

I perceived some hardly noticeable movement, even though pitch darkness was still my only silent companion. I felt as if... as if I had been lying in my bed half asleep in that exact condition when you're slowly drowning into dream having no clue what awaits you "beyond" but you're still brave enough to make a step into the unknown. The only problem was that I *was* scared! Too much f*cking scared to make this step. Oh well... all thanks to that most terrible surgery in my whole life, some ghost feelings of which I remembered as clear as if it'd been performed just a few hours ago. The feelings that are impossible for one to simply forget. Those, that would haunt me forever, like some sort of a nightmare repeating over and over again. Even though I knew it did help me in the long run. That I must be grateful Catastrophe, Fast, Scalpel agreed to perform it. It must've been done. And I became better, more enduring, faster. But still... what was the point of it now?

I felt like I was starting to fall. At first, I couldn't even get what was going on with me. But the quicker I was speeding up the clearer one indecently simple thought was forming – I'm falling, and, besides, with a really high velocity. I tumbled in space, waved my hooves, even tried to scream but wasn't sure if my vocal cords were making a loud shriek or I still remained silent as a fish. All the normal feelings were going back to me slowly, even though I couldn't tell exactly where the darkness was ending and I was beginning yet. And then my loins suddenly touched the water on the incredibly high speed, a loud plop was heard, and I plunged many feet under the water. I have no idea how I managed to live that and how such an impact did not crash the entire lower half of all of the bones in my body since, as I calculated it later, I fell down from a fifteen- if not a twenty-store building's height. The water was slightly cold but not too much and absolutely not what real sea water is supposed to be. A bit chilly though but at the same time it was also somewhat a little warming too by some unknown way. It felt... neutral. And what was even more peculiar: I was able to see under the water with my eyes open and the picture remained as clear as if I'd been looking through goggles. But I didn't have time to think it all over: very-very deeply, where the bed of the ocean was supposed to be, two eyes appeared. Two big oval violet eyes staring at me. And what was even scarier – I knew who they belonged to. And then this pony's mouth broke into a giant grotesque pure white grin. I released all the air I had in my lungs shouting and paddled with my hooves convulsively towards the surface. It was far from me, but I didn't give up and kept rowing. Up, to the air, only to get away from this monster! Oh well... if only I knew back then one simply can't drown or die in this place even if they would really want to... But I didn't and kept acting absolutely instinctively. Stroke. Then another one. And another! And there I was on the surface!

"Anypony! Help!" I cried. I could swim. And I did pretty good, at least back at school many years ago in a swimming pool on my swimming lessons. Not many creatures have to do it in the Wasteland if they even have to in the first place. But I was panicking a lot now and could only plop my hooves in the water incoherently diving into it with my head from time to time.

I looked around quickly: nothing, just sea. A giant enormous sea everywhere. No ships, no shores – absolutely nothing at all.

"Anypony, please, help me! I need help!" I shouted turning my head from side to side. But there was no one except for me in here. I was alone in this place. Absolutely alone.

"Help!" I yelled again in panic. And then all of a sudden felt someponies' hooves seized my armpits and pulled me up. I fell on my back right in the middle of a tiny wooden boat that could float flawlessly somehow despite having giant holes in its bottom. I leaned on a side of the little four-seater boat with my front hooves straightaway, climbed up the back seat. The Golden twins were sitting in front of me: Sky and Bullet in the flash. Both golden pegasi occupied the front seat facing me. The every one of them was holding a paddle and slowly rowing in synchrony with the other. I noticed something peculiar about their look: it was... indifferent? Not

really... Cynical? Close but isn't it either... Fatalistic? Maybe partially. Or probably all of this at once. Their upper eyelids were half-closed and the look itself was as if... if they were scanning me, scanning my soul. Like, if my and their souls were connected with an invisible hose and they were pumping out information about my life while their souls remained locked up to the key I was in no possession of. A long wooden rod was standing on the front end of the boat, an ornate kerosene lamp was swaying back and forth in synch with the movement of the waves being attached to it. And what the most interesting thing is: the flame wasn't always facing the top as it was expected but instead the point where it was fixed to the rod as if the flame was only a three-dimensional projection disobeying any known laws of physics. To say the kerosene lamp's light was dull is to say literally nothing: it was only able to illuminate space in the radius of ten to fifteen feet around us or even less than that. The light was very, very dull-yellow (I'd even call it deadly-yellow) and incredibly unnatural. Because of it I could hardly make out red and black colors of my friends' manes, and even then, I wasn't absolutely sure if I actually saw the red color or just *wanted* to see it...

"M-m-many thanks to you, my friends! Without y-you I-I would perish here..." I mumbled when Bullet gave me a towel, appeared from nowhere, with a strange smirk on her face, and I dried myself up in a haste. The twins didn't say anything and only went on staring at me with their weird puzzling look and rowing as well.

"How did I get here?" I asked.

"Wrong question," Bullet said. "You know the answer pretty well."

"Wait a second, but did I... Oh, Celestia! Does it mean I... I died?"

The Golden twins didn't reply.

"Really? No way, it can't be true! Did I..." and then I put two and two together.

"Catastrophe wasn't able to save me, was she? Damn it... they weren't able to bring me to the Fifty Fourth bunker on time. Buck..."

"We can't answer your question directly," the female pegasus said.

"But instead, you'll be able to answer it on your own soon enough," the male pegasus added.

"Okay. okay..."

We went on floating in almost pitch-black darkness.

"And how did *you* get here?"

"Let's just say we travel quite a lot, and you'll be surprised to find out how many and which exactly places we've already visited in our lies," Golden Bullet said.

"Mhm," agreed Sky with his sister.

Oh, f*ck you... come on, are they even being serious?! What the buck? I got Discord knows where, and that's all what I get as an explanation? Why don't they simply answer my questions normally, not in the eerie, veiled and totally unclear way, just like how they were doing it now (and besides rather successfully) so far?!

"Because sometimes a pony wants to find out something they shouldn't know in this particular moment yet," Bullet said.

"Wait, what? But I... I haven't even said anything yet!" I was taken aback entirely.

"Yes. But have made up such a thought. For us words mean very little sense in here. The whole thing is contained in your thoughts."

"Feelings."

"Soul."

"It helps to understand who a pony actually is, quite often," said Golden Sky.

"And who they are not."

Guys, now you're scaring me...

“Aw! How impolite of us!” said Golden Bullet with way exaggerated sarcasm in her words. “If you want it this way, we can only respond to the questions you specifically ask us.”

“Yeah. That’s... that’s gonna be the right way.”

“I don’t even doubt.”

I thought a little what question I should ask the twins next. They probably wouldn’t answer it but I had to ask it nonetheless...

“Will I ever see my friends again?” I asked them in a quiet voice with unconcealed worry. An expressing smirk appeared on Bullet’s face.

“Yes, you’re gonna see them pretty soon,” Sky answered in a tranquil voice, no emotions whatsoever.

“Heh, funny... every time you ask all the same questions and even in the same order.”

“Every time?” I didn’t get it. “What are you trying to say, Bullet?”

But instead of her the yellow male pegasus replied:

“You’ve already been here, Paradox. Ma-a-any times. And it’s far not the first time when we lead your way to a terminus... Even though you can’t remember it.”

“No, it’s... delirium if I’ve ever seen one!”

The pegasi didn’t reply.

“What the buck even is this place, anyway?”

“It has many different names,” said Bullet.

“Limbo, Tartarus, The Transfer Zone, The Sunless Sea, The Ghostly Dimension...” Sky named some of them.

“Just call it ‘The Border Dimension’ – you won’t make a mistake.”

“And this is the place pony go to after they die?”

The pegasi didn’t reply.

“Fine. Apparently, I’m not yet ready to hear the answer to this particular question...”

We’d been floating in silence for some time. Maybe about... ten to fifteen minutes? Does such a term as ‘time’ even exist here? Well, the thing is we didn’t float long. I tried to look around sometimes but the only thing around was a pitch-black darkness and nothing else. It felt like we were going through some fog. It was impossible to make out where the water ended and the sky began. And the sky itself (or what was instead of it here), although dark but, I’ll bet you anything, it was irradiating a slightly visible claret-colored shade, like a night sky above a city covered in clouds... And then bodies started to appear around us. A good many pony bodies. There were griffons here too, as well as zebras, but ponies were still in the majority among them. They were lying in, or close to, or on the surface of the water. They didn’t move. And everycreature had no eyes in their orbits.

“Oh, Celestia! Holy crap...!” were the only things I could mumbled out. “So many bodies, so many dead ponies here...”

“They are not dead. They are no more than imaginary self-representations of the actual living ponies,” said Bullet not interrupting roaring or staring into my eyes.

“Containers they can temporally use, just like the one you’re using right now. There is no soul it them,” Sky said.

“Not yet. The eyes are the window to the soul. And as you can see, none of them have eyes.”

And it was at that moment a cold shiver went down my spine. I reached my eyes with the rear sides of my front hooves in fear. But those were on their place. I think. I rubbed it and then the picture rippled, my ears were filled with a high-pitched squeaking noise and my head was struck with a terrible migraine. I remembered something. Something I wouldn’t likely wish on anycreature else. The memories weren’t just pictures but I saw, smelled, heard, touched, tasted

most of it – the every one of them was a thick lump of feelings, thoughts and emotions, and they were attacking my brain one by one, one dozen after another. The migraine healed as suddenly as it appeared, the view stabilized again and the high-pitched noise was gone. All of this lasted some few measly moments and I was trying my best to immediately forget memories most ponies would never even get in their nightmares.

“Memory superposition is striking again?” asked Sky in a little sly way.

“I thought you’ve got used to it”

“You can’t get used to it, ever,” I said. “You never know what you’re going to see next time, whose body you’ll get into, what feelings will experience next time...”

“As if,” the male pegasus denied. “Memory superpositions are always connected to some specific ponies who once lived through the same feelings you did.”

“With the specific character.”

“With the specific temper.”

“With the specific fate...”

“If only you knew what I remembered now...”

“We do,” Sky said. “And yes, these memories aren’t the nicest, that’s for sure.”

“I’ve already seen them. Not all. Some of it. When Catastrophe was putting bandages all over me half an hour ago my brain got into another superposition. I’ve seen such a good many pictures, so many different locations... It was as if I’d been transferred into another ponies’ bodies, as if I... lived their lives once again...”

“It’s funny your brain is still trying to glue a crystal vase together from just a few broken shards,” Sky noticed.

“Well, one’s brain adapts,” Bullet replied moving her rolled up eyes on him and bending her head towards him as if she felt a minor irritation because she had to explain her brother the common truths.

“I know,” the male said. “I lived it.”

“But why is it *me* who must deal with all this flashbacks?!” I lost my patience.

The pegasi didn’t answer.

“I see.”

I see that everything’s unclear.

“All in good time, Paradox,” said Sky.

“Wait for a little bit more, you’ll get the answers to some of your questions soon enough.”

I started waiting docilely. But it seemed that there was one question needing to be asked to the Golden twins no matter what.

“There’s one thing I don’t really understand...”

“M-m?” Bullet uttered probably out of courtesy because she must have known what exactly I was going to ask her.

“After Catastrophe bandaged me up, pumped with a mule dose of Med-X and went on to observe life support system’s readings and when I more or less recovered from a pain shock... and after I was overflowed with that sudden wave of unexpected memories... I tried to transfer some of them mentally to her. Those I considered the most necessary ones and the ones that would be the most meaningful. The most important ones, namely those which she was in. I didn’t have a slightest doubt: these two mares have too much in common and it’s not their race or the color of their fur I’m talking about... I did it: I saw her nose started bleeding with a tiny trickle. And yet she remembered nothing. Absolutely nothing! How come she couldn’t remember anything at all?..”

“It was pretty much expected, really,” Bullet replied.

“Pretty expected to us but not so much obvious to him,” Sky corrected the mare.

"It wouldn't be obvious even for us if we were him and it won't be as expected the moment we leave this place too. Don't forget about that, brother."

"Mhm, thanks a lot for a reminder but I remember it pretty well..."

"Expected?" I was taken aback. "But how?! W-why? It has already happened to us before. Once upon a time... hasn't it?"

"It's only your mind's delusion. You keep thinking about time like if it were a linear structure when you talk about the Metasoul..."

"...but the thing is, when we talk about the Metasoul, time stops being linear and turns into a multidimensional vector."

"About the... Metasoul? Are you talking about... those zebras' legends about the eternal rebirth of a soul in newer bodies, aren't you? About reincarnation?"

"Exactly," Bullet proved my guess. "But I'm talking more about the principal core of this phenomenon now disregarding some details of zebras' folklore and local beliefs."

"Not to say zebras delude themselves a lot in their philosophy," said Sky. "they just, well... let's say, they like to embellish the facts sometimes. To make things clearer for themselves. I don't think one should judge them for it. Their legends managed to bring the core idea of the phenomenon to us in exquisite details after all. Even through many centuries."

"Imagine a few colored strings lying in front of you horizontally. This is now a model of how you see lifetimes of ponies around you. And now imagine that parts of these strings are, in fact, just a one long string (or few long strings, doesn't matter) each and every of which is wound up into a thick round bale and is suspended in time-space in such a form. Or instead of a bale of strings you can imagine a scarf – even a more graphic representation. Even though such a comparison would be much less correct than the first one if only you knew some basics of sewing."

"I... I guess I'm... starting to understand... something."

"All of these events you remember remained in the past for you," the male pegasus said.

"But it doesn't mean they remained in the past of all the other participants as well," added Bullet straightaway.

A shiver went down my spine when my thoughts started hanging together quite well.

"So, in other words, you're saying that... what happened at the spaceport... And later on..."

"Might have been a thing of the past for you but is still a thing of the future for Catastrophe."

"Oh no..." I dropped my muzzle onto my knees, then covered it with my front hooves in despair. "Poor, poor Catastrophe... She didn't deserve such a misery. She did nothing to deserve it. Did nothing to deserve *such* a death..."

"And here you can see yet another reason why, in general, the lesser a pony remembers about their previous lives – the better," Sky said apparently to Bullet.

"Screw you, Sky! Give it a rest, Paradox, please, stop whining," said the yellow mare in a tired voice. "I've already heard enough of the Metasoul's whining apart from you in these last few hours me and my brother had spent in the Limbo..."

"No, no, no... It can't be true... She... she shouldn't have died like this... just not like this... Oh dear Celestia..."

"I'll give you a piece of advice here: don't take it too personally. Is harmful for your health. It was her fate to some degree."

"How..? How can I fix it?"

“No way. You can’t impact things remained in the past for you. Because now it is part of who you are. I’m factoring out Project “Second Chance”. There are some other principals of functioning of the fundamental universe which make its basis.”

“But this isn’t right! For what? Why did she deserve to die like this?!”

“As I’ve already said, fortunately or unfortunately, but you cannot make an impact on it, no matter how sincerely you’d love to. Thus, I suggest you to simply... forget about this episode. Abstract your mind from it. Knowing you, I bet it’s gonna be rather hard for you, but, trust me, this is the only way.”

“Just forget? About this?! Are you serious?”

No, is she actually being serious now?!

“What other options do you see here? Firstly, you can’t do anything about it. And trust me, this is definitely so. The only pony who can fix it is herself. But knowing Catastrophe, I really doubt she’ll have enough spirit and guts. If you were me, you would agree with my opinion. Anyway, now it depends entirely on her own. And yes, preventing your next question: you cannot influence it either. Secondly, it’s all remained in the past for you, including all the accompanying emotions about her. You’ve already lived it, and it is definitely not the case when it makes sense to dredge up unsettling memories from the past. Thirdly, it is just one of her following reincarnations and, to tell you the truth about her prospects, please don’t get offended, far from being the most successful ones.”

“W-what?!” I didn’t understand.

“I’m talking about her role in the local ether. There was no way her inborn potential could develop where she was born and lived her, unfortunately, very short life. I must give it to her, she quite successfully played in her act as far as she could and then left the theater forever. There is neither your nor her fault in what happened. Consider that she was just born...”

“Will just be born”, the pegasus corrected his sister.

“‘Was born’ and ‘Will be born’ is all the same in our case, for your information!”

“Not quite. You’re obviously not destined to study grammar to foals in the nearest future.”

“This stupid grammar is simply pissing me off when I’m in the Border dimension... Fine, ‘Will be born’, in this case, in the wrong time in the wrong place, and the fate decided to fix that. In this context her next life, after the one mentioned by you, is going to be much more successful, happy and rainbowy. Please excuse me for this little black pun of mine. And is gonna be with much less losses and sufferings, both physical and emotional. Fourthly, don’t forget that even though she was Catastrophe partially, at the same time she wasn’t her. In other words, that mare is an absolute stranger to you, who, if you met her in real life, wouldn’t remember neither of you, nor of her Bunker Nineteen or yours, number fifty-four, nor of your adventures, nor about anypony else, in short – about nothing whatsoever what could make you call her Catastrophe. She won’t have anything in common with your marefriend but for maybe their look, partially, and subconscious mind, which was the reason for a similar character to form later. To put it simply, that mare won’t care about you at your first meeting. Just like you or anypony else wouldn’t care about a random pony from the Wasteland too.”

“I’m afraid you’re a little wrong here with your last statement,” I said.

“I’m not taking into consideration nuances but am talking ‘bout the general case. In general, this is exactly the way how life works. You can prove it to yourself wherever and whenever you want: you’ve either already been or will be familiar with anypony from the Wasteland, be it a raider or a slaver.”

“The statement is also true for any other pony from any other time and location,” added Sky.

“Yeah, you gave me hope, for sure...”

“Besides, if you remember it correctly, she wasn’t angry with you in the last moments of her life and was happy the fate gave you two a chance to meet even though for such a short time. And this is a pretty good sign. So, I don’t see any reasons for us to go on with this monologue.”

“On the other hoof, she used to be rather angry and upset about him and hasn’t forgiven him for something...” Sky said with the tone implying he would want to keep up talking on the already closed subject. Somehow, I didn’t care a straw of what he meant by this.

“Shut up, Sky.”

I didn’t reply having plunged in thoughts about the Golden twins’ words. Silence came again. I didn’t know what to ask Sky and Bullet. They probably wouldn’t have answered it if I’d kept asking some specific questions, how I would do in the beginning. I peered into the corpses... bodies, into the bodies of ponies. There was a good many of them. I tried to guess who they used to be by their cutie marks. Sometimes I was able to do it, sometimes I wasn’t. You’ll probably find it weird but it helped me to distract from this spooky bizarre place and, besides, it helped me, weirdly enough, not to think of them as perished creatures, floating next to the surface of the water like some dead passengers of an imaginary airplane crash-landed in the middle of the ocean. And it was at that moment I noticed a familiar stallion. At least this is what I thought: because of the dull deadly-pale light of the kerosene lamp I wasn’t able to see his cutie mark but I was able to see that he was a pegasus. He was lying in the water, face down, he had a dark-brown body, and his mane and tail were bicolored in red and black.

“Rusty...” I said being more than startled by shock. “No!” the body of the pegasus started to float away, “Hang on there, pal, I won’t let you go!”

I sprang up from my sit and was just about to push it with my back legs and dive when my body suddenly stopped half-hanging over the water.

“Paradox, don’t be silly. There is no Rusty here.”

“But! But... it’s him! It’s...”

“Just a soulless casing waiting for him,” Sky said. “There’s nothing you can help him with. Rusty will have to pass the barrier on his own. We will meet him when he’s here. Now he’s in another place, though.”

“Rusty...” my eyes became wet with tears. If only I could, I would’ve dived after him straightaway into the water and dragged him... his... body... into the boat. There was no way I could leave him in here. Just not in a place like this one! But Goldens didn’t let me do it. Like some invisible lasso on my belt their look, their will did not let me go or basically do anything. The only thing I was able to do, however, was only weeping and watching Rusty’s body floated out of sight behind us. I sat down back to my seat.

“Why...?” I asked.

“For the hundredth time I repeat: ‘cause it was not Rusty!” said Bullet with undisguised irritation. “His soul is not here.”

Some glow appeared up ahead. The light suspended high in the air turned on and off, and only after half a minute’s time when a large column started to loom, I understood what was this light.

“A lighthouse...” I murmured.

“Eyep,” Sky replied.

“Is this my destination point?”

“Yep.”

“But it stands in the middle of the ocean! It... it doesn’t lead anywhere!”

The pegasi didn’t reply with anything.

I wiped away blood with my front hoof still pouring down in a tiny trickle from my nose after the sudden superposition.

“Do you know what I find rather funny in this situation, Sky?” Bullet asked.

“Hm-m-m?”

“The fact he hasn’t paid any attention to his hooves yet.”

“Well, yeah, this is peculiar.”

And then I got it what the twins were talking about and cold shivers went down my spine once again. I was so carried away with everything that was going on I simply... forgot... I looked at my front hooves. My left leg was intact! Like... absolutely intact!

“How..?!” I couldn’t believe my eyes. I touched muscles, joints on my left leg then checked my elbow, checked my shoulder, moved it in different directions, then another leg, stroked one leg over the other, moving fur away. And to my greatest surprise not a single scar was on it! “My legs... they’re... intact! How... how is that even possible? I remember how... my left hoof...”

“You don’t have hooves, Paradox,” said Sky. “It’s just an illusion.”

“You feel your body the way you consider it should be, but in reality you don’t have one in here.”

“Neither do we.”

“We look the way we consider to be looking right, but all these bodies, this boat, this sea and this lighthouse as well...”

“...is nothing more than a simple illusion.”

“It helps getting the right way here quite well.”

“Besides, if you can feel anything here as if it were real including your own body, why not to consider it to be real?”

I didn’t know what to reply to it. In the meantime, we’ve already reached the lighthouse. It was very high (and rather grotesque too) made out of big white marble bricks built in the Art-Deco style with its characteristic high lamps in a form of stretched hexagons, spreading its similarly dull yellowish light to the bottom of the lighthouse. The boat slightly bumped to a small wooden pier.

“We’ve arrived,” Golden Bullet stated the fact. The pegasi continued looking at me with the same weird stare of theirs. I moved up to the pier and dubiously went on to step up a huge granite staircase, leading to the entrance into the lighthouse. The twins moored off. Sky and Bullet started to paddle away from the lighthouse slowly.

“Dare asking you a question: do you still want him to remember our first meeting?” Sky asked Bullet. Surprisingly enough I heard his voice as clear as if he’d been a couple of feet away from me, not a hundred.

“*Our* first meeting with him, *his* first meeting with us or our first meeting *in this place*?”

“You know perfectly well I’m talking about the *third* alternative.”

“You know what, Sky? Yes, I do.”

“And for some reason I’m not even surprised. So... who’s gonna sing in this case? Me or you?”

“I can do.”

Bullet cleared her throat and began to sing a song and Sky started to hum an approximate rhythm to it:

“Row, row, row your boat

Gently down the stream

Merrily merrily, merrily, merrily.

Life is but a dream.”

After that they changed their roles, and it was now Sky who was singing and the mare who was humming the rhythm:

*"Row, row, row your boat
Gently down the stream
Merrily merrily, merrily, merrily.
Life is but a dream."*

Then they started to alternate:

*"Row, row, row your boat
Gently down the stream,"* Sky sang.
*"Merrily merrily, merrily, merrily.
Life is but a dream,"* Bullet replied to him.

"Life is but a dream?"

"Life is but a dream."

"Life."

"Is but a."

"Dream..."

"Param-paparu-rurah!"

"Pam-pam!"

And Goldens disappeared in thick fog with their boat.

"Row, row, row... your boat... gently down the stream... merrily merrily... life is but a dream..." I repeated after them thinking over it. "Life is but a dream... What does this suppose to mea-A-A-A-AH!" a strong migraine stroke my head, heavy rippling appeared in my eyes and my ears were flooded with a high-pitched ringing. I clasped my head with my front hooves, leaned to the wall of the lighthouse with my back and lumped down to the marble bricks the spiral staircase leading to the entrance was cobbled with. The world zoomed off...

"...You know what, that actually was an interesting idea to get back to the beginning of my journey once again. You learn a lot of new things about your social environment and about yourself as well, including those that were lying on the surface all this time but you would only fail to notice it stoutly. Or just, probably, didn't wanna notice. Or maybe something that was hidden away from you but became clear and obvious only after all this time... You know what I'm thinking, we might probably visit some other ponies who where both before and after *her*, as well as after *me* and you? I guess I don't see any harm in enjoying another ride, even to this place," Golden Bullet said.

"Is this a joke?" Golden Sky asked her.

I once again tuned up in the same boat with the twin pegasi floating in the Sunless Sea but everything was pretty much different now. There was no fog. But instead, many a lighthouse was present. Thousands, millions and billions of lighthouses everywhere! The every single one resembled the one the twins brought me to the slightest, but every one of them was still... unique. I don't know how to explain it. They... they felt differently. Of course I could mistake, but, as far as I realized it, the lighthouses made vertexes of huge virtual hexagons, like some honeycombs. Lighthouses were about seventy to hundred feet away from each other, and slowly revolving lamps emitted light from the top of every single one of them. The light was white with a little blueish luminescent shade, but every single lamp had its own unique shade, was emitting some unique energy which felt alive and belonging to a pony... There were a lot of lighthouses and even more of them were on the horizon. And it seems that... there wasn't even a horizon in here. It felt like the Sea was sagging a little where the boat was floating like fabric under a tension of a small metal ball and was slowly and slowly getting height somewhere in the

distance. And then a thought came up to me: billions of billions of stars glowing on the cloudless night sky like some tiny diamonds weren't stars: those were similar lighthouses. The boat was floating along the inner side of an enormously giant sphere sized of Equus if not bigger! And the Sunless Sea was everywhere. And so were the lighthouses. So similar and yet so different from one another! But this place didn't have the same spooky vibes the one Goldens picked me up in had. And not only because of the vast expanses of this place, and not 'cause there was no fog. The light. It was different. Not that deadly yellow. It might have been cold but... it didn't appear as such to me for some reason. It was calm, serene, eternal. It was the light of the stars. The light of the souls. And exactly the same kind of light was emitted by the familiar kerosene lamp rocking on the waves, which flame was still doing its best at breaking laws of physics.

"I guess I've partially come to your way of thinking," the female pegasus assumed.

"Have you?"

"Yes. I do believe one pony can change a lot. But after all the bother and tediousness one often wishes that one could not," Bullet looked into my eyes as if trying to find a proof of her words. But there was no reply from a pony whose memory I was occupying. Curious enough, they were now looking around thoughtfully or at each other much more often instead of staring into my eyes only with their mysterious look. Though their half-closed eyes would still meet the look of the pony from the vision eventually and would also cling to it for some time.

"You're a fatalist."

"A masochist? Well yeah, a bit. So are you, by the way."

"A fatalist."

"What?! No, I'm not! I'm a rationalist. And I see that apples tend to fall not too far away from an apple tree."

"Are you implying she's related to Apples?"

"I'm implying she did not succeed well enough at learning on her own mistakes during her lifetime either."

"Oh well... it seems like I deserved to listen how I'm being discussed as if I ain't here, didn't I? He-he..." a mare sad in sorrow and made a heavy sigh. Okay! Now this is getting interesting... It seemed I was in a body of a mare. Wait. Goldens said a pony can't have a body in this place, only its illusion. I was in the illusion of her body? Argh! How am I gonna explain where I was now?! I would always say it when I would plunge into the crystals of memories! Okay, fine... I'm gonna call it her body. I mean, since it's quite real to her, to the Golden twins, to me then why the heck not to reckon it to be real in general? It was something the twins said too, by the way... Anyway, it's gonna be much easier for everycreature. Hm, this mare had a rather interesting voice. A little squeaky but it still had a pinch of... well... charisma in it, I guess? Well, it wasn't repelling, that's what I'm trying to say! Like... come on, really! It was just a little unusual... funny... a bit weird... not a voice of a typical imaginary mare, that's for sure... Even though I couldn't figure out the age of the voice's owner by her bodily constitution but the voice in itself sounded kinda young, in my opinion. And if the memory serves me right, I've already heard it during a few memory superpositions of mine, and I almost remembered which ones...

"Hm... you think so?" said Bullet with uncovered irony. "You know what? Yes, you're right, you deserved it! I'm surprised how just one single pony can break so much in such a short period of time..."

I was incredibly curious to see the look of the mare whose body I was occupying, not quite sure why though. But unfortunately, I wasn't able to do so yet with the help of my peripheral vision.

"Bullet!" Sky said reprehensibly.

“What?”

“It looks like we’ve already talked about it.”

“E-e-eh no way, brother! I’m gonna tell her everything what I think of her right now!”

“I’d rather you didn’t. It will make a bad impact on her further life.”

“Nope, it won’t at all, and we both already know it! She’s going to forget this conversation any way. So what am I losing?”

“Oh, screw you, here we go again...” Golden rolled his eyes.

“In difference with Sky I was born in the same world you were, and I must point it out... your way of living is so much bucking freezing me out! Tell me, how can one dislike oneself so much? How can one be so neglectful of yourself, their body... their soul for that matter!”

“I was only trying to do my best at proving the others... and, probably, myself too... that I’m not self-centered.”

“Oh yeah? Hah! Is that so?” Bullet snickered. “And so, succeeded? To whom though, please tell me, dear? A dangerous, crazy, over-emotional, vengeful, moody, b*tchy mare, that’s who you are...”

The mare shifted her gaze slowly from the left side of the boat, looking into the eyes of the female pegasus:

“I’ve already heard such a phrase once from one pony...”

“I bet you have. I’ve already listened to your whole conversation with him once again, though... I doubt one can call *it* a conversation in the conventional sense. Just like how one can call *him* a *pony*. But I’m happy to please you, I ain’t him.”

“That’s for sure,” Sky played it up.

“It’s just this phrase, it... describes you just perfectly well, in my opinion!”

“Less sarcasm, Bullet.”

“Sarcasm? Where did you find sarcasm in my words?”

“Everypony used to describe me differently when I was alive... And I put up with it.”

“You put up? Oh, no, no, no, my dear, excuse me, I don’t think so! You never put up with anything in your life. You would arrange things exactly the way *you* wanted it to be. You... you are... a darn freak of nature, that’s who you are! You shouldn’t have existed in the first place!”

“Still not making it personal, huh?” Sky sneered.

“Shut up!” Bullet said and turned back to me. To her. Turned back to her. “How did you live everything that happened to you, huh? How? How did you manage to survive? Tell me, my dear. Would you kindly share your secret with me?”

“It seems that I’m a pony who’s lucky as f*ck, huh?”

“Mhm. Oh, you don’t say! You must’ve dropped dead in *three weeks* after you left your home but no! You lived some few more months... F*ck it, *three weeks*! I don’t know a single pony apart from you who managed to work herself from an almost fully healthy mare to death into a f*cking cripple in some bucking twenty days! And after that to get back to a normal life as well, and also... by *such* a way? Seriously? No, excuse me, my dear, but I detest such deus ex machinas! You must’ve died after three weeks there and then, period! That is the right finale for your life! That is the kind of death you deserved!”

“I... I...”

Holy crap, I’ve never seen Golden Bullet so furious in my whole life... in life... Okay, don’t concentrate on it, Paradox. That’s not the best time to quibble over words even when these words are your own. And my friend was still going on at her best:

“You must’ve died like *that*! You must’ve been regretting not thinking about yourself with all your heart while we would carry you with Sky on this bucking boat! But you lived. You f*cking lived it. How come? You were running in a few days as if nothing had happened. It’s

peeing me off so much! If you died back then, it would be much better for everycreature, including we, you and others. F*cking bisexual mare..."

"Just like you," Sky grinned, while pushing Bullet with his shoulder.

"Is that actually true?" the mare asked with a much more brightened up tone.

"The best time to raise the topic, Golden, as if there was no other better one..." Bullet muttered.

"So you also... like fillies?"

"It's all 'cause I ain't very lucky with stallions," she replied to the passenger with irritation.

"Neither is she with mares," Sky smirked.

"Hey! Keep your mouth shut! You weren't allowed to speak up!" the yellow female pegasus told Sky.

"So if we decide to make it a threesome... He-he, that's funny... Technically no one will cheat on anypony else. Cool, huh?" the passenger said.

Wait a second. She was talking about a threesome and no one cheats on anypony? Excuse me but... how? How is that supposed to work?

"Don't you even dare thinking I'd agree to somersault with you in bed!"

"I could insert some barbed remark with a just made up by me term of 'solipsistic self-chauvinism' now, but I'm not going to," the yellow pegasus said.

"Then keep your bucking mouth close!" Bullet attacked him.

"Why not though? Heh-heh. You're a funny filly and a pretty nice one too."

"Yeah, keep dreaming! No way I shall! I know it perfectly well what happens to those who told you 'yes' on this one!"

Okay, now Bullet did look scary! So terrifying, in fact, my skin would've crawled if it was mine. I mean, if it had been skin. Like in the real world, not here. Well, you got it, I guess. Then I realized the smile on the face of the mare vanished and its place was then occupied by a half-opened due to some great shock mouth. And I bet her eyes widened a little too because of the yellow mare's harsh words.

"...W-what?" she mumbled.

Bullet kept silence for some time and then asked:

"What's happened to those who you loved? Those who were dear to you? Those you knew... who were your friends? The best, one can say even, the only friends? Could you give me an answer?"

"I... no! But... but I did...!"

"You may have helped some ponies you hardly knew. But you still weren't able to help those who you knew quite well... and who were actually important to you."

"I... B-but I...!"

"Are you going to deny my words? Unlikely," Bullet shook her head. "You are smarter than you appear at first sight. Besides, you're like an opened book lying in front of me now."

"I... what else could I've done?!" I realized the mare started crying out of despair by the changed voice and the now blurred picture.

"Well, I don't know... to stay at home, for example. Forever. Till the rest of your life. You can't lose your friends if you don't have any. Or run away but without getting into other creatures' business. Like, I mean, any business at all. Or not to be overly supportive to ponies you hardly know. Or just not to wander around the Wasteland and settle down in one place instead. Or help others for bottle caps only. Or not to help anypony at all. See, how many alternatives there are?"

Bottle caps? Maybe... pistol rounds? It must've been a slip of her tongue, bottle caps are used only as a replacement for chips in poker...

"I could not! I... can't live like this! Knowing you refused to help somepony and blaming yourself for it till the rest of your life? Thinking of yourself as of the last turd 'cause you refused to aid those who were begging for your help? Is this the life you reckon 'normal'? Is this the kind of life you consider to be the 'right one'?"

"Were you often begged about it, though?"

"Yes, I was, sometimes."

"But not most of the time. You see how interesting things turn out to be in the end? You may have not dwelled on it a lot, but those whom you helped rarely asked for your help in the first place. You would often give a no-strings-attached help 'cause... well... I guess you'd take it as duty of your own? Because of moral remorse? Because you thought everypony should act like this? You can answer my 'why?' question better than me."

"So you're saying I was wrong about it, wasn't I?!"

"Well, I didn't say this. I just find it funny how you cannot stay indifferent in some extreme cases of injustice, even if they have absolutely nothing to do with you directly. I must admit you have a rather interesting mindset. A psychological trauma from the childhood? Or its source derives from somewhere even much deeper?"

"So you're saying my mindset is rotten?!"

"Don't make up things I didn't say, my dear."

"I... I... but I can't live the other way! I just... don't know how!"

"Like, to buy yourself a house in some small town, for example, to go in the gunmaker's craft and to start some routine life?"

"No way I could've done it! Doing the same thing over and over again? Living the type of life I had before? And to live in ceaseless remorse for what you could've done, yet never have?"

"Just like in the example with helping other ponies?"

"Yes!"

"Whom you ain't really familiar with?"

"Why does it matter?! Probably that's the thing: I'm afraid of routine. I'm scared of accepting the kind of life that makes sure the next day is gonna be equally lousy, senseless and sucking like the present one. That's why I ran away from my home! This is why I got used to seize the days! Because in this case you get hope. A hope for a better future, for a second chance, for redemption... whatever! Everypony must believe in something. And I did find it for myself eventually what there was sense to believe in. And I sincerely believed in it too. Because otherwise I would've simply blown my brains out out of despair."

"Very touching," Sky noticed. "Maybe you should've become a writer after all? Who knows how things would have turned in the end in this case."

"By tearing about the Wasteland day after day you're automatically signing for a short life," Bullet noticed.

"Perhaps so, but why is it necessarily a bad thing? I mean, what I'm trying to say is... I heard that one can divide all the ponies in two groups: the ones who would prefer a long and a slow-paced routine life without adventures or any great disturbance and the ones who would choose a short but action-packed one even if not always with nice things. But there's no way I could've chosen the first option! It's... it's like... I'd been put into prison till the rest of my life!"

"Wow, now these are the words I was curious to hear from you," Sky said.

"Sure, but it's not what we're talking about right now but rather 'bout often irrationality of her actions," Bullet said to Sky.

“So, in other words I shouldn’t have saved a single creature according to you?! Should’ve doomed them all for a certain death, is this correct?!”

“If there’s your life on the other side of the scales, then most likely, yes,” Bullet said.

“This is exactly what selfishness is!”

“We all have our own crosses to bear...” Sky said mysteriously.

“...But! There’s a thin line between a martyr and a fool.” Bullet finished the end of the aphorism for him. “And to put it bluntly... I don’t know who you are. You somehow succeeded at being both.”

“Oh no! So that’s what the whole thing’s all about!” the passenger put her front hooves onto her knees and laid her face on it. “No, no, no, no, no!”

“I saw you bluffing as well as going all-in. And I must admit it: I was impressed. The only problem with going all-in every single time is... in the end you always lose everything.”

“No-o... If I weren’t such an egoist... If only... If I only didn’t want to prove it so desperately to the others... nothing of this would’ve happened. No! Oh, Discord! No! If I really did care about them... if I would do what *they* really needed rather than what, as I used to reckon mistakenly, could prove I’m not thinking only about myself... Oh, Celestia... I am the only one to blame for what happened to my friends! No-o-o! I never wanted...! If only I could... Oh, Luna, no way, no way, no, no, no...! I killed them. It was me who killed my own friends! I am the only one to blame! All of my friends died because of me...! Oh, Celestia Almighty... No, no, no, no, no...!”

I didn’t know exactly what this mare has done in her past to make her remorse escalate to such a degree. Okay, so she killed her own friends? But, excuse me, it’s a pretty vague description of things. Was she under Phyco when she was shooting them dead with a minigun or cut their heads with a fire axe? Did she falsely accused them with what they hadn’t done and killed them for it and the truth was revealed only when it was too late? Or is she reckoning herself guilty not actually being one and trying her best to find some artificial reason to start hating herself? I could’ve come up with a hundred more similar potential cases of the passenger’s remorse and could only guess the true one. But I tended to lean towards the last alternative. No, really! Correct me if I’m being wrong here, but wouldn’t the whole boat trip be just one ceaseless repentance from the beginning in the first two scenarios? I doubt such thoughts would’ve even come into the mare’s head if Bullet hadn’t been so committed to remind her of her own failures in the past. Anyway, I felt terribly sorry for her. She was crying having burrowed her muzzle into her knees, her crossed front hooves, lying on it, to be more precise, detesting herself, belaboring herself with curses, being torn apart by ghosts of the past. And I heartily wanted to hug her, to embosom her and calm down, say that everything would be okay. If only I could I would’ve done it... But having been trapped inside her body I wasn’t able to do it and was nothing more but a bodiless watcher.

“Congratulations, Bullet, now you’ve done it,” sarcastically noticed Sky.

“Done what?”

“Made her hate herself for the life lived.”

Bullet had a look at the mare.

“Hey! Chin up already. It’s not really all that bad.”

The passenger lifted up her head.

“Not all that bad? Not all that bad?! All of my friends died because of me, and you’re telling me it’s not all that bad!!!”

“Well... there is some truth to it, indeed. But you’re dead now too.”

“I... I thought I would meet them... here... in this place. Hoped for it with my whole heart. I was wrong.”

"And you're going to meet them."

"Not here, though," Sky said. "And not all of them."

"But most of them at least. Pretty soon. Actually, this is where we're going now."

"I know, I know, it's just that everything seems... so... wrong."

"'Strange' would be a better word," Bullet corrected. "But I get it, what you mean."

"I'll... I'll forget everything, won't I? Is it how it normally works?"

"She will forget," said Bullet thoughtfully to Sky rather than her.

"Will forget the past."

"The future."

"The present."

"All the parallel worlds."

"And all the alternative ones."

"Will forget this place."

"And our conversation."

"Till we remind her about it."

"And if we'll remind her. Will forget her world."

"Her life."

"But not the lessons learned."

"Her friends."

"But not her relationships with them."

"Oh well, if only there was a way for one not to forget all of it..." the passenger said thoughtfully.

"There *are* rules," Sky said.

"Even for such ponies as you."

"No exceptions."

"It's better this way. Thus, you live easier."

"Yeah, as if."

"I can lightly reassure you 'Carpe Diem' is not going to be your day-to-day philosophy anymore."

"Even your friends are gonna be the same."

"Almost."

"This is his choice now."

Wait! His choice?! Did Sky just said "his" not "her"? Wha-a-a-a-at? She is a mare, isn't she? Did I perhaps miss something or misunderstand?

"And you... could you tell me about my future life?"

"Does it matter?" Sky asked. "You're going to forget our conversation soon enough."

"I know. But, I really need to know this!"

"You'll be a pegasus. A male one." He replied.

O-o-oh... So that's why Sky said it was 'his choice'...

"Brown body."

"Yet the color of the mane will be the same."

"Cool, isn't it? There's something that doesn't change."

"As well as the character of hers."

"But for the result of the mistakes made."

"And the lessons learned."

"Hm... the eyes will be of a similar color too."

"I doubt *this* is what she's interested in."

"Still a lover for mares."

"Hm... is it a constant or a variable in our case?"

"Will get into quantum mechanics."

"Will be an unreplaceable engineer."

"Will be making inventions."

"Will be repairing flying cars."

"An engineer? Will repair flying cars? Holy moly!"

"I agree with you it may sound absurd, but it's true."

The mare kept silence for some time, then she asked a rather unexpected question:

"So what should I do? I mean... with my new life in order not to, well... not to repent in the end?"

"Live," said Bullet.

"Create," said Sky.

"Love."

"Joke."

"Help."

"Save."

"Suffer."

"Feel pain."

"Kill."

"Avenge."

"Drink."

"Repair."

"Fly."

"Walk."

"Be bored."

"Have fun."

"Share."

"Pay."

"Get used to."

"Compassion."

"Forgive."

"Save yourself."

"Travel."

"Hope."

"Dream."

"Learn from your own mistakes..."

"...And do better."

The boat bumped a wooden pier.

"We've arrived."

"We've arrived," Goldens said in unison.

"And please, try not to fail me this time," Bullet added.

But the passenger took some of her time before getting off. She spent quite some time looking at her front hooves what I found to be a rather weird action. But at least I finally managed to find out the color of her fur. Well, in fact... not really. Well, shoot, it was hard to tell exactly due to the lighting! The thing is, it was some very light shade that's what I was absolutely sure of.

“So unusual...” the mare lifted her front hooves in the air and slowly moved them around, then inspected them and smoothed one over the other. Almost how I was doing it. Now this is getting eerie... “It’s been so little time, and I’ve already forgotten how they looked once.”

“These aren’t your hooves...” Bullet started saying.

“...Just only what my brain remembered as its ‘right’ version, I know. It’s just... So fascinating...!”

After that the mare lowered her hooves, and her look became somewhat vacant, moving somewhere past Goldens still cautiously staring into the eyes of their passenger. She kept silent for some time and then spoke:

“Before I go through the gate... I’d like to ask you one question.”

“Yes?” Bullet asked, though sounded as if she’d already known the question the mare was going to ask her. Still, it’s quite likely to be that way.

“After when I... I died... I had some sort of a vision... I... saw the future. Quite a distant one. There was one group of ponies... well, I guess, you know, who I’m talking about.”

“Mhm,” Bullet nodded indifferently in agreement. Hey! One second! What about giving some extra details?!

“And I wanted to ask... what I saw... is it actually the future? Is this what everything is going to be like?”

Damn, she cut her thought halfway through! Was she talking about... us? About Catastrophe, Shadow, Rusty, Nuclear, Ezimthenda, about... me? Or about whom if not? Not about the Mane Six, that’s for sure. Which “group of ponies” exactly were they talking about?! Goldens, could you tell it in some more details? Apparently no... Well, I guess I’m gonna ask the pegasi twins this question in person when I see them next time. They ain’t gonna escape my interrogation, that’s for sure...

The pegasi did not reply for some time as if thinking over her words and pondering on what should be said and what should be not.

“A famous pony once said...” Sky started talking.

“And a famous pony *shall* say,” Bullet corrected him a bit.

“I may reach the mountaintop...”

“...but I fear I shall never visit the valley below.”

“Okay. I get it.”

And I did not! I bet it’s some sort of a famous aphorism I’ve never heard anywhere before. Goldens, please, would you kindly decipher it for stupid ponies? It’s gonna take the eternity for me to get its meaning by myself!

“You might’ve never told it anyone... you might’ve never thought about it consciously either... But almost since your childhood you used to hate your life and subliminally wanted to die,” said Bullet. “Well, as you can see, your wish is granted. You also wanted to live your life differently, to start everything from scratch. And this wish is about to come true in a bit. Even though you’re one Tartarus of a lucky pony, but, trust me, your luck has nothing to do with it. Think of it as of your “second chance”. A present for you. A chance to live a happy life. Without making the same mistakes from the past. Don’t miss it.”

“Tha... Thanks...”

“Pf! As if I were somepony to thank for it. We did not go back in time and rewrote your life history, did we?”

“And now imagine for a moment, Bullet, if we had!”

“Ho-ho! Now that would be something!”

The passenger stood up, leaned over a side of the pier, got up to it quickly and moved up along the same staircase I was sitting on, slowly. She kept looking around: the eternal starry sky

and the enormous number of working lighthouses everywhere. Goldens moored off and began to move away slowly from the wooden pier at the bottom of the lighthouse.

“Some ponies just love to overcomplicate things...” Bullet murmured. By the way, the acoustics here was equally good as when I was floating on the boat with Goldens.

“Are you talking about me?” Sky asked.

“I’m talking about *her*.”

“Well everypony must live their own catharsis, keep that in mind.”

“I wish catharsis was universal.”

“Would it be fun then, though?”

“I dunno, but it surely would be less of a pain in the ass for me...”

“Nevertheless, I’m still being surprised with you, sis.”

“M-m-m? Why’s that?”

“You know... if I were her, I would never expect to hear *such* a speech from my... ahem... ‘heiress’.”

“You think I overdid it?”

“Yep. Also your ‘claims’, to be fair, looked, he-he, quite funny from other’s point of view.”

“‘Funny’, you say?”

“Well, it’s somewhat irrational, cynical, and... ahem, somewhat... masochistic?”

“Fine, you may stop here! At least it’s much more logical than hearing such a speech from your ‘testator’! That’s why I don’t see any harm in my need to speak out as well as her being a punching bag for it.”

“Actually, the exact opposite claims would be much more logical to me.”

“I disagree. Since I’m a bit more experienced in the subject in this case.”

“Factually – yes, practically – not always.”

“Anyway, as I’ve already said, I think she did deserve it, that’s why I don’t see any reason why I should apologize.”

“Yeah... Apparently self-flagellation might take pretty peculiar forms here in Limbo... Or is it just because somepony’s simply jealous?”

“Oh, shut up already!”

Judging by the movements of the head and the body, I guess, the mare was about to say something after the twins but still hesitated. Then she got up the nerve and shouted the couple floating away from the lighthouse:

“Wait! The last question! I wanted to ask about...”

“...About your immortal female friend?” Bullet finished ahead of her.

“Yes. Has she... has she been here?! Has she gone through the gate?!”

“It’s funny you asked about her in particular,” Sky said.

“I could’ve asked you to be more precise about your female friend from which particular world we are talking about but there’s very little sense in it, am I right? I don’t think you’re interested in hearing about the destiny of a mare you’ve never been acquainted with. So... yes, she’s already been here,” the mare opened her mouth but didn’t have enough time to speak out. “And preventing your next question as well: yes, all of your friends have been here too. You’re the last one.”

The passenger remained standing with her mouth open, and the twin pegasi started to sing the exact same song they performed for me, but now it didn’t sound as forced and unnatural as before. Bullet sang the first couplet ‘*Row, row, row your boat gently down the stream merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily. Life is but a dream*’ Sky sang the rest after her, then it was her again and so on. And the filly spent quite some time after that looking at Goldens’ boat slowly

shrinking in the distance. She moved her look to the stars for just one brief moment, then back – neither the boat, nor Sky, nor Bullet were anywhere to be found. Then she looked around a few more times, sighed and moved along the marble staircase leading her to the entrance to the lighthouse. The mare approached giant brass doors. I couldn't get it why those were made so tall: it could let just a pony through in its width but its height would be enough to let a Cerberus through. She beheld some pictures etched on the doors and as a result – I did too. And that's when I was stupefied – Rusty Spanner was engraved on it! Well, it was some stallion who resembled him a lot, to be more precise, standing full face, side-on and half-profile who didn't even have a face so one can't say for sure it was Spanner by looking at these pictures. But there were some interesting etched pictures literally shouting out loud it was him indeed on the other side of the door – those were some engravings of machineries, and most of them did look a lot like those built by Rusty. There were some unique guns, flying cars... and even the original all-terrain vehicle looking just like Vega-4! And some other an almost definite proof of my guess – a cogwheel with number '63' in the middle. It was the number of the bunker Rusty lived half of his life in. Yeah, no doubts, it was him...

"Unbelievable..." the mare said, looking at and touching the engraving. Yeah, unbelievable, you don't say... After that she looked around and sighed: "So... it looks like this is where one of my adventures ends and another begins. Heh, funny... why I am so afraid to make this step now, I wonder? Okay, fine... everything's fine... All's good, the bad times are left behind... Everything is going to repeat itself there... And everything's gonna be different. Everything will be better... Much better. Yes, definitely! And I'm going to meet my friends there. That's what matters. Even though I may not remember them. But that's not even that important. Oh my...! Okay, fine... Pluck up some courage, will ya. It's time for me to lead at least something to the end. I've been literally within an inch of death a few times in my life... now the time to be born has come," the mare set the door ajar. A dazzling white light got out, so bright, in fact, it was impossible to spot anything behind it. 'Well... I might get luckier in my future life. Maybe, I won't have to suffer as much as I had to in this one. Perhaps I will be happy. I'd want to believe so much in it. And I will! Well, in this case... Happy Birthday!"

The passenger breathed out, went through the brass doors into the dazzling whiteness, the doors closed behind her with a particular sound, launching a quickly decaying echo in the background, and that's when the vision ended. I was still sitting in the exact same place where I was overrun by a sudden vision. But this place felt different now: like if it were just a small piece of *that* place. A lighthouse was here too, though in the singular, as well as the sea, the dark night... There were no stars though. And everything was covered in thick dark fog, as if pointing out that this place is just a small shatter of the Limbo... Tartarus... the world, I'm never going to be able to study or understand, no matter what I do. I sniffled and rubbed my nose with my left hoof – a few red dirty lines appeared on the grey fur. Bleeding... nothing unusual, though, just like the last time. What am I even surprised with? I got up. The side effects of the superposition of memories were over (apart from bleeding nose, however), and I was able to keep going. In any case, I wasn't going to stay here for too long.

I reached incredibly tall brass doors of the lighthouse. What's peculiar though they... looked different. It was definitely some other lighthouse. These doors did not carry a picture of a pony, gryphon, zebra, dragon or any other sentient being. Those only carried some simple Art-Deco pattern: straight lines and half-round curves. But apart from the pattern there was something else that caught my attention. The lines on the right door made it into spires and buildings I've seen many times – those were definitely the towers of Canterlot. One could find the palace itself too. The buildings didn't look abandoned and destroyed the way we saw them with my friends a few weeks ago. They were intact and in good condition. But what was even

more remarkable, two figures hovered above this stylized 'Canterlot': the Crescent and the Sun. On the left door though (apart from similar patterns of lines) one could easily make out a passenger zeppelin moving towards Equestria's ex-capital. And... that's it. Nothing else was engraved on these doors at all!

I looked around, not knowing why I was doing it. Perhaps I was expecting to see something new on the horizon or in the sky? Anyway, my expectations were pointless. I sighed deeply and having pulled my wits together started talking to myself quieter than I always would but still louder than whisper:

"Very well... so Goldens did give me answers to some of my questions. Thanks a lot that is, indeed, but the thing is I only got even more questions now. Who was this pony? Why neither Bullet nor Sky addressed her by her name at least once? Why were there millions of lighthouses in that vision and only one here? I understand far too little now, to tell you the truth... Bullet did say something like 'She won't remember this conversation until and if we remind her of it', so in other words... if Sky didn't remind his sister of it... my brain wouldn't have switched into a superposition and I wouldn't have recalled... But the mare they were getting to the lighthouse... turned into Rusty! Like, I'm absolutely sure about it. It was his inventions that were on the doors of the lighthouse! And even his own Bunker's number – sixty-three... I might believe in coincidences in general, but this is not the case. It looks like Goldens wanted me to see who Rusty was in his past life. But then... how can *I* remember it? If only... No way. This can't be it! If only... I am Rusty. If I were Rusty in my past life. Or what's more possibly not in the last one past but in one not too distant by time from present me. Is this why these visions are called 'superpositions'? If I've already lived Rusty's life not so long ago, so theoretically I can remember things... that haven't happened yet? Something that has happened with us in the future? Ouch! No, no, enough thinking about it, Paradox! It's all way too difficult and complexed for you to realize! On the other hoof, however, zebras' philosophy of the cosmos states this as well... Okay, no, enough is enough! I'll drive myself insane if I'm gonna think equally as much about things I'm not able to understand!"

Not entirely sure why but having said that I slightly stamped my right hoof. Most likely to give myself a boost of confidence. Or maybe Euthanasia's right and I am crazy. Okay, stop! You must concentrate on the practical problems. I was just ready to open the doors when I froze in uncertainty. So, this is it? This is the borderline of oblivion? I go through the gate and I'll be born again in a different body without any memories whatsoever? But I doubted a lot. Firstly, there was Canterlot and a zeppelin instead of a pony's features and silhouette on the doors. Secondly, this place felt different: foreign, not the way the Sea of a Thousand Lighthouses felt like. And we also had a much poorer talk with Goldens even compared to theirs and the mare's from this shatter of a recollection one. Or what if they simply didn't wanna explain everything once again to me and made me remember my past explanation of things? But was Bullet actually planning to cause this superposition of memories of mine in the first place? I mean, if Sky hadn't reminded her or if she had decided not to sing the song... I would've not remembered literally anything! And would've walked through the lighthouse's gates without a shade of doubt. And would've forgotten everything? No, this doesn't seem right. Maybe I'm still gonna be reborn as a different pony after I go through the gates after all? But then why did Goldens even start this whole conversation with me in the first place? If I hadn't seen the recollection... I wouldn't be anxious about anything! And now I felt my elbows and my knees trembling with fear. Is *this* better than ignorance? But on the other hoof it's also not a pony engraved on the lighthouse... Looks like I actually won't find it out before I go through the gate.

I opened the door wide. And then a dazzling white light hit me making me narrow my eyes. The unknown. This is it, right in front of me. I used to often have troubles with falling

asleep after that backing operation because of this feeling. The feeling of the unknown. Realizing my consciousness is about to go away someplace it won't be able to control the body for a few hours, where it will be absolutely helpless and where anything can happen to me and I... And I won't have any means to influence it anyhow. A trip of short oblivion, every time going for which I was very, very afraid to lose contact with reality. But this is not the case with superposition of memories. And I felt this lighthouse was nothing more but a portal that would move me to some other place. To some kind of a zeppelin? Into some Canterlot? Now it was time to find out! The time has come for me to make my own leap of faith.

“Well, here we go!”

And I walked through the gate.