

Aquilla climbed out of his nest and began doing some standard stretches with his body and wings, after this he checked his calendar and saw that it was the day he had organised with his farrier to get new shoes and not a day to late, even he agreed that it was time for replacements, as he paced around getting ready the rusted, chipped and loose steel shoes made clanging noises against the wooden flooring.

"Big day today, can't wait to see Steelclaw again, love talking to her" the hippogriff muttered to himself as he eyed himself in the full body mirror his wardrobe had, the aquamarine griff moved closer to it and began to pick the crusts from his eyes with his yellow talons, careful not to poke his eyes, after that it was time to preen his feathers that were frayed from a night of tossing and turning, during this the stallion noted that his beak seemed to have dulled so went into the bathroom.

There he knelt down under the sink, grabbed a small box, opened it revealing the bowie knife inside, took it and proceeded to sharpen his beak with it, after finishing he cleans up the shavings and gets back to getting ready.

"Wonder how the smithy is doing? Steel said she had a huge bulk order from the Army, must've paid good plus the honor of doing such a thing must have caused an increase of customers" The griff idly thought of as he secured his saddlebags and filled them with some money, a pack of tissues, his keys, and some books to keep him entertained, ready to go he did a quick slash of the scratching post in his room shredding yet another picture of Princess Twilight Sparkle, to let off some energy "Princess of friendship huh? We'll see how much friendship will help you when i get my claws on you" the eagle pony whispered below his breath with malice.

Now out of the door, which Aquilla locked, he didn't care if his nana left him a house in a good area, he wasn't taking any chances, he trotted through the neighbourhood since all the homes were built into trees it was like a leisurely stroll through the woods, but instead of the threats of timberwolves manticores, or any other threat of the forests, the turquoise griff had to avoid gossiping middle-aged mares which to be honest are possibly worse, given their blatantly false happiness and their constant snooping of others for gossip, the griff thought on.

Perhaps a bit too deeply as before he knew it he had collided with a group of guards in marching formation with the impersonal shouts of "MAKE WAY" from the groups leader ringing in his ears

"Sorry 'bout that guys keep up the good work!" the griff uttered from the ground and as he got back into his legs, hoping the apology was recognised by the unfazed guards, as soon as he got his bearings again he sped up his trot not wanting to be there as the same gossiping mares began chatting amongst themselves about what had just happened.

"Damn vultures that little thing is gonna be all they talk about for weeks don't know wether to be annoyed at them or feel bad over how they clearly don't have anything else going on" the griff

ranted to himself mentally as he trotted into town slowing his trot to a walk as to avoid further collisions in the dense city centre.

Not long after getting to the city centre he found Steelclaws Smithy and Farrier shop, entering he spoke to the receptionist who gave him a slip of paper with a number on it and told him to wait, pointing him to the soft mats in the corner, understanding this he went to the mats and took out of book from his bags one about a warrior from a faraway land who had to set aside his proud honorable code of combat to beat back an invading army, over the course of his reading he heard many numbers being announced to tell griffs to go and see Steelclaw though not acknowledging them, being so deep into his book what broke him from his focus was a tap on the withers from the receptionist from before.

“Um Sir? Your number has been called. I've tried to get your attention for a few minutes” he said with a gentle voice.

“Has it? Sorry i wasn't paying attention, really loving this book. Thank you for going out of your way to remind me” Aquilla said, trotting to see Steelclaw.

The room smelt of heat, even with a wide open window letting air in the air inside was thick and oppressive, like a physical force, on the wall hung tools, some documents, some pairs of horseshoes Steelclaw always used to help measure hoof sizes and in the center of the room laid the forge with Steelclaw working at it, her ruby feathers dampened with sweat and swinging a hammer with her muscled foreleg, he couldn't deny it was an attractive sight even from a young age he had a slight affection for her admiring her strength and might, things he found very attractive in a mare, but he stopped letting his mind wander and spoke up.

“Hello Steel I'm ready to see you now” the stallion blurted out nervously, despite loving conversations he was never the best at starting them.

“Ah Aquilla!” Steelclaw exclaimed not noticing him, while so deep in her work “So you are lay there and I'll get my tools” as she said that she pointed to a mat in the corner like the ones in the waiting room.

“Okay” Aquilla responded while walking to the mat and laying down on it in such a way as to expose his back legs and not long after laying down Steel was there and sat on her haunches and was taking some tools out of a metal box.

“Right then let's see how your hooves have been since i last saw you” Steel said with a warm kindness, she grabbed ahold of Aquillas right hind leg by the fetlock and begun to scrape away the clumps of dirt with the scraper, a task made somewhat awkward by Aquillas twitching and wincing from the scraping.

Steelclaw however didn't mind she had been used to this and much more, even from aquilla, she remembered when he first came in with his grandmother about a month or two after the

storm kings death, and it took minutes before he could tolerate the scraper, much less everything else but as the visits became routine his tolerance grew.

"You've done an alright job in keeping them clean, there wasn't much I had to scrape" Steelclaw said with a professional tone.

"Clean hooves, Clean life as you always say" Aquilla said warmly with a smile.

"Yep, now time to get your shoes off" Steelclaw responded as she took out a pair of tongs, a shoehorn and a hoof file.

As she prepared to remove the shoes she saw how rusted, damaged and loose they were and exclaimed "By Novo!" with utter shock "I know it's been over two months since you last visited but these are horrifying, Explain yourself!" she spat.

Aquilla who was reeling from the shock of her going from friendly to shocked to angry so quickly he stammered in panic "Uh i ju- just never g- got round to b- booking you cos of how horrible I've been feeling" All the while he hid his head in his wings his breath hitched and raggedy.

Steelclaws furrowed brow and raised plumage of anger immediately melted into concern when she saw how the stallion had reacted, noticing tears falling in between the gaps of his wings.

"Hey Aquilla it's alright i didn't mean to get angry at you" she quickly assured, all the while taking in his words and remembering that its been a while since she had saw him, especially the colts grandmother, she chose not to bring this up however.

Aquilla looked up and folded back his wings revealing his eyes reddened and flooded with tears as his breathing became more stable he whispered "Really?"

"Really" She parroted with concern, "i just got really worried and scared for you because letting your shoes get to this can be really dangerous, shoes splitting while still nailed in, nails breaking, rust causing frogs to become infected and that's just 3 dangers" she lectured with authority while still attempting to be gentle with him, "I understand how your feeling that you might feel like it doesn't matter or how you don't deserve it but please don't think that way, hoof care is essential, everyone deserves it and never think you don't deserve anything your better than that" she explained warmly she had considered going further but decided against that not wanting to make Aquilla anymore upset by mistake.

"Alright then I'll take all of that to heart" Aquilla mumbled softly, his throat hurt from all the sobbing, he wiped the tears from his eyes though they remained reddened from the crying, getting back into position he said with a weak smile "best get back to the task".

“Right” Steelclaw said with renewed vigor as she picks up where she left off with removing the shoes, with both the tongs and the shoehorn she was able to remove both of them without too much bother, however the nails were quite a challenge to pull out.

With the old shoes now taken off, Steelclaw begins to file at Aquilla's hooves, shaving away any unwanted growth, then shining them so they'd be nice and shiny.

“Alrighty got those nasty old shoes taken off and have gotten your hooves all nice and clean now it's time for the shoin’” Steelclaw said as she walked to her forge and pulled out a pair of shining steel shoes “Did i ever tell you that first time i ever shod a griff i accidentally nailed them on backwards?” she joked trying to make Aquilla laugh and feel better.

“No you didn't” Aquilla replied with an expression Steelclaw couldn't tell was from a smile of amusement or from anxiety, nevertheless she carried on with her work lining up the first shoe and hammering in the first nail, which later was followed by more nails, then the other shoe before finally the shoin’ was done.

“Well that's that” Steelclaw said with the pride of a job well done, she reached out one of her front legs to help Aquilla up “let's see how they fit”

As Aquilla got up and began walking around the room he noticed how much better these shoes were compared to his old ones, they stayed perfectly attached at all times and they made a nice noise as he walked “I love them Steel, you really are something” Aquilla praised his voice laden with gratitude.

“No worries Aquilla just promise me please that no matter what happens and however you may feel, never forget to take proper care of yourself” Steelclaw pleaded with the stallion.

“Don't worry i will, I'll try at the very least” Aquilla assured her, he reached into his saddlebag and pulled out a bag of money “here's the payment” he said as he took 35 Bits from the bag, before putting it back into his bag.

“Thank you” she replied as she put the money away before Aquilla left tho she called out to him to ask him something she had wanted to ask for a while now.

“Aquilla?” Steelclaw readied herself “How's your....” the ruby mare felt herself seize up at the thought about bringing that up so desperately she changed her word “School doing?” she inquired.

“Oh school?” the turquoise griff responded as he was in the door frame “Its going pretty good actually, just finished level two of my course and will start level 3 after summer break, Why do you ask?” the griff inquired back

"No reason" Steel mumbled meekly hiding behind the forelock of her orange mane, the only part of it not tied back for safety reasons.

"Okay then?" The griff said, sort of confused on why she'd ask "Thanks for caring though" he said cheerfully as he walked out the room and later the building.

As soon as he got out of the building he felt empty inside while he forgave her and understood why she got angry at him it still felt bad in addition to reminding him of... "ughh feel terrible" the griff thought to himself, as his stomach rumbled "That's it" the griff stated, however he felt too down to bother with hunting anything so just went to a nearby restaurant and ordered some salmon and rice, once he was finished he quickly paid the waiter and left, even with a full belly however he still felt empty.

As the griff trotted back to his home, he overheard one of the many arguments between the middle aged gossip mares and their husbands, he had always found amusement in watching such fragile and loveless marriages slowly crash and burn, even these couldn't cheer him up today, "This just hasn't been my day" the griff brooded to himself while he trotted home, with his head hung low "Still these new shoes are really good, Steel always delivers" the griff thought desperately trying to find a good part about today.

He finally reached his home, without missing a beat he went inside, locked the door, somberly looked at his Twilight Sparkle scratching post before deciding that not even that could make him feel better, before going to his nest and going to bed, despite it being only 5 in the afternoon according to the clock in his room.

"Sleep schedules are for losers anyway" the griff mumbles in his nest as his eyelids became heavy.