

## The Old Stories

By Thanqol

### Chapter One: **Applejack**

"Now, these are stories with meaning. Stories which are important. My pappy used to tell me that it was stories like this which was why the trees grew, why birds sing, why we worked before now and why we'll keep workin' since.

'cause back in the day, we didn't have any of this. Back in the day, there was no sun and moon. There was an eternal twilight goin' from horizon to horizon, a sky of purple stars an' nothing to hope for in the morning. Nothing changed. Nothing grew. An' all the power was held by six ponies who ruled unchallenged.

Ponies lived in those days, but it wasn't an easy matter. Everythin' they had depended on the Six, an' the Six demanded service. The worst of the lot was Metal Mask, though. He was an Earth Pony with a coat greyer than steel an' a soul blacker than pitch. When he was a little colt, lookin' to find his talent, he found the spirit of Honesty sittin' upon a hill. An' she was beautiful, made of earth and mountains and oceans; eternal and unbreakable, truer than gold and gentler than water. Everythin' you could hope the Truth to be, an' more, in the body of a spirit mare.

Little Mask, who hadn't yet earned his cutie mark, came to her on that hill. He looked up at that beautiful spirit, an' his eyes went wide. An' he went and did the unthinkable.

"Are you Honesty?" asked the colt.

"I am," said the spirit, smiling. Even as simple a truth as this made her glad.

"Do you take bets, lady Honesty? And if you do, do you play fair?"

"I do, and I do," said She.

"Then I challenge you: answer my question and I will spend all my days honouring and serving you. Answer not, and you shall serve me until I release you."

"Be warned, little colt, I understand all things. I have seen the passage of centuries, I have brushed the wings of stars, and I was born in the song that sang the world. None will keep secrets from me; the entire world will sing me the answer to whatever question you pose. So warned, do you still wish to challenge me?"

"I do." said the colt.

"Then ask."

"What is my special talent?"

And for the first time since the dawn of time, the cosmos rang silent in Honesty's ears. She did not know. No pony, no spirit, nothing knew. For the first time in all time, Honesty had no answers. There was no truth for her here.

However, that was not because the world had betrayed her. That was because she was incapable of understanding impossible things; and the impossible thing that all the world was desperately screaming at her was something she refused to understand, refused to accept.

*"His special talent is **lying**."*

Honesty could not believe that. She could not accept that. She could not accept that here stood a colt whose very existence was the bane of everything she stood for.

An' so she said, "I don't know." An' she lowered her head 'cause she'd lost the bet.

An' the colt made her into a mask made out of metal, an' he wore it ever since. It was featureless an' empty, as blank as a slate, with two starin' eyes an' nothing underneath. It was nothin', so it could seem like anythin'.

Thereafter, whenever Mask spoke a lie, Honesty had to make it true. An' so the colt rose, and rose, and rose. Everything Mask did, everypony saw as perfect, even when it wasn't. When he'd write, they'd shower him with praise, even though he could hardly string two words together. When he'd paint, ponies would offer their most carefully hoarded jewels for his clumsy splatterings. Everything he did was awful, an' he made a killin' off it. Before too long, he was one of the Six, the rulers of Equestria in those times of twilight.

Mask ruled from a palace of gilt an' gems, fancied up something awful, though he never took the mask off. Despite all the finery an' all the money, he still walked around wearin' that soulless mask. Everypony served him an' told themselves they were happy to do so, but that was a lie, an' they knew it deep in their hearts.

An' then, when it looked like Mask'd rule till his dyin' day, with no hope for the ponies below him, Celestia shows. She was young in those days, still a filly, no cutie mark an' no sun. She was an Alicorn, but no pony knew what that meant. She asked to see Mask, an' Mask agreed. The way he figured it was that it was nothin' if not another pony for his empire. An' when she showed up, she was wearin' a mask made of paper and coloured with pink marker; simple an' silly an' completely out of place.

Celestia walked up to the pony on the throne, an' didn't bow. This caused a stir amongst the

high folk, but it made Mask afraid. If there was one thing that spooked that pony it was somepony who his lies didn't work on, because if his lies didn't work, he had nothin' to fall back on. If the music stopped playin', everypony would see that they'd taken away the last chair hours ago.

But curiosity undid him in the end: Curiosity about how far he could push this, curiosity about the limits to his power, curiosity about the glint in that filly's eye.

"Why don't you bow to me, little girl?" asked Mask.

"Because you should be bowing to me," said little Celestia, in a high and arrogant tone. "You have usurped my throne and betrayed my trust, and I shall suffer your insults not a word longer."

Mask stood up. The mask told everypony he was angry, but his heart was a coward's, an' he didn't have the strength to act on his threat. Instead he bellowed, "Who do you think you are?"

"Who do you think you are?" Celestia cried back, "A masked pony rules in this land, everypony knows that,"

"But your mask is made of paper! Anypony could have made that! Anypony could be underneath it!"

"And anypony could be underneath yours."

There was silence.

"If I take my mask off, everypony will agree that I am the ruler of Equestria. Of this, I am certain," little Celestia said, speaking without fear to the looming figure of Metal Mask, "What will happen if you take your mask off?"

There was silence.

Celestia took her mask off.

"Your turn."

Metal Mask took the mask off, with shaking hooves.

An' the spell was broken. The little grey pony almost threw the mask at Celestia, an' ran for the door as fast as his hooves would carry him. He was never seen again, an' all the assembled ponies agreed that Celestia was indeed the rightful Princess of the land.

Celestia then released Honesty back into the world, back into the heart of everypony great an'

small. Nowadays, the truth is plain an' easy to come by. Honesty looks after friendships in troubled times, she looks after improvement an' constructive criticism an' she looks after trust. If a pony has the touch of Honesty about her, you know you can rely on her 'till the very end."

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## Chapter Two: **Fluttershy**

"Well, I'm not a very good storyteller. But there's always been one that I remembered, one that my dad told me. He said that it was family history, but... well, I'm not sure if I was that important. I hope not..."

Anyway, a long, long time ago there was a Pegasus named Red's Keeper. She ruled the weather and the natural world. She could weave storms like a Diamond Dog digs tunnels, and in those days she managed Equestria's weather almost entirely by herself. She was kind and caring, and she wanted to do the huge job all by herself so no other pegasi would have to deal with the dangers of a thunderstorm at 10,000 feet in pitch blackness.

After one pegasus got hurt trying to help her with the weather, she built a roof of wind across the world, almost impossible for anypony to cross. She flew above, alone, spinning the wind and weather, and everypony else had to stay safely on the ground. Keeper did her best to bring everypony good weather, but she also intervened from above when she thought she could help somepony. Lightning and rain would fall from the sky to prevent foals from making bad decisions or going places they shouldn't. She'd drive ponies away from dangerous quests and make sure they got enough rest by forcefully turning out the lights.

And then one day, Keeper spotted young Celestia.

This was just after Celestia had gotten her Cutie Mark and created the Sun, and she was still very young in those days. The sun, too, was young and fragile. It was barely the size of a pony, dim and flickering, too weak to even fly on its own. But the sun was her friend and companion, as well as being part of herself. She played with it and it shined stronger and happier. They worked together to fight scary monsters that attacked them. The sun was her familiar, her child, her friend, and part of herself all at the same time.

Celestia carried it on her back, between her wings, walking east to west. Every day, as the sun got a little bit bigger and brighter, it also got a little heavier. After a month of carrying the sun, Celestia's walk was slow and weary, barely managing to put one hoof in front of the other, going on through stubbornness and determination. It was so heavy it took all her magic and all her

muscle to keep it moving.

And Red's Keeper decided that the Sun was causing her suffering. She decided it would be an act of kindness to take it off her.

When Celestia was on the final leg of her daily journey, swimming across the western ocean towards the horizon, Keeper created a thunderstorm. At first it was small, but Celestia was a strong swimmer, and kept going. So Keeper started making it larger and larger, until it was the most immense and most powerful thunderstorm the world had ever seen. The sky was full of lightning and the ocean tossed and turned. There were waves bigger than entire buildings, and hurricane winds from every direction.

Celestia was an Alicorn, so she wasn't in danger - she could dive underwater, teleport, or just wait it out. But she couldn't do these things while keeping the sun on her back. She struggled to swim, but it was hopeless. She was soaked to the bone, the rain was blinding her, and the undercurrent threatened to suck her down.

Keeper aimed a lightning bolt, and it hit the sun on Celestia's back, just as the Princess emerged from being dunked underwater for the ninth time. The sun slipped, and fell. It sank into the water, leaving a huge pillar of steam.

And Celestia screamed. For the first time in her entire life, she was afraid. She was terrified. It was more than her special talent; it was her friend, her family, herself. Without hesitation, Celestia dove under the water to try and retrieve it, but it was useless - she'd barely been able to carry the sun before, and there was no way she'd be able to lift it all the way back up to the surface. But she was trying, trying with all her strength and all her magic.

And Keeper, from the clouds, realised what she'd done. She'd tried to take away a pony's friend, for what she thought was that pony's own good. She realised that all this time she hadn't been showing kindness to the ponies below her; she'd been showing tyranny. That she'd been making all the important decisions in everypony's life, decisions that ponies had to make for themselves.

She struck the storm at its centre, and dispersed it, but it was too late. Calm set over the ocean, with no pony and no sun in sight. Keeper despaired, because she knew it was her fault. She'd drowned Celestia and put out the newborn sun as surely as she'd tried to smother her with too much kindness.

But then there was a huge explosion of steam, and the sun emerged from the water, flying high by itself. And then the water exploded again and Celestia flew out behind it. They were flying up, fast, towards the wind barrier Keeper had built to keep everypony down. She flew down and tore it apart as well, letting Celestia and the Sun into the sky.

As the sun began sailing towards the West, carried on its own strength at last, Celestia turned to

face Keeper. Keeper said, "I was wrong. I tried to do the best for everypony, and I was wrong,"

And Celestia smiled; half drowned and coughing up water, but smiling as though nothing was wrong at all. She said, "You weren't wrong to show kindness to everypony, Keeper, but kindness isn't about control. It's about support. It's about helping somepony when they're down, not getting them to give up."

The two became friends after that. Keeper let the pegasus ponies back into the sky, and rather than locking them out when they did dangerous things, she taught them techniques to handle the dangers safely. She taught them the secrets of moving clouds, building snowflakes, mixing rainbows. Some ponies got hurt, but more got wise. The sky became full of life, and still is to this day.

And that's my story. I hope you liked it. It's something that means a lot to me... sometimes animals won't let me help them, and it makes me angry. Sometimes I get frustrated that they're making the wrong decisions, and I want to step in and do it for them. But that's not what kindness is about. Kindness is about being there for others. Kindness is about helping. Kindness is about always offering a helping hoof, not about tying the hooves of others up. Not that I'd know anything about tying ponies up - *eep!*"

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### Chapter Three: **Rarity**

"Oh, a story? Well, you came to the right mare. I know all the important ones, the classical ones, the subtle and romantic ones. Because there were *romances* in the old days. Not petty stuck-up snobs like Blueblood, genuine princes, genuine romances, the types that changed the world. True love, the greatest power of all, walked Equestria in those days. I'll tell you the story of the time a god courted a mare, and nearly doomed the world in the process.

The mare was beautiful. Her name was Olympia, and she was a unicorn without compare. She made and wore dresses of diamonds and fallen stars, invented entire schools of fashion, and moved with a grace and nobility that made ponies swoon the world over. She had armies of admirers who showered her with gifts. This attracted the eye of the Spirit of Generosity, and then her beauty captured his heart. One of the ancient gods had fallen entirely in love with this mortal mare, and determined that he would woo her.

Generosity took the form of a handsome black stallion and approached Olympia, showering her house and the world around with brilliant red roses. He asked for her hoof in marriage as flowers rained gently from the sky. She shrugged him off, turned him down, and went back inside without a backwards glance.

A pony would have been heartbroken, but Generosity was a god, and did not understand the ways of the heart or the concept of defeat. If she had turned down his gift, his logic went, it was simply that he had not offered enough. He went to the ancient mines of the Diamond Dogs and gathered all the jewels he could find, drawing them to Olympia's house in fifty great carts. The collected diamonds shined so brightly that the stars saw them below, and thought they had made a new friend. He stood before her door again and professed his devotion and his love. Once again, Olympia told him she did not want him and turned away. Once again, Generosity decided he simply hadn't been generous enough, and left to find something even greater and more valuable to offer.

Generosity had discerned that Olympia enjoyed fashion and dresses, and so he went to every fashion shop and designer in Equestria and persuaded them to part with some of their greatest masterpieces. Generosity towed over a thousand dresses, each more beautiful than the last, to the house of Olympia and left them in offering. This time, he asked for but the smallest kiss or sign of acceptance, but Olympia once again turned him down. And Generosity still did not understand why.

By this point, Olympia was wildly wealthy and had so many gifts showered upon her by her admirers and by the spirit of Generosity itself that she had become one of the Six great rulers of Equestria. For her part, she mostly did what she had always done: designed dresses, attended formal events, and provided the world with an incontrovertible reminder of what beauty looked like. The glamour, the sophistication... Equestria has never seen anything like it.

Generosity's gifts had to come from somewhere. He was slowly draining the land of wealth and funnelling it into the hooves of Olympia. He had no concerns, fears or doubts; it was his nature to give, and as far as he was concerned, the only failure was that he could not give more. He did not understand love, even as it ruled his every thought. But after he had given all these things, and been turned down each time, Generosity found himself wondering what he could give Olympia to truly prove his devotion.

And then he saw the sun, and he knew.

Generosity flew to the mountain that would one day be Canterlot, where Celestia lived in a small wooden cottage. He asked her frankly to give him the sun, that with it he might finally win the heart of his beloved Olympia.

Celestia thought the request over with great nervousness. Refusing a request from the spirit of Generosity is unthinkable, after all, but similarly she did not want to give him the sun, which in

her mind belonged to everypony. When she finally spoke, she said, "I do not think that would win her heart."

Generosity was confused. "Princess, your sun is the most beautiful jewel in all the Heavens. There is nothing greater that can be given. How could it fail to win the heart of fair Olympia?"

And Celestia said, "Because it does not come from you."

Generosity blinked in frank incomprehension.

"You have given Olympia flowers, diamonds and dresses? More than anypony else could ever offer her?"

"Why, yes. And I have seen many times ponies exchanging such things as shows of love and devotion."

"Were these things hard to acquire?"

"No. I simply asked for them, and others gave them to me."

"Then that does not show her you love her. It just shows her that you are wealthy. The point of giving a mare a gift is not to increase her wealth, it's to show that you care for her and understand her. That you are prepared to make a sacrifice."

"Then I shall sacrifice everything I own!" said Generosity.

Celestia looked the naked stallion up and down. "Do you own... anything?"

"No. I gave it all away."

"Of course. A better approach might be to create a gift yourself. A poem, a song, a picture. Something that comes from your mind, that costs you time and imagination to perfect. The gift of thought, the gift of art is something that comes from within. Even if you own everything in the world, you still only have one mind, and offering some part of that is something that cannot be replaced."

"I understand. I shall invent a poem to win the lady's heart. Hmm... Roses are red, daisies are yellor, come with me, doll, let me be your fella..."

"I'd be glad to help you work on it, though!" Celestia said hurriedly.

And so, Celestia helped the Spirit of Generosity learn poetry, the nuance of words, the mysteries of beat and rhythm, and the language of love. After more than a month, Generosity returned to



Olympia's house. This time he bore nothing, no gifts, no offerings. Only himself, and only the words he had written.

*I could spend my life amongst the heavenly heights,  
And climb a silver ladder up to the vault of the sky.  
'till end of days amongst the stars' shining lights,  
And I'd search and I'd search until the day that I'd die.*

*I could spend my life searching caverns below,  
Through rock and stone and the blood of the Earth,  
And I'd find many treasures, but only I'd know:  
That no matter the gem it would bring me no mirth.*

*I could spend my life tilling the fields and the plains,  
And grow ten miles of red roses and count every one.  
No matter the beauty of the harvest and rains,  
I'd never be satisfied and I'd never be done.*

*Because any gift I could give would devalue your art,  
I have nothing to offer, so I offer my heart.*

And Olympia smiled.

And they lived happily ever after.

That's what Generosity's about, everypony. It's not about being rich. It's about giving the gifts that matter. It's about the thought, the meaning, the sentiment. A clumsily written poem from somepony who genuinely cares is worth more than all the jewels in the world. A genuine compliment from a friend is worth more than a speech from a stranger. And politeness and respect is worth more than any amount of divinity or aristocratic breeding."

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#### Chapter Four: **Twilight Sparkle**

"Here you go. *Pies, Germs, and Steel* by Diamond Digger, *The Origin of the Ponies* by Darwhinny, and the *Treatise on Government* by the Great and Powerful Aristrotle. Read these,

and then cross reference them with the books on this list and you'll have a pretty good starting point when it comes to researching Pony history. And if you ever need more resources, the history section covers the wall to the door, and also that stack of books over there and if there's anything you need and I don't have you can fill in one of the request forms... oh, did I get you a library card? We can be Bibiloteers!

Wait, what? You want me to *tell* you a story? Oh... well, sure! Some cultures have a rich tradition of oral storytelling, like the buffalo. Let's see... It'd have to be a story I know by heart... Oh, I could tell you the story of how Celestia made the sun!

A long time ago, there was a unicorn named Starry Notions. He was brilliant! He wrote *Magic in the Natural World*, and the *Mathematics of the Stars*, and *A Brief History of Unicorn Magic* and so many other texts, and they're still required readings and the foundational principles of modern magical theory. There were unicorns before Starry Notions, but none who really studied magical theory in the same way he did. He wore a green hat and cape, and he studied the supernatural and codified magical secrets and the laws of the world. He was the best wizard in Equestria by a long shot. There was a psuedopolitical organisation at the time called the Six, which were essentially precursors to modern nation-states overseen by single monarchistic ponies, and Starry Notions was definitely a member.

Starry Notions oversaw a great deal of territory, and dealt with it using the minimum effort. He used magic to keep the skies clear and the ponies fed, but no more. He made sure there was enough light and took the time to defeat any monsters that attacked his land. And he spent as much time as possible in his studies, learning more and more magic, and using less and less of it. He was the most powerful pony in all the lands, but he also did the least.

Meanwhile, Celestia had started having dreams. She was dreaming of the sun, and she knew she had to build it, but she had no idea how. So after trying everything she could she approached Starry Notions and asked him for help. She told him that she needed to build a fire that could light up the entire world. Starry Notions was intrigued; he'd never had a challenge like this before. It was a direction for his research to take, and a worthy challenge of his abilities all at once. So he agreed, and Celestia and Starry Notions fell into deep study.

The Royal Library has kept their research notes, and I've read a few - they're absolutely *fascinating*! Do you have any idea what's involved in building a Sun? A self-sustaining light and heat source, with enough magical sympathy to accept limited control? Not so hot that it'd burn Equestria, but not so cold that it'd be useless, and capable of seasonal variation - there's so much involved, so many details! Starry Notions' notes were comprehensive; there was the challenge of finding an appropriate fuel source, of ignition, of sustainability, of monitoring, of ongoing magical links to Equestria, of the seasons - and don't even get me started on solar flares and eclipses! I could *tell you* about solar flares.

But it probably wasn't so fun for Celestia, because by all accounts Starry Notions was a total

grouch. He ordered her around and called her stupid whenever she failed. He made her do all the hard work and put her in charge of the enormously complicated weather spells so he could spend even more time in study. When monsters attacked the town, Celestia had to go and stop them. When they disagreed on magical theory, the rows could be heard from the town below, and Starry Notions even threatened to throw her out one time. It probably didn't help that Celestia was teenaged at this point, and Starry Notions disapproved of her hairstyle or her loud music. In one transcript I read, Celestia shouted at Starry Notions "You're not my dad!"

But after a year of research, Starry Notions finally came to his ultimate decision: the project was impossible. He'd assembled the fuel, scribed the spells, worked out the spiritual bindings that'd be necessary. But the heart of the star was made out of an idea - the idea that *things got better* - caught in a thread made out of hope. But ideas didn't burn. Starry Notions had gone through everything and decided there was nothing that could light that fire, and told Celestia the bad news: Her sun would never, could never be made.

Celestia didn't accept this, of course. She knew the sun was possible. She'd seen it's completed form in her dreams, and felt deep in her heart that it was her destiny, her special talent. She got into another row with Starry Notions, and the unicorn finally said, "If you want to attempt the impossible, feel free!" And he stormed out of the room without looking backwards.

Celestia decided she was going to anyway, so she gathered all the ingredients and all the spell components together. And she collected her strength and began to focus all of her might on trying to set fire to the impossible. After the first hour, she thought she'd made progress. After the second hour, she thought she was almost there. By the ninth hour, she began to despair.

No matter what she did, how hard she pushed, how intensely she focused, she couldn't start that fire. She'd done everything right but it was just as Starry Notions said. The act was impossible. But she kept trying anyway. And it was getting dangerous; Ritual magic is extraordinarily difficult, and the longer you go the more magic you've got in one place, and the more tired you get, and the more likely you are to make a mistake. Small fires started around Celestia, but she didn't give up, and she didn't stop.

On the sixteenth hour, Celestia's knees gave out, and she fell over. She kept focusing as she struggled to get to her feet, but the magic was getting away from her, and all of a sudden it looked like the entire thing could fall apart. Even then, Celestia didn't retreat or give up. She stuck to it, focusing on that fire that she *had* to create. Celestia said a few times that the sun was like her child, so maybe that's why she kept going. She couldn't stop creating any more than she could stop giving birth.

But then and there, things looked bleak. The spell was falling apart and the entire project looked doomed.

But a green glow filled the room. Starry Notions stepped up next to Celestia, and began to pour

his own magic into the ritual. They smiled at each other, and there was a spark. The idea caught fire. And, with a sound like a heartbeat, the sun came into the world.

And that's the most important part about magic, something that I didn't know until recently. One pony can do amazing things, world changing things, things that they'll be remembered for ever. But two ponies can do the impossible. Magic isn't just about charts and graphs and math, it's about *why* you do magic. I know I'm pretty good, normally, but when I've got my friends standing behind me I'm *unbeatable*.

Remember why you're doing what you're doing. Remember who you're doing it for.”

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## Chapter Five: **Pinkie Pie**

"Oh, you want to know how I got my cutie mark? That's easy! First off, I was a pegasus, but then somepony said that we should be more racially diverse, and then they rewrote me as an earth pony and - oh no, that's how Equestria was made. I always get those two mixed up.

\*Gasp\* But hey! I know an even better story! I can tell you about the time Celestia invented laughter! It's a gem!

See, a long, long time ago, when Equestria was covered by eternal twilight, there was this *huge* monster - or it was maybe a pony, or a spirit, or maybe a fox. No pony really knows because it was also a shapeshifter, but ponies called it the Fox for short. Sometimes, the Fox would take the form of a huge serpent made out of pure darkness, and the only way you could tell it was overhead was when all the stars went out. Sometimes it took the form of a cute little fox in a tie. Sometimes it took the form of a pony made out of night, except for its gleaming white smile. The Fox was always smiling, you see, except it wasn't a proper smile - it was just showing its teeth. And it had a *lot* of teeth.

And the Fox was a trickster, and a cruel one. He'd knock ponies into freezing cold water with his tail. He'd lead little foals away into the forest and abandon them there. He'd lead monsters into town and watch as they wrecked the place. One time, he stole Starry Notions' spellbook, and the Unicorn Wizard cast a spell to blast him with a huge lightning bolt! BANG! The Fox fled, bleeding, and where his blue blood landed it grew into groves of Poison Joke. Fallen scales became Parasprites. One way or another, the Fox left only suffering in his wake, like a big,

shadowy old mean meany-pants.

No pony was really sure where he'd come from, or why he was here. What everypony did know was to be absolutely afraid of him. When the stars went dark, ponies ran inside and hid under their beds. The Fox would fly through towns and leaves hundreds of cruel traps and pranks, some of which wouldn't get found for years afterwards. Sometimes, even today, if you're walking in the forest, minding your own business, and suddenly you get tied up from nowhere that's probably a leftover trap from the Fox. Ooh! I know a pony who's special talent is finding the Fox's traps! No, wait, her special talent is writing. She just finds the traps by accident.

So, anyway, the Fox lives like this for a long time - I don't know how long. Were years invented then? It was before the sun, so probably not. But if years didn't exist before the sun, then why did Celestia make the sun's cycle exactly one year long? Oh! Nevermind! The Fox just travels around, setting traps, ruining ponies' days, until he sees Celestia, carrying the newborn sun on her back, walking from east to west.

And the Fox gets all *kinds* of ideas for pranks. Celestia's a slow moving target, walking a predictable route - and just between us girls, those are the easiest ponies to prank. If you want to avoid a pranker, mix up your daily routine. Anyway, when the fox is near the sun, it's much easier for ponies to see him because he's a big black outline, so he kind of wants to trip her up and put out the sun before it gets any bigger. So he runs through the forest like a hurricane and fills it with all kinds of traps and pranks. He puts so much effort into it he even invents some of the oldest tricks in the book, like sneezing powder, right then and there.

Celestia walks right into the forest, and bang! Rake in the face! She tosses it aside and continues on a bit further, but she accidentally walks into a nest of bats because she's watching the ground for more rakes. So she runs from the bats, steps into a rope trap, and gets dangled upside-down by one hoof. She just manages to catch the sun between her wings before she drops it in the mud. By this point, she's getting pretty fed up, so she uses her magic to untie herself and locate and disable a whole bunch more traps ahead of her.

And the Fox sees that Celestia has taken care of the traps he set, so he decides to step it up a notch. He takes the form of an old brown pony, but without a cutie mark - the one thing he can't fake - and starts whistling. Celestia's kind of messed up, scratched, and muddy at this point and she thinks that the one thing she could really use would be a good shower. She goes and approaches the old pony and asks him if he knows where she could wash off, and the Fox tells her there's a place nearby called the Reichenbach falls.

Now, have you ever heard of the Reichenbach Falls? Back then, it was the most beautiful and clear spot in the Everfree, shining brighter than a disco ball or Prince Blueblood's smile. Celestia finds it, sets the sun on the bank, and goes for a swim. Celestia's always liked swimming, and she plays in the water for a long while before sitting down under the waterfall to wash off properly. And the Fox sneaks up over the bank...

And he transforms the water coming down the river into thick, black tar!

Celestia doesn't realise until she was soaked horn to hoof in the sticky blackness. She screams and runs, trying to get it off, but it won't come off! That tar *never* comes off; most of the time, if it gets on you, you've got to be shaved *bald!* After spending some time trying to scrape it off, and just getting even muckier, and getting tar caught under her hooves, she walks up to the sun and makes it burn bright and hot, until it burns all the tar off of her. But she's angry at this point, and she still feels sticky and icky. She picks up the sun and starts walking again. The Reichenbach stayed as a big ugly tar flow forever afterwards. I think somepony started harvesting it for moustache gloss.

So Celestia's basically having the worst day *ever* by this point, and she just wants to get out of this forest so she can get it over with. But just as she's leaving, the Fox comes to her in the shape of a little brown and red fox wearing a dark blue tie, and sticks his thumb out. And it's the cutest thing ever! \*Gasp\* I mean, can you imagine a little well dressed fox showing up on the roadside, politely asking you for a ride? Celestia can't exactly resist a little fox asking for a lift, so she lets him hop up onto her back, and finally exits the forest once and for all.

After a little while, she notices that while the sun is still heavy on her back, it's getting darker all around her. So she turns around and sees that the sun has been replaced with an anvil, and that the Fox is back in the form of the enormous dragon, blotting out the sky. He's holding the sun in his mouth, he shows his teeth, and then he swallows it whole!

And then Celestia did something that nopony had ever done to the Fox before.

She laughed at him.

And the Fox just stopped. He had no idea what this sound was. He had certainly never heard it before - he'd only ever heard screaming, cursing, mutterings, swearings. When he first hears Celestia's laughing, he thinks she's trying to cough and scream at the same time. But then he realises that she sounded *happy*. And he'd never heard that before.

Because when the Fox pranked ponies before, he's always shocked and surprised and scared them. And everypony has always reacted as though those were bad things. But Celestia was happy that she was surprised. The Fox had thought that making ponies sad was just something that he *did*, something he had no control over, like breathing. Before now, the Fox had never thought that he could make them happy instead.

So he coughs up the sun, balancing it on the tip of his tongue, and showing it to Celestia. She laughs again, so he tosses it up in the air and catches it on his tailtip. And then he pretends to drop it and catches it just before it hits the ground. And Celestia laughs more and more, and the Fox gets more and more encouraged. After trying some more tricks with the sun, he gives it

back to her, and Celestia smiles and thanks him.

And the Fox flew away without a word, but after that, he was different. He wasn't just showing his teeth now. He was smiling, really smiling. And he was absolutely determined to make everypony else in the whole wide world smile as well, and keep smiling *forever!* He kept playing pranks, but he began changing up so they'd be harmless. Like running a cart through a muddy puddle to splash a pony, or opening a cellar door just in time for somepony to fall into. He didn't naturally understand laughter, and sometimes his jokes were still mean, but over Equestria's history he's gradually gotten better at them.

That's why Laughter is so important. Sometimes, when your worst fear is there, looking you in the face, laugh at it - and it might laugh back! And it's better to make the monster your friend than run away from it.

Stand up tall. Smile. Don't get frustrated or angry when bad things happen, just laugh at how silly it all is. Fear can't hurt you, it can only ever *stop* you doing things, and it's better to try and fail than to not try at all."

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## Chapter Six: **Rainbow Dash**

"Wow. You must have sat through a lot of boring stories to get here, huh?"

Don't worry. You came to the right pony.

I can tell you about the time I aced the Jr. Speedsters Entrance Exam! Or the time I got my cutie mark! Or the time I hung out with the Wonderbolts - they taught me this totally awesome move called the Butterfly's Thunderstorm, what you do is you get up to a certain height and start flying backwards and cycling your wings like this, and then -

- Wait, what? You want to hear one of the *old* stories? I - er, you wouldn't prefer hearing the story of that time I saved the lives of three Wonderbolts instead? I mean, I *could* tell you one of those stories, but... er... oh, look at my wrist, gotta go clean the clouds! Wait, what do you mean Derpy already did that? That pegasus is a few potato crisps short of a muffin! I... *urghh*.

Look.

I'm a flight school dropout, okay? There's a *lot* of things I don't know.

... Oh wait! No! I've got one! I've totally got one! And not just any story, but the best one ever! The Wonderbolts comic, issue #34! Wonderbolts: Origins! It was about the history of the Richthofen family, you know, Soarin von Richthofen? 'cause his great ancestor, Baron von Richthofen, was around back during those times. And he was a *legend*!

Now, the Baron, he was a great pony. Faster than lightning across a mirror! He practically *invented* high-speed flight as a discipline, and no pony's ever beaten his record in the Stormsurfer competition. And he was a good pony too. He was the guy you wanted on your side if you were around in those days; the rest of the Six were various flavours of jerk, but the Baron was just and fair and absolutely dedicated to the betterment of ponykind.

And so, when Princess Celestia asked him to become a vassal of hers, he turned her down. He was a proud pony and wasn't about to bend knee to some newcomer Alicorn, no matter what was being said about her, no matter that she was responsible for creating the Sun that was bringing light to all Equestria. For Celestia's part, she knew that while the Baron was a good pony, she was looking at it from the perspective of some pony who was going to live for thousands of years - and while Baron von Richthofen might be a good pony, some pony some generations down might not be, and then a lot of ponies were going to be in trouble.

So they rolled up to the border one day, both of them bringing armies - hundreds of ponies of all types and the best fliers in all the world! But neither of the rulers really wanted to fight; they'd just taken the armies to show the other that they could, and what was at stake. They met out in between the armies and, in order to spare a big battle, agreed that they'd settle this with a duel. The *original* Iron Pony competition! Winner gets Equestria. Stakes couldn't be higher.

So they agree on a series of three challenges. The first one is Weather Control - create the most spectacular weather effect they possibly can! The Baron takes off right away, and flies up into the clouds. He blasts through them so fast that the clouds catch *fire*! And then, the Baron starts kicking the burning clouds - one! Two! Three! Sends them flying at maximum speed down towards the lake below! They hit the lake and send up huge clouds of steam - clouds of steam that form the letter R. The crowd goes *wild*.

So then Celestia stands up, and no pony knows how she's ever going to top this. And she just smiles, and her horn starts to glow, and she lifts herself up into the air. And the sun comes up over the horizon behind her, silhouetting her against it. And the black night sky, which was all every pony had really known before that moment, turns crystal blue, and black clouds fluffy white. And fire and clouds are awesome, but they're nothing on some pony who has the ability to control the entire sky. Point: Celestia.

Challenge two is a race. Straight up, knock down. They get to the starting line, take their positions - and they're off! The Baron instantly takes the lead - around the first cloud, no problem, and spinning on forwards with absolutely perfect control. He's got much faster



acceleration and manoeuvrability than the Princess, but Celestia's got bigger wings and a bigger top speed. She batters through the obstacles as often as she weaves them, penalising her score but letting her build up momentum!

It's neck and neck half the time, but the Baron keeps peeling off to dodge every obstacle while Celestia bashes right through them. Soon, she's going so fast in a straight line the Baron can't keep up, and she crosses the finishing line well before the Baron! But after the Baron finishes and the penalties are calculated, he wins by a clear margin. This time, when everypony cheers, it's for the Baron.

And then they're there, facing down, the final challenge. And the final challenge is the traditional challenge that comes up whenever somepony wants to challenge the Princess for Equestria. It is, of course, the Magma Kraken. Active volcano, with a full grown Magma Kraken inside. You don't know what a Magma Kraken is? Well, imagine a Kraken, made of magma. Challenge is to steal a gemstone from its hoard and get out - pony with the biggest gem in the shortest time wins. You know, actually, the last Magma Kraken challenge was only two years ago? I heard Prince Blueblood got *really* drunk and challenged Celestia to a duel for the kingdom - well, yeah, that ended how you might expect.

Anyway! Baron von Richthofen goes in with maximum speed. He flies low, trailing his storm trail, zapping the tentacles that try to grab him. He swings in close, weaves and circles, and with some death-defying flying manages to tie three of the tentacles in a knot! He snatches up a gemstone and accelerates on his way out.

Meanwhile, Celestia flies down as fast as she can, getting smacked once or twice by the Kraken, but she carries the sun around - she can stand the heat. It just bruises her a bit. She lands, sees she's going to get out later than the Baron, so she grabs the biggest gemstone she can carry and starts trying to escape, and hopes that the size of the gem will be enough to tip the score in her favour.

But then, just as the Baron is hugging the volcano cliff wall on his way out, one of the tentacles hits the side of the volcano, causing an avalanche. The Baron swings and weaves to avoid, but in doing he has to drop a bit of altitude, and instantly, he gets caught around the middle by the Kraken! His armour protects him, but it's burning hot.

Celestia sees this, and she doesn't even hesitate. She drops her gem and flies right back down towards the Kraken. Her horn glows as brightly as if she was just about to raise the sun, and she casts the first spell to come to mind. The dreaded... the legendary...

*Number Twenty Five.*

Enormous moustache, *glorious* moustache, all over the Magma Kraken's face. Celestia summons a mirror a second afterwards, and the Magma Kraken is taken aback by how *stylish*

and *manly* it looks with that moustache. And then the moustache instantly catches fire, what with all the magma everywhere. And the Magma Kraken panics when it sees it's beautiful new moustache burning, so it releases the Baron so it can try to use its tentacles to put out the fire. That doesn't end particularly well for the Kraken 'cause it's tentacles are also made out of magma, but it buys time for Celestia and the Baron to escape.

And they get out, back to the cheering crowd. The Baron is holding a gemstone. Celestia has nothing. Immediately, the von Richthofen army begins cheering, celebrating their new Prince. They lift him up, and he flies up into the air. And he gives a speech.

"I won the contest. But I also learned something. I learned that there is a pony who would not hesitate to drop her chance at becoming sole ruler of all Equestria in order to help her bitter rival. And, as I am a pony and a leader of ponies, I understand that anypony who would show such courage and nobility is a pony deserving of my loyalty. I, Baron von Richthofen, pledge my allegiance to Princess Celestia."

And so, the Baron becomes the very first Wonderbolt, and his family has been at Celestia's side ever since.

And that's more than just an awesome story. It's a story that's always made me think about loyalty. It made me think about how you shouldn't give your loyalty for the wrong reasons. It's when you realise that somepony is a true friend, a true leader, that their cause is genuinely just. Loyalty is the most important gift that can be given, and it shouldn't be given for the wrong reasons."

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## Chapter Seven: **Celestia**

"If I had to pick a regret, just one, out of all the thousands, it would be those stories.

They're beautiful stories. Important. Stirring. Inspiring. And also completely wrong. Looking back, it would have been such an easy matter to correct them, set things right. But I was a Princess, and I had to spend my time ruling. I didn't have the time to be a storyteller. I didn't have the time to correct every lie, or inconsistency, or ignorance. And in retrospect, maybe I should have made the time. Because no matter what else seemed important, getting those stories right might have been the single most important duty in my entire life. And I missed the

chance.

I speak, of course, about the simple fact that not one of those stories mentions or references my sister, Luna.

The story of Metal Mask is broadly accurate, but I can fill in a few more details. Metal Mask was a filly, not a colt, and an ancient ancestor to the Apple family. Though I released the Spirit of Honesty from the Mask, there was some dark magic in that metal, and it's resurfaced time and again to haunt Equestria with its wretched lies. I've never been truly able to end its evil. But most importantly was that at the time of that story, my sister Luna was very young, and had made for me a gift of a paper mask coloured with bright pink marker. She told me it was prettier than Metal Mask's, and in that moment I got the idea to confront her.

The story of Keeper is mostly accurate except for an immensely glaring inconsistency at the end. I wasn't able to simply magically pull the sun out from under the water - I was, in fact, completely submerged in the ocean, sun on my back, thinking that this could be the end. And then, Luna dropped a ribbon of moonlight into the water and tied it around the sun. And, using the moon to pull, she lifted the sun out from the water and into the sky. She saved us, she saved us both, and hearing her role in the story forgotten fills me with sorrow. And I can't even imagine the pain and anger it caused *her* to feel.

I have a few quibbles with Olympia and Generosity's story. For one, Olympia wasn't so much a fashionista as she was a baker and weapons designer - she came up with the plans for the original pie-catapult and several other ancient pastry-based weapons. And secondly, when Generosity showed up and asked me to give him the sun, I actually got into something of a shouting match with him about how it wasn't mine to give. It was a significantly longer time than the story implies before I was able to suggest alternative gifts to Generosity. Never get into an argument with a Spirit; it's literally *impossible* to change their minds. Luna, though, was the one who was urging Olympia to "Hold out for more" in the first place. She did have something of a petty side sometimes.

The story of Starry Notions, though... He was a grouch. An unambiguous, eternal, spiteful grouch who never gave anything, never said anything nice, and never smiled. He didn't have a change of heart and come by at the end to help me. He lived out his life in his tower with his books, alone and arrogantly unflinching in his determination to be alone. Who did come by was Luna, my sister, and only our magic together was able to create the Sun - and the Moon, at the same time, born from the shadow the Sun had cast before it caught ablaze.

The story of the Fox and Laughter, again, accurate, right up until the end. When the Fox stole the sun from my back, Luna was walking at my side, laughing at the tar in my hair. When the draconic shadow blotted out the stars and the monster swallowed the sun, though, I was steeling myself for the greatest battle of my life - and Luna looked across at me and said "I'll take the ten miles on the left, you take the ten miles on the right,". And I laughed. And, like the

story says, that broke the Fox's entire mind. I still invite him to the Grand Galloping Gala every year, and he always finds somepony to prank.

The last story, Luna didn't play a huge role, but she was there, comforting and encouraging me the entire time, hovering above the action, sitting on the moon, calling out the commentary the entire time. The Baron, though, later admitted to me that part of the reason he'd let me have the title of Princess was because he was terrified of the paperwork and royal duties involved, and frankly, he'd much prefer to be flying. Looking back, I realise that he probably got the better of that deal. Wonderbolt Celestia... has a ring to it, doesn't it?

Anyway. Luna was forgotten from all these stories because she simply wasn't seen as much. When I raised the sun, it changed the entire world, and everypony stood up and took notice of me. When Luna raised the moon, it was a return to the way things were; the night, the stars, and ponies didn't notice the differences she had made to it. She'd made the night lighter, smoother, safer, more beautiful and nopony paid attention.

Imagine how it must have felt to be forgotten, by the entire world. Edited out of stories. Getting blank stares and questions of "Who?" when you introduced yourself. Being responsible for so many things, so many glorious and beautiful and amazing things, and nopony even noticing.

I can't condone what she did, but I can understand it, I can forgive it, and I can realise that I played a role in it.

So, credit where it's due, everypony. It's time to set the record straight.

Let's all bring our hooves together and have a round of applause for my sister, our hero, Princess Luna."