

The Steadfast Sky : Chapter 7

The Grey Potter

<http://www.fimfiction.net/story/11495/The-Steadfast-Sky>

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~Celestia~

That day, I thought my biggest issue would be my shame about begging from the shopkeepers. It was just silly before, picking up a little extra treat or two. But now... it was depressing. I left the shop early, after a very brief round, not even stopping to listen to Apple-a-Day. I would have gotten home before Luna that day, if we both mutually understood I couldn't afford school for her anymore. To be perfectly honest, she seemed glad about that news. I didn't know if that should have made me happy or very, very disappointed.

But as I walked, I noticed something was different on the streets. Guards. Guard ponies in black armor, wandering in pairs. There were always a few around, just enough to be barely noticed. But today, they were everywhere. Not arresting anyone or looking to be in a hurry, just watching, looking at each face as a pony passed, taking and asking brief questions of passersby's.

It was hard to stop myself from galloping home. The guards made me uneasy. I thought one would realize I hadn't paid my taxes and grab me. A silly worry, no one knew who I was, right? Goodness... I forced myself to canter calmly. Now was not the time to stand out in the crowd.

Arriving at home proved me wrong. There was something very close at hand to be worried about, and it had nothing to do with taxes.

It was day, barely mid afternoon. Yet, when I got home, I found Discord. He was collapsed on the foyer floor, trying to catch his breath, clutching an unevenly shaped stone. Luna hovered by his side, but bounded over to me cheerfully as I entered.

"Welcome home, sis!" Luna yelled with a smile.

"Um, hello, Luna." I walked past my sister and hovered over my friend, staring at him, stunned.
"Discord?"

"Yeah. Hi." He raised his paw in a brief greeting, still breathing heavily. I was getting a sinking feeling. A very, very bad drop on my insides.

"What are you doing here?" I asked, throat tight.

"This. This is why." He raised himself into a sitting position and pushed what he was holding towards me. It seemed to be an ordinary stone carving, and a crude one at that.

"What is this?"

He shrugged. "Touch it."

I tapped it with my hoof. It was warm, from Discord's paw, I assumed. I felt it shift under me. I yanked my hoof away.

"But, but what is it?"

"A weird cool rock that Discord found, that's what!" Luna piped up, jumping towards us. I ignored her.

"Discord. What. Is it."

He laughed nervously. "I don't know, something crazy."

"Where did you get it?"

"Ehhhheheh...."

He avoided my gaze, trying to laugh off the situation. I didn't let him. This was serious. There were guards everywhere and a magical *thing* in my house. If this was nothing, I'd let it be nothing. But if this was the cause of the hubbub outside... I put my hoof down, snapping his attention back to me.

"Discord. Please. Please tell me where you got it."

"A vault." Not good enough. I kept my silence. "In the castle." Still not good enough. "In the, uh, Shadow Stallion's personal quarters?"

"The... the what?!" I squealed, "Why did you think this was a good idea?!"

"Hey, I didn't learn it was his place until all the guards started screaming it." Was that supposed to be a *defense* for his actions? How could he be so relaxed about this?!

"Then why didn't you give it back?!" I retorted.

"I dunno. I dunno, I guess I still thought it we could sell it."

"Sell *this*?" I forcefully waved my hoof at the rock. "Something so precious? Who did you think would buy it?!"

"Hey, you ever try and think when you're in a blind panic?" Now he was shouting back, standing and trying to get *my* eye contact. "Try it some time! It's not exactly easy!"

"Why did you do this at all?! What did you think would happen, that you just waltz off scot free?! Whoops, seemed we misplaced our weird magical rock, I guess it wasn't that important!"

"Hey, if they didn't want me to take it, they should've locked the door!"

I tried to wheeze out a response, but all I could offer in reply was my head turning at a further and further angle, as if sideways logic could be seen better at a ninety degrees. "No! No, you're not getting

away with that. That has no basis, no place in reality. That, that is moon logic!”

“Well gee, Celestia, thank you for thinking I can make intelligent and rational decisions all the time! I will try and be logical and never make any mistake for as long as I live, because I’m just *that perfect*.”

“This isn’t just a mistake, this, this goes beyond that! This is the dumbest, most stupid—!”

“STOP FIGHTING!” Luna stomped her hooves between us, shouting. “And don’t tell me not to yell, cuz I needed to, to be heard over you two.” Luna looked right up at me, neck straining upward in an attempt to look regal, “What Discord did is done now, and you told me that complaining about past stuff is silly, Celestia. What we gotta do now is figure out how to help our friend, and not make him feel really bad for something he already feels really bad about.” She snapped her eyes over to Discord, “And you DO feel really bad about it because you just told me so. So stop pretending to Celestia that she’s the big bad meanie here.” She backed away and glared at the two of us, “Now hug!”

The room fell quiet. I stared down at my little sister, knowing she was right, how she could just *do* this. This entire situation was a bad one, terrible, and I saw no way out of it. I closed my eyes. No *sane* way out of this.

“I SAID HUG! Hug or I’ll scream!”

Discord nervously pulled me into a hug with his forelegs. I patted him on the back with my hoof, looking elsewhere. At least his wing wasn’t jamming into me this time.

“Close enough!” Luna declared, proudly nodding. We broke apart, and the room was quiet again. Awkward quiet.

“Alright...” I began, “I have an idea.” I steadied myself, gathering my thoughts. “There’s no other option now. We leave the city. We’ve got to find a way out, and go.”

“I was told,” Discord quietly said, “That the only way out is by Pegasus cart. We’d have to find a way up to the top of the walls, then sneak aboard one.”

“Fine. Then we’ll try to do that. Luna... pack your things, okay?”

She nodded with a squared jaw, and began tearing through the messy foyer trying to find her saddlebags.

“Celestia,” Discord said, “I’m sorry... I was trying to help.”

“It’s, it’s alright,” I replied, forcing a hesitant smile. “We’ve all wanted to get out of here anyway. This was just an extra push, that’s all.”

He nodded, “What can I do to help?”

“Just, just help Luna for now. Make sure she doesn’t pack all of her dolls.”

"I can't pack all of my dolls?!" Luna squeaked, but I was already walking upstairs.

Just a few steps down the hall, and I was at the door of my room. I paused for a moment, trying to get my breathing under control. I guess this is really happening. How often did I dream this would? Not under these circumstances. Not like this. In a situation under control. This was too much, too fast. Guards outside, no easy way out...

Control, Celestia. Control your breathing, control this situation. You are the mare here, the adult. Put on your brave face and smile, for Luna. For Discord. You can do that, for everyone.

Pacing myself, I eased open the door.

It had been too long since I had been here... I didn't need it, I had outgrown it. Outgrown the soft pink decorations I thought matched my mane. Outgrown the shelves full of little trinkets and toys. There was an order to things that was lacking in Luna's own room. Decorations, my shelves, they were orderly decorated, and my bookshelf was organized neatly, by topic. Fiction top shelf, Reference second, Other nonfiction on the third and fourth, arranged by topic. My sheets were tucked carefully into the pallet, with pillows and two stuffed animals placed with care and purpose.

Of course, that was my room before... all of this.

The cloth was valuable, and none remained. Only a few books lay scattered on my shelf, the oldest and most worn down. Some of my trinkets were scattered around the shelves, rooted through, leaving behind the sentimental items. A small bundle of feathers, an old coin...

Better not to linger. I pulled my saddlebags away from where my nightstand used to be, blew the dust off of them, and walked out.

I don't know entirely if I'm ready to leave, despite always wanting to. But I think I will be happier, once we leave these bad memories behind. Right now, there was a much more pressing problem.

What in Equestria do you pack when you plan to never return?

There were the obvious things, of course. I packed the hay I had bought today, as well as the small bag of oats from the kitchen. Beside it, I tucked away the rest of our savings, thirty bits. I was certain that this was a universal currency, but just thinking that immediately made me doubt what I knew. I packed them anyway. I also packed a brush. It was very important. Then I stood in the foyer like a foal and wondered what else I could possibly take.

A blanket was my first thought, but there was no way I could get that heavy thing in my bag. A sheet might take up too much room as well. I started thinking about bringing a towel before I stopped this silly line of thought. What on earth would I use a towel for?

Should I bring a pen and paper? I almost went to my father's old study to get some, before also concluding that was silly. If it rained, the paper would be ruined, and if I accidentally fell, an inkwell would shatter and stain my bags readily.

I thought, maybe my old dictionary? Oh yes, I could use that as a blunt weapon, it was so heavy and useless.

Luna and Discord and finally narrowed down exactly which doll Luna would be taking. Tottering Trottingham, a stuffed purple pony mother had bought me when I was a foal. It was old, and the stuffing was loose, giving the doll a limp appearance. At one point it had been able to regally stand on all four hooves. I approved the choice and asked what else she had packed. Discord's stone butterfly and a bag of marbles was all. I didn't bother to oppose the bringing of more toys. It's not like I had anything better.

Okay, I needed to get serious. I began rooting through cupboards and drawers for ideas.

I found a bottle of unopened rubbing alcohol in the back of a kitchen cupboard, and immediately packed it, wrapping the glass carefully in a sheet. I could tear up the sheet for bandages if we got hurt, I thought. Or better yet, could *cut* the sheet into strips. I packed a pair of scissors, still in the old drawing room desk. I had no idea how to sew, but I thought some thread and a needle would be worth taking. After raiding several drawers, I gave it up as a lost cause. I'd probably lose them anyway, small as they were.

Discord had crawled up to the top shelves in the kitchen to help me look. Nothing had been up there in years. He opened a cupboard. "What about these cups?"

"I don't think I want more breakable glass in my bag..." I replied

He carefully climbed over the next one, digging his claws into the cracks of wood. He eased open the next door and looked inside. He drew out a small brown paper bag.

"Oh? What's that?"

Discord carefully opened it with his paw. "Sugar..." he dropped down to the counter and dipped in a claw to taste. A sour face, "Bleh, no, salt. Maybe only a cup's worth."

"Better than nothing. Let's take it." I hovered it over to myself, carefully folded the top, and tucked it next to the hay. "Alright." I nodded, "Alright, I think that's everything."

We sat in silence for a moment. Or five. At a loss for what to do next.

"Okay, let's go then!" Luna started marching towards the door with purpose on her face, but I stopped her.

"Let's take a look outside first, alright? Discord can't exactly walk out unnoticed."

"Oh, right!" Luna scampered over to a window and popped her head on the other side of the heavy curtains. She ducked back, face serious.

"Hey guys? Guards have completely surrounded the house."

"What?!" I squealed, "How did they, why, oh my dear goodness, oh horseapples... Why? How did they?"

"Well that shouldn't, uh..." I turned slowly to Discord. Should have known. Should have. "Yeah, I gave

the guards the slip, but I guess I didn't try and conceal myself while running through the streets." He rapped his head sullenly, "If they talked to the right ponies... Yeah. Sorry."

"Feathers. Horsefeathers!" Celestia, calm down. Calm down, there's a way out of this. If you calm down, you can think of a solution. I jumped a little as a pony knocked on the door. Oh, why didn't I have more time to think?

"Okay," I squeaked, "Okay, let me try something. Both of you... both of you, close your eyes and count to ten." I put my foreleg in front of my face, and Luna nodded happily. Discord looked blank.

"What is that supposed to do?" he asked. Luna took Discord's paws and shoved them in his face, closing her eyes and grinning.

I took a deep breath, prepared my spell, and threw open the door, releasing a furious and intense light the guards won't soon be unseeing.