Book 1: Part 1: Chapter 3: Episode 1:

The Thaumaturgical Exodus of us, the Eternal!

T'was the morning of the Exodus, and all through the house not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse. The clouds were hung in the sky with care, in hopes that I, Ostentatious, would soon be there. I was still nestled all snug in my bed when the voice of a young mare turned my face red. The girl with a scream and I from my nap; I tried to explain until I heard a loud snap—of my bones.

Teeth and fur all wrapped in a killer had me positively pinned between the floor and a pillar. Sienna paws threatened my face until the mare raised a hoof and regarded my disgrace: "What do you think you're doing here?" She said, displeased tone loud and clear. Again I tried to talk, but the bear atop me scared out all of my rhymes.

From the thick body of my captor I spotted the creature: Gentle eyes lead to an even gentler mare of a simple shade of an airy yellow. Fearsome wings marked her territory I seemed to have disturbed as those gentle eyes tried their best to stare daggers into the bear's next meal. A mouth parallel to her two eyes like cerulean balls with two black dots on them lead to a nose like a nose is a nose. All, though, so feminine and sheltered as was personified by her flowing celadon locks unable to be corrupted by the morning's cruel hand. A countenance like that of a mare's if that mare was a storm and hooves like that of a mare if the mare was a colt. It was surprising she could escape my vocabulary so easily with her mystique.

"You hungry, Honey?" I attempted to answer, until I realized she has addressed the bear and it growled hungrily. It leaned in close to consume my fear, and it may have, had I completely forgotten I was magically inclined.

To the chagrin of the beast tamer, my horn hummed with kinetic energy, releasing me from the grip of death and thrusting it across the room. Slender legs of an innocent coffee table cracked and collapsed beneath the flying circus. Triumphant over the elements of nature, I jumped to my hooves and erected my neck over the defeated duo, eager for an apology, though I got a different result. Was that…whimpering I could hear?

The flotsam and jetsam of the bear's flight left scattered ornamental objects damaged if not destroyed and I shuddered to reiterate the table's fate. A rug became a passenger as Honey, as the beast was so inaccurately named, shook the wall he collided with and displaced the hanging pictures. Glass shattered around the killer as my neck grew a little limp from my stunt. The mare was horrified and ran to her companion.

“Are you okay, boy? Show me where it hurts.” An unexpected demureness rose in the pegasus’s voice as she tended to his wounds with tender rubs of her hooves. The whimpering died down and Honey seemed to make an instantaneous recovery, but the beast smelled my guilt and played his role well. “You brute!” She threw an uneasy gaze at me. “He’s just a little cub! He doesn’t know any better!” Honey nodded furiously and hid his head behind the mare’s neck, seeking unjustified comfort.

“Ahem.” I coughed, attempting to ease the tension of throwing her friend across the room as much as one could possibly attempt to do. “I have no quarrel with you, my lady. I am here at the request of Slay Bells, for he promised me a safe voyage through the canyon yonder.” Her worry faded and became intrigue.

“The canyon?” She paused, before tending to the matter and hoof and sighed. A soothing quality rested comfortably in her tone as she helped Honey to his feet. She told him to rest outside, and then surveyed the destruction before releasing another heavy sigh. “I’ll get the dust pan.”

Wings took flight as she entered a doorway behind her and disappeared. Guilt wedged its tentacles around me and compelled me to help. As she returned with her pan and brush, I victoriously asked “Where would you like it?” referring to my horn’s balled collection of glass fragments and wood.

“Oh! Uh, in the bag.” Her teeth retrieved a garbage bag draped over her back, but I would not have her lift a hoof on my account.

“Don’t worry, my rose. I will not have you lift a hoof on my account!” With another telekinetic arm I drew the bag to the mound and swallowed it into the depths of the bag, never to be seen again.

“Thanks.” She said. “Sorry about Honey. We so rarely get visitors around her, not to mention ones that spend the night. He must have been startled.”

“The apologies are all mine.” I decreed, kneeling. “As a gentlecolt, I must acquaint and leave an impression as such. I am Ostentatious.” I looked back up at her, my eyes smoldering. “I hope you will forgive my intrusion. I assure you I mean no harm.”

She distanced herself. “Awfully rude to spend the night at a lady’s home without so much as a consent. Not only that, but you scared poor little Honey!” The demon bear looked from the window with eyes mentally picking apart my limbs. I used my magic to close the shutters.

Another sigh was lost. “It seems we should get on some sort of common terms. My name is Scattershot, and I’d like you to join me on my back porch to watch the sunrise, Mr. Ostentatious.”

“A majestic name, and I shall accept your invitation, Ms. Scattershot.”

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Scattershot. The name still sang to me. She was an animal enthusiast by nature and divine intervention, as her mark portrayed a magnificent rising phoenix. Attuned more to the needs of the more beastly variety of creatures, her relationship with Honey began to come into focus. Moonlight still lingered in the morning air as we went on and talked. I foretold of my quest to be and the lands I was to explore. The journey sparked that previous intrigue I spied before.

“How long do you plan to be gone?” She asked.

“However long it takes.”

“What are you looking for?”

“It remains to be seen, otherwise I would not look for it.”

“Well, what provisions have you packed?”

“Nothing but a few pieces of gold, rations of food, and the earth’s energy.”

“Oh.” She sank a bit. “How long have you been planning this trip?”

“A good night’s worth of planning.”

Hope faded from her face. “And you expect just go out into the wilderness and conquer it, just like that?”

“Not just like that, for my father is in the wind and guides me along my way!” Scattershot looked to the sky for a current and felt nothing.

“Maybe you should consider simply settling down. You seem more inclined for housework than adventuring." She giggled. "You’re only a smile and a dreamer.” She said with a motherly tone.

“Well, he is not great who is not greatly good.” I said with a returning smile. “What do you do, Scattershot?” I queried.

“Well, I am the florist for the town, but I normally keep to myself out here with

the animals who are, um, how shall I put this. No offense to you!” She looked to Honey tenderly. “Scarier?” Honey gasped and nuzzled Scattershot, retrieving the love he was after. “As bunnies scurry around the square, the bears and boars come to me for solace.”

“Where does such a soft spoken mare come by such ability?”

Her knit brow begged me to reconsider my opinion of her. “What you call ‘soft spoken’ I call politeness.” She paused for a moment. “Jerk” she finally let out, though quite muted. “I guess I got it from my mother who I suppose got it from her mother."

I took in the gallery of crimson protruding from the grassy fields in neat rows and columns. Those brilliant Birds of Paradise looked especially radiant in their prime, though I dismissed their beauty and told myself they were but plants.

"You planted all these yourself?" I wondered.

"Yes. It takes quite a toll on my hooves, but I think I prefer it that way, and Honey is a big help."

Honey cooed before throwing me another dirty look. “Is it not an occupational hazard to befriend these animals? Who knows what they are really thinking?” I glared back at Honey.

An incredulous giggle flew into the wind. “You see, I have had, and may have still, a thousand friends, as they are called, in life, who are like one’s partners in the waltz of this world—not much is remembered of them when the masquerade is over. Animals, however, are reliable, many full of love, true in their affections, predictable in their action, grateful and loyal. Those are difficult standards for ponies to live up to.”

“But am I not of an admirable state, dearest Scattershot? We creatures need wide open pastures and worlds to explore!” She continued her gaze, eager to capture the sun. Those celadon streams hid her eyes from me.

She snorted. “I see you are an idealist, whatever else you may be…”

“Don’t be foolish!” The sun still hid beyond the distant hills and I grew irritable at her irreverence. “Do not be timid or squeamish about your actions. All of life is an experiment! You can not let it sit idly by and age.”

“But how practical is that?” Truly this “soft spoken” pony knew not the term in the argument’s heat. “It’s cozy here and blistering out there. Here food is abundant, out there it is scarce. Here there is stability, out there is anarchy.”

“Don’t you wish to know it? To have lived among it and conquered it? The

unpredictability of it all is what draws me! Flowers will always be their reds and greens, but who know what colors are in the horizon?" I stamped my foot to get her to look me in the eyes, but she remained frozen towards the empty sky.

"What is there to see in a land our princess could not even govern? Here I know the sun will actually rise."

"All empires fall, but that is the enticing aroma and air of mystery to the journey. And what if the precious sun was to not rise but fall out of the sky? Would you not regret your sheltered life?"

"The crash of the whole solar and stellar systems can only kill me once, Ostentatious. I like to think I have a good idea of the world around me simply by watching the sun." She soothed, hearing the passion grow in my voice. Those first rays of sun dared a glance. "Evil is a myth in this empire. I don't wish to look for it."

"I guess I am not as leveled as you then." From my satchel I retrieved a delicate pendant for the mare. I cracked it open. "My father gave me this amulet as a memento to remember him by. The inscription reads: 'The whole course of history may depend on a change of heart in one solitary and even humble individual – for it is in the solitary mind and soul of the individual that the battle between good and evil is waged and ultimately won or lost.'" With a small clap the pendant was shut. "I choose to fight on. So many ponies in this town have lost and submitted, but I see fervor in you, Scattershot. Your individual action made a haven for these otherwise shunned out creatures. Who is to say that same action cannot save others?" I turned to her once more, sunlight enveloping and sweeping across the porch. Her mane began to fly and those cerulean eyes squinted in the morning glory and searched for the words to respond with. In the silence I went on.

"Dare you leave the safety of your home and join me on my quest? I do hope you'll say 'yes'." The quote struck a chord with the girl as the sun burst over the horizon.

Tremendous breezes spilled over the mountains and picked up our manes in unison. Mine flowed with determination, hers with irresoluteness. A face well lit with the morning, she saw something in my words, I believed. Her beautiful gems revealed themselves, as if by an epiphany, and she looked to me. The world opened itself around the timid creature as she saw the horizon become a great deal smaller.

"We had better start packing." She said with a pleasant smile, apathy melting with the darkness.

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With the morning sun drew an ebony foal from the shadows of the houses. The child crept to the door of the cottage and let himself in. He spotted Scattershot and I surveying the items in her closet and pantries and sorting out what to bring and what not. Honey had curled himself into a ball outside and continued his loud cries at the thought of his friend leaving, though I reveled in them maliciously.

“I see you two have gotten friendly.” Slay Bells chirped, alerting us of his presence. “You helping him pack, Scattershot?”

“Well, you see Slay Bells, I’ve decided to join Ostentatious on his adventure. I think he could benefit from someone keeping him firmly on earth.” I am sure she meant that only with endearment as it sounded like serenity.

Slay Bells eyes only widened with admiration. “No way!” He said with glee. “I thought you were gonna work on your flower business! Besides, you told me you hated the idea of leaving the town!”

“What do you mean, Slay Bells?” She giggled nervously. “I can handle it! I have a pet bear, aftera—“ and she punctuated her sentence with a tiny squeal as a fist met the side of the house, possibly a disgruntled bear upset of his new title as “pet”.

“She’ll do fine, young guard.” I added. “She’s got a knack for these animals that I cannot make up for with brute force. Every battle needs an anthem to orient itself by.”

“Awesome!” He cooed, eyes bright. “Like a dynamic duo! When do you leave?”

“As soon as we finish packing. What has your father got to say about our trip?” I asked.

“Don’t worry about him. He means well and all he wants is everypony to not have to face the wastelands because he’s been there. Most ponies who say they want to adventure there, he says, only go for the glory without knowing what they are actually getting themselves into. He said Paradise Gorge was founded decades ago by nomadic ponies who finally found a green pasture amid the deserts, so they hoped they could create a paradise so nopony ever has to deal with the deserts ever again.

“I just think it’s so boring here, so I am going to prove myself overtime and one day go there as well. I hope that you two return so you can tell me how it is and take me next time you go!”

I put a hoof on the little tyke, feeling the flame still young yet reminiscent of my own youth. “I'd say such a statement already warrants your maturity. You have grown

since I met the little imp in the forest. And it's an amicable gesture your father has created, but in what taste is it? Why not spread the green across the world rather than concentrate it here? Tell him to remove the wastelands, not isolate them. The beast may then finally die and sloth may disappear with the memories of deserts."

I turned to Scattershot, her eyes wide with inspiration. "What a great idea!" She flew back into a closet, retrieving a bag of seeds. "These are my 'Birds of Paradise' seeds. They helped the gorge flourish when it was first discovered, so maybe we can spread them on our own path?"

Slay Bells and I were in agreement at this proposal. Thus our mission was set and engraved in the annals of this sleepy town still snoozing in its bed as Scattershot and I prepared to embark on a grand adventure. Slay Bells offered me the pendant around his neck, though, and told me to keep it.

"My mom gave me this pendant. She's out there somewhere, Ostentatious. She went out into the wilderness with others to find other ponies. I know she's still out there doing miracles and every day the message she left me in the pendant reminds me of it. But I think you should carry it. It fits you better. Whenever you need some hope, just read the message inside, and maybe if she sees it, you'll tell her I'm doing okay? She's got a pendant just like this one, so that's how you'll know! You promise?" He finished, a lip bit and eyes intent on a "yes".

With a friendly laugh I picked up the pendant with my magic and delicately set it around my neck. "Of course, Slay Bells. Every seed and every town will foster a new road for which perhaps your mother and I shall cross paths. Fear thee not! In fact, my father gave me a pendant similar to this one in appearance."

His eyes lit up. "So, maybe they have met? Maybe she's doing alright?"

"I'll see to it that she is. But as the day matures your father is sure to soon wake. Say your goodbyes to Scattershot and wish us the greatest."

He nodded, wishing his florist friend a good trip and was off into the morning, teething gritting away tears as his friends embarked.

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Honey was the most torn up, practically fusing himself to Scattershot as we made our way to the canyon. The beast of burden may have proved to be somewhat bearable had it meant bearing the bloated bags Scattershot insisted we bring. Unfortunately, when he had to depart, I would be left with the heavy lifting. As the two walked and

shared goodbyes in their own special way, he only glared at the colt tearing him away from his long time friend and wished me dead.

A weathered sign came into view and hung crooked and lifelessly upon the grassy hill side. It read: "Everfree Wastelands. Nopony's land."

Of all the things Scattershot charged Honey with while she was gone, the name “Felicity” had come up as someone Honey was to keep company. It was harmless information at the time, though when we rounded the corner of the canyon walls and they began morph from lush and green into a rocky exterior, a thickness and mist began to rise in the air. Humidity beat down on our coats as something, like a barricade, came into focus. Rising and falling in the fog, a shade of pink appeared in the distance.

Wedged between the rocky faces of the canyon stood, no, slept an amorphous creature. As we approached, the gargantuan size of the behemoth towered stories over Scattershot and I. Head slumped over a large paw, the creature looked almost feline in its features. A deep rumble kept in time with the behemoth’s heavy breathing, that snoring nearly sparking an avalanche. I stepped back and pondered what manner of barriers manifested themselves into such a figure.

“Oh Felicity, how many times have I told you not to sleep with your mouth open?”

Into the satchel Scattershot somehow, amid all the trinkets and items, withdrew a tiny whistle on a loop. To her lips she drew the tiny instrument and blew a soft note on it; so soft I did not even hear it. Lazily, pink eyelids began to flutter and notice her friend’s present. The behemoth lapped her mouth and yawned, our manes twirling in the feline’s breath. “Good morning, girl. Could you please get up? My friend and I must pass through here.”

Without a word, stubby legs lifted the beast into the air and stretched with another yawn. Felicity dipped and arched her back to remove drowsiness before waiting for us to go by. Scattershot placed the whistle around Honey’s neck as a passing of the torch.

“Be good. You have a big responsibility now, Honey. Make sure Felicity doesn’t sleep too much and make sure to keep the cottage tidy, alright?” The bear rubbed against the motherly figure and cooed an uncharacteristic coo. It was genuine though.

Before Honey could finally turn and depart, a statement caught both of our displeasures: “Don’t you want to say goodbye to Ostentatious, Honey?”

A deep frown grew on my face, but I turned and faced the slaughterer with the best smile I could muster for him. I extended a hoof, not sure what I was to receive from the gesture. Honey approached me, staring intently at me. For a moment he did nothing, but then motioned his head to Scattershot. Back at me, he drew a claw over his neck, putting the responsibility for her dead set on my shoulders. I nodded with an uneasy nod and backed away from the beast as he turned and ran to say goodbye to his friend one last time.

As Honey disappeared into the mist, my new cargo could not even falter my sense of glee. Felicity stood motionless, only watching the two of us, Scattershot and I, as we passed beneath her belly. I looked to Scattershot as we exchanged giddy smiles.

Though as we passed through the gate, a ray of light shined down from the heavens and enveloped me. Spinning and dancing in the light, a card made its earthly descent. The two of us watched the ballet until the card came into my grasp. No bigger than an index card, I held the card with my magic and read it.

“What does it say?” Scattershot read.

A large platform from which to leap to towards the world! The horizon was in my hooves and my father would make sure of it. “It reads: ‘Eternal’”. Glee overtaking me, I placed the card in the satchel pocket and reveled in the brilliance of the sun until the portal closed and replaced itself with mist.

“Let’s go, the fog is rising.” She said, and I followed as we left the mouth of the canyon. Felicity sat herself down and began her slumber once more. Beyond us was only opaque white and no signs of life. A fresh start.

“A misty morning does not signify a cloudy day, Scattershot!” I galloped off into the mist, Scattershot following on her wings without pause.

-- END OF BOOK 1--

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