

Chapter 5

“What do you mean you’re not going?” Pinkie whined. She and Big Mac were in the kitchen of Sugar Cube Corner, busily baking various pies. Applejack had been overjoyed to discover Big Mac had actually made a real friend, rather than another ‘friendly acquaintance’, so she hadn’t complained about letting her big brother come help Pinkie with the daily baking. It wasn’t like there was a whole lot to do on the farm today, and Big Mac worked too hard as it was.

“Ah just don’t see why Ah should.” Big Mac said with a shrug as he rolled out some dough. “Skippin’ a few hours work to visit you is one thing, but Ah’d have to miss a whole day to go to the Princess’ party. Ah can’t do that to Applejack. ‘Sides, how could Ah explain why I needed to leave?”

Pinkie gave a snort of frustration and pointed a flour-covered hoof at the newspaper she’d left on a nearby clean portion of the countertop. “But Maaaaaac! Look at the paper! ‘Party in honor of Ponyville Savior Thor!’ How can they have a party without the guest of honor?”

“Pinkie, it’s too risky.” Big Mac said, not looking at her. Pinkie’s puppy-dog eyes could sway armies. “‘Sides, Ah don’t even like fancy parties. The ones you throw are one thing, but from what AJ told me ‘bout the Gala, Ah wouldn’t last five seconds at one’a them fancy celebrations.”

Pinkie was about to reply when the kitchen door burst open in a rainbow blur. It resolved into Rainbow Dash, looking rather excited and frantic. “Pinkie!” She shouted, before noticing that Pinkie had company. “Oh, hey Big Mac. Pinkie! Have you seen Twilight anywhere? She’s not at the library.”

“I think she’s at Rarity’s, getting ready for the big party in Canterlot!” Pinkie chirped. “Why, something wrong, Dashie?”

Dash shook her head rapidly. “No, I just need to get a ticket to that party! I figure if I ask Twilight, she can get one from the princess.”

“Yah don’t need a ticket.” Big Mac spoke up, not looking up from the pie crust he was making. “Th’ paper said everypony’s invited. Ya’ll c’n just go.”

“Really? AWESOME!” Dash did a miniature loop-the-loop in the air, grinning broadly. “This is gonna be the coolest party ever!”

Pinkie smiled at Dash, happy that she was happy. “Are the Wonderbolts gonna be there, Dashie?”

“Huh?” Dash paused her arial acrobatics for a moment. “Oh, yeah, them too! Almost forget about them!”

Pinkie and Big Mac glanced at each other in surprise. “If you don’t care about the Wonderbolts...” Pinkie said, the words sounding strange to her ears, “Then why do you want to go so bad?”

“Isn’t it obvious? THOR!” Dash exclaimed, with an enthusiasm normally reserved solely for the Wonderbolts. “He’s, like, the coolest pony EVER! He totally saved my life, you know.” Big Mac felt slightly disturbed at how pleased this seemed to make her. “I never even got the chance to thank him. He must think I’m a wuss, the way that loser Dead Weight tossed me around. Next time I see him, I’m gonna show him what I’m really made of!”

Pinkie cheered for her friend, but Big Mac frowned. “What if... What if Thor don’t show?” The farmpony asked slowly. Dash looked at him as though he was crazy.

“Of course he’s gonna show! It’s his party! What kinda hero wouldn’t show up to his own party? That’d be, like... like the Wonderbolts skipping a show!” Dash frowned. “A REAL hero wouldn’t insult his fans like that.”

Pinkie grinned at Big Mac; Mac doubted she even had the capacity to be smug, but if she did, that grin would’ve been very very smug. “Ah... Ah guess you’re right, Dash.”

“Course I’m right! OH! I gotta go practice my tricks so I can show off to Thor! Later!” Dash flew from the room so fast, Mac barely saw her leave.

“See, Mac?” Pinkie said. “You *gotta* go! Or Dash’ll be sad, and so will everypony else who wants to meet you! You don’t want to make everypony sad, do you?”

“Ah... Ah...” Mac finally gave up. “Oh, alright. But ya’ll gotta help me convince Applejack, alright? Ah can’t lie to her.”

“Okey-dokie-lokey!”

As it happened, convincing Applejack was unnecessary. She and the rest of her friends - Twilight, Rarity, Rainbow Dash, and Fluttershy - were all going to the party together. Pinkie Pie was all too happy to join them, of course. With Apple Bloom and Sweetie Bell both spending the night at Scootaloo’s parents’ house, it would be a simple matter to fly to Canterlot unnoticed. With Thor’s speed, he’d reach the castle in record time.

Pinkie was sad that she wouldn’t get to go to the party with her newest friend, but Big

Mac assured her he'd be fine. He made sure not to betray his own nervousness as he reassured the filly. Nevertheless, Pinkie seemed to pick up on his nervousness and baked him some chocolate chip cookies to help ease his tension.

A week passed fairly lazily, and the day of the party arrived. Big Mac helped Applejack into the dress had made for her to help her avoid the embarrassment of asking Rarity for help. The elegant garment was similar to the one Applejack had worn to the Gala, but she'd been unable to prevent Rarity from adding frills, ruffles, and other fancy additions until the outfit was almost too frou-frou for Applejack to even look at, much less wear. Rarity had insisted that a party celebrating the arrival of 'new royalty' - for what could an Alicorn be but a royal prince? - was MUCH fancier than that silly old Gala, and thus a much fancier dress was required.

"Ah'm sorry ya'll can't come, sugarcube." Applejack commented as they finally finished struggling with the complicated piece of clothing. "Ah know how highly ya'll think of Thor, but somepony needs ta' look after th' farm."

"Ah know, Applejack." Big Mac said, forcing himself to seem nonchalant and hoping his sister didn't pick up on his nerves. "Ah don't really want t'go anyhow." Technically true. "Probably gonna be awful borin' just like that Gala ya'll went to with yer friends."

Applejack chuckled. "Gosh, Ah hope not. With any luck, this party'll end a lot more calmly." She checked herself in the nearby mirror. "Whelp, looks like Ah'm all ready. Ah better go meet the girls; we're ridin' to Canterlot together. See ya'll later, sugarcube!" Applejack gave her brother a hug before galloping out of the house. Big Mac sighed, fetching Mjolnir out of it's hiding place in his saddlebags.

"Might be a bit sooner'n you think, sis."

Big Mac's primary worry was formal attire, but it seemed Mjolnir had that covered. Upon his transformation into Thor, the magic hammer seemed to sense Big Mac's desire for clothing and showed off another of it's many tricks. When the glow of his transformation faded, he was clothed in what his borrowed memories informed him was Thor's old armor - a glorious silver breastplate with a beautiful cape of red silk. The cape was dashing, though Big Mac thought it too impractical for a fight. He liked the armor, though; he'd keep that.

His memories also informed him of a matching hat, but Big Mac elected not to wear it. It looked ridiculous, and he wanted to make a good impression.

Thor's godly speed carried him to Canterlot quickly, making the normally hours-long trip in fifteen minutes, twenty at the most. The armor was so light he barely felt it, and the cape cut through the air with much less difficulty than he'd anticipated. He slowed as he approached the

Canterlot castle, gliding in gently for a landing near the majestic building's gates.

The guards leapt to attention at his arrival and saluted furiously. Big Mac felt uncomfortable at the attention, but as Thor he merely inclined his head in polite acknowledgement as he passed through the gates. The entrance hall was crowded with ponies all chatting amicably, but the conversation died abruptly at his arrival. Everypony turned to gawk at the new arrival, and quiet whispers filled the room.

Big Mac could only imagine what they were thinking. If it wasn't for the fact that he was Thor, Thor's arrival would throw him into confusion as well. Even so, the stares of everypony on him made him feel quite uncomfortable, and it took a great deal of willpower not to squirm.

Forcing himself not to be hesitant, Big Mac - no, *Thor* stepped into the room, head held high. The Princess stood at the head of the stairs near the back of the room. On her right stood her sister, Princess Luna, quite looking nervous as Celestia leaned over and whispered to her. Thor's godly senses were sharp, but even he couldn't hear what the Princess said to her sister. He wondered what they thought of him.

"He's cute, isn't he?" Celestia whispered to her sister.

Luna blushed slightly. "Princesses should not entertain such thoughts about their subjects."

"This princess does." Celestia retorted. "And he's hardly a subject; he's an Alicorn, like us!"

"Still, it is unbecoming of a princess - or any lady - to admit to such open admiration."

Celestia chuckled at her sister. "Oh, come on. You think he's got a nice flank too."

"I do not!" Luna protested, her blush growing more pronounced. "I-I would never entertain such... vulgar thoughts!"

"Oh really?" Celestia teased. "So it's fine with you if I seduce him for myself?"

"Don't you dare!" Luna snapped, losing her composure for a moment. She recovered quickly. "I-I mean, such behavior from a princess would be quite improper."

Celestia grinned from ear to ear. "Oh come on, Lulu. At least admit he's cute."

Luna blushed prominently and refused to look at her sister. "He's... handsome I

suppose.”

“*There* you go!” Celestia said cheerfully. There was a pause. Then: “If I can’t have him for myself, maybe we could shar-”

“NO.”

Rather than make a direct beeline for the Princesses, Thor scanned the room for a particular pony. Her mane was impossible to miss, and he headed directly towards her. “Art thou Rainbow Dash?” Thor asked the pegasus filly.

It took Rainbow Dash several moments to control her excitement enough to answer. “Y-yes! That’s me! Rainbow Dash! Th-thanks for savin’ me. You know, that thing with the Wrecker. Last week.” Was she actually blushing? Big Mac didn’t think he’d ever seen Dash blush before.

“Indeed, I recall the incident.” Thor said calmly. “Thou should be proud. The Wrecker’s speed nearly matched my own; few mortals would have lasted quite so long against him alone. You have a special gift, a talent for flying few pegasai possess. Be proud of it, hone it well, and cherish it always. I shall follow your career with great interest.”

Leaving the ecstatic blue filly endlessly chanting ‘ohmygosh ohmygosh ohmygosh!’ in his wake, Thor continued on towards Princess Celestia. He climbed the stairs towards her, stopping several steps below her. He bowed his head in low in greeting, causing a wave of mutters through the crowd. “Greetings, Princess Celestia and Princess Luna, Rulers of all Equestria, Goddesses of the Sun and Moon.” Big Mac made the most of Thor’s deep, booming voice, his greeting echoing throughout the room. “I am Thor Odinson of Asgard, God of Thunder. I was honored to receive your invitation.”

Celestia smiled brightly, and dipped her head in response. Her voice was soft, but could be heard in all corners of the room. “Greetings, Thor. My sister and I are glad you could come.” Luna, for her part, said nothing and looked vaguely embarrassed and uncomfortable. Big Mac shared her pain; greeting the Princess herself was one thing, but exchanging pleasantries like an equal? If not for Thor’s boundless confidence, Big Mac would’ve flown away as fast as his godly speed would carry him.

“When such a grand party is thrown in my honor, how could I refuse?” Big Mac said, thankful that he could keep his tone casual. Thor was not intimidated by royalty. “We have much to discuss.”

“Of course. Please, come with me.” Celestia led the way through a pair of double doors

behind her, Big Mac and Luna following behind. They traveled down a short hallway before entering what appeared to be a small, comfortable study. The room contained several lounging couches, each large enough for an Alicorn, arranged in a small circle. The Princesses sat next to each other, while Big Mac sat across from them.

“Now then.” The elder Princess said, once they were all seated comfortably. “There are many things I want to ask you, but I think this is the most important: who or what is Loki?”

Big Mac swallowed, and drew upon both what Pinkie had told him and what he could glean from Thor’s memories. “Loki is an Alicorn, like we three. He, like myself, is a citizen of the fallen city of Asgard, home of the gods.” The Princesses shared an excited look at this clue to their origins. “He is largely responsible for the fall of Asgard, and the death of all its’ inhabitants, excluding we two.” Now the Princesses looked troubled, and Celestia in particular looked vaguely sick at the thought of such genocide. “He is a trickster and a master of magic, primarily enchantment and transformation. He is devious and ingenious, and I believe he will stop at nothing short of complete domination of Equestria.” Big Mac took a deep breath, surprised to hear even Thor’s voice was shaking. When he looked at the memories of what Loki had done, his stomach turned unpleasantly, and he felt - and shared - Thor’s anger towards his ancient enemy.

“Shamefully, he is also my foster brother - my father Odin saw fit to take pity upon him as a child and adopt him. But he is no brother to me. What was once harmless, childish pranks has grown to malevolence I had never believed a pony could possess. He hates all ponies for having the happiness he’s never experienced, and me in particular for being a symbol of everything he’s never had. He hungers for power, and he is ruthless in obtaining it.”

“And young Heavy Weight?” Celestia asked. “What purpose did he serve?”

“I do not know.” Big Mac admitted. “The mark on The Wrecker’s brow was quite distinctive, as was the... trap... laid within the enchantment. It was most definitely the work of Loki, but for what purpose I cannot divine.”

Big Mac was vaguely startled as Luna spoke for the first time. “How can we be certain what you say is true?” Luna asked, her face carefully neutral. Gone was the embarrassed young filly who had blushed as he approached; this mare was hard and calculating. The transformation was... startling, to say the least. “How can we be certain that this Loki is truly as evil as you say, and not merely a personal rival.”

“Luna!” Celestia admonished. “Don’t be rude to our guest.”

“No, your sister is correct.” Big Mac admitted. “In reply, I say only this - the spell that nearly took the life of thine student was designed to destroy a pony from the inside out. To destroy their magic from within. Ask thyself: what sort of pony would craft such a spell?”

Silence reigned in the room.

Princess Celestia was about to reply when there were sounds of a scuffle from outside the room. Suddenly, the door flew open and in burst a very distressed Pinkie Pie, followed by two guards with apologetic looks on their faces. "We're very sorry, your highnesses." One of the guards said, sounding embarrassed. "We tried to stop her, but..."

Pinkie didn't let the guard finish, running up to Big Mac. "Thor! I had that twitch again! Something's coming, and it's BIG!"

Big Mac shot to his feet. "Princess, we must evacuate the castle immediately." He said, trying hard not to make it sound like an order. Ordering around the Princess was never a good idea.

Thankfully, Celestia and her sister were not keen to enforce protocol at the moment. "You know Miss Pie?" she asked, somewhat surprised. Luna was already calling for their butler.

"Aye, she is the one who warned me of the Wrecker's arrival." Big Mac confirmed, looking anxious. "She can detect when Loki begins to act, and I trust her intuition."

Celestia nodded, apparently content to trust one of the Elements of Harmony. She turned to Proper Etiquette, who had just arrived in the doorway. "Inform everypony attending the party that we will be ending early due to an emergency. Apologize profusely, but ensure they leave the castle quickly."

"At once, your majesty." Etiquette replied, vanishing at a speed only a true butler could attain.

Big Mac turned to Pinkie. "Do you know where?"

"The front hall! Hurry!"

Thor and the Princesses burst into the front hall just in time to see a bright sphere of green magic materialize in its center. There was a bright flash, and suddenly there was a blue unicorn filly standing on a raised platform that hadn't been there before. She wore a dark blue cape and hat with stars dotting the nearly black expense. What caught Thor's attention most, however, was the twisting mark of the snake on her forehead, just below her horn.

"ATTENTION CANTERLOT!" The unicorn spoke, her voice magically enhanced to boom throughout the room, over the confused and frightened mutterings of the partygoers. **"I am the**

Great and Powerful Trixie! The most powerful unicorn in all Equestria, and the personal apprentice of Loki the Magnificent, the *rightful* ruler of Equestria! I have come here today to claim the throne in his name, and to accept the unconditional surrender of the Princesses. We require not only the throne and rulership of all Equestria, but the head of Loki's hated enemy Thor! Should you not comply, the lives of every pony in Canterlot will be forfeit!"

Celestia stepped forward, Luna and Thor a single step behind her. "We will not bow to the threats of cowards and bullies." Celestia said calmly, her voice echoing throughout the hall. Her face was one of the supreme calm one only showed when one was angered beyond what one's face could express. "Leave now, and tell your master we will expect *his* unconditional surrender within the week. Otherwise, we will consider him and you enemies of Equestria."

Trixie laughed arrogantly, and Thor felt something was very off. When Trixie had last visited Ponyville, her magical talents had been average at best. But now, he could clearly feel Loki's magic rolling off her in waves of malevolent intent. A glance around the room told him that many unicorns in attendance had felt it as well, including Twilight Sparkle. Thor had to hide a relieved smile as he saw Twilight quietly evacuate several ponies, including Applejack and Pinkie Pie.

He redirected his attention to Trixie as the unicorn spoke again. "**You foals are naught but dim shadows of my master Loki's power. Surrender now, and I may have mercy.**" Her horn lit up with a sickly green glow. "**No promises, though.**"

Much to Thor's surprise, Princess Celestia spread her wings and leapt at Trixie, her own horn glowing with golden radiance. Clearly, she didn't take well to threats against her subjects.

Trixie smirked, and an oddly familiar spell formed on her horn before launching at the charging princess, a bolt of twisting green energy. With a sickening feeling in his stomach, Thor cried a warning. "Princess! Look out!" He leapt into the air to protect her, but he was too late. The insidious spell that had nearly killed Twilight Sparkle a week ago struck the Princess square on the horn, knocking her backwards into the wall. She collapsed to the ground with a sickening *thud*, her horn glowing a dull green.

She did not get up.

"Sister!" Luna cried, rushing to the elder princess' side. Celestia could only groan in response, her rainbow mane ceasing it's flowing, dimming to a dull pink as it fell in messy tendrils around her.

If looks could kill, Thor's glare would have smeared Trixie across the floor, though he was quite prepared to use his hammer for that purpose instead. "You *monster*." He growled. "Thou shall die a thousand deaths for daring to use such a wicked spell against another pony,

and a thousand more for having the arrogance to harm our monarch!" His own mane began to glow with electric power, beginning to drift like a golden storm cloud.

Trixie laughed again, her horn glowing again. **"Sorry, but the Great and Powerful Trixie has business elsewhere. Oh, but don't think Trixie is leaving you all alone! She has brought one of her master's closest friends to play you!"** Thor, losing all patience, lunged at Trixie, but he was too late. **"Ta-ta!"** She called, as she vanished in a haze of green.

The hall was deathly quiet, as many ponies who had yet to evacuate looked around in shock, confusion, and fear. Now what?

All too soon, however, the silence was replaced with a low rumbling that steadily grew louder. The floor in the center of the hall began to crack, and ponies near that section began to panic and run for the exit.

What seemed to be a green spine poked through the floor, than pushed upwards, revealing a head... a neck... then the body of a fully grown, dark green dragon. It's arms punched through the floor as it forced it's way upward, climbing laboriously out of the hole it made. It roared so loud the ceiling began to crumble, and its' words found their way into the mind of every pony for twenty miles, broadcast with a telepathic intensity so forceful it was almost painful.

"I AM THE FIRST AND LAST OF ALL DRAGONS. I WAS HERE WHEN EQUESTRIA WAS BORN, AND I WILL BE HERE TO SEE IT DIE. I AM THE GREATEST OF ALL CREATURES TO WALK THIS WORLD, AND I HAVE COME AT THE BEHEST OF MY GREATEST ALLY, LOKI OF ASGARD."

"MY NAME IS FIN FANG FOOM. I BRING YOUR DESTRUCTION."