

“Do I have to do everything here?”

Padlock and Crowbar slipped through the moonlit shadows out of Ponyville. They had a good tip that the Pumpkin family had a bumper crop this year and between their sugar pie pumpkins and their carving gourds selling like mad they were flush with bits.

The two burglars crept into the mostly barren pumpkin patch, watched over by a tall, gangling scarecrow. Its pumpkin head was dried out and partially rotted, giving it a sunken, wrinkled appearance. A tattered old flannel shirt stuffed with fragrant sweet hay made up its upper body and two thick, sturdy branches for its legs.

It guarded over a pitiful patch at the moment. Dead, dry vines with only a few stunted pumpkins nobody really wanted left. There were still a few more days until Nightmare Night, but it looked like the old farmers were out of stock well in advance despite the fine crop.

Crowbar, a big gray unicorn, frowned at it as they passed. The thing gave him the creeps. Holding his prybar in his magic, he gave the pumpkin head a few experimental pokes before giving it one solid whack, knicking off a chunk of rotted orange flesh. Padlock, the smaller brown earth pony mare hissed at him, yanking his ear with her teeth to get him back on track.

Casting a glance over his shoulder and brushing his green mane out of his eyes, Padlock saw the scarecrow facing away from them, back towards town as they did their best not to trip over the thick vines or uneven ground of the pumpkin patch. Crowbar grumbled under his breath as a light, misty rain began to fall, adding an unhealthy damp chill to the already cool evening. Clouds rolled in, obscuring the night and forcing him to ignite a faint glow from his horn so they could see where they were going.

All of the lights were off in the farmhouse as they crept around to the back door. Crowbar levitated a set of lock picks out of his saddlebags and set to work on the door. After a few moments, Padlock grumbled at the metallic clink of a snapped lock pick and shoved him out of the way.

“Do I have to do everything here? I swear.” She hissed, her breath forming a misty cloud between them in the damp air.

Glancing over his shoulder, Crowbar blinked as he saw the scarecrow was no longer facing towards Ponyville. The thing was turned towards them and a dull orange glow had ignited inside of its pumpkin head, illuminating its collapsing features as well as the hole the big unicorn had knocked in its head. “Uhhh... P.. Padlock?”

Not looking up from her work, the earth pony gave him a shove with her free hoof. Grumbling as water dripped onto her nose from her soaked mane the mare concentrated on the sound of the tumblers clicking into place. She didn't pay any attention to the sudden rattle like a stiff wind bowing through dried leaves still stuck to hundreds of vines, or the soft scrabbling of hooves against tilled earth and stone, figuring the big lummoX was just giving her some more room.

There was a soft click and Padlock gave a grunt of satisfaction as she felt the lock release. Putting away the picks in the case she held it behind her for Crowbar to take. When she released it, however,

the case fell to the earth with a thud.

Slowly turning, she was stunned to see no sign of her accomplice. Calling out for him in a hissing whisper she trotted into the field. She hadn't gone very far, about halfway to the old scarecrow when she got her hind leg tangled in a vine and fell sprawling to the dirt.

Cold, damp, and thoroughly annoyed, she kicked her leg a few times, but the vine only seemed to wrap more tightly about her hoof. She cursed through her teeth, then gasped as a thick vine whipped around her mouth, gagging her. Her eyes widened in horror as she looked up to see the glowing features of the scarecrow glaring down at her.

There was a creak of wood and a rustle of hay as the figure slowly raised its arms. Vines and roots burst from the ground all around Padlock, lashing tightly about her body, squeezing the breath from her lungs as they entangled her legs, slamming her down hard against the damp, musty earth. She whimpered in fear as she struggled to break free but could barely twitch a muscle. Biting down as hard as she could she attempted to chew through the vine in her mouth.

She had just bit through the vine and started to tug at one around her foreleg when the scarecrow dropped its arms. She felt a great rumbling and cried out in pain as she was crushed against the soil. She pulled and struggled, giving out a breathless scream as she was slowly dragged down beneath the cold, dark earth.

The following morning, the Pumpkin family could barely believe their eyes! A miracle had occurred overnight! The field was lush and thick with heavy green vines. Huge carving pumpkins lined one field, round and fat and orange. The lighter-skinned sugar pie pumpkin field was practically overflowing with the gourds as well. With this much produce to sell, they would live like kings through the harsh winter and have a great head start on spring planting.

The only thing they found out of place was the fallen, broken remains of what looked like an old scarecrow. Pumpkin Pie picked up the old, half rotted jack o' lantern head and placed it in a spot of pride on the low stone wall near the gate before gathering up the broken mess that was the rest of its body. Shrugging, she supposed someone was either trying to play a prank or do them a kindness.

“Honestly though,” she asked aloud, gazing towards a Ponyville mostly obscured by morning mist. “What good is a scarecrow in a pumpkin patch at harvest time?”