

ALICORN

by Aldea Donder
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A sequel to [Mommy Nearest](#) by Fairy Slayer. Please [rate and review](#).

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Prologue

Morning

Morning came slowly for Rainbow Dash, who lay asleep beneath an elegant purple blanket, her chest rising and falling with deep, peaceful breaths. Her suffering had gone quietly into the night, replaced by a serenity which manifested in every gentle motion and soft exhale. Her face, once the province of anguish and misery, was liberated by a smile which stretched from ear to ear.

Dreams flitted behind her eyes. Dreams of being held by a wonderful, faceless mare, who licked her wounds when she was hurt and nuzzled her when she was afraid; the warmth of her body; the softness of her voice; the familiar fragrance of her mane; comforting her in her darkest hour, when all she knew was pain and fear.

The morning light crept across Rainbow's sleeping visage, falling upon her eyelids, coaxing her back into the world. Gradually, she became aware of herself lying on the hard hospital bed, and her mother's scent was replaced by the unpleasant odors of antiseptic and gauze.

She yawned and she stretched. Then she rolled over and promptly fell back asleep.

Little did she know there was a goddess watching over her.

Minutes passed, and Rainbow's breathing grew deep again. Celestia smiled, her heart filled with a warmth she had seldom known in the last thousand years. She closed her eyes and began to hum—softly, so as not to wake the sleeping filly. [Then she began to sing:](#)

Hush-a-bye, don't you cry.

*Go to sleep, my little baby.
When you wake, you shall have
All the pretty little ponies.
Blacks and bays, dapples and grays,
All the pretty little ponies.*

*Way down yonder, in the meadow,
Poor little baby crying mama.
The birds and the butterflies flutter 'round her eyes,
Poor little baby crying mama.*

*Can you see the little ponies dance before your eyes?
All the pretty little ponies will be there when you arise.*

Rainbow stirred in her sleep, enticed by the promise of something wonderful. She seemed so close, that motherly figment, and there was a song on her voice which echoed in her memory.

She could almost remember it. The melody came to her in dreams some nights, but only in snatches, half-forgotten, wrapped in deafening obscurity. Yet here it was—the whole lullaby, the same as it was the first time she heard it, years ago, when she was just a foal.

“Mommy,” she whispered urgently.

“I’m here, little one.”

She felt a warm breath on the back of her neck and a gentle snout nuzzling against her cheek. Rainbow sighed contentedly and leaned into the embrace.

Then reality finally caught up with her, and she snapped awake in realization. “Who—I—what?!” she spluttered, instinctively backing away until she banged against the headboard.

“Princess Celestia?!”

The princess! Here! Her brain went into overdrive, scrambling to remember every royal decorum Twilight had ever droned on about. She was supposed to bow down, right? But she was still in bed! Was she supposed to get out of bed and *then* bow down? Or maybe she should stand on *top* of the bed—

“Shh. There’s no need for any of that.”

Celestia looked at her in a way that said more than words ever could. Then it all came rushing back—all the revelations of her traumatic night. Rainbow felt a wave of vertigo wash over her,

memories swimming before her eyes and bouncing off the insides of her head. The air she had been breathing disappeared in her gullet.

“You’re—You’re—”

Celestia nuzzled her. “I’m your mother, Rainbow Dash.”

Rainbow could only stare open-mouthed and make strange, voiceless noises in the back of her throat. It wasn’t possible! ...was it? But all the doubt in the world couldn’t refute that *Princess Celestia was nuzzling her*. The ruler of all Equestria—a goddess!—*was nuzzling. Her*.

And then there was that memory, dangling like a little white string that begged to be pulled—Celestia beside her, tending to her wounded head, cradling her like a newborn. The warmth of her body. The softness of her voice. The familiar fragrance of her mane. Comforting her in her darkest hour... when all she knew... was... was...

“You’re... You’re my mother.” Rainbow pulled away suddenly, her expression unreadable.

Her brain, having finished filling in all the blanks from her recent trauma, now set to work making other connections.

“And all those times—all those times you could have said something, and you never did—the Summer Sun Celebration, the Best Young Flyer Competition, the Gala—”

Celestia winced.

Rainbow could feel herself growing angrier, even though she knew she shouldn’t. Even though the memory of Celestia’s compassion still resounded in her soul. She had been happy, hadn’t she? After the horn appeared, when she laid her head against her mommy’s side and fell asleep listening to the sound of her heartbeat... Was there ever another time in her life when everything felt so right? But no—the stupid horn must have screwed up her brain chemistry.

She had been wronged! Every ounce of her pride screamed it, and screamed for her to scream it!

“That thing with the parasprites—the one time with Fluttershy and the stupid bird—” There was accusation in Rainbow’s voice now, and it was quickly getting louder. “All those times... All those times you just brushed me off, and you never said anything!”

“Please, Rainbow Dash, try to understand. It just wasn’t possible for me to reveal the truth—”

“Why? ‘cause I didn’t have one of *these*?” Rainbow crossed her eyes and tossed back her head, motioning to her newly-erupted horn.

Celestia cast her eyes downward and didn't reply. The weight of the world seemed to rest on her shoulders, even as her hair continued to billow in the nonexistent wind.

"Wasn't I good enough for you without some dumb horn on my head?!"

Celestia met Rainbow's hard gaze. "You were *a/ways* good enough for me. And I *a/ways* wanted to be your mother. Giving you up was the most painful thing I've ever had to do. I agonized over it for weeks, and the day I sent you to live with your parents, I cried so hard I couldn't raise the sun. I only did what I did because it was in your best interests. The High Court of Canterlot would never have accepted you."

"Because I wasn't a unicorn."

"Yes," Celestia said sadly. "Because you weren't a unicorn."

There was a long stretch of silence that neither of them wanted to be the first to fill. Rainbow was distressed, looking down at the bed with a disconsolate expression.

"Rainbow Dash, there are some injustices in this world that even the magic of friendship can't set right... Prejudices that are even older and more powerful than I am. All I ever wanted to do was to protect you. But pegasus or unicorn—Rainbow, it *never* made a difference to me."

Rainbow could feel the tears threatening, even though she hated herself for it. She tried to turn away, to hide her weakness, but there was Celestia with a gentle hoof, tilting back her head until she had no choice but to meet her eyes.

There was an intensity there, but also a tiredness which belied her radiant exterior. There was a yearning, golden and pure, blossoming from the deepest fathoms of her soul, marred by a thick, gray sludge of apprehension, and layers of false happiness piled high on a mountain of regret.

She wondered what Celestia saw looking back. For Rainbow Dash, a pony who prided herself on being brave, had never felt more scared in all her life.

Scared of what this meant.

Scared of the changes it would bring.

Scared to hold back.

Scared to let go.

Scared of being hurt.

Scared of being left alone.

But in the tempest of her emotions, on cresting fear and waves of doubt, a memory and a lullaby surfaced, and she held onto them for all she was worth.

“Do you—*Do you love me?*” Rainbow’s voice cracked as she struggled to form the words.

Celestia smiled. “More than the sun itself, my little Freyja.”

And as mother and daughter reached out to each other in the morning light, whispers of a lullaby floated on the wind’s breath:

*Hush-a-bye, don’t you cry.
Go to sleep, my little baby.
When you wake, you shall have
All the pretty little ponies.
Blacks and bays, dapples and grays,
All the pretty little ponies.*