

## Sunset Glimmer

It was the last thing that Sunset had expected to see upon her coming to Equestria, least of all in the castle of princess Twilight Sparkle.

"Everything all right there, Sunset?" asked Twilight.

"Yeah. It's just... I think I've seen this before... *somewhere*." replied Sunset.

"The Cutie Map? I don't see how that could be the case. I mean, it's not much younger than the castle."

Sunset continued to gaze at the Cutie Map with consternation.

"Hey! Maybe you've seen it's 'counterpart' in the human world. I'm still not totally clear on how this 'multiple world' thing works but if my crown can have a—" Twilight stopped when she noticed the tears beginning to flow from Sunset's eyes.

"Sunset?"

"I'm sorry it's just... It just feels like it was a bad memory, you know."

Sunset tried to shrug off Twilights concern but the Princess continued.

"You know, Sunset, if there's ever anything you want to talk about—"

"I told you, I'm fine!" barked the irate unicorn.

"Sounds like somepony woke up on the wrong side of the bed this morning." said a new voice.

"Starlight." Twilight chided.

"Uh, sorry Twilight."

Twilight motioned towards Sunset none too subtly.

"And, uh, sorry to you too..." said Starlight, ending her sentence with the indistinct waving of a hoof in the air; the universal sign that so eloquently communicates an "Um."

After a moment's confusion the fiery unicorn identified herself as "Sunset. Sunset Shimmer."

A moment of awkwardness ensued. Just as Twilight was about to break the silence an orange, frazzled stallion bumbled his way into the room.

"Hey, Starlight, did you see the library this place has! I mean, I'm sure you've *seen* it. I mean, you *live* here after all. But, um, have you ever really *looked* at it?"

Sunburst's voice reverberated itself around the large room, surprising him, and he took a moment to compose himself and realign his glasses.

"And who is this?" he queried, leaning in to inspect Sunset.

"This is Sunset. Sunset Shimmer." stated a somewhat smug Starlight. It wasn't often that she'd ever gotten to answer a question of Sunburst's, rather than the reverse.

"This is the unicorn I though you two might like to meet" elaborated Twilight.

"The so-called 'world-traveller', yes. I recall it now" said Sunburst, sceptically.

"I know it's a little hard to believe but I really have gone to another world." said Sunset.

"Really? Did this world behave according to Gummedes' theory of trans-magical philosophy, or maybe Starswirl's hypothesis of parallel counter-paths?"

"Um..."

"There'll be time for that later" interrupted Starlight "but for now *I* want to know what that shouting was about."

Sunset stiffened, for just a moment.

"Sunset?" probed Twilight.

"I—I, honestly don't know." said Sunset.

"Huh?" said Sunburst.

Sunset sighed, before lighting up her horn and conjuring a crumpled note out of the air.

"All I've really got is this. I—I like to think it's from my parents... But it's total gibberish. I've researched all sorts of languages but even Celestia didn't know if it really said anything."

Sunset lowered her head, ears drooping. Her parents had always been a sore spot with her. As far as anypony could tell she had just been abandoned. All Sunset could remember of her parents was a warm, fuzzy feeling and she didn't want to think about the possibility that they really had just left her.

"Well, maybe I could take a look at it?" suggested Sunburst. "I am an important wizard you know."

Sunset looked up at him with a glimmer of hope in her eyes.

"Really?"

Sunburst nodded and was soon the victim of a surprise hug from the red-maned mare.

Twilight, Sunset and Starlight struck up a conversation while Sunburst took a seat on a vacant throne and got to work on decoding the message on Sunset's note.

Just as Sunset was getting to the part of her story where she turned into a demon, Sunburst called Starlight over and the former personal students of Celestia took to watching the two childhood friends lost to their work.

"I'm sure Starlight, this isn't just any old gibberish; it's our gibberish."

"You mean the code we used as kids?"

"Yeah, it's not exact but it seems that way. Um, how much of that code can you remember?"

"Bits and pieces."

Twilight and Sunset couldn't quite hear the duo but the expressions on the ponies faces were more than expressive enough. Sunset was starting to get excited about the possibility of unravelling the note's mystery. Suddenly the two jumped, as if in triumph, and hugged. they had done it! They had really done it! Sunset had waited for this moment for almost exactly as long as she could remember and she would finally get what she had always wanted. Then the expressions on Sunburst and Starlight's faces changed, the fading

elation leading them to actually consider the nature of that which they had decoded. They frowned and gazed up at her with an indeterminable aura.

"It looks like they figured something out," suggested Twilight "maybe we should go see how things are getting along."

Sunset didn't need to be told twice. She ran over to the duo and immediately asked them if they had decoded the meaning of the note and, if so, what it said.

"Um." said Starlight.

"Er." elaborated Sunburst.

"You see, Sunset, the letter suggests that your parents are in fact..." began Sunburst.

"Us." finished Starlight.

"Huh."

"Well, you see, the note was meant for us, not you. Not exactly." said Sunburst.

"It was written in a code that only we could understand. And only together." elaborated Starlight. "Apparently future-me used her magic in conjunction with the Cutie Map in order to send you back in time."

Sunset opened her mouth but before she could utter a word Starlight spoke.

"It doesn't say why she did it, but—but I'm sorry Sunset. You've gone without parent all this time because of me."

"Because of us." said Sunburst.

A tense moment passed before the pair found themselves subject to a surprise hug from their surprise daughter, Sunburst's second of the day from Sunset. She had never known how much she had missed her parents until the day that she found them again.

"Mommy. Daddy." whimpered Sunset, tears in her eyes once again, whisked away to lost memories. She could remember now, vaguely. A loving smile, a fond ruffling of her mane and a pair of oversized glasses that just screamed "Dad". And the Cutie Map; taking her away from her parents. She shuddered. Being torn away from her parents by that spell had felt positively evil. A sudden realisation struck Sunset.

"Sweet Celestia! I told you all about my evil phase!"

"That's okay Sweetie, I had one of those too, you know." replied Starlight.

"Yay! Mother-daughter bonding!" they yelled in unison.

"I'm not sure if that's really something you're meant to bond over." said Sunburst before musing "But to think that we have, er, will have a daughter someday. We aren't even a couple."

"Really?" said Twilight, who had taken to looking at the duo's notes while, what was for Sunset, a family reunion took place. "Because the note seems to suggest that Starlight should be pregnant with Sunset by this point."

Sunburst blushed.

"So that means that there's another me inside of—of Mom right now?" said Sunset, savouring the word as she moved out of the hug. "Hello, future me!"

she said to where she thought the other her ought to be inside of her mother. Starlight gave her daughter a funny look. "Er, future me like you're going to be me in the future, past me." Sunburst began to give Sunset that same look and Sunset gave a brief, nervous laugh.

"Oh, and Sunset, don't be too surprised if it turns out I'm not that important of a wizard." said Sunburst.

"Are you kidding, Dad? To me, you're the most important wizard of them all!" Sunburst took in the warm glow of his daughter's admiration.

"This is a strange, I don't really feel old enough or ready enough to be a mother just yet but at the same time I'm feeling these strange urges." said Starlight. "Like wanting to dress you up in cute little clothes, and take you out on Nightmare Night, and make embarrassing photographs of you that I can show your friends when you're not looking, and wanting to give you another one of those hugs."

Sunset smiled but was soon swept up in a humongous hug from Twilight, along with a surprised Starlight.

"Hey, I just realised you guys haven't given *me* a hug yet!" beamed Twilight. Sunburst adjusted his glasses. He wasn't sure about having picked up a daughter on this trip to Ponyville but seeing everypony so happy he couldn't help but use his magic to squeeze them in an invisible hug of his own.