

Author's note: Much thanks to Lucky for his help pre-reading for me and catching all of my horrendous mistakes and inconsistencies. If you all haven't checked out his fic ["Before the Reign" over at Equestria Daily](#), then you definitely should. I mean it. Go read it right now. What, are you still reading this? Why? Ignore my pointless drivel and go check out his brilliant work of science fiction and military intrigue this instant!

-Mbulsh

CHAPTER SIX

Investigation, Day 2 (cont.)

As I stepped in to the Ponyville Police Department for the second time in my life, I was once again met with that oppressively quiet atmosphere. And it had seemed to me that scarcely a pony had moved since last I left. They all still sat at their desks, pouring over their work. I could hardly blame them; there was little left for them to do aside from their normal daily duties. At least, that was all they could do until I walked in of course. Today was my day, so to speak. The day for me to prove myself to the local police, gain their trust, and let them into a part of the investigation. Gaining their trust would be instrumental to my plan. They had to believe they were as much a part of this investigation as I was, after all. That would make it easier to pull the wool over their eyes. I expelled a quiet breath as I closed the door behind me and walked in. It was time to begin.

"I am now prepared," I announced the the entire room, "to present my Profile."

This garnered inquisitive looks from the room, but everypony stopped what they were doing and looked up at me. They were hopeful looks, I noted. Hopeful that I could possibly help. I moved to the opposite end of the large office-esque room so that I could be seen and heard clearly by each pony present.

"Alright listen carefully." It was time to put on a small show. I looked down to Blaise, who was standing off to my side. *Watch and learn, little buddy*, I thought. *This is how you deal with the local PD*. Looking back up, I addressed the room. "Many of you are probably wondering how exactly we intend to help. Our place here is not so much a physical form of help, but rather, intellectual."

This earned me a few raised eyebrows, but I ignored them. They would soon see how much use I could be here.

"We were called in to advise on this case," I continued, "by Princess Luna. Our job here was to investigate every scene, review evidence, construct a Profile of our killer, and present it to you. The purpose of our Profile is to help you narrow down suspects, and if possible, set you on track towards new and unseen suspects. The Profile, by itself, does very little. How you use

it, however, could determine how quickly you catch the pony responsible.”

Interest now, a few perked ears. They would listen, I decided. “It would help if you all took out notebooks and wrote down what I am about to say.”

There was a scrabble for notebooks as each officer opened drawers and grabbed writing implements. Every unicorn horn in the room was lit immediately with light telekinetic spells and they all readied their writing. I took a moment to ensure they were all paying attention before continuing. As I did so, Blaise spoke up. I had given him this small part of my speech. He needed the practice addressing crowds, so I felt it wise to do so.

“It’s really important to remember that our Profile isn’t a sure-fire method,” he told them. “It can guide your hooves in the right direction, but it is not perfect. Not every part of it will be spot-on, and you should always remember that. But it will help, even so.”

I nodded to him before continuing.

“We began with victimology, or rather, the study of the victims the killer chose. By studying these, we discover what the killer prefers. When looking at the victim spread here, however, the killer’s preference appears to be all over the place. Various kinds of ponies, as well as species. Note the dragon. Each victim is a young mare, yes, but the population of Ponyville is predominantly young mares in population. This tells me that there isn’t a specific type of pony he is after in terms appearance. These victims were not chosen by look. Also note the lack of sexual abuse. Our killer didn’t choose these victims for that. These victims were chosen for a different reason.”

I tapped the board behind me, and raised a marker with my magic. I wrote out the words that had accompanied each of the bodies. Gluttony, Vanity, Pride, Lust. They had pretty much been burned into my memory.

“And this is the reason. At least the reason he gives us. He perceives each of his victims as having a great sin or shortcoming, and that is what triggers his need to kill. But,” I added, holding up a hoof, “that is not the absolute true reason for it. The true reason, the reason that perhaps he himself doesn’t even realize, is shown to us through each kill.”

I thought back to the photos and scenes. I had gone over them many many times in my head, and through careful scrutiny, I had come to this conclusion.

“The purpose, fellow colleagues,” I added that last bit to keep them on par with me, “is the act of killing in and of itself. If you look to each of the photos, and coroner reports, evidence suggests that each pony died slowly and painfully. Our killer drew out their deaths and made them suffer unnecessarily. This narrows down our Profile to a very specific type that we call a ‘sadistic killer.’ A sadistic killer focuses on the pain he inflicts on his victims, and nothing more.

To him, the kill is more arousing and exciting than anything else. And now, look at the scenes.”

It was a rhetorical command; nopony actually had the pictures on them. I had made sure of that.

“The scenes were well controlled by our killer,” I pointed out, “and even if the victims put up a struggle, there is little evidence to suggest that it was much of a struggle anyways. This tells us a great many things. Firstly, our killer is strong and fast. He can subdue and torture grown mares with little effort. Secondly, he knows the areas. He knew when and where to strike, and was able to come and go largely unnoticed. This means he’s studied the area and his victims. Thirdly, and most importantly, he knows his victims. He knows them well. This is also evidenced by...”

I tapped the board with a hoof.

“...these. These messages are interesting as well. One might even say they are the most important part of each scene. Not because of the words that were written, but the very fact that they were written at all. This shows us the most important thing: how much our killer studied his victims. He was close to them. One could go as far as to say he was friends with them, or at least he thought he was. And that brings us to our last bit of the profile. The way in which the bodies were staged after their deaths.” I began pacing. “In the case of Pinkie Pie, her face was covered after death. Rainbow Dash was placed in an almost angelic pose. And Rarity was made to look as though she were sleeping. This is important. This is *very* important. This tells us that after each kill, our killer felt remorse. He may have hated them just enough to kill them painfully, but a part of him is still emotionally attached to them.”

A pony to my left raised a hoof questioningly. I already knew what his question was going to be, but I allowed him to ask it anyway. The interaction between us would help build some trust.

“How does this help us actually find out who this pony is?” A perfectly valid question.

“It is very important,” I answered him. “Because our Profile will tell you how this pony behaves, what he may look like, and how you might find him.”

Raised eyebrows at this. Some ponies leaned forward with interest, and others displayed disdain. That was fine; we’d see how they felt when I was finished.

“I’ll start, then,” I continued, noting these looks. “We have a clear case of a sadistic killer. Statistically, sadists are male, between the ages of 20-35. A sadist is easily driven to anger by what are called ‘triggers.’ For him, the triggers are things he perceives as horrendous shortcomings. And he reacts violently and brutally. He punishes his victims for their sins by inflicting as much pain as he can before killing them. This tells us that he is strong. The lack of

struggling indicates that he is either a very strong pegasus or earth pony, or he is a magically skilled unicorn, able to subdue victims with little to no struggle. Because he is so closely personally tied to his victims, he probably sees them every day. He has studied them closely, so at the very least, he has access to their personal lives. Look first and foremost at friends and family, using this Profile to narrow them down. Make your way out from there, keeping in mind that this pony had to know them and know them well.”

I thought for a moment before continuing with the final part.

“There is one more thing,’ I said, “but it is not to be taken in to consideration as strictly as the other parts. This is where our study of criminal psychology gets a little fuzzy. It is clear from our perusal of the evidence that we can narrow down to a specific type of killer. However, my job is to help you narrow that down even further to help you find suspects. I can give you a statistical interpretation of this particular killer’s personality, but remember that this is in no way concrete.”

I paused to take a breath for a few moments before continuing with my last bit.

“Sadistic killers,” I said, “are easily prone to violent bouts of anger. However, we can tell from the evidence that this particular killer is extremely smart. He plans for his kills, leaves no evidence behind, and has been able to kill quickly without any trouble. As such, he has probably adapted to fit in to normal society well. This pony will be well-spoken, reserved at times, and possibly somewhat shy. But behind that demeanor lies a showman.” Once more I tapped board. “These messages are for us as much as they are for him. They display for all to see what he believes to be ideals. Even more so are the ways in which he has killed and staged his victims. Heavy usage of irony, as you can see. These are his way of taunting us, daring us to find him, and daring us to guess who his next victims are. If brought in for questioning, this pony will be confident that we will not know he is responsible. He will be calm and collected. He may even talk back to his questioners if he isn’t playing shy. Be on the lookout for these kinds of character traits.”

Well, that was it. This was our Profile, for them to use as they would.

“Are there any questions?” I asked

A pony towards the back raised a hoof. “How does th’ baby dragon have anythin’ ta do with this? There was no message left at that scene.”

“It’s difficult to believe,” I answered, “that there is more than one killer, so I would strike that notion from your heads right now. Killers of this magnitude rarely hunt in packs. In all likelihood, the dragon was simply in the wrong place at the wrong time. I think that the killer came back to the scene in an attempt to relive that particular kill by taking in the scene, and....” I trailed off, attempting to remember the name. “...Spike just happened to be there. The lack of

the a message just goes to show us that it was not a planned kill. I'm pretty sure that it was the same killer, and the most important thing for you right now is to stop focusing on our past victims, and start thinking about the victims that are to come. It's imperative that we try and catch this pony as soon as possible."

That seemed to answer his question, as he went back to writing in his notebook. I looked around expectantly to see if there were any more questions that needed to be answered, but all that was returned were either blank or satisfied stares. I nodded to everyone then, and wished them the best of luck. As I turned to leave, however, Blaise tugged at my sidesaddle bags. I looked down at him to ask him what he needed, and he told me he had to run off to the restroom for a bit, then dashed off before I could offer to hold his bags. Inwardly, I sighed. That could have been a perfect time to read through his notebooks, but perhaps there would be time for that later.. Shrugging, I made my way to the front entrance, past the rows of desks, the the waiting area near the front doors. I sat down, taking the weight off my hooves. Leaning back in the chair, I allowed my chin to rest in the crook of a forehoof, and fell into deep thought. We had finished the first phase of our little operation. I had gathered up all evidence the local police owned pertaining to the case and sent it back to headquarters. They would deal with processing and destruction. I had presented a Profile that was accurate to the best of my ability in an effort to speed along the suspect process. The local Police would catch the killer for us, and I would take him into custody. That left a few areas tied up. I needed to interview a few ponies around to ensure their knowledge of the case was fuzzy at best. I would also need to secure the bodies. I made a mental note to check in with the coroner and have the bodies sent to headquarters as well.

With any luck, I decided, we would be able to perform our cover silently, quickly, and without fail. I was worried, however, at the possibility of there being more victims. I frowned. There was going to be more. That was a fact that I could not deny. This killer was good, and even with a perfect Profile, we could not be sure how quickly we would find him. More bodies were going to turn up. That was good in its own way, however. More bodies meant more evidence, more chances for him to slip up. As wrong as it sounded, more bodies would be a help. I could only pray at this point that we wouldn't need the help.

"Excuse me?" A voice from above me snapped me from my thoughts. I whipped my head up to look at who had spoken. It was one of the police officers who had attended my short lecture.

"Yes?" I looked him up and down quickly. He was rather young, only a year or two younger than me. He had a roughly cut mane, with a forelock that hung down to his eyes. His dark yellow coat was well taken care of, though it appeared that he had not groomed in a few days. My eyes instinctively flicked to his cutie mark, which was a pen set upon a six-pointed gold star. I felt a small twinge in my stomach at that; it was very similar to a cutie mark I had once seen every day but hadn't in about a year. Shifting my gaze to his face, I studied his demeanor. He wore a tired but inquisitive look.

“Hi, I’m officer Scrawl.” He held out a hoof. “Well... most here know me as Ambrose. Though some of the officers around here like to call me ‘Amber.’” He laughed at the joke nervously.

I held up a hoof and tapped it to his, returning his greeting. “A pleasure, officer Scrawl.”

He laughed again. “No, the pleasure’s all mine, actually.” He shuffled his hooves awkwardly. “I uh... had a couple questions to ask you about the case, and your job. And it looks like you’re just waiting here, so I figured I might as well ask.”

“Ask away, then,” I answered, motioning for him to sit down. I wasn’t sure how many questions about my job that I could actually answer, but I figured I could entertain a few of them.

He pulled a chair out and sat down to the side. “Well... I was just wondering how many cases like this you’ve seen in your job. I know that agents at the CIA only get called in when things get too crazy. And I was also kind of wondering how it is you got your job.”

I expelled a short breath, tapping my chin. “In regards to your first question, I can’t really say that. Agency rules, you see? Suffice to say that I have reviewed quite a few cases that were... well, rather extreme in nature. Though I will admit, this is the first case I have come across that is so violent. As for your second question... I was recruited for my educational background.”

He leaned forward. “You were scouted? I hadn’t heard of many ponies getting admitted to the Agency that way.”

“It does happen.” More than one might think, actually. The CIA was always looking for new blood, ponies willing to do their bidding.

“I’ve been wondering how that worked. Jobs at the Agency always seemed like something I could see myself doing. I dunno, though.”

I looked at him out of the corner of my eyes. He reminded me a lot of myself. At least, myself back at my old desk job in Canterlot. He wasn’t a far cry from where I stood, I just had a couple years on him. Well, that, and a whole slew of missions from the Agency under my belt. Those had not been kind to me, though I am loathe to admit it.

“You don’t know?” I asked in a very neutral tone.

“It’s just this case...” He trailed off, not really knowing how to answer.

I nodded. “Let me guess. This is your first case, and you’ve only been working here for a

couple weeks.”

That nervous laugh again. “Was it really that obvious?”

It was. “You’re a couple years younger than me at the least. Your co-workers here have given you an embarrassing nickname, something many veterans do to new officers.” It was true. They’d done it to me. “By the looks of it, you haven’t properly groomed in a couple days. That tells me either you’ve been putting in a lot of overtime, or you’ve been fretting about this case for a while now.”

“You really nailed it, actually. I’ve been putting in a lot of overtime on this case.” He sighed. “I really want to get some work done here, finish it, and-”

“Make a name for yourself.” I finished his sentence for him. “You’ve got your sights set on a job at Canterlot, possibly in the CIA.”

“Right again. You really are a Profiler.”

Profiler. Now there was a word I hadn’t heard in a long time. That was the real name for what I did. But all this time it had been Patcher this and Patcher that. It was quite nice to hear the real title for once.

“Years of study make you an apt pony, that’s all. On that note, what area do you specialize in?”

“I did general Justice Studies at a local university near Manehattan. That was how I got my job here. I’m planning on specializing in the lab stuff, though. Fieldwork isn’t really my thing, I found out this week. Would it be possible to get into the CIA in that area? I don’t know how many lab techs they need up there.”

That wouldn’t have been very hard, I thought. There were always openings for lab assistants there. My own mentor had worked in the R&D labs in the main headquarters for many years and was always on the lookout for interns. I thought for a moment about how to answer this question, however. Part of me was ready to give the answer we were always supposed to give. The higher ups had always directed us to point possible recruits to the applications offices. It was almost a mandate; the CIA loved getting new helpers. But a part of me rebelled at the idea. Well, perhaps not. The entirety of me rebelled at the idea. Here was a perfectly willing young pony who wanted nothing more than to catch killers and kept the peace. I didn’t want to crush his hopes and dreams with stories of heinous crimes. But more than anything, I didn’t want to see him end up where I was; a tool of the government, thrust into a dark world to do its dirty work and then sworn to secrecy. No, I decided, the standard answer would not fare here. Blaise wasn’t around, I might as well speak my mind. At that thought, my eyes quickly flicked towards the direction Blaise had walked. Where was he, I wondered. He

certainly was taking an awful long time.

"I'm not entirely sure, actually," I lied to Scrawl. "I'm a field agent, so I don't really get to see the lab techs very often. But if you'd like some advice...?"

I continued at his nod. "Take it a case at a time, officer. I won't lie to you. This is a brutal set of murders. But all over Equestria, these sorts of things are happening all the time. And I can tell that this case is already wearing at you. I don't blame you. It's wearing at me, and I've only been a part of it for two days. Setting your sights high is a lofty goal. But buckling down and fighting the fight here? That's an admirable thing. I've seen too many law enforcement offices go down under the strain of being underfunded and understaffed. Places like this? They could use you. The CIA has applicants coming in daily. I'm sure that you could get a job there, but to be honest, places like Ponyville need ponies like you working for them."

He beamed at this comment. "That's really nice of you to say."

"I mean it," I answered. "And, one more thing..." I sighed. "I'm not going to lie to you. In all likelihood you'll find yourself working a case that's as hard as this one. Just be prepared for that."

Looking back, I'm surprised at how jaded that last comment had sounded. Jaded... how I hate that word. How I hate it when ponies use that word in tandem with descriptions of my personality. I like to think that I've managed to retain a hopeful outlook. For Celestia's sake, I'm writing this damn little book here in hopes of finally getting free. But now that I think about it, I begin to realize more and more that this job has turned my thoughts towards cynicism. I dislike many things about the way that this country is run. Or rather, I dislike many things about the way this country is actually run behind the sunny facade of two benevolent princesses. And knowing that so many things in our history have been covered up with sickeningly sweet stories and patchwork lies does not help my opinion of our current government. I dislike what it has made me. But enough about that. Perhaps later there will be time to write about this. Time to put this back in its little box in the back of my mind, and save it for later.

Officer Ambrose Scrawl thanked me for my time as I stood, telling him that I had to go. Out of the corner of my eye, I had seen Blaise coming back from his lengthy trip to the restroom, and I decided I should probably halt that conversation before he listened in. Scrawl replaced his chair in its place along the wall and went back to his desk just as Blaise walked up beside me.

"Sorry about that, Six," he said. "Lunch wasn't really agreeing with me."

"We'd best get going, then," I answered. "We have one last stop to make before we go back to the farm."

We left the muted atmosphere of the Police Department just as the sun was beginning to

touch the horizon.

As we entered the morgue of Ponyville General Hospital, I was once again reminded of why I disliked medical facilities. It was the color. It had always been the color. So blindingly white. It reminded me of the lobby area of the Canterlot branch of the CIA. Every inch of the floors, walls, and ceiling is always so clean, and the air of the place always has a sterile smell to it. Hospitals are the same way. Always so damn white. No matter how much death or disease rolled through a hospital, it was always cleaned up in a neat and orderly fashion.

So it was with a frown that I pushed through the double doors and stepped into the morgue. I looked around distastefully at the clean room, each wall lined with small doors that stored bodies. The tables around the room were all full metal, which had been shined to an almost blinding extent. When the door latched shut behind us, a head snapped up from under one of the tables. An earth pony had been cleaning a spot on the floor. She stepped out to see who had disturbed her and I finally got a good look at her. She was white in color, almost as blindingly white as the walls around us, with a very light pink mane and tail. She wore a simple nurse's hat that covered her long mane, which had been tied up in a bun. A quick perusal of her attractive buttocks gave me her cutie mark, which was a red cross; a symbol that stuck out in contrast to her milky white coat.

She looked us over once, and nodded when she saw the patch over my mark. "Can I help you?"

"Are you.... Nurse Redheart?" I recalled her name from the coroner signature from our evidence.

"Yes, that's me." she leaned against the shiny table, a tired look in her eyes.

So this was the coroner. I looked her over once more and noted that she seemed very stressed. She had bags under her eyes and despite the fact that she was smiling at us, it was a very strained smile. Her bun, which I'm sure at some point today had been done up well was beginning to sag and stray hairs were popping out. I briefly reflected on her before continuing our conversation. Aside from the few policemen who had investigated each scene, this young mare had come into contact with more evidence than anypony else. She had handled the bodies, and performed the autopsies. As such, she was a primary target for the Patch. In essence, she knew too much. I would need to discern what she knew, and if it was a possible threat.

"Then you're the coroner who drew up the reports for the string of recent murders?"

She sighed. "Yes, I am. Truly awful things, let me tell you."

"I'm here to ask you a few questions." My heart went out to her. This seemed like such a nice town. Or rather, it had been, until this happened. She seemed nice, too. I sincerely hoped I wouldn't have to kill her.

"Everything I have to say was drawn up in the reports I sent to the police. I don't know what I could possibly tell you now."

"I mostly have some questions about the bodies, and a few inquiries as to your opinions. I won't take up much of your time. I know this must be taxing for you."

She slumped against the table, her legs giving way. She seemed so drained. "I'm sorry... It's my job to deal with this sort of thing on a daily basis, but these murders..." she trailed off, biting her lip. I thought she might cry right then and there. "...they're like nothing I've ever seen. I'll be glad when this is well over. I'm ready to put it all behind me."

That was a good sign. Perhaps silencing her would not be necessary. "Tell me then, nurse, about the dragon."

She shuddered. "I don't even want to think about that one. There was so much of him gone it was impossible to even begin piecing him back together. I could hardly get anything off of him."

"In your professional opinion, what happened to him?" I was genuinely curious.

"I have no idea," she replied. "It looked to me like he'd simply been torn apart by an explosion. Best answer I could give you is that it was a magical death. I don't know of anything that is strong enough to rip through scales like that..."

I nodded. "And what of the others? Anything strange or different that you didn't put in your reports? Any small detail you didn't see fit to record?"

Even through her exhaustion she managed to give me a very pointed look. "I am a thorough pony, mister. I didn't leave a single thing out."

"I didn't mean to insult your job, miss Redheart," I said, holding my hooves up defensively. "These are standard questions I have to ask."

"Oh, I know. I'm getting short with everybody around here. I haven't slept in a while." She rubbed her eyes with a forehoof. "My shift is up soon, and I'm not sticking around for overtime tonight, I'm afraid. I'll do more bad than good here right now."

"Of course." I stepped forward. "I just need to see your records of the bodies, as well as the bodies themselves before I go."

"I'm sorry, any records we had went straight to the police. As for the bodies, well, we have the dragon's body, but I'm afraid the rest are gone."

I was taken aback. "Gone?"

"They've been laid to rest at the request of their families."

I frowned inwardly. This would make my job rather annoying. Outwardly, I smiled. "That's good, then. Can I ask where?"

"Looking to pay your respects?" She yawned, smiling.

"In a manner of speaking, yes." Actually, I wasn't. We needed those bodies. I didn't have the time, anyway.

"Well let me see if I can remember." She tapped her chin with a hoof. "Miss Pie, miss Dash, and miss Cheerilee were all sent to the Ponyville Cemetery. Miss Rarity's body was sent to Manehattan where some of her family resides to be buried near her home. As for young Spike, he will be cremated at the request of one miss Twilight Sparkle."

That left the body of the dragon already destroyed for us. I would need to get my hooves on the others. That would be an easy task, however. Thankfully, they had sent all their paperwork to the police, which meant I already had it.

"Thank you, nurse Redheart." I turned to leave, but before walking back through the double doors, I spoke to her over my shoulder. "I'm very sorry that you've had to work through this. The feeling of wanting to put this behind you is very justified. I suggest you get some good rest tonight, you need it. And thank you for your time."

With that, Blaise and I exited. Though not before I heard the nurse mutter, "I don't think I'll be getting any kind of sleep soon."

We had one last bit of work to do before heading back. I needed Blaise to write us a letter to my liaison back at Headquarters.. We needed to deal with the bodies that were in existence, and I required the services of the CIA to do so. I dictated it to him and I shall reprint it here:

*The following document is marked at clearance level: EYES ONLY
If you are viewing this document without proper clearance, you are in violation of CIA code 172, sec. 1.*

*The **SECRECY CLASSIFICATION** of this document is marked: BURN AFTER READING
Failure to comply with any or all codes of conduct will result in immediate referral to
Central Command.*

Dr. Whooves,

*As part of an ongoing specialized investigation based in Ponyville, I require that four
bodies be exhumed for processing. Under confidentiality codes, I am not allowed to discuss the
case itself, though I will request that princess Luna brief you in it, as I will need your expertise.
You may use this letter as my formal request. Before the bodies are destroyed under the
standard Cover codes, I would like you to examine them. Your insight may prove useful.*

The bodies are as follows:

*One Rarity Belle, buried in Manehattan
One Pinkie Pie, buried in Ponyville
One Rainbow Dash, buried in Ponyville
And lastly, one Cheerilee, buried in Ponyville.*

*Please take care of this as soon as possible. The current investigation depends on a
swift reply.*

Sincerely,

Agent Six.

I had Blaise send the letter to my old mentor back at the CIA. When the last of his
dragon magic had burned away the scroll and flitted off into the distance, he and I turned
towards the setting sun back towards our lodgings at Sweet Apple Acres.

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