

Final Dreams of a Filly

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Table of Contents:

Chapter 1	3
Chapter 2	5
Chapter 3	8
Chapter 4	14

Chapter 1

The moon was chillingly beautiful. The young filly watched it silently; a rare moment of reverence for her normally exuberant personality. A chill ran through her tiny frame and she pulled the thin material closer around her fledgling wings, trying to trap her frail body heat beneath the scarlet cape and emblem. A smile pulled at the corner of her mouth as her lavender eyes caught sight of the insignia. The symbol glittered in the moonlight, tendrils of frost having begun to collect on the surface of the cape. Winter was coming - and soon.

Her eyes fell away from the frost as she dismissed it. So what if it was cold? The filly nestled closer betwixt the wooden beams of her residence and closed her eyes tight in defiance. There was no time to worry about that now. Now it was time to sleep. Every filly knew the moon meant that, and even she didn't have the energy to fight its silent nocturne. "Goodnight, mom. Goodnight, dad. I love you..." she called out softly. The answer was the same every night. Silence; only broken by the creaking of the aged structure warping with the change of season. The eerie creaks of the empty room would have frightened most, but this was her clubhouse. Unknown to her two best friends, it had also been her home for several months now.

Scotaloo curled into herself and tried to will herself to sleep before the cold could set in and keep her awake. Fitful hours passed before she hazy lapse into unconsciousness took her trembling body, and with a final exhale of steam rising from her mouth she fell asleep.

Sunrise brought with it a new world. The tiny frost crystals had seemingly taken seed and overtaken the landscape. It was as if the world had been waiting too long for too little and suddenly allowed its need to flood the earth with a bone chilling cold. Dawn cascaded through the foliage surrounding the small structure, the gentle rays illuminating everything but the tiny huddled figure in the farthest corner of its shelter.

As early as it was, she would not expect anypony to be out looking for her. The gentle nudge that slowly brought her to consciousness came as a shock, and she started as her eyes snapped open and rose to meet the

gaze of the mare looming over her. A yelp broke forth from her as she tried to push herself to her feet and clamber back away from the stranger. "What the hay?! Who are you?!" She cried, eyes widening as the adult took a step closer. As the surprise wore off, her tone turned to annoyance as she took note the sun had not even barely risen yet through the clubhouse window. "What the hay lady, why'd you wake me up? The sun isn't even all the way up!"

Only then, taking back control of her situation did the filly take a good look at the stranger. The mare looked like an Alicorn, old and worn far past even what Celestia looked like. Her pelt had faded drastically through age and had a dull luster of muted grey to it. Her wings hung low at her sides now, the feathers thin and barren; only soft down clinging to them. Her mane shone no stars or celestial decadence, but draped around her like a white cowl, solemn and straight. What took Scootaloo aback the most was the horn. It had been snapped in two, with thin hairline cracks running through it. They all fell to a point just above her eyes; the saddest brown eyes that Scootaloo had ever seen, that had fixated down upon her.

Meeting those eyes caused a lump to rise in her throat, and she struggled to swallow it before wrenching her gaze away and casting a sidelong glance at the Alicorn. "W-who...who are you...and w-why'd you wake me up?" The mare stood silent for a few moments more before she closed her eyes and bowed her head, shaking it slowly. "Scootaloo...I'm so sorry...b-" "How'd you know my name?!" The mare winced at the outburst before stomping a hoof resolutely to silence the filly and continue. "I'm so sorry...sweetie...I didn't wake you. You never woke up this morning."

The tension in the air almost made her choke on the lump. Tears stung her eyes as she shook her head and took another step back. "You're lying." she whispered, her voice unintentionally harsh as she continued to back away. It was then her hoof hit something solid. She expected the sound of it meeting wood, but it only made a dull thud as it collided with the object. Slowly, she turned her head to see what it was. She felt ill as her heart fell deep into her stomach and she stared, transfixed at the tiny bundle that lie there. It was wrapped in her cape. Its visage was marred by the violet tendrils of its mane. It was her, and it wasn't breathing anymore.

Chapter 2

Scotaloo stared down at herself silently. Regret flooded her as thoroughly as the tears that slid down her face. "There was so much I was gonna do...I never found my special talent in life and earned my cutie mark...I never thought it would end like this. Applebloom, Sweetie Belle, and I were all going to do it together. This is a nightmare..." The thought quieted her. This was a nightmare and that was all that it could be. She rounded on the mare, eyes narrowed. "This is messed up, ya know that?! What gives you the right?! Why?!"

It had been countless centuries of the same question. The mare closed her eyes and thought for a moment, wondering how she still never quite had a good answer. After a moment her eyes opened and extended one of her wings as if to beckon the filly near. "I wish I had a better answer, but this isn't a nightmare, Scotaroo. You...you fell asleep and the temperature dropped so suddenly. There was nothing anypony could have done..." As she spoke she slowly came closer, the heartache in her eyes deepening as, as countless times before, the filly began to beg.

"NO!" she screeched, rearing and striking the mare with her front hooves. "No, please! Please, I'll be anything you want. I'll never break any of Rarity's form models, I'll never sneak cupcakes at Sugarcube Corner, I'll even go back to the orphanage...Please..." The momentum in her voice waned into sobs as she felt her front legs collide with the old mare's body. The mare didn't cry out in pain or try to defend herself. What she did was much worse, and Scotaroo broke into fresh sobs as the mare tucked her wing over her broken body and lowered her head to gently nuzzle her muzzle. "I'll do anything...please...I don't want to die..."

Quiet dominated the small room. The only sounds were that of Scotaroo, quietly crying into the coat of the mare. Occasionally the mare would softly shh or soothe her, but otherwise said nothing. The filly was right in that it was not fair. To have lived alone for so long and to perish alone without purpose to life was cruel. It was also why she was here.

It was a long time before Scotaroo found her voice again. Turning to look

at her body, she addressed the mare. "What happens now?" She turned her gaze up at the ancient Alicorn and tried to quell the tremor in her voice, "Am I going to hell? I never...I never found my special purpose...I never did anything with my life...The last thing I did..." She bit her lip and took a moment to collect herself again, fresh tears breaking. "I told Applebloom I was going to be first to find it and we got in an argument. That's the last thing I ever said to one of my best friends..."

"Scootaloo?"

The filly looked up at the mare, but it hadn't been she that had spoken. Her eyes widened as the sickening realization sunk in and she turned to face the door. Applebloom stood there and she could hear Sweetie Belle following not far behind. They had only just bounded in and hadn't spotted her yet, but the yellow filly persisted unaware of what had happened.

"Scootaloo, ya sleepy slowpoke - didja forget about the meetin' today?" Sweetie Belle squeezed in and shot Applebloom a reproaching look before looking around the room. It was still only just morning, but finally she found her friend in the corner. "There you are! Why're you still asleep? That's unusual for you, Scoot, usually you're the first one up!"

Applebloom rolled her eyes and smiled. "Guess Ah`m gonna be the first tah get mah cutie mark than, huh Scootaloo?" She tossed her scarlet mane and grinned wider and approached her still sleeping friend. "But seriously - yah gotta get up now Sc-..." Only once she got close did she go quiet.

That was enough to worry Sweetie Belle. Neither of her friends was ever this quiet normally. "Applebloom?" she queried, taking a step toward her. Her friend didn't say a word, but sank to her haunches, eyes still transfixed on Scootaloo. The beginnings of panic started to sneak in, but she forced herself to move to her friend's sleeping form and gently place a hoof on it. "Scootaloo...it's time to get up..." Ice met her touch. The velvety coat was now rigid and cold and her frame hard from the onset of rigor mortis.

"Scootaloo...this isn't funny...Scootaloo...please get up...wake up! Wake up! Please!" Her voice rose in volume and pitch as she began to shake her friend, screaming louder and louder to arouse deaf ears that could not hear her. Finally there were no words, just a wordless wail of horror and grief as she began to choke on her own tears.

Then pain. Pain erupted in her jaw and she reeled, stunned into silence.

Applebloom stood over her, tears steaming down her face as she fought to regulate her breathing. She looked up at her silently, but the question was almost audible in her face. Why? Applebloom took a deep breath before helping her to her feet and gently sitting her down. The emotions still ran too high for her to form words, but Applebloom had somehow found them.

"Stay here with Scootaloo. I'm gonna go get mah sister. Stay here...j-just in case...in case she..." No. She couldn't lie to her only remaining friend. She couldn't paint a pretty picture with Scootaloo's blood to make it all better. She took a step back and then turned and ran, yelling back, "Stay here!"

Sweetie didn't need to be told that now, not once or twice more. Turned back to look down at Scootaloo and lay down beside her, trying to warm her with the heat from her body. "H-hush now....q-q-quiet now...it's time...t-to lay your sleepy head..." she softly sang, before breaking into tears anew.

And all the while Scootaloo hid her face in the mare's chest, unable to stand as her body convulsed with sobs. Far off she could still hear Applebloom calling for help. She could still hear Sweetie Belle trying to wake her. Only then did she know they could not...for she could never wake up again.

Chapter 3

The funeral was a modest affair. The town gathered up a collection and the mortician was even kind enough to donate a simple black coffin for the sake of holding her. It almost didn't seem real as Scootaloo stared down into the open casket and examined the tiny bundle within. They had done a good job, she admitted. She still only looked asleep, a small smile permanently hovering on her face from her final dream. Scootaloo turned away and cast her gaze to the sky, a sigh causing her to shudder. The weather team hadn't been able to clear the skies. Why, she didn't know, but the day was somber in its muted gray sky that occasionally rumbled with the softest rumbles of thunder.

"It's time, Scootaloo...we should take our places." It was the mare who spoke, beckoning the filly away from the casket to stand beside it instead. She had positioned them to watch the approaching procession of friends and loved ones that heavily trod to the filly's final resting place. Upon seeing Applebloom and Sweetie Belle, accompanied by their sisters and their friends, Scootaloo turned to look up at the mare. "You never did answer me in the clubhouse. What happens to me now? Is this it?" The mare didn't speak for a moment, but instead gestured to the procession before explaining. "When a life is lost before its time, and while it's still innocent of crime, judgment cannot be passed. There was never enough time to decide who you would have grown up to be or the choices you would have made, and death doesn't believe in punishing the innocent." She lowered her gaze to meet the filly and smiled sadly. "Your life wasn't without purpose though. You lived and you touched ponies lives through simply being there."

Time did not stand to wait for the pair. As the mare spoke, ponies came and went. Each had their own words, but only a precious few being heard. As Applebloom approached the coffin, the mare paused in her explanation. Applejack stood beside her younger sister and gently pulled her close, doing her best to offer comfort that would never be enough to fill the hurt. The little filly spoke with a seriousness that Scootaloo had never before heard her friend take upon any matter before, even her own heart's desire in obtaining her cutie mark. "You were never supposed tah die, Scootaloo."

Ya were one of mah best friends, and I...you were like another sister tah me. We were gonna grow up together and find our special talent, an now I don't know if ah can without you. I miss you, and I loved you; so even if ah can't find mah special talent, I'll keep lookin fer yours. You were so special, and I hope, if ya can hear me, that ya know I admired ya. Ahm sorry about the argument, so please forgive me, cause I...I..." then the tears took her again and she was led away by her sister to piece back together a broken heart.

As Applebloom was led away from the coffin, Scootaloo felt her composure beginning to slip. She bit down hard on her lip and willed herself to keep what little she had together. The mare noticed the filly struggling to handle the scene and allowed her to compose herself again before continuing her explanation. "What happens now is this. Your death - much like life - is what you decide it is. It is your choice to make what happens now. Yours to decide what your heaven will be. But please..." her voice faltered as she lowered her head, as though weighted down by the sorrows of the world. "Once you choose...you can never go back. Your heaven can change, but you have to do it on your own. I can only help you the first time. So please...make your decision wisely."

It was by that time that Sweetie Belle and Rarity had approached. The young filly looked up with a lost sort of heartache, unsure of what to do. Rarity only stroked back her sister's mane and turned to reach into a saddlebag she had brought to the procession. From within, she pulled out a garment designed for a young mare. It was a long, flowing cape lined with the shimmering gold of Celestia's sun. The rest was comprised of a rich, heavy scarlet velvet. In the middle was a much more intricate design, three mares of all creeds joining in the center. The earth pony and the unicorn were mere silhouettes, but between them they held the magnificent wings of a Pegasus. Carefully, she draped it over the coffin and nodded to Sweetie Belle. Soft at first, the little filly began in low trembling tones, but as she closed her eyes and turned her head to the heavens her voice grew louder and louder as she sang.

"I have not wings to follow you, and I know not where you go.
I cannot fly to heaven far to ever let you know,
But your wings were made for angels, irreplaceable in their worth,
So goddesses have now taken...an angel...back from earth..."

The song dissolved in bitter tears, and as the former had - she was led away to recover in the company of her only surviving friend.

"I-it's not fair..." she choked, furious at herself for collapsing back into the grief of her own death again. She scrubbed at her eyes and cursed herself before taking a deep breath and forcing herself to calm back down. Even after the touching words, she felt at a loss. Did they not understand? "You were the best friends a girl could have...Sweetie Belle is more of an angel t-than I am...and Applebloom is just trying to be strong for her. It isn't fair..."

The crowd slowly dispersed as the hours ticked by. Scootaloo watched as many of the adults she had known spoke in low soft tones of their regret and sorrow. She watched as some lay down gifts and letters to a filly that most of them had never known. Was it guilt that drove them to do this? She didn't know. She only watched as familiar and unfamiliar alike gathered to say their goodbyes, and then she was all alone.

Scootaloo could feel a dull ache in her chest as she sat there, waiting. Out of many faces - there had been one missing. "I-I guess I wasn't...I wasn't really important to her." she began, looking up at the mare who moved to sit beside her, offering only what she had to give, if only an ear to listen. Scootaloo continued as she looked up at the sky. "I wanted to grow up to be just like her. She was the most amazing flyer in all of Equestria...she could break the sound barrier. She could move the world if she wanted to...but...she didn't..."

A creak of protest interrupted her. The origin came from a rusted hinge at the funeral's gate, and two figures seemed to move at the edge of the haze that had begun to enshroud the grave site. They seemed to speak to each other for a few minutes. One turned away only to be shoved by the other, gently but firm in its resolution. As one ushered her companion nearer, their voices began to materialize. "I-I c-can't...oh Celestia...please, I can't d-do this..." "Yes you can...I know this is hard, and it's going to be hard for a little while longer, but if you don't do this than you'll never get another chance. Please..." The silhouettes began to become clearer outlines, and Scootaloo's eyes widened as, finally, they stepped into visibility and approached the coffin.

"H-Hey kiddo...I-it...it's me. I just...Oh Scootaloo, I'm so sorry!" the mare

choked, a cry of anguish ripping itself from her heaving chest. Tears blinded her as she bowed her head and rest it against the coffin. "I'm so sorry! I-If...If I had known...I should have...I'm so stupid, Scoots. I should have seen w-what was going on. You w-were the first filly to believe in me. You looked up to me. You d-depended on me and I was so blind...It should have been me!" She cried, beating the earth below her with her front hoof. "I-it shoulda been me...I'm so sorry...I loved you, Scootaloo...and I n-never t-told you that...it didn't have to be this way...and it's my fault. I'm sorry...please forgive me...Scootaloo..."

It was then Fluttershy tucked her wing around her friend and held her close. It was disturbing in its way. Scootaloo could find no words for what she saw before her. The strongest flier in Equestria now bowed before her, broken and inconsolable by even her closest friend. She had never seen Rainbow cry before. She had never even known if the confident mare was capable of allowing herself that relief; that didn't matter to her anymore. Scootaloo had mattered. Now it was too late.

Yet, at the same time, Scootaloo couldn't bring herself to anger. She had been angry at times, yes. Why had no one ever looked for her? Why had her parents failed to take care of her? Why had Rainbow never once asked if everything was ok with her home life - or known there had never been a home for her to go back to? In life those things had made her angry. Now they only made a deep sigh well within her as she wished she could tell Rainbow her true feelings.

She had never blamed any of them for what had happened and she never would. They never needed to ask for forgiveness - because they were never blamed...but how could they know? How could they hear a voice come from a mouth that would never move again?

Fluttershy did her best to console Rainbow for the time that passed so slowly. Finally, after a moment in eternity that lasted what seemed forever, Rainbow got up. The mare silently pulled out something she had tucked beneath her wings, placing it on the coffin and whispering a final, "Goodbye..." before turning to leave with Fluttershy at her side.

Once they had finally gone, Scootaloo brought herself to look at it. It wasn't a second longer before she couldn't look at it anymore and turned away.

The crown of Equestria's Best Young Flyer had been placed over the cape Rarity had left behind.

It had been Rainbow's pride and joy. It had been her happiness and inspiration. Now, it was only a memory they would never share, and a broken dream. She would never get to see her fly - so there was no reason to wait for the next best flyer, her flyer, that had never gotten to soar. As they reached the gate to the funeral, Rainbow stopped one last time to cast a glance back at what could have been. She couldn't see Scootaloo staring back at her, nor could she see anything more through the tears that blinded her.

Now truly alone, the air was silent. The filly and the mare sat together there for a long time, the filly staring off into a nothingness that stretched endlessly before her. There were endless possibilities now to fill the void of all that she would never grow up to realize. The destination of heaven now loomed to replace the journey of life to reach it. There was no hurry to get there. She had all the time in the world now. The mare knew this just as well as she did, and did not move to disturb the filly's thoughts.

Days passed in the course of those thoughts, and Scootaloo uttered not a word. She sat there, perfectly still, staring sadly into forever that merely stared back. Tears would occasionally brim and flow down her features, but even those waned and ended as time passed. Finally, on the first morning of winter, she spoke.

"I've decided." the words came from absolute silence. The mare started at the sudden resolution in such a young filly's voice, but listened to hear what she had deemed worthy of heaven. Over thousands of years she had heard and seen many different heavens. Sometimes, the heaven would be of one who chose to become a god and rule forever in their own domain. Sometimes, the heaven would be a fantasy they had never gotten to fulfill. Then, sometimes, it would simply be to never want or need for anything again and to simply join their loved ones when their time came; living in paradise for all eternity. Scootaloo continued, pushing herself up and bracing for whatever was going to come next. "I know what I want, so now what?"

While the mare found it odd she did not simply speak it and let it be, she nodded and turned to stare into forever once more. "Will it to be, but be

sure...there isn't any going back after this. Do you understand?"

Scotaloo only nodded and closed her eyes. This was her heaven. This was her final wish.

Chapter 4

The world felt like it had exploded around her. Suddenly, needles of ice punctured her lungs. The metallic taste of blood tinged her lips and for some reason she was burning alive. In the distance she could hear sirens wailing and terse, anxious voices barking out orders and choppy directions. None of them made any sense and she was being eaten from the inside out with fear. Scootaloo struggled to even remember what had happened that had led to this, but her thoughts were sluggish and she couldn't seem to collect them.

Only once the world came to a shuddering halt did she realize that she was in an ambulance. Before she could invest in the thought, she felt herself slip from consciousness and she was plunged into complete darkness. It didn't last long - or it didn't seem to. What felt like seconds later she opened her eyes and tried to sit up with a start. Her entire body was convulsing and trembling, but she could feel her heartbeat raging away within her frail chest.

A strong set of hooves pushed her gently back down, and as she tossed her head wildly to see who was confining her, the will to fight disappeared. "R-rainbow...d-d-dash..." she managed, her teeth clattering so hard she quickly gave up on attempting more than that. The mare looked down at her with tears in her eyes, but was smiling despite being just as scared as the filly. "Calm down kiddo, take it easy for me...that's right, that's my girl..."

A nurse entered the room, followed by other familiar faces. "Scootaloo!" "Oh Scoot! Are you ok?!" Both of them were pulled away by their older sisters as the rest of the visitors filed in slowly. "Applebloom, she's gotta rest now. Yer friend had a pretty close call..." For once, Rarity agreed, pulling Sweetie Belle close to her. "I should say so. Why did you girls never tell us she had been living in that tiny little clubhouse?" Both of the filly's lowered their heads, guilt surging within their voices. "We never knew..." "Ah...ah never asked..."

As the nurse administered the vital warmth the young Pegasus needed, the

trembling began to subside. Slowly she found her voice and used it now to say the hardest thing she had ever brought herself to. "It wasn't their fault. I-it's mine...I was ashamed. I was scared of being taken back to the orphanage if anypony knew...so I...I lied to everypony. I was scared of saying goodbye..."

The room went quiet as it sunk in. She could see on each of their faces that they could not bring themselves to simply accept that answer. "I should have known." "I should have done something." Although unspoken, Scootaloo could see it in their faces. Only one of them spoke aloud, but it was not what she had expected to hear. "I'm leaving. This is something I shoulda done a long time ago."

Her eyes widened as she turned to face the voice of her mentor. "R-rainbow Dash, no, please!" The sudden distress caused her breathing to hitch, and she was taken by a fit of coughing. Without being able to say another word, she could only watch as the pony she looked up to the most got up and left the room.

The action had taken even her friends aback, and Fluttershy rushed after her to see what was the meaning of the outburst. The others merely talked amongst themselves, frightened of further upsetting the delicate health of the filly. They took it gradually outside, leaving Scootaloo alone with the nurse. Even her closest friends had been dragged away to leave her. This had to be a nightmare.

Nurse Redheart frowned, her eyes filled with a quiet sympathy. She tried to lift her patient's spirits as she continued to work on gradually reintroducing warmth back into her tiny body. "I'm sure there's just a misunderstanding, dear. Your friends are just outside discussing important things right now - but I'm sure they'll be back to visit once you're stable." The word caused Scootaloo to break from her sad reverie and realize that her body still felt as though it was overly warm. "W-what happened?" Nurse Redheart stopped and considered whether it was a wise idea telling the filly of how close a call she had had. Delicately, she tried to make it so she would understand.

"Sweetheart, they couldn't wake you up. After your friends went home, I think one of them got worried and said something to their sister about not having seen you outside of that little clubhouse for some time. It was enough to call a search party, and about an hour ago - Rainbow Dash found you curled up on the floor. She couldn't wake you, so she flew for help. If she hadn't found you - you wouldn't be here right now." She then moved close and tucked in the thick blanket close around the tiny Pegasus's wings. "They call it hypothermia. The temperature dropped so suddenly, and you were only wrapped in a thin blanket. You got too cold too quickly and it's very dangerous. I can honestly say that I'm grateful that you're alive and awake to be here right now."

Scootaloo said nothing, but rolled over. It was so much to take in. It was so much to handle and she was so exhausted. The nurse didn't disturb her anymore with the rest of the details, but the mare did lean down to gently kiss the top of her head. "Get some sleep...goodnight, Scootaloo." The nurse walked to the door and gave one look back before turning off the lights and shutting it quietly, leaving the little filly to fall into fitful slumber.

Morning brought with it a new world. Scootaloo slowly opened her eyes and took a deep breath, grateful her lungs had stopped burning. The room came into focus gradually and she found herself staring at something foreign. Rainbow Dash had come in sometime during the night and fallen asleep. The mare was curled up on a small sofa in the corner of the room, surrounded by flowers and gifts her friends had asked her to bring. The morning light caused her to stir, and a soft groan drifted from her as she opened her wings and stretched. It was then she noticed Scootaloo watching, and she moved to the bedside. "Good morning."

Scotaloo lowered her gaze and braced herself for the lecture she was sure was coming. Rainbow Dash had been woken up in the middle of the night to go look for her in the cold. She had had to deal with her stupidity at not knowing better, for not being more careful. She could hear her fears as loudly as if they had already been spoken, and dreaded the stark reality she had woken up to. The world was about to change.

The words never came though. Rainbow didn't launch into a long winded lecture, or start yelling at the filly. She did not scream at her at how stupid and useless she had been, nor how the unloved should be shut away. Instead, a gentle hoof took her own and Rainbow spoke quietly. "I'm sorry...about last night. I was angry at myself. I've done a lot of stupid things. I've made a lot of mistakes. I'm going to try to start fixing them though, starting right now. Scootaloo," she gently took the filly's chin and made her look up at her. Rainbow smiled and took a deep breath before finishing what she had begun. "How would you feel...about...about moving in with me? About me adopting you? Last night made me think about a lot of things long and hard. I was so scared of losing you, we all were. So if you want to...if you can forgive me for being so slow, you never have to be alone again. You can come home."

It took a few seconds before it sank in, but the filly answered without words. Tears brimmed, hot and unbidden with joy as a relieved sob broke from her and she hugged Rainbow as tightly as she could. The mare didn't push her away. She would never push her away, and she would never wake up alone. "This is the beginning of the rest of your life, kiddo. I promise to make it an adventure as long as I can."

Through the tears, she opened her eyes. She could see Applebloom and Sweetie Belle standing there, both of them just as overwhelmed as she was with emotion. Behind them their sisters and the other mares stood, all relieved and thankful that the nightmare had ended. All of them were there, and for a moment someone she didn't recognize. It had been an old gray mare passing by with a smile on her face. She was there and gone, leaving the filly to the happy moment.

Later that day, the adoption papers were signed and officiated. Scootaloo was released from the hospital a few days later. As she walked out with her new guardian by her side, an old gray mare watched from the hospital window. Sad brown eyes closed, and a tear slid down her cheek to meet

her smile. The filly would never again see her, but she would remember her. She would be the one who chose all the pains and sorrows of life so that every moment of happiness and joy was her own little piece of heaven that she would never have to wake up from again.