

Through The Eyes Of **Another Pony**

*Chapter Three: A Series of Tubes and A
Bucket of Water*

By CardsLafter

Commence the great and powerful recap! I woke up in Ponyville, I had a bromantic day with Spike, I fed Twilight, I partook in insanity-time with Pinkie Pie, and I sassed Stupid Bird shortly before making up with it. And somewhere in there I got attacked by a rose bush and The Nightmare. Oh, and my second favorite pony called me her little pony and meant it. Squee!

Overall, this day was kicking butt, ass, and flank all at once without any apologies whatsoever. Indeed, the amount of derriere getting kicked here was naught but staggering. It was almost too much for me. Even though I was on Twilight's front lawn, smoking a cigarette, and staring at the cartoony sunset, I was still having troubles believing that this was actually happening. I mean, it was just surreal. How could this have happened at all? Why me? And just how was I supposed to digest all this awesome? I mean it wasn't getting filtered or anything!

In the middle of my internal questionnaire, Stupid Bird interrupted my train of thought by landing on my back. I turned my head and glanced back at her, pausing to marvel at just how far I could turn my head. Extendo-neck~!

"Hey there, Featherduster," I said with a smirk, drawing a puff off the cigarette and smiling at it. Well, I guess it would be more appropriate to say 'her' by this point. She did save my life, so I guess she should get a pronoun and stuff.

"Hay is for horses, and you by proxy," said Stupid Bird after a second of wing preening, "And you're welcome."

I resisted the urge to roll my eyes. I wasn't certain how powerful Stupid Bird was, but I wasn't sure I wanted to find out, either. Besides, I had questions and Stupid Bird had answers.

"Thanks again," I said earnestly, "Sorry about the douchebaggery earlier."

"Your vocabulary is reminiscent of foul poetry. Apology accepted."

Stupid Bird was snarky. I like that. I'd rather match wits and verbally spar than deal with some boring asshole that thinks they're far more important than they really are.

"Besides, I've had plenty of time to think it over. You're smarter than you both look and act, even if you aren't as smart as you think. And yes, I understand that you had no reason to trust me and still don't beyond a single act of goodwill."

Pffft! Goodwill? More like blackmail. Not that I was going to throw that in there like an dumbass. Like it or not, Stupid/Awesome Bird had saved my life. I could spare her the slightest modicum of courtesy. I'm not so stupid as to be impolite. Though I suppose that would depend on whom you ask.

"Eh. We can let it go for now," I said as I waved a dismissive hoof. "But I totally owe you."

"That you do," she agreed, nodding her beak slowly enough to be ominous, "But there are more pleasant subjects to discuss. No doubt you are curious of a great many things."

"I am but uh..." I hesitated, absently chewing at my lip. "Is this going to cost me every time or something?"

Just checkin' the fine print. I'd say sue me, but that's what checkin' the fine print is for after all.

"No. We made a deal and I have to uphold my half of the bargain," she clarified, her unblinking eyes staring right into mine. "I'll help you as much as I can while drawing as little attention to myself as possible."

"Sounds like you get a cakewalk and I get to do the heavy lifting. Eh, everything has its price, I suppose." I sighed before lighting up a cigarette and gazing into the box just on the offchance that the pack of cigarettes had been depleting without my knowing. "Okay, seriously though. What exactly is the deal we made?"

"Oh, did you not pay attention to the details?" she said, tilting her head just a tad.

I swear, I don't know how, but that beak was giving me the most condescending smirk I had ever seen. Without moving! No, I don't know how that works, either!

I chuckled a bit nervously as I took a long heavy drag. "Nope, I totally ignored the hell out of you."

"Your loss." She shrugged. With her wings. For some reason, I found that offensive.

My jaw dropped.

"W-What!?" I cried, keeping my voice down so as to not draw attention from the ponies inside. I know now why I did that, but at the time I had no clue why I didn't want them to come out. "That's it? 'Tough shit'? You can't tell me? Wasn't it something about protecting Equestria?"

She laughed at me. Out loud! ... How dare she.

“Hardly. Perhaps you could not tell, but I was aware of your lack of situational awareness and simply led you on. Even my outburst was to lead you into thinking your position was at a deficit in our next exchange. I would not waste my time binding you into doing something you would already do. Now that you know for certain that this place is real and not a dream, you’ll give flesh and blood to keep this world and those that live in it safe from any and all harm. Rest assured, though, if you had been paying attention, you would have been able to understand what I was asking of you.”

I had been played. It hurts. Even to this day it burns my ass to know that I’d been had. It sure as hell ended up being a life lesson, though. When I sign an MMO’s EULA, it’s because I’ve already acquired myself a printed copy and have spent more time reading it than playing the damn game. When I go to Holiday Inn, I make myself more familiar with the policies than the damn employees. When I flush the toilet, I’ve already made sure that there’s no addendum that states that by activating the mechanism, I thereby take all responsibility of the direct and indirect consequences and am liable for restitution, including, but not limited to, giving them the right to name my first child Skippy, paying to have the whole damn plumbing system replaced, granting them ownership of my soul and any inheritance I might have to give, and my taking of any and all bullshit. No pun intended. Also, certain details may be grossly exaggerated, but not as much as you might suspect.

“Then how am I supposed to uphold my half!? I don’t even know what you want from me!”

“I find that is more your problem than mine,” she reminded me with a chuckle, “Besides, you seem to have a great distaste for authority so I’ll no doubt have an easier time of manipulating you towards my desired goal if you are unable to actively work against it.”

My jaw further unhinged and I dropped my cigarette as a result. Oh, it was deliciously true. I mean, looking back, she had no idea just how right she was. I have no problems respecting authority, but I take issue with having my chain yanked around. True, things could have had a better start than me being a general assbutt. I mean, I don’t do it often. In fact I’m a pretty easygoing guy. But while I have a tendency to be very... let’s say... impulsive, maybe? I am a very good judge of character. I’m quite literally the only person I know that studies psychology for the simple joy of understanding people better. Do you realize just how much easier it is to get along with people when you can almost scientifically understand where they are coming from?

It’s amazing.

Amazing, that is, until you run into one of *those* people. *Those* people are the ones that see everything and everyone around them as means to an end. *Those* people I just can’t connect with. Stupid Bird, as it turns out, is one of *those* people. I can work with them when forced to, but when it comes down to it, *those* people are the ones I find myself actively being aggressive

against in a futile effort to get them to understand that I will not be used.

Hey! Never said I was perfect. Quite the opposite, really.

"I...But! How can..." I stammered for a few seconds, mentally grasping at the first straw I could find. "You... Are a bitch!"

"No, I am simply a pragmatic bird. There is a difference." She certainly sounded pragmatic. "Keep in mind that I bear you no ill will. I will not try to disrupt your stay in the slightest. Unless, of course, your actions would interfere with my goals. Intentional or not."

"Whatever. Stupid Bird..." I turned away grumpily. I'd turn my butt her way, but she was on my back still and that would have involved some freaky deaky yoga magic.

"If you care, I go by Tisiphone."

I blinked in shock as the name slowly registered. I turned back to look at her, my eyes showing more shock than suspicion. "As in... the..."

"Greek Fury of Vengeful Destruction, yes. And no, before you ask, I am not really Tisiphone. My name is merely a concept and that is as close a match as I can find."

Oh, now I'm comfortable. Goodness gracious, I thought I was just dealing with a worshiper of Tzeentch or something. An Aspect of Destruction is just loads better and brings out all the warm fuzzies deep within me. An aspect of destruction that wants to use me to protect something. I think. Or hell, maybe that's just a red herring and I'm going to be the doom of all ponies everywhere. Jesus Christ, how horrifying.

Best to start whittling her down, just in case.

"Huh. I'll call you Tissy!" Because ponies. That's why.

Tissy leaned away from me as though I was made of bubonic plague. "I... I won't allow that."

"Too late, Tissy! It's been done," I cried, flashing the biggest grin that I could possibly manage. That's really big, for those of you that aren't aware.

"I think I have to leave now," she replied as she took on an air of introspection. Her voice, while calm, had a slightly manic edge to it and while she was still technically talking to me, her attitude suggested that she was trying to reason with herself. Maybe she was trying not to be blown away by my awesome. Maybe she was trying to avoid murdering me. There's no way to know for certain.

"I get the suspicion that if I remain here long enough, one of us is going to die." She took flight and landed in front of me with that physics breaking trick of hers. "Either me by way of your stupidity, or you by way of me strangling you. A lot."

Nope. No possible way to know. Let's just be optimistic and assume the best.

I reached a hoof over and gently pat on her little birdy head. "Now, now. Let's not throw a Tissy fit."

Tissy leveled a look that would have impaled me on the spot if her malice were material. And then she exploded. Not literally, but it made this trippy little '*fwoop!*' sound before disappearing in a small cloud of blue and black feathers that just... faded away.

"Oh my God, I killed it," I mused aloud, blinking several times before shaking my head.

I decided that was enough outdoor shenanigans for one day. I took one final drag off my cigarette before holding it up to my face. I stared at it with intent, willing it to burst into flame as casually as I could. And I totally didn't scream (much) when it obeyed. After making sure no one saw that embarrassing display, I went inside. My arrival warranted no attention as a conversation was already in progress. At least they were talking about me. That made me feel special.

"And then he started mouthing off to it, provoking it into attacking!" Twilight sounded a wee bit frustrated.

Maybe not as special as I would have liked to feel.

"Next time I'll just roll over and take it," I butted in, chuckling as I made my way into the library. "Seriously, you don't think things would have gone better if I hadn't sassed it into submission, do you?"

Twilight had enough benches marking the edges of the library to accommodate everypony. Except for Celestia. She didn't have any Queen or Princess sized benches. Alas, Dear Princess Celestia was forced to stand. So stand she did, but near a window where she could keep an eye on anything approaching. Applejack was doing that pony-equivalent of sitting over near the staircase with Applebloom doing likewise on her back. Rainbow Dash was stretched out on her back over the top shelf of a bookcase. Pinkie was nowhere to be found, which can be terrifying given the right circumstances. Spike wasn't around, but I knew where he was thanks to the smell of frying noodles.

"I suppose we'll never know." Her reply was dry and her eyes fixated upon me with a gaze that screamed 'Disapproving Mother.'

“Well, maybe not you. But I do,” I countered frowning at her as I hopped up onto the bench and flopped down on it. Mmmm... Sanded pine never felt so good.

Celestia's soft smile shifted into a pensive stare. “Please explain.”

“The ‘Nightmare’ was very straightforward,” I continued with a yawn. “It has plans. Nasty plans. Plans that don't involve the well being of ponies everywhere. I don't know what they are, but I know its idea of a good time isn't what we would call a ‘widely shared opinion’. So sassing it wasn't going to make things worse. It made them better, in fact! In the sense that I got to smacktalk the villain and it irritated Twilight to no end.”

Twilight's disapproving gaze graduated to a full-fledged glare of annoyance.

“And if you just take all that winsauce, you could fill up a jar this big with it.” I held up my hooves, putting enough space in between them to fit a big jar of mayonnaise in. “And it would be delicious. One big ol' jar of winsauce. Mmm!”

Dash snickered from her perch as Twilight rolled her eyes. I could tell she was trying to hide her amusement. Trust me on this, I've both annoyed and entertained enough people to tell when they're faking either one.

“Speaking of delicious,” Celestia smiled as a certain tiny purple dragon wheeled in a serving cart covered in bowls of Lo Mein.

“Ermagerd~!” I cried before hopping off the bench and rainbow dashing over to snatch a bowl for myself. “Thanks, big guy!”

Twilight wasn't as enthusiastic about it as I was. I guess she's just too bitter to let some things go. Still, she didn't wait for Spike to head her way before nabbing her own bowl with magic. “Thank you, Spike.”

He beamed at our gratitude before carting off to the other ponies. Everypony else stared at the two of us as we began to dig in. Oh man, it was amazing. Now, I won't lie, I was proud of the Lo Mein I made earlier. I put some heart, soul, blood, sweat, and tears into that stuff and I'll be damned if it didn't turn out half-decent. Spike, however, knows his stuff. He had already improved on the recipe significantly and had added something that made it taste like it had been cooked with pork. Not exactly like, but rather close. Either that or he actually cooked pork in it and then removed it afterwards, but I doubt that. Magic, mayhaps? Magical pork seasoning! No, wait! MAGIC. BACON. SEASONING.

“What is it?” Applebloom shied away from it like it was going to jump out of the bowl and kill her. That brought back memories of a younger me!

“Dude called it ‘Low Mane’ and showed me how to make it.” Spike shrugged before handing out the last bowl to Rainbow Dash, who was glancing back and forth between Spike and the dish as though she were trying to determine if he was being serious.

Celestia decided to risk her life and give it a chance after witnessing me and Twilight. I mean, we were tearing into it like a pair of hungry Neanderthals. Very carefully she extracted one of the noodles and gave it a testing nibble.

“Oh my!” Celestia exclaimed before levitating a fork and spinning it in the dish to serve herself liberally. Keep in mind, Celestia’s mouth is significantly larger and is able to accommodate a lot more food than the rest of us. Because of this, she was able to somehow appear dainty and regal whilst eating at my pace. Which isn’t fair at all.

Long story short, everypony ended up loving the food, Spike was crowned royal chef, and we all lived happily ever after. The end.

The end of the fun parts, I mean. Because it definitely didn’t stay fun for me from there on. Because halfway through dinner, I was ambushed by questions. Questions everywhere.

“So, No-Name!” Pinkie called out with her mouth very much full, “Where are you from? Is it nice?”

“Depends on who you ask,” I replied, giving a half-hearted chuckle, “I’m... fairly neutral about my home. I could take it or leave it, personally.”

“What’s it called?” Applebloom was draped across the top of Applejack’s head, sporting her big sister’s hat.

I swallowed before responding.

“Earth.”

“Earth as in Earth Pony?” Rainbow Dash interjected.

“Quite right, Lady Dashington.” Sadly, I was lacking a monocle. “In fact, humans are a lot like Earth Ponies. We build stuff with nothing but brains and brawn.”

“That sounds boring!” Dash pointed out in a less-than-civil manner. But she did so in a manner befitting one so cool.

Celestia quietly watched us all gab it up, content to pretty much fade into the background as she kept one eye on the window. At least, I think it was aimed outside. Celestia’s hair has this tendency to block one of her eyes at any given moment. That’s gotta be hell on the depth

perception. I kept expecting her to collide with a wall or something. And then destroy it for its impudent attack uponst her royal person... pony. Whatever.

"Wait, so humans have no magic whatsoever?" Twilight asked, giving me a skeptical glance.

Celestia suddenly became very interested in the conversation. She didn't say anything but most of her smile faded as stared at me. I hesitated in answering, somewhat distracted by her attention. I recovered quickly enough that none of the others seemed to notice (or they did and didn't mention it).

"Well, I certainly didn't have any magic before I got here!" I said with a chuckle. "Except opposable thumbs. Those are pretty magical. Right, Spike?"

Spike gave me a thumbs-up from the kitchen. Brilliant. Absolutely brilliant.

"But your magic glass you showed me earlier. The one with the tubes connected to it?" Twilight pointed a hoof at me accusingly.

It took me a few moments to get what she meant. Then it hit me. The cell phone!

"Ah yes, the series of tubes," I said with a chuckle, pulling it out and showing it off. "This is actually an electronic device. Nothing magical about it. Lights and clockwork, as it were. Just on an incredibly small scale."

So yeah, you know that thing with Douglas Adams and flying? If you ever say to yourself, 'I cannot possibly be flying!' then reality will reinsert itself and you'll fall to the ground? Same thing with trying to use a flat hoof to manipulate the security lock on a touchscreen cell phone. It was like trying to pick up that stupid teacup all over again. Only now I was humiliating myself in front of all the ponies.

"Mother Eff-Bomb!" I growled, trying to get the damn thing to cooperate before finally remembering that I just had to let it happen. Like the Centipede's Dilemma or something.

Pinkie snorted gleefully. She liked that phrase. Which I still kinda feel bad about, whenever I think about it.

"This is harder without fingers," I sighed before looking up at the ponies with a slight blush, "I need you guys to say something... distracting."

"Like what?" asked Applejack as she tilted her head to the side.

They all proceeded to look at me as though I were asking to borrow their livers. I don't know why a slightly odd request is so difficult to comprehend, but there you have it. Ponies can

sometimes be a little hard to work with. After a few seconds of non-distracting silence, I sighed.

“Atta way to let me down, guys!” I sighed before looking back at the hoof that held my phone. Much to my surprise, it was empty.

“LOOK LOOK!” Pinkie squealed as she held my phone up for everypony to see.

I don’t know how, okay? I just don’t. Pinkie Pie unlocked my phone. Do you want to know how hard that is? The unlock pattern is complex enough that I don’t have to worry about people watching me unlock it. Seriously, I’ve had people stare over my shoulder and then immediately try to unlock it themselves, only to be met by taunting failure. I’m not making this up, there’s like nine different steps to it and a whole lot of line crossing. So for Pinkie to just **guess** the combination to unlock it was not only frustrating, but utterly stupefying as well.

“How did y-...” I started to say, only to be ignored by... Well, everyone, actually.

“It’s Twilight with wings, everypony!” She waved the phone around so quickly that there was no way they could actually see what was in front of them.

Twilight blushed, suddenly aware of the picture being shown around.

Dash was very interested in this. “Pinkie, hold it still!”

She tried to keep maneuvering in front of the overly energetic hoof waving, but she simply gave up and snatched it out of Pinkie’s hoof.

“Hey!” Pinkie was displeased, but only for the briefest of moments.

Dash stared into the phone with her eyes wide. “Woah, Twilight, you look just like the princess!”

That got just about everypony else’s curiosity riled and before you knew it, everypony that wasn’t me, Celestia, and Twilight was stuffing their heads together to see the phone. I was kinda surprised that the princess wasn’t that interested, to be honest. After having thought about it though, I’m sure she’s heard of crazier things in life. I personally forgot to give a damn and went right back to eating, as did Twilight, but Celestia kept an eye on the device just in case it exploded or something. Okay, that may have been an assumption, but it’s as good a guess as anything else.

Finally, after they all got their peeks in, Pinkie ran over to me with the phone in her mouth. I was somewhat engrossed in my evening meal that I didn’t notice her right away (Pinkie is fast and quiet, you see. Like a bright pink ninja poninja...). By the time I caught sight of her in my peripheral vision, she wasn’t the only one quietly waiting. Pinkie, AJ, Bloom, and Dash were all

staring at me as though I was holding everything up. I started to ask what was up before I realized my phone was in Pinkie's mouth. My reaction was to snatch it out of there for obvious reasons.

"Ewww," I whined, "You got Pinkie slobber on it."

Surprisingly enough, there was actually no slobber. But damn it, there should have been!

"Show us another!" she demanded, pointing at the phone.

I blinked at her before looking back at the Motorola 4GX, pursing my lips in contemplation. What harm could there be, right? With that in mind, I went to my phone's personal gallery (consisting of 30% ponies, 30% video games, 20% memebase stuff, and 20% randomness).

"Okay just... Just keep it out of your mouth. Here, when you want to see a new picture just slide to the next one like this." I slid my hoof across the screen, moving the view over to the next photo. I swear, if I had spared a single iota of my thought process realizing that I had just used a flat hoof on a touch screen that covered approximately 60% of the screen, I likely would have went crazy. Fortunately for me, though, I have the attention span of a cat on nip, so I was spared the Lovecraftian descent into madness.

Pinkie was ENAMORED. She snatched it back up with her mouth (... le sigh) and scampered all of three feet back to the others to show off her newly acquired alien knowledge. The 'Ooo's and 'Aah's that gushed forth were silly to say the least. I couldn't help but chuckle as the inevitable, "What's this!?" started up.

Well, seeing as I had little over a hundred pictures on my phone, I'll just hit the highlights and the silly parts.

Pinkie loves meme pictures. After explaining the ones that had any chance of making sense to her, she would explode into an unmitigated bout of laughter. Luckily, I didn't keep any of those awful pokepuns (erectabuzz... Nuff said!). That'd have been downright frustrating to elaborate on.

Dash suddenly found me to be much cooler after discovering I was a Spitfire fan. I don't blame her. I think Spitfire's awesome, what with her slightly empowered voice of awesome. Spitfire's the bomb-diggity and stuff. Word.

Applejack was really skeptical that this wasn't magic at first, but that got canned when I pointed out that cameras weren't magical and used the camera to snap a picture of her. And then she got all sorts of worked up when I showed her the video-record feature. To be fair, she wasn't the only one to think that was utterly amazing, but she was the one that found it more intriguing than anything else.

Then the voice recorder came up. It wasn't that interesting until I showed them how to mess with the voices. That was where Twilight got involved. How much easier would it be to just dictate everything instead of write it down? Apparently easy enough for her to honestly wonder how hard it would be to make her own.

Applebloom was pretty interested all around but it wasn't until she saw a picture of a human that she actually gasped.

"What's that!" she pointed.

'That' was an old picture that I'd digitized and moved from phone to phone, making sure it always stayed with me. My phone never left my side, so I never had to worry about losing it that way. But as for what the picture actually pertained to... Well, it's something of a touchy subject.

"That's a human girl, right?" Twilight asked, glancing at me before getting this worried look on her face, "Are you... alright?"

Dunno what was on my face, but it probably wasn't a smile. I mean, I'm not one of those guys that lets little mementos drive him into a rage or teary mess, but that doesn't mean that I'm immune to the stuff either.

"Why's it so fuzzy?" Applebloom asked, looking up to me before reaching out a hoof and gently tapping mine. "No-Name?"

I blinked as the contact brought me back to reality (or as close as it gets anyway) before glancing down at Applebloom and smirking, "Well, uh... It's a really old picture. Cameras weren't as good back then as they are now."

They all looked at me to continue explaining what the picture was about but that was just not gonna happen.

"So yeah, um... That's enough show and tell for now!" I picked up the phone before doing this motion that was akin to stashing stuff into a pocket. No, I don't actually have any pockets, but that seems to be where the magic comes into play.

"Waaait!" Pinkie dived for the flank I stashed it at and hit me like a pony-shaped bag full of rocks. Earth Ponies... Y U SO HEVY?

"AHHHH!" I screamed as we tumbled, glad for the distraction from the photograph, "SWEET CELESTIA, IT'S GOT ME!!!"

Celestia's expression said it all. She wasn't going to do squat to save me from the needy

greedy Pinkie. Oh, she'll save you from The Nightmare, but you throw a Pinkie at something and you're on your own!

It took some coercion, some assistance, a few delicious-looking cupcakes and something shiny to distract her, but I was eventually separated from Pinkie thanks to the mercy of Applejack and Twilight. Not Rainbow Dash, though. No, she was already busy. Laughing herself sick, if you must know.

Still, I was relieved to escape the pink clutches of doom. I thought it was going to take me chewing my leg off or something (seriously, I put that on the table more than once). Luckily, I did get to make it out with all my pieces attached and I didn't have to explain what the picture was and why I was acting all funky about it. After gathering my wits, I dashed up the stairs as frantically as I could. With all the smoothness of a piece of sandpaper, I politely (if somewhat hastily) excused myself for a cigarette and stepped out on Twilight's balcony.

"That was a close one," I mused aloud, checking the bruise on my flank. Unless that was my actual Cutie Mark. Oh man, that would suck; my special talent is getting the shit beat out of me. Whatever. Stupid, unhateable Pinkie! It wasn't visible or anything, but it still smarted right where my cutie mark would be. IF I HAD ONE!

"Are you trying to complicate matters?"

I didn't scream, but I did startle and strike the coolest ninja pose in the history of pony-ninja poses. Imagine my disappointment when there were no other ninjas about, but rather, just Tisiphone, the Stupid Bird of Vengeful Destruction and her stupid, vengefully destructive self resting upon the stupid safety rails that were quite clearly a device of anti-vengeance and destruction-prevention.

"Dinkleburg..." I seethed whilst narrowing eyes.

"What?"

"Nothing!" I blurted before lighting my cigarette, "What's up? Would you like some Lo Mein?"

"No, thank you," she replied politely, "I'm here to stop you from making a grievous error."

"You were only gone like two hours! How have I screwed anything up by just talking to the ponies!?"

"That's what I said," she said with an exasperated sigh, "Imagine my surprise. I figured you'd have waited at least until tomorrow to start ruining Equestria with your buffoonery."

"Your face is a buffoonery," I snapped, feeling prickly all of a sudden.

"Oh stow the bitterness, child," she groaned before flying over and attempting to land on my muzzle.

For real, does anyone else freak out when something flies into their face? Let me actually ask the more sensible question: Who DOESN'T freak out when something flies at their face? Absolutely no one, that's who. I don't care if it's a bird, a bat, a bee, or (God-forbid) a spider! You. Will. Freak.

Perhaps even like this:

"GEEEGERPPFFFT!" I sputtered as I swiped at the bird attempting to drop down onto my nose. Purely reaction, okay? A damned reasonable one, too. Effin' birds and their effin' face attacks. EFF!

She backed away and hovered in midair before exploding into a mocking guffaw. I was all sorts of flankhurt about that.

"You are NOT allowed to land on my face! End of story!" I rubbed my nose as I growled angrily at my assailant.

"Oh, keep your voice down," she said with a chuckle, having landed on the nearby telescope that Twilight leaves out on the balcony at all hours, day and night. Apparently, their lenses don't get moisture in them or something, because all it would take is one week of Floridian humidity to permanently ruin one of those.

I took another drag off my cigarette and pouted silently as I glared at the fowl with disgruntlement. Complete with sitting on the other side of the balcony and crossing my hooves.

"Oh, how mature," she sighed, facepalming into her wing, "Look, just pay attention and we'll go our separate ways. After that, you can go do whatever it is childish simpletons do."

"You're a childi-..." I started to reply before being so rudely interrupted.

I'M AN AH-DUUUUUUULLLLT!

"*Thank you*, for cooperating," she bellowed to interrupt me before letting out a soft cough for unnecessary preparation. "Alright. Now, I know you probably crave attention and all that, but I think you need to put a little more forethought into how you interact with the natives."

"The ponies?" I clarified before glancing her way.

"Yes, the Equestrians," she confirmed with a nod, "Do you realize that less than one percent

of the entire population has ever been in a fight?"

I turned my head her way and gave it a tilt to let her know I was listening but had not caught onto her implication yet.

"And that there are no more than two prisons in all of Equestria?" she continued.

"Okaaaay...?" It was like a beautiful bald eagle flying way over my head.

"And that those prisons have seen, in the entirety of their combined existence, no more than a hundred inmates?" She was talking like I should have caught on by now.

"That's some seriously low crime rate," I answered with a nod, "And you're still being seriously vague."

She smacked her wing over her face again before muttering in a language that... really resembled nothing I'd ever heard. I couldn't even mimic the phonetics of it.

"The Equestrians are as innocent as children with very, very few exceptions," she finally came out with it, "Now, I know it may seem far-fetched to the unenlightened, BUT! Try to imagine, *and stay with me on this one!* ... If you were to unintentionally introduce the concept of... Oh, let's start with something small... racketeering?"

And that was all it took. My mind went straight to hell and dragged my comfort zone right with it. All the awful possibilities of Earth's grimdark potential thrust upon the eager, innocent, young pony mind. They would be monsters! Especially the Earth Ponies with their super toughness and such!

I could see it already. Rainbow Dash becomes a pimp and starts the red light district on the south side of Ponyville, pushing drugs called 'Sonic Rainboom' to all the little colts and fillies who want to be 20% cooler (yeah, I went there...). Twilight becomes a beatcop to try and suppress the unforeseen crimewave sweeping across Equestria with Pinkie Pie as her partner. Together they fight crime until it's just too much and Twilight instead becomes the very monster that she seeks to protect others from.

"I just thought you might want to know... Oh, are... you alright?" I think Stupid Bird was trying to get my attention, but I was too busy freaking the hell out.

This leads to Twilight structuring crime in an attempt to control it but she loses herself to it when Pinkie tries to stop her. Twilight would be forced to frame Pinkie for murder to get her out of the way with an unjust life sentence. OH MY GOD! AND POOR RARITY! She would lose her shop to Twilight, who would then be a soulless shell of her former self, when she failed to pay protection rackets. She would be forced to move in with Applejack, the last bastion of

honest integrity amongst ponykind!

"No-Name, is something wrong?" Wait, that wasn't Tissy.

They would join forces with Fluttershy, only to discover that she's on Rainbow Dash's payroll as a hooker. THE HORROR!!! Her betrayal is not discovered in time, though, and Twilight sends some dirty guards to go break their kneecaps while they're asleep or something. Also, Celestia would wear sunglasses and a beret, just because. Then Pinkie would break out of prison. Now too jaded to make jokes and play nice, she turns to vigilantism and applies her freaky mechanical knowledge to become BATMARE!

"Apparently there is. I apologize in advance." Hmmm. That's definitely not Tissy. Whatever, they'll have to wait, I told myself.

It takes years for the pink pony to penetrate the genius and nigh flawless infrastructure that Twilight has set up, but in due time she works her way up the ladder and finds Twilight! Rather than destroy her though, Pinkie appeals to her with a photograph of how things used to be! Twilight would fall apart and realize what a fiend she has become! Just before she can repent, though, Rainbow 'Danger' Dash shows up and shoots them both, securing her place as the regional crime boss. All would be lost! AND IT'S ENTIRELY MY FAULT!

I'm not sure what it says about me that I was able to think all that up in mere moments, but I'm rather certain it doesn't say anything good.

And then Celestia dumped a bucket of water over my head. I made my usual completely unintelligible noises of shock before lifting my sopping wet mane out of my eyes. That's when the dismay struck. It doused my cigarette. That made me so sad. Sad enough to turn a pair of big watery eyes at Celestia and poke out my bottom lip in despair. That seemed to bother her on an emotional level. Note to self: Celestia can be tormented with sad ponies.

"I... I'm sorry, but you seemed to be..." For the first time since forever, I'd seen Celestia genuinely unsettled.

Oh, I'm sure there was some part of me that thought trolling the Goddess-Empress of Equestria was a bad idea but it was quickly stuffed inside of a box and smashed with a hammer. No postage required, by the way.

"Why do you hate me~?!" I cried, dropping my cigarette and flopping over on my side.

Unfortunately, Celestia is smarter than that. She decided to 'fix' her mistake by drying me off. One less-than-amused stare later, I got to feel the unlimited powah of Her Majesty by way of hurricane winds. Like, winds so strong that it gets caught in your mouth and sends it flapping open with an utter lack of regard for your dignity. Well, I was all sorts of frizzy afterwards, and

more than a little rustled, but I was definitely, unmistakably dry.

"Thanks..." I responded breathlessly, spotting my cigarette and picking it back up with an empty stare. It was also quite dry, I was happy to discover.

"You're quite welcome," she answered with a gentle, if somewhat trollish smile, "Try not to be so dramatic next time."

"Affirmative," I nodded soberly, lighting the smoky treat back up and backed away to keep from getting my addiction on her Royal Ponymess. I don't know how she managed to blow dry me without sending Twilight's telescope and my cigarette careening off the balcony to their respective dooms, but I assume it has something to do with magic. No, I don't understand it, so don't ask me.

"You looked like you could use a little bit of company, but you seemed... distracted to say the least," she pointed out, tilting her head to communicate that she still didn't understand what was going on there.

When she noticed I was taking efforts to keep the smoke away from her, she cast a spell to actually shift the wind to blowing my way. She's considerate like that and it definitely made my job easier.

"Oh, yeah!" I suddenly remembered what was going on and brought a hoof up to scratch at my chin thoughtfully. "I was having this hypothetical scenario play through my head and realized that I might not want to just divulge the... diverse tendencies of my race. I mean, I don't mean to make us sound like monsters or anything, but humans can be just as renowned for their cruelties as they can for the niceties."

Celestia actually leaned back as she digested that. "Cruelties? What...?"

"Yeah, we're not all a bunch of saints. I mean, the average pony here is a sweetheart, if a little bit... sheep-like." I remembered how quickly the crowd at Ponyville's Town Square all went to gossiping about me. "But humans... Eh... Well, most of us are decent but we ain't perfect."

I gave her a helpless smirk to let her know that it was just as troubling to me as it would be to her. I'm not sure that reassured her so much, but she didn't lament on it overlong as she changed the discussion.

"Just as long as you're quite capable of behaving yourself while you're here." How diplomatic of her!

"Cross my heart, hope to fly, stick a cupcake in my eye!" I was all too happy to have the opportunity to use a Pinkie Pie Swear. Complete with the motions. Oh, I'm sure they make

drugs that feel that good, but they just don't last that long.

"I'll hold you to it, too," Celestia countered with a smiling wink. "So, I noticed you were unsettled by what happened inside."

Bam, sudden subject change. She didn't even use a blinker to warn me. If the cops had seen it, she'd have been pulled over.

"Oh. Uh, yeah." I should have asked her if she wanted to fight about it or something. That would have been funnier.

She was just being concerned for me, which is touching and all but I think we can all agree, sometimes, personal space is best space. "Is everything alright?"

"If it's alright, Princess, I'd rather not talk about... well, that," I admitted, giving her a reluctant stare. "please?"

I don't think Celestia is used to being told no. Because I could tell that she seriously wanted to pry into it out of curiosity alone, if nothing else. Still, her better side won out and she nodded with a sigh.

"Very well," she answered before staring up at the moon, "Let us change the conversation, then."

See, that I can handle. None of this sentence-by-sentence nonsense; crazy rapid subject bouncing.

"You got it! To what are we changing it to?" I piped up, quite relieved to have my boundaries respected. Seriously, so many 'Fixer'-types just don't understand that forcibly digging into your past to help you can be just as detrimental as having a rough past to begin with.

"Why was The Nightmare after you?"

Well, that was direct. So I gave her a direct answer.

"Ummm, it wanted my body. And not in the 'I find you incredibly attractive' sorta way," I explained, flipping a hoof-shrug as if I had nothing else to give.

She laughed at that, which made me feel oodles and oodles better.

"I see. Do you have any idea as to why?"

"To be honest, Princess, not a clue. I've no idea how I got here, what that thing was, or

where that crater came from.” I started to explain before suddenly remembering the Stupid Bird. “The only thing I do know is that there was this...”

Ever go breathless for absolutely no reason? Yeah, neither had I before then. But I did and it was quickly followed by the most disorienting pain I’ve ever felt coming right from behind my eyes. I shut them and seized up all over, just barely managing to not fall over on my side. I can’t explain it fully because it just doesn’t work. What I can explain was that I was very discouraged from ever talking about Tisiphone to anyone and anything.

It was kinda like a migraine, if you’ve ever had one. If you haven’t, oh they are NOT like headaches. Let me just clear that up, right here, right now. That brand of pain was just, more or less, something I dealt with. Hell, pain in general doesn’t really stop me from doing what I want to do unless I’m in danger of seriously messing myself up. But migraines aren’t like that. Those are something utterly unbearable and it makes you angry. So ready to just rip into something or someone for bothering you. Because it’s so unfair and you know it and you’re suffering nonetheless. The only thing separating this pain from the well-known migraine was that instead of a blaring agony that keeps going up and down like a super-terrible roller coaster, this was more of a steady, roaring pain that just wouldn’t stop. In a way, that made it easier to handle. Mostly, though, it was still PAIN.

“What’s wrong?” Celestia approached me and lifted my head up without waiting for my answer, “Open your eyes.”

It took a whole lotta focus to pull it off, but I eventually made it happen. Opening my eyes, I stared up at Celestia as she stared back. And then, without taking the time to warn me of her intentions, she gently bopped me in the nose. Even through all the pain, I had a huge Dubya-Tee-Eff moment happen right there. Celestia just clopped me right in the nose! What the hell!

For whatever reason, though, it totally worked. Before I could go back to my irregularly scheduled suffering, I realized I was no longer hurting beyond a soft ringing in my ears.

“What was that?” I mumbled, rubbing my poor offended nose.

“I don’t know,” Celestia replied with a soft smile that almost completely hid the troubled demeanor about her. “But... I think I have some work to do in the morning. May I ask you a question?”

“Is it going to hurt?” I aimed a pair of big super pouty eyes her way.

She let out a soft chuckle before replying, “I don’t think so. Would you be opposed to coming to the castle in the morning?”

“Go to Canterlot?” My eyes inflated right there as I sucked in about 15% of my cigarette in one drag. I felt a little dizzy after that, but it was a good dizzy. I did make a swift recovery though and made a nonchalant charade out of accepting, “Well, I hear it’s rather dismal this time of year and that pollution is really getting out of hand, but if you think it will help then YES!”

She blinked, hesitating a moment before making a very obvious comment. “Has anypony ever told you that you’re incredibly energetic?”

With my tail-a-waggin’ and a grin large enough to envelope a watermelon, I nodded rapidly.

“I’m not usually this wired, but trust me when I say, Madame Alicorn, that I am living the proverbial dream,” I clarified, still locked in the state of tail-flapping happiness. I don’t know why I wag my tail, it just seems to be the right thing to do when I’m happy. I don’t expect the ponies to do it, but before you get on my case, I think you need to realize something: This is my flappin’ tail and I’ll wag it about if I damn well please. And I do indeed please.

She gave me an odd look before shrugging her wings which... I mean, it’s Princess Celestia and all, so I can’t hate on her but it just... I dunno, it doesn’t seem fair that I have to do this complicated one-sided shrug or this rearing-up which takes so much effort. I just want some equality here, y’know?

“I suppose I can’t find fault in you just being happy,” she said with a nod, “Very well. I will send an Archon to pick you up in the morning.”

She turned to go back inside but right as she did, I had a bit of a realization. That realization being that I had a load of questions for her, too!

“Wait, hold up,” I implored, trotting her way a bit to help get her attention, “What’s The Nightmare? I don’t remember anything like that from... Well, what I saw of Equestria before I got here.”

She paused at the door before glancing back at me. She kept her eyes fixed on mine as though she were trying to figure something out about me, but whether she got her answer or not, I couldn’t tell. After a heavy pause, she finally smiled and shut her eyes with a nod.

“Let’s save that question for Luna when you arrive at Canterlot tomorrow morning before she goes to bed. No doubt she’ll have more insight on it than I will,” she kindly explained before opening the door back up and stepping inside.

I dropped my jaw in amazement. I had COMPLETELY forgotten about Luna. That was something to get excited about. I mean, no one knew what Luna was really like! She’s so mysterious, having had all of two lines in the actual show. Despite that, she had nearly as much of a fanbase as Twilight or Rainbow Dash, if not more. I mean, I heard she was going to get her

own episode in Season 2 and everything but I was going to get the super special sneak peak! I thought I was privileged before! Now, I was just going to get spoiled! Squh-weee~!

“R-Right,” I nodded, lost in wonder at the moment, “Luna. Canterlot. Awesome sauce.”

With that, we made our way back inside. I expected to see a plethora of excited little ponies bombarding me with questions, but much to my relief, they had found other things to occupy their time. Twilight was reading a book (stop the presses!) from her comfy little perch on the bench I had left unoccupied by my departure whilst being picked on by Rainbow Dash who was flying over and blowing on her ear. Incidentally, Twilight ear twitches are adorable. Pinkie, on the other hoof, was hovering over Applebloom, staring at the tiny filly with big shiny eyes that were mesmerized.

Why? Oh, she had her reasons, and they were completely fathomable for once. See, Applebloom was busy snoozing the young night away along with her big sister. Taking into account that they own a farm, that isn't too surprising on its own. Regardless, that alone would have been pretty cute, but they took it to the next level and made irresponsible use of their powers of D'Awww. AJ was lying on her back with a half smile on her face. Her snoring alone was pretty epic, but it was that right hindhoof bucking away at what I can only assume was an apple tree that really sold it. But wait, I'm not done. It definitely gets worse. Applebloom chose Applejack's tummy as a bed to lay her sleepy head upon, having approximately 90% of her tiny body covered up with AJ's oversized cowpony hat. Couple this with Applebloom being only just barely disturbed with each of her big sister's applebucks and you had a weapon that could stop a brony's heart at fifty paces.

I'm just glad I made it down the stairs without having to experience the rigors of the five point palm exploding heart technique. I mean, my life had taken a bajillion turns for the better in the last sixteen hours, but that doesn't mean I was ready to call it quits just so that I could go out on a high note. Still, it was a close thing and having to explain that at the pearly gates would have been a little embarrassing.

No, St. Peter, I died from a heart attack caused by looking at adorable ponies...

... Right, then. To Hell with you.

I figured as much.

“Am I the only one about to die from this?!” I whispered, dramatically throwing my hoof out in their direction.

Pinkie was busy soaking it in, too, so she gets a pass. Twilight and Dashy, however, just glanced at me like I was naïve. Which just isn't fair; being desensitized doesn't mean you get permission to judge me.

Twilight did begin to answer me to some extent, but Dash was there again, messing with her ears in an attempt to keep herself entertained. "Rainbow Dash, I'm going to stuff Poison Joke into your pillow if you don't quiddit!"

The multichromatic flying pony snickered quietly behind her hooves as Celestia let out a gentle cough. Not sure how everypony knew to quiet down just by hearing the princess clear her throat, but they did. Maybe it's the law? I can only imagine how that would sound in an official proclamation.

"I need to get back to Canterlot," she explained, "Twilight Sparkle, if you would be so kind as to house our guest for the night, I will send for him in the early morning."

"Of course, Princess."

Heh... Like Twilight was gonna tell Celestia 'No' concerning anything. Hah! That'd be the day.

"But I wanna see Rainbow Dash's cloud house~!" That was me, if you couldn't tell. It was all Lafter's idea and I couldn't argue with on how cool that would be, even if Stoic was pointing out the obvious flaws in that plan.

"Heh! I'd totally letcha if you didn't... y'know... Fall through it!" Dash was taking Stoic's side for some reason. Honestly, he's not as smart as he sounds.

I put on a brave face and saluted. "That, RD, is a risk I am willing to take. I can't let such trifling obstacles get in my way if I want to get anything accomplished in life."

Twilight facehoof'd, Rainbow Dash cackled, and Celestia rolled her eye(s?) mirthfully. I got the impression that I wasn't being taken seriously. They obviously didn't know me. I would have made a big deal out of showing how serious I was, too, if Celestia hadn't distracted me.

"By the way, before I leave, Twilight," Celestia interjected like the rude mare she was, "Do you want to give me your friendship report before you leave?"

I'm not sure where I found a quill, ink, and paper so quickly, but I did. Oh, it was easy. Hell, I may have even summoned them. Not too sure, though. I kinda blocked out everything but the event that was about to take place.

"Please, write it out," I requested nonchalantly as I set them all down beside her. I was in PERFECT control of my voice, if you could believe that. It wasn't even remotely easy, but I managed it. "I'd uh... I'd like to see how it's done. Y'know, for future reference."

Who's an amazing actor? I am. You could have run a nuclear power generator's current through me and it wouldn't have excited me even half as much. But I held that poker face. I held it real good. That is, up until she picked up the quill. After that, everypony started to stare at me like I was crazy. And maybe that had something to do with the slightest bit of hyperventilation. Or the bug-eyed stare. Hell, it could have been anything, but one thing was for sure: I probably earned every last one of those stares.

"And... And read it aloud." I think my voice was a whisper.

Twilight's expression told me she was back to doubting my mental health. That didn't matter to me though. Oh, no sir. Just as long as she wrote the friendship report. Nothing else mattered. Just the quill, the paper, the ink, and the pony. Fixation at its most absolute.

~~And no, I'm not going to write it out for you. It's mine. If you want one you can go get your own! THIS FRIENDSHIP REPORT IS SPECIAL! IT'S MINE YOU D...~~

Due to the interference of a certain annoying pony (GO AWAY, LUNA), I've been pressured into giving you that which belongs solely to me. Your gratitude had best be unending. I will know if it isn't.

Dear Princess Celestia,

Today I learned that there's always more to a pony than meets the eyes. Even knowing that, though, one shouldn't hold their secrets against them. Suspicious though it may seem, assuming the worst is a quick way to a bad start. I was treated with the opportunity to meet the strangest pony ever, and even though his eerie knowledge, as well as the lack thereof, about many things set me off guard at first, I can honestly say that I'm glad to have met him.

Friendship in the past has taught me that first impressions, while important, don't tell you everything there is to know about a pony. Keeping that in mind, I was able to accept this new friend, and I can definitely say that it was worth it. Were he not here, it's very possible something terrible could have happened to the entire town. Not to mention I could have lost one of my best friends. Thankfully, I don't have to know what that is like. All in all, I can safely say that everypony deserves a chance, regardless of how bad the situation looks. And furthermore, I can only hope that other ponies get to know him like I did. If he doesn't first drive them crazy.

Your faithful student,

Twilight Sparkle

P.S. Much to our misfortune, I don't think I'll ever be able to write another letter to you without laughing uncontrollably. Apologies in advance.

Yes, that was quite unfortunate. It couldn't be helped though. Twilight is a slave to her impulses, after all. I can't be blamed if she finds it incredibly amusing that I sat there and

quivered like a toddler at Christmas. That's her problem, after all, not mine.

"Hey, Twilight, not to point out the obvious," Rainbow Dash sputtered behind a facehoof, "but I think No-Name likes your Friendship Reports."

"Thanks, Rainbow Dash, I wouldn't have noticed," Twilight snickered before rolling up the parchment and floating it over to Celestia.

"I liked it, too!" Pinkie declared loudly before slapping a hoof over her own mouth and glancing back at Applejack.

It was a close call that involved both the Apples snorting loudly before rearranging themselves and going right back to their regularly scheduled snooze. Nnnnnneerghh! That was hard to watch. Trust me on that.

Celestia took Twilight's letter, but rather than tuck it away, she actually turned to me and drifted it my way. "I think you will take better care of this than I will."

Ohhhh Jesus, why are they trying to kill me with awesome, I asked myself. What did I do to them that drove them to attempt bronycide? Whatever the case, they were doing a damn good job. Because that almost finished me off, right there. I mean, I hadn't been here twenty-four hours and for some damn reason, I'd had more close brushes with death than I'd ever had in the entirety of my life.

That got me to thinking. Was this really such a good idea after all? Did I need to be taking all these risks and get myself killed through death by awesome? Maybe I just needed to find a way out and go home to-...Hehe... Eh, yeah, I couldn't keep a straight face on that one.

"Thank you," I whimpered happily as I grabbed the parchment with my mouth and stashed it away like I do with my phone and cigarettes. I immediately had this tiny mini panic attack and retrieved it, just to make sure it wasn't gone and breathed this obvious sigh of relief.

Dash continued to laugh at me. She's allowed, being Dashy and all. My payback came in the form of her hurting herself trying to hold it all in to avoid waking up the sleeping Apples.

"Well, if that's all, then..." Celestia started to say before being interrupted by Pinkie Pie.

"WAIT!" She was most definitely *not* using her indoors voice that time, either. She responded by slapping both hooves over her mouth this time.

"Pinkie, why must you be so inconsiderate to the Apples, eh?" I quietly pointed over to the still completely unconscious ponies, "You're mean, you know that? *Meanie Pie~!*"

Oh man, she totally believed it. Even from behind two hooves, we were able to see her incredibly distraught frown, complete with sad ear droop and incredibly misty eyes. What had I done?!

"I just wanted us to name you before we all left," she whimpered from behind her hooves.

Aaaaggghhh! My guilt is unending!

I mirrored her sad disposition which led to everyone staring at us as we unintentionally got into a sad-face competition. This, in turn, pretty much killed what was left of Dash's self control. She had to snatch one of the pillows from Twilight's bed and smoosh her face into it in an attempt to smother her laughter. She stayed up on the second floor, furiously kicking her legs about as she let it all out.

"Oh fine," I finally gave up with an exasperated sigh, "I'll be Anon-Pony."

"Absolutely not," Twilight immediately snarled.

I just can't win. And Twilight is not best pony. End of discussion.

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