotto): "Stop encouraging him, Pinkie Pie. For goodness sake!"

Hearing rustling in the bushes, Shambi announces that his friends are coming. The ponies imagine that it must be a whole bunch of crazy ponies with sticks on their head, and are dumbfounded when real deer show up. These deer have face paint like Shambi, but most have feathers hanging from their antlers or ears as well. Shambi asks his best friend Jumper about the string, and he explains that it will disappear once he's a little older, and the other deer chime in to support this idea. Applejack starts getting riled. Out of earshot, she and Twilight wonder how can his friends lie to him like that. Why are they doing this to poor Shambi? What the heck is going on???

ACT II

As the ponies bed down for the night, Applejack thinks that someone should tell Shambi the truth about himself. Rainbow Dash counters that the "truth" would only crush poor Shambi's feelings, and what good would that be? Twilight agrees that it's a quandary, but believes they should probably just get the root as soon as they can and mind their own business.

The next morning the ponies rejoin Shambi, and Shambi tells Jumper he's going to help the ponies find the root. Jumper is surprised. Has he forgotten? The annual First Father Ritual will start later that day. It's where all the young deer have a chance to demonstrate their running, jumping, grace and agility skills to earn a coveted "first feather" to hang from their antlers. Shambi's competing for the first time this year, and he's got a good feeling that he's gonna nail it. Shambi's friends respond with over-enthusiastic support and, meanwhile, the ponies groan.

Shambi assures the 'other' deer that he can use his amazing grace and agility to be to the lava bed and back in no time flat! His nervous friends wonder if it's really necessary to go all the way to the lava beds. Pointing to a plant nearby, they ask: "Isn't that Dragonroot right there?" Shambi and ponies correct them: "No, that's alfalfa." The deer point to another plant that must be it, and Shambi and the ponies must correct them yet again. Shambi laughs at his friends, and then, with a sotto aside to the ponies ("Seriously, sometimes they can be so clueless."), he leads the ponies off in search of the root.

Shambi tries to make good time with lithe and graceful deer-like jumps and repeatedly falls flat on his face. No matter how often he stumbles, Shambi remains oblivious to the limitations of his stumpy and clunky pony body. Applejack starts to say something several times but is stymied by Rainbow Dash at every turn. Mercifully they soon arrive at the lava beds. Shambi pulls a Dragonroot from the ground, hands it over to Twilight, then starts back to Main Camp for the Feather Ceremony, where he'll be proving his deer skills to one and all! The ponies exchange worried looks.

They make it just as the First Feather Ceremony is about to begin. A large impressive stag

takes center stage – it's the CHIEF of the deer tribe. He speaks about the meaning of the First Feather Ceremony. It signifies a young deer growing into adulthood and finding their place among the elders, it's about demonstrating one's ability to make a meaningful contribution to one's community. As Shambi heads off to prepare, Applejack insists they should stay here and protect Shambi somehow from guaranteed humiliation ... like by waking him up to the truth... but Rainbow Dash and Pinkie Pie disagree. Shambi seems happy living this life – why should they ruin it for him? Twilight gets them all to agree that, for poor Shambi's sake, they should at least find some way, ANY way, to keep him from participating in this event.

It proves difficult for the ponies to distract Shambi from preparing for his upcoming turn in the ceremony. But they do convince him that he should at least let them thank him for helping them out. Each pony then takes a turn thanking him in the most elaborate, distracting and time consuming ways they can. Pinkie Pie even tries "thanking" him by getting him to stare at a swinging pocket watch and fall into a hypnotic state. But as soon as the Chief calls Shambi's name, he's off like a shot. Applejack and Twilight wonder if maybe this is the best thing for Shambi after all. Maybe failing in the First Feather ceremony will wake him up to the truth about himself. But when it's finally Shambi's turn, the ponies are shocked to discover that the whole thing is rigged to make sure Shambi succeeds!

In the River Jump, the river is dammed upstream briefly before Shambi goes. In the Stick Slalom Run, the sticks are spread further apart. On the Bush Hurdles, the bushes are fake and get lowered drastically for klutzy little Shambi. As Shambi gets cheered for each "success", Rainbow Dash and Pinkie Pie think it's sweet, but Applejack and Twilight can't believe their eyes – this is SO wrong! The Chief awards the elated Shambi the First Feather that he just "earned" (while the course is surreptitiously reset for the next day). The whole tribe leaves the obstacle course for the celebratory feast but the ponies stay behind. Applejack can't take the lies anymore. She's determined to blow the lid on this sham. But when she goes to tell Shambi, Rainbow Dash restrains her and the two begin tussling. Rainbow Dash insists it's wrong to ruin this for Shambi, but Applejack counters that she's not ruining anything. It's all a fake – Shambi didn't really earn any of this! Then, to the ponies' collective horror, they see that Shambi is standing nearby with his new feather. He overheard the whole thing.

ACT III

Shambi asks Applejack what's 'fake'. Applejack swallows hard and comes out with it: Shambi's not a deer and the course was rigged for him to succeed. Shambi reacts - of course he's a deer! He deserves his feather and he'll rerun the course to prove it. But running it in its now-restored condition, Shambi blows every single event. Finally, tripping over the fake bushes and landing smack on his head, Shambi sees two familiar, antler-like sticks on the ground as he rises to his feet. Reaching up to feel his now-antlerless head, Shambi is speechless. Just then Jumper and a couple of his other friends come looking for him. Forced to finally admit the truth, Shambi's friends insist it makes no difference. But knowing now that he's not a deer, Shambi feels he no longer belongs in White Tail Wood. He asks the ponies to take him to Ponyville, his true home. The ponies exchange woeful looks. The truth is finally out. Whoopie.

When they arrive in Ponyville, Twilight rushes ahead to get the root to Spike while the others hang back to keep poor Shambi company. Shambi's upset that he was never told he wasn't really a deer. Applejack throws Rainbow Dash a vindicated look. But then Pinkie Pie speculates as to all the reasons Shambi's friends may have kept up the deception: because

they love him, because they wanted him to feel like one of them, because they wanted him to feel included in every way and not feel different. Shambi sees Pinkie Pie's point, and then begins wondering if maybe it would've been best if he'd never found out the truth at all. Applejack's feeling of vindication suddenly fades. Then, reluctantly, she turns to face Rainbow Dash... but Rainbow Dash has disappeared.

When Pinkie Pie, Applejack and Shambi arrive at Spike's room there's a big commotion underway. The medicine isn't working. Spike says it tastes horrible, but they keep feeding him more and more of it in hopes of getting results. Shambi stops them and points out that it's not meant to be swallowed... it's meant to be rubbed on his chest. They do as he says and Spike's cold clears up instantly! Mopey Shambi turns to leave, and the ponies, seeing something, react with excitement, but he ignores them. Once outside, Shambi sees to his great surprise that Rainbow Dash has returned... with all his deer friends and the Chief of the tribe! Ever impulsive, Rainbow Dash went back to fetch them and found them already on their way to Ponyville. They want Shambi to come back.

But Shambi refuses to return. He's not a deer and he'll never ever earn any feathers. But the Chief says he's wrong... he already has one. By now the other ponies have caught up with Shambi and show him what they noticed on his behind: a feather cutie mark! Shambi's bewildered – what does this mean? The Chief asks Shambi if he remembers to point of the First Feather Ceremony. Shambi says he does: that it signifies a young deer finding his place and demonstrating his ability to make a contribution to his community. Twilight remarks that a cutie mark is a pony's magical way of doing the same thing... except this "feather" is one he has really and truly earned, through his knowledge of plants and their uses. Jumper reminds him how he's always stopped others in his tribe from eating distasteful or even poisonous plants. His tribe needs him.

Finally ready to embrace who he truly is, and seeing that his friends and tribe sincerely embrace it too, Shambi says goodbye to the ponies and returns with the deer to White Tail Wood. And, once they're gone, Applejack acknowledges to Rainbow Dash that maybe she wasn't completely wrong after all. Rainbow Dash acknowledges the same to Applejack, while adding "... and that's the truth."

Twilight, in her letter to the Princess, says that, yes, it's important to tell the truth. But sometimes things aren't quite so simple. The fact was that Shambi was a pony but the 'truth' was that he belonged with the deer. Where ever you find friendship and a sense of community is where you truly belong.

END.