

Waves crash against the ship walls. The air smells of saltwater and the sky is clear offshore. A deep blue waits over the ledge with only the shimmering of the sun reflecting off of the waves to break up the vastness. It's 18 kilometers from the nearest city on the map with 2 more to go until they can anchor the ship at shore.

"So you are certain we are going in the right direction?" Orion asks as he looks out over the water, staring into the distance to look for any sign of land. The purple sky is the only thing that meets his gaze on the horizon. On the bow of the boat they rented, Ceres stands looking out over the vast waters.

"Definitely, Absolutely no doubt about it." He looks at the paper map he slapped on the window behind him. It's still slightly wet and written in a completely different script as to what anypony aboard can read or begin to understand.

"Are you sure?" Orion stops looking out over the water to turn towards the current (self assigned) captain of the boat. "I mean you bought this map we can't read, got us to float off somewhere towards the south as far away from land as possible and claim you know the island holds a weapon capable of instantly crushing any opposition we face. Which you also said was over a thousand years old and completely unknown to anypony."

Ceres breathes in before turning to his current deckmate as he corrects his hat. The largest grin appears on his face as he turns back to looking out over the horizon.

"You're planning to kill us aren't y-"

Orion stops as at the place where the sky and sea meet a peak appears. The small island on the map has finally come into view. Ceres grabs a telescope and holds it out to view through. Clearing his throat first before pointing at the island out over the ledge and loudly announcing. "Ahoy mateys! It seems like our seafaring journey has come to an end! But worry not, though our time at the seas will be over, our time on this treasure hunt is far from! In just moments we will proceed to leave ship and board land, where our greatest desires will be quenched!"

Everypony falls quiet.

"I've always wanted to do that." Ceres chuckles to himself as he looks at a completely dumbfounded Orion and Matchstick.

"You absolutely did not have to do that." Matchstick breaks out of his confusion as he steps over to Ceres, Who is looking down on him from his place at the bow.

"Yes I did, I absolutely had to do that. I mean what would this be worth if I didn't?" He lowers his head to be at eye level for Matchstick. Still with a smirk on his face.

Ceres jumps down from his spot on the bow. Walking into the cockpit to speed the boat up a bit. The map is clinging onto the window by sheer acceleration alone as it dries up. Matchstick follows him inside, wanting to ask a few things.

"So do you know what we are looking for beyond, abandoned superweapon?" Match tilts his head to the side and lowers an ear.

"Obviously I do. It's just, probably hidden somewhere underground in like a bunker so ponies wouldn't steal it? You get my train of thought here don't you?" He turns back to Match to look at the pony he's speaking to.

"You have absolutely no idea."

"Nope."

"Alright hold on, I'll go looking for any signs of it." Match sighs, turning back around out of the cockpit. With a rumbling of the boat He takes off into the sky and flies away.

The boat is getting to a docking distance of the island. Matchstick is still flying around looking for the treasure Ceres is so sure about. Lowering an anchor down into the water and a plank onto land Ceres takes a step off the ship as Orion follows behind.

"So... You have a supposed clue where to go? *Captain?*" Orion nudges his Captain as he jumps down onto the cold sand of the beach. Freezing in place for a second as he adjusts himself after spending days on hard ground.

"Not exactly, the details are foggy at best on this map. But! It has a red cross! So obviously it must be real." He smugly tells his servant as he strides off into the woods. Orion makes sure he has supplies with him before galloping after his current leader.

The forest is tightly packed with foliage and obstructions. They have been walking in a strict snaking pattern for a good thirty minutes now while Match is off scanning the top layer for anything that seems like treasure.

"We should've brought like a machete or a knife to cut through this stuff like they do in the movies." Ceres groans as he trudges with his hooves through the muddy soil. The trees above are obscuring a lot of sunlight from coming in, making the place below dark, cold and humid, but a few rays peeking through once in a while.

"Geez cap, maybe you should have thought of that before we came here. Being an actual pirate and all." Orion walks with his head down as he pulls his hooves through the wet ground.

"That's your job, servant."

"You are really trying to make me regret this treasure hunt thing aren't you?"

"Is it starting to rain?" Orion feels a couple of droplets hit his wings. The rays of light had dimmed through the trees, leaving the area dark and gray. The smell of petrichor covered the ground level of the forest.

"I'm pretty sure it is. Oh well." Ceres kept on trudging forward, even with the sky darkening.

"Can't we stop for a second to stay dry at least?"

"We keep going until we find the thing we are looking for." Ceres scoffs. "We have only been walking for a measly bit, we don't stop until our hooves are crumbling otherwise."

The two pull themselves along. Trudging on for another hour and long after the sky has cleared.

"Actually how about we pause here for a moment?" Ceres feels his hooves standing on solid ground. It's a small clearing of bushes and other ground plants where no trees have grown at all. The sun shines down bright through the clouds, piercing the greenery. After trudging through a dark and moist path Ceres hops over to an empty spot on the ground, one which was kept dry. "Fine." Orion sighs as he too sits down and takes off his bags. Pulling out a sandwich.

Ceres grabs something out of the bag to eat too. With a mouthful he asks why Orion can't just fly up into the sky and look for clues too. Orion takes a moment to pause and look on his back. "I keep forgetting I have these now to be honest. I'm not all that comfortable with flying yet either." He takes a bite out of his sandwich and swallows before continuing on, "Imagine if you woke up with, like, another set of legs one day. You would probably have no idea how to use them and especially not how to use them well."

Ceres looks a little dumbfounded as he tries to process what Orion just told him before a response sparks up in his head. "What do you mean? If I had wings I would be flying immediately! You couldn't even stop me from doing so." He says in a cocky tone of voice as he looks away from Orion and up at the sky.

"You know how you had to specialize in gunsmithing when you trained your magic? It's like that but for flying. Instead of transmutation and regeneration it's long distance flight and short distance burst. You get good at one thing and if you're doing everything you'll probably never be the best." He taps Ceres on the shoulder to get him out of his daydream. The captain shakes his head to come back down to earth.

"Uhuh yes I see, But Match can do both really well though can't he?" Ceres looks at Orion's wings, mesmerized by the streaks of silver feathers on the dark purple reflecting the sun. Orion takes another bite of his sandwich. "Matchstick is cheating, he's using some advanced nanomachine bullshit."

Finishing their break, Ceres decides to get up and walking again before a crash booms behind him. Turning around he sees a panting Match who has just dived down from 140 meters onto the ground with minimal braking time.

"Hey Match." He shouts at the exhausted pegasus as he turns back around. "Have you found anything? Broken any bones?"

"Yes and probably not I haven't yet checked." He rubs the dust out of his eyes and shakes his wings. Two turbines dissipate into a mesh of nanomachines and bind themselves back around the shoulderblades where the wings connect. Orion had already turned himself around to check Match for any wounds but Match already found himself walking again.

"Anyways I found this giant steel structure overgrown with like moss and vines and shit it's really cool you should come with me- Oh right yeah anyways it's like at the mountain base I'll see y-" Matchstick rambles on while before being interrupted by Orion tugging at his ear.

"You stay with us for now. We need somepony to clear a path." His speech is slightly muffled as Match's ear is still in his mouth, dragging him along into the forest.

"Okay okay let me go then!" Match shouts as he stumbles along. Desperately trying to find solid ground in the mud before Orion lets go of him.

He finds a solid piece of ground before looking at the direction of the rays of light peeking through the foliage to orient himself. Putting his hooves in a more stable position he clenches his jaw as the nanomachines bind themselves around his wings into one large engine. "I suggest you take a step back! I wouldn't want to get any lawsuits for damages from you all." It is barely audible over the noise of the engine burning and spinning. With a leap forward and a flap of his wings Matchstick shoots forward, knocking down a path towards what he found.

A large rumbling shakes the ground as trees collapse onto the forest floor and a streak of sunlight breaks into the yet darkened piece of nature. In the distance Match has already braked, Standing at the other end of the tunnel at a gigantic overgrown metal beast. Orion and Ceres take a moment to let their ears recover before running after him.

Gallop over fallen logs and roots the two finally arrive to see the absolute size of what Match had just discovered. Standing on two legs with feet large enough to crush a carriage and at the size of a building. Ceres takes a moment to admire what they had found.

"Real ancient treasure, Just lying around on an island where you can see it from the sky?" He asks himself. "No way. You can't be serious."

"So, How do you intend on using this thing Cap?" Orion looks at his Captain who is completely starstruck by the machine. Hopping onto its foot he takes a good second to note the shape. Two large arms are attached to the main body, one has a manipulator limb and the other a large beveled rod. The main body is attached to the limbs by a hip section built out of various hydraulic rods and on the back was a large tank.

"Can't you fly up for a moment? See if there is anything at the top?" Asking his Alicorn friend as Ceres walks around the base. Seeing if there is a way inside.

"I mean... Fine." Orion complains as he starts to flap his wings to get up to the shoulders of the construct. It takes him a moment as he clumsily pulls his weight up while Match without second thought swoops upwards to best him. "You didn't have to do that." His superior flying counterpart chuckles as he lands on the top. It is entirely empty, bar a set of hinges implying the front can open up and two large containers attached to shoulders.

"Nothing up here!" Orion shouts down to Ceres on the ground.

"Can't you pull me up there to see?"

"Absolutely not! I barely got myself up here and I have no idea how to carry your weight on me for 60 meters."

"Rats." Ceres complains to himself.

"Okay so ancient tech that has been lost since a thousand years ago with that one war no pony really cares about. It has no buttons on the outside. It has been overgrown for years and we can't turn it on normally. If I were an ancient pony with access to all the tech I desire for military advancement what would I do?" Ceres keeps on circling around the feet of the machine while he thinks to himself before something catches his eye on the wall of steel beside him. Wiping the dust and moss out of the way he takes a good look at the paint on the foot.

"C-L-A-S-S colon H-E-A-T-S-E-E-K-E-R... Wait a minute." He takes a minute to think.

"If I were an ancient hm? No buttons and no obvious entrance... That'd mean you can only... Hey Orion! You studied at med school right?" He shouts up towards the two at the top. Orion takes a moment to peek over the edge before shouting back. "Yes? Why?"

"I was wondering if you know the phrase for 'Open up' or like 'Enter' in ancient Ponish."

"Hold on, let me think." He takes a moment to sort out what Ceres is asking about, Incredibly confused and unsure he answers back. "Try with 'Jeighmoshoth' maybe?"

Ceres takes place in front of the Machine. Looking up at the giant black cockpit jutting out of the

body. "Jeighmoshoth HEATSEEKER!" He shouts at the hunk of steel and with loud mechanical whirring it starts to wake up. Match and Orion proceed to jump off the top and land back on the ground while it lowers down to a more reasonable height and places its manipulator limb on the floor in front of Ceres, Opening it.

Having the biggest grin on his face he steps into the hand of the automaton knowing he's probably getting crushed but against his expectations it only lifts him up to the front of the cockpit. The hatch opens up with inside of it a control room with a lot of dust.

"Wow this must have been abandoned for a while, clearly hasn't been cleaned in a bit." He hops into the cockpit, blows the dust off of the chair and sits down.

The hatch closes on him while inside the lights flicker on. The inside of the hatch is made out of six screens giving both a full 160 degree front view with protection. The chair is made out of leather with a cup seat and a belt with two joysticks and a set of buttons on each arm rest.

"New registered pilot detected. Welcome to the HEATSEEKER class weapon platform or Heatseeker for short. Do you need a rundown of the controls?" A voice echoes from inside the cockpit. Sounding like a Mare talking in a soft tone.

"Wow you've probably been dead for like... forever now... that's so fucked up."

"Excuse me?"

"I said yes, give me a rundown."

">Proceeding. Please put on the Pilot headgear."

Looking around in the cockpit for a headgear or helmet of sorts Ceres is completely bewildered by the wiring and circuitry. Green and red lights cover the walls, each with their own little lever and label. Finding the headgear in a glass compartment behind him he takes off his hat, lifts up the headgear and puts it over his head. His horn conveniently fits in a groove that was cut into the helmet.

"So was this made by unicorns?" Ceres lowers the visor over his eyes as suddenly the sounds of outside breach through the insulated steel walls. He clenches his eyes shut as the Heads Up Display flickers on with a bright white light.

"The HEATSEEKER class Weapons Platform was made by an alliance of ponies with no race in particular at the head of design." The voice quickly switches over to a different conversation.

"Please keep your limbs within the cockpit at all times. Control pilot breathing. Keep magic use limited and do not pilot while under the influence of any psychoactive substances. Confirm if ready to start training transfer." On the screens in front of him appeared two choices, one to confirm and one to cancel. Reaching over for the right joystick he pushes it forward to select the former option.

"Proceeding on with transfer. Please stay still." Ceres was incredibly confused about the stay still part of the request but obliged anyway. His HUD was fading entirely to white while a high tone ringed through his ears.

The noise of crashing glass woke Ceres up. He had no idea if or when he had fallen asleep but as he woke up he felt a pain in his head. A heavy weight pushing down on his neck. The HUD was no longer a blinding white and the screens in front were still on. From outside he could hear something banging on the top of his cockpit and almost as if instinct he moved the entire machine around to look.

“Ah!” Match was startled by the sudden movement of the mech. Flying above the cameras he yelled at it. “Hey Ceres! You’ve been quiet for like a good half an hour. What have you been doing in there?”

“Huh? What do you mean?” Matchstick didn’t hear Ceres’ response, it seems like it’s only a one way channel into the cockpit. Getting up out of the chair to pull the hatch’s level he takes off the helmet which in turn shuts down the entire machine. With a whirring down he pulls on the hatch which then hisses open.

“Hey match!”

“You’ve just sat there for 30 minutes?”

“I think I did, I was busy doing whatever a Training Transfer entails.”

“A what now?”

“Yeah exactly.”

In the span of 30 minutes the HEATSEEKER had transferred it’s entire control scheme into Ceres’ mind. He of course couldn’t tell the specifics of each button but he knew what they did and what they were for. It stood dormant with it’s hatch open while the trio decided the best course of action to get off of this island with a 16 ton metal death machine. Some ideas cropped up on how to carry it. Match asked if he could pull it with him which was met with loud no. Ceres suggested towing it by boat which would probably just cause everyone to get dragged into the depths. Orion shook his head when asked if he could maybe teleport it away but he doesn’t know any teleportation related magic and zipping this thing away would be quite a problem.

Eventually Ceres took a look at Matchstick who was still hanging around the Mech looking for a way to transport it. His wings aided by the nanomachine turbines as he hung in mid air.

“Hey Match, can you come down here for a moment?”

“Huh?” Match zipped down to the ground. “What do you need?”

“Can I take something for a second?”

“What exactly?–” He looked at Ceres funny while Ceres had his signature Terrible Idea look™.

“Oh you know, Your wings.”

“What? No?”

“Thanks!” With a spark the nanomachine turbines on Match’s wings melted down into a black sludge as Ceres bound them to the back of the Heatseeker. Match shakes in place as he feels the augments ripped off of him.

Ceres jumps into the cockpit and with some flipping of switches and manipulation later the nanomachines had formed into two functional jet wings. The engines whirred up as the 16 tonnes of steel started to lift themselves off of the ground.

“What the fuck dude give those back!” Orion yells over the mechanical screaming as he holds his ground.

“Sorry! I’ll see you back at the docks!” Ceres smashes the hatch closed and puts on his headgear. With two white lines trailing behind the Heatseeker it flies off towards the city.

“Are you fucking kidding me?” Match runs after Ceres but he’s long gone before he could be caught. Defeated, He strolls off into the woods with Orion chasing after him.

“So, Back to ship?”

“Yep.”

“God damnit.” Match sighs, Going back over the path he had knocked down.