

A Pony Named Magenta.

A white unicorn walked carefully down the road. The same rehearsed smile upon his lips. His predestine white coat perfect, almost too perfect, and his meticulously groomed light creamy blue mane. He was supposed to be a fashionista and purveyor of all things fancy and fine; his cutie mark of a generic suit and tie said as much, but he knew, just knew what his color scheme really looked like... a toothpaste bottle. It was something that had given him mockery, all his life, or at least his life in this form.

Slick Suit couldn't change it though. Changing it would throw him off the hunt. A gentlestallion's agreement. He would blow his cover to the exactly zero (sometimes one) ponies that resided in this village. So he kept appearances. He would have feigned outrage and disgust when some foal called him toothpaste head, itself feigned mockery, and they all would keep this game of pretend to themselves even if it was by this point... what did ponies call it, kayfabe? He supposed that was right, but the word felt inadequate when there was no one who wasn't in on this performance.

Perhaps mass method acting would be better metaphor. After all, some of those lines got blurry between the character and the actor themselves. He was often actually sort of offended at being called toothpaste head; he was less offended when he was passed up a photoshoot by some fake magazine that didn't exist and wouldn't be a ruse reused again by whatever traveling changeling came by.

Slick Suit rounded the corner, the house was in view, a simple cottage on the outskirts of town. He smiled to himself, but tried to keep up his normal smug smirk. Can't let anypony know what he was doing. Not yet.

He had seen her a few days ago. She had been there for six months, and seemed very clumsy and slightly off. Thus he had dismissed her as a poorly socialized younger changeling. Such a thing was becoming dreadfully more common now that ponykind was mostly gone. Villages such as this acted as a museum and training ground for the young to at least get some idea on how to actually behave, still, this mare stuck out so awkwardly she was something of an outcast.

Her name was Magenta and she was a flower gardener. Her mane and coat were both dreadfully magenta and he considered her, by pony standards, kind of frumpy. And that was a judgment by both his fake persona and something he actually felt deeply. This idiot was a clear amateur and beneath the standards of the game. *A dithering dotard of disastrous diligence and dreadful demeanor*, he had said to her smugly and in passing. He wasn't sure she heard it fully, and wasn't sure the sentence made full sense in meaning, but that was how rich smug ponies sometimes talked and he had been quite proud of the insult.

And he did mean it, after all, if he didn't know any better, he would have thought she was a pony pretending to be a changeling pretending to be a pony.

And the thought occurred to him. Maybe she was.

And the temptation to check led to action.

And now, with a knock upon her door on this fine evening, he was here.

A long pause. He heard someone getting up and moving. That was not what caught his attention. He sensed it, the slightest whiff of pony magic. Excitement arose inside him. Hunger to be fully satisfied. He had been right! Probably. *Don't blow it yet, you never know what can be waiting beyond the door.*

The door opened, Magenta face before him, she looked, well, as frumpy and dull as ever. Her Magenta fur coat looking ever so slightly disheveled and unkept. Her Magenta... or was it fuchsia(?) mane poofy and curly, but partly unkept, and she looked at him with those slightly baggy and non uncomprehending eyes.

"May I come in?" Slick Suit said with a smile.

"What do you want?" She sounded slightly annoyed and confused.

"To apologize."

"For what?"

Slick Suit blinked momentarily in confusion. "You know, for my insult towards you a few days ago? Or was it weeks? No matter, may I come inside and we can discuss further?"

"I don't recall you ever insulting me." Slick Suit's ego was slightly hurt at this. Though he paid more attention to a slight change in demeanor. Suspicion? "I would rather not let someone inside right now, I just got a rambunctious toddler to sleep. Could we meet at the cafe in the morning or something?"

"I don't recall you having a foal." Slick Suit said. He cast a wary gaze around the area, and saw nopony around, though knew that meant little in a village of shapeshifters. He'd have to ask fast. "What's the little tot's name?"

"Rosemary," Magenta says in a more deadpan tone. "Can you please leave?"

"I'm sorry, miss Magenta, I am afraid I cannot." Slick Suit forced his way through the door. Magenta had a fearful look cross her features and she backed away in fear. Uttering a muttered 'Please-' but the rest he didn't understand. He closed the door behind her, somewhat hopeful that interaction had been subtle enough to not draw attention.

"Now, Magenta my sweet. I think you know why I am her-" Suddenly Slick Suit found himself hit with a green blast of familiar changeling magic and knocked off his legs.

"Yeah, you dug your nose a little too deep into somewhere you shouldn't have." Magenta looked completely opposite from seconds before, now with a face that was somewhere between smug and sadistic and a black changeling horn now protruding from her otherwise unchanged form.

"But... I could've sworn. My apologizes." Slick Suit said as he found his hooves suddenly restricted by green magic, which held him awkwardly.

"Drop the act, and tell me why are you here?" Magenta eyed him with a certain malicious amusement. Though there was something else behind her gaze: calculation.

“Excuse me? You should know. I sense a pony, just barely. I thought it was you using a potion or some spell to conceal yourself!” He eyes the place frantically. “I can STILL sense a pony, stronger. My sense for such things is one of the best. So I know there must be somepony unless you have some *really* good ward or something.”

“You’re correct. There is a pony here.” Magenta leans down to meet his gaze, smiling. “And figuring that out may have cost you your life.”

Slick Suit’s pristine white coat actually grows pale. He wasn’t pretending. It was subconscious adjustment to actual fear. “You’re working with them?!”

Magenta laughed. “You could say that.” She idly looks around, her magic tugging at the curtains to ensure that they were closed. “At least sort of. Though not in the way you think.”

Slick Suit suddenly found himself levitating. “Where are you taking me?” He tried to wiggle free or charge his own magic but couldn’t. “What have you done to me?” Slick Suit knew of counterspells and such things that could restrict a changeling magically, and he certainly knew that an average young drone would not know anything but basic shapeshifting and very basic telekinesis more intended to emulate a unicorn than use in personal daily lives. Whomever she was, she was an elite or rough of very high talents and Slick Suit decided that, rather than pathetically struggle, he’d try his best to gather information and be corporative for the moment. Desperately holding on to **may** of ‘may cost your life’ in her threat a few moments ago.

“Basement and I am not telling you anything on the stun spell I cast on you.” Magenta said as she opened a door on the side of the interior hallway. Slick Suit found himself in a dark, dimly lit stairway, he could see a faint green glow, but his head could see much other than the barely illuminated ceiling.

He was swung around and laid upon a couch, and finally he saw a pony in a familiar slimy green cocoon. The pony herself was familiar as well, for it was Magenta, the same pony that had captured him right now. This was the only source of light in the otherwise dimly lit basement. Some faded, pinkish purple hue being cast from the green luminance around her. He briefly had mild amusement at the thought of the pony known as Magenta having been some sort of narcissist and her own love for herself having been some sort of jackpot of strange self love for his captor, but he pushed it aside. He was truly confused and scared for his life after all, and had to focus.

“Well, I must say I am impressed you managed to hide a pony like this in here, but, I must ask why?” Slick Suit dared to ask after a moment of silence.

“Well, ponies don’t grow on trees anymore do they?” She laughed. “I’ll cut to the chase: I am an trying to preserve the long term viability of our food supply and gathering what ponies I can. This operation is entirely unapproved by our queen and her idiots. If you prove yourself trustworthy, useful, and weak enough to control, I’ll let you live and you may get a cut in pony love.” She looks at him darkly. “If you don’t meet my criteria or, you refuse to cooperate and keep you mouth shut, you die.”

Slick Suit blinked, it was a lot to take in. “Wouldn’t you think someone notice if I went missing? It’s not like you can say I am a pony: I have been here for three years and if I were to vanish someone would raise eyebrows.”

“Oh, please, changelings come and go all the time, without warning, I doubt many will bat an eye.” Changeling Magenta looks at him even darker now. “And if they do, they die too.”

“Well, I don’t have much choice but to cooperate,” Slick Suit tries to keep his calm. The idea of being part of some pony smuggling ring sounds suicidal and dangerous, but if he can somehow survive this and actually get a steady supply of pony love, it might be worth it. “I will say this, I have no love for Queen Chrysalis, so I wouldn’t snitch for that reason.”

“Yeah, yeah, we will see, I have to get back upstairs and check around, you get yourself comfortable.”

And with that, Changeling-Magenta departed, and Slick Suit found himself alone, with only the sleeping foam of Magenta to keep him company.