

A Starlit Sunrise

The land of Equestria is home to the ever loyal subjects of the royal and benevolent Princess Celestia, who rules a country of peace and harmony. Conflict in Equestria, while it exists, it is boiled down to small trivial triflings. This is the Equestria known to its citizens, but it wasn't always this way. Once, long ago, in a nearly forgotten time, Equestria was a constantly brutal battlefield. But we'll get to that later, first let us follow our leading lady on her journey to this forgotten age of war.

Starlight Sparkle, granddaughter of the Princess' favorite pupil, Twilight Sparkle, is the hero of our story. Though, as you shall soon find out, she is not yet the hero she is destined to be.

We shall find Starlight in her home in Canterlot, where she is enrolled at Celestia and Luna's School of Magic for Gifted Unicorns. Although she is especially studious, intelligent, and granddaughter of the most powerful unicorn since Starswirl the Bearded, Grandmaster of Classical Equestria, Starlight Sparkle is no good at magic.

"Starlight! Wake up, we're gonna be late to History of Magic!" Starlight's roommate, Diamond Charmer, yelled from the living room.

After a few groans, Starlight got out of bed, trotting over to her mirror after turning on a lamp. Her dark blue, nearly black mane, was a mess, the starlike white spots showing through more than usual. She took her brush up with her telekinesis, and as she lifted it to her mane her magic slightly faltered and the brush clattered on her dresser.

After a moment Starlight refocused on the brush and muttered to herself picking it back up, "Come on Star, its just telekinesis," as she began to stylize her mane in a semi-straight fashion with waves at the ends, similar to how her grandmother had in pictures of her youth. Once done, she made a quick check over her dark purple coat and her tail, patting it down and brushing it, making sure all was in order, glancing at her shooting star cutie mark, spacing out momentarily as she thought back to her fillyhood and when that little mark appeared on her flank.

"Come on Star, hurry up!" Diamond shouted, stomping her hooves so Starlight could hear. "Class starts in like ten minutes."

"I'm coming, don't worry," said the blue haired mare, suddenly realizing just how late it was. After putting her saddlebags on, Starlight bolted into the living room shooting past her

white coated friend as she declared, "Okay Diamond, I'm ready, let's go."

"Finally," Diamond said with exasperation, rolling her eyes, asking, "What took you so long anyways?"

Starlight blushed a slight bit, stating, "Well, uh, I just sorta zoned out thinking about my cutie mark and back to when I got it."

Diamond was intrigued, in all the time she knew Starlight, she never asked about how she got her cutie mark. The mare actually felt a bit disappointed in herself as a friend, but regardless asked, "Really, I've never actually heard the story, mind sharing?"

"Okay," Starlight said as she began to canter out of the room.

The two then began to make their way across the school grounds, keeping their pace at a steady trot. "Well, where should I begin?" Starlight wondered aloud. "I guess it all began on my fifth birthday, when Grandma Twilight gave me my first telescope," she began, her eyes trailing of a bit, and a feeling of nostalgia in her voice. "I'd always loved the stars, but this was unlike anything I'd ever experience. It gave me the ability to look at stars and planets with more detail than I could have imagined at such a young age," she continued, adding, "though in hindsight it was only a starter telescope."

After a short pause she began again, "This simple gift captured my attention for years, and then just a day before my entrance exam to the school for gifted unicorns a shooting star shot through the sky, with a bright streak of brilliance unmatched by anything I've seen since. Seeing this, I made a wish, a wish to have an adventure." She then closed her eyes and let out a calm breath, "Then when I opened my eyes, upon my flank rested the shooting star I had seen on the night sky."

"That's awesome," Diamond replied, a smile on her face. Glad to finally have heard the cutie mark story of her friend she asked, "So why hadn't I already heard this story?"

"Yeah, I guess it is, and I dunno, it just never really crossed my mind to share it," Starlight said with a smile and a shrug, adding, "Anyway, the next day, as I mentioned, were my entrance exams. I was really nervous, but I passed the written portion with flying colors. Then, likely thanks to confidence that came with my cutie mark, I was able to slip through and do just well enough on the magical section that my written portion made up for it enough to let me in." A relaxed smile came across her face, "And boy am I glad I was let in," looking at her friend happily.

Diamond looked at her friend with a newfound perspective. She had always known Starlight barely passed the second half of the exam, but to think that if it weren't for her cutie mark appearing when it did, they'd never have been such good friends was somewhat astounding to her.

After a few minutes they arrived at the largest of the teaching buildings on campus,

Magical Studies, where the History of Magic class was held.

Diamond and Starlight entered the classroom just as class had started. The teacher, Professor Dawning Dream, then said to the class, "Okay Students, today marks the start of your classical spell research project, in which you will choose a spell developed by a Classical age unicorn, study it, and if possible perhaps perform it. Now let us all go to the library to choose your spells, and remember to report to me once you have decided."

"Awesome," stated Diamond Charmer, who was eager to add new spells to her ever-growing arsenal.

"Yeah, awesome," Starlight replied, and with a roll of her eyes added, "right". While she was looking forward to doing the research, and learning about spells from her favorite era of pony history, the indication of performing the spells drug down Stars mood a bit. She was not the type of pony to let her lack of natural ability get in the way of overachieving. It still was, however, just another reminder that even though she inherited Twilight's intellect, she did not, as far as she could tell, inherit her ability to spell cast.

As the class began to file out of the classroom the duo stood up and started out of the room then eventually out the main door into the beautiful Celestial Gardens, centerpiece of the campus. The gardens were adorned with phenomenal sculptures of both stone and bush, flowers of all shapes, colors, and sizes, and fountains scattered about.

While on their way through the gardens, Starlight and Diamond slowly fell behind the group, the stunning sights of the garden luring them to slow their pace. "Man, this sure is a beautiful area, isn't it Star?" Diamond said, leaning herself over a fountain they passed, gazing at her light orange mane and how it contrasted with the clear blue sky overhead.

"It really is," replied Starlight. Letting out a relaxing breath, the serenity of nature soothing her mentally. Starlight plopped her forehooves onto the edge the fountain next to her friend and the two of them simply sat for a moment, staring at the simple world around them and admired its brilliance.

"Well, as beautiful as this place is, we really best be getting to the library now, we are already probably the last ones there," Diamond stated, interrupting the surreal feeling her friend felt from the wonder of nature. Starlight took one last deep breath of the calming outdoor air as she turned to her friend and simply nodded as they embarked on their way to the library once again.

After their prolonged stroll through the gardens, Diamond and Starlight approached the awe inspiring Canterlot Royal Library. Simply standing in front of the tremendous building gave off an aura of brilliance that a unicorn could bask in all day. The architecture was some of the finest in all of Canterlot, dating back as far as the era they were researching, but still after all that time it had not lost any luster over those hundreds of years. Marble pillars rose high above the heads of its visitors, and on the sides of the steps leading up to the entrance were two

sculptures of manticores with unimaginable detail carved into each centimeter. Finally as they stepped inside the building Diamond and Starlight were both taken aback. Having not been in the library for ages, a feeling of insignificance came over the two. For a moment they simply stood in the entrance reveling at the stunning architecture that stretched 10 stories up, the brilliant marble statues scattered through the hall. Finally looking upon the stunning enormous stained glass windows each adorning one of the Princesses on them.

Surrounding the Princesses were some of the most influential unicorns in magic since the beginning of the Princesses' rule. Starswirl the Bearded, Clover the Clever, and many more of the mystical minds of magic over the past thousand or so years looked up towards the Princesses, almost holding them up, showing the Princesses appreciation for these great ponies. And finally, directly between the Princesses, and slightly under them, was the greatest pupil of Celestia and the acclaimed greatest unicorn since Starswirl, or even ever: Starlight's grandmother, Twilight Sparkle. What set Twilight apart the most, however, wasn't that she was such a renowned unicorn, it was her ascendance past unicorn hood to become an alicorn, something no other unicorn, and almost no other pony, had ever done.

As Star noticed this, she felt great pride in being a direct descendant of such a bright and brilliant pony, not many could say their grandparent became an alicorn. Though she also felt disappointment in how she thought that no matter how hard she tried, she'd never be close to as powerful, influential, or great of a pony, or unicorn as her grandmother.

Diamond asked, "What's the matter, Star?"

Coming to, Starlight realized she was standing in the center of the library, blankly staring off into space. "It's nothing, I just sometimes feel as though I am a failure of a unicorn, especially with Twilight being my grandma. I mean it's not my fault I have trouble with most spells, is it?" Starlight asked, a hint of sorrow in her voice.

Diamond was a bit thrown off by this question. Starlight Sparkle was one of, if not the smartest, ponies she knew. Not only that, but Star usually seemed relatively self-confident, always believing in herself.

Diamond adamantly responded, "Of course it's not your fault. Besides spell casting is not the only thing unicorns should be judged upon. There is also intelligence and willingness to learn, which I can assure you that you more than excel at both of those categories. Your grandma is probably just as proud of you from that, as she would have been if you were a good spell caster. Stop beating yourself up. Besides, I believe that if you truly put your mind to it, you could make anything possible." She then put her forehoof around Star's shoulder saying, "Now, let's go do some research."

Starlight looked at Diamond, and with a grunt, nodded in affirmation, saying, "Yeah, let's."

Starting then, a newfound passionate fire began burning deep down in Starlight. At that

moment she decided she was going to search high and low to find the most challenging spell created in Classical Equestria. Then study it, and she *would* learn it, no matter how much of a lame horn she had.

Seeing Starlight's change in attitude put a smile on Diamond Charmer's face, "Race you to the 5th floor," she said, egging Star on, playfully.

"Oh. It. Is. ON!" Star screamed as she began to gallop towards the stairs, leaving Diamond behind, smiling.

After a second Diamond galloped after, yelling, "Hey! No fair, we didn't say go yet!"

Star only responded by turning her head and sticking her tongue out. Then the two of them raced through the library with immense smiles on their faces.

After a few hours, the library began to empty. Almost everypony had already chosen a spell and were on their way to the dorms or their next class. The only ponies who hadn't yet chosen and confirmed their spells with the professor would be Starlight and Diamond.

Diamond had found her spell easily over an hour ago, and was currently laying upside down on a bench reading about an object teleportation spell.

"How much longer is this going to take?" The white unicorn said with a sigh, adding, "I mean everypony else had their spells nearly an hour ago."

Without even looking at her friend, Starlight said, "Hopefully not too much longer, but I told myself that I was going to find *the* hardest spell of the classical era. It's going to take a bit of time."

"Okay, okay, just try not to take too long. And make sure to tell me you are done as soon as you finish." Diamond said as she continued doing her research to pass the time.

After many more minutes of consistent book shuffling, everything became silent. Confused, Diamond looked up from her book to see her friend standing there with a giant smile on her face.

"What'd you find?" Diamond asked, hoping that their multiple hour library excursion could finally come to a close.

After staring at the book for a bit, Starlight looked at her friend and said, "I finally found just what I was looking for. This book is entirely dedicated to the final spell that Starswirl the Bearded ever crafted, his masterpiece." After a second, of taking in just what kind of a challenge she presented herself with, Star let out a huge sigh of relief. Now, that she finally had decided on what spell to research she had a bit of relaxing time, studying, before taking up the bulk of

the project.

Diamond was skeptical Starlight could pull it off, hearing it was the masterpiece of such a brilliant unicorn as Starswirl, and almost protested, however she decided against it. Realizing that they were still in the library, and at this rate would not be leaving anytime soon.

"Sweet, now that that's done we should skedaddle on out of here, it's already starting to get pretty late. And it's a good thing that we only had this class today or we'd be screwed." Diamond said quickly.

Laughingly, Star replied, "Sounds like a plan. I'd really like to start my research." Grasping the book in telekinesis and putting it in her saddlebags, they began trotting to the door.

"Star, you are the only pony who, after hours in the library, is happy to finally get home so you can *study*." Diamond said, astonished that Star was still so enthused.

Turning to her friend with a smile, Starlight replied, "Yeah, I guess I am. I'm just so excited," giddily squealing as she spoke.

"So Class," Dawning Dream said that afternoon, "as you all know, today marks the first day of spell presentations. If you could leave your paper on my desk when you go up and present your spell, I will grade them." Dawning Dream said, looking around for a unicorn to have go first. "Any volunteers for going first?"

No hands raised. The professor sighed, no one ever volunteered. "Well since none of you will go first..." Dawning paused a moment, looking over the room once more, his eyes fixing on the dark purple mare in the front row. "Starlight, how about you go first?"

Starlight was shocked, over the past few weeks, she had done nothing other than study the spell. It turned out to be so advanced that simply comprehending the steps it took to perform it taxed her mind to the point of absolute exhaustion, and she was sure it nearly gave her an aneurysm. Due to this she never actually got a chance to try out the spell. She was unbelievably unprepared and certainly did not want to go first but, having been called upon, Starlight reluctantly replied, "Okay, Professor," as she nervously walked over to his desk while pulling out her paper and setting it down. For a moment Starlight stood there with her eyes closed, trying to relax, after which she took a deep breath and trotted to the front of the classroom.

Fear overcame Starlight as she turned to face the class. The room had never seemed so large before, yet at the same time she felt pressure building from all sides. Sweat began dripping from her brow with anxiety, as she hoped she wouldn't make a fool out of herself. Looking around the room, Starlight saw the piecing and impatient eyes of her classmates, the pressure continued to build. But then, her eyes drifted to Diamond, Diamond's eyes were soft and understanding. Diamond noticed Star looking at her and simply smiled. That smile eased

much of the pressure, and so Starlight began.

“The spell I chose was one of Starswirl the Bearded's finest, his advanced time travel spell. The spell was so complex and taxing both physically and mentally that even he had difficulties perfecting it. This gives probable cause to his sudden disappearance at the peak of the Golden Age of Equestria.” Starlight started. Reciting facts and giving explanation came naturally to her. What she was about to do now would put her out of her comfort zone like never before. Starlight drew in a deep breath and then slowly exhaled.

“I am going to perform this spell for you all,” Starlight announced to the class

With that the room fell dead silent. Everyone in the class knew Starlight was Twilight Sparkle's granddaughter, it was surely apparent in her intelligence. However, they also knew she was not a good spell caster. Ponies around the room shot each other confused glances to each other, wondering how a unicorn, whose horn could barely maintain a simple telekinesis spell, was going to pull off such a master spell.

Nerves slowly started creeping up Starlight's spine, and hairs began standing on end. Disregarding this Star began to focus, using all of the knowledge of magic that she could muster up. Closing her eyes, Star started thinking of a point in time to travel to, just as the spell had told her. She began thinking of the day she passed her entrance exam, focusing intently on the exact moment she passed. After a moment, she cast the spell, magical energy began building up and flowing through her body. Her horn began to glow yellow and jaws dropped. But then after that moment of success, the yellow glow halted and all was silent.

Starlight began panicking, she had failed her performance. Doing the one thing she'd hoped not to do, make a fool of herself. A frown began to appear on her face and tears swelled up in her eyes.

Seeing this, Diamond cringed. The fact that Starlight attempted the spell and even came close was something to be proud of, but she knew her friend felt defeated. Diamond then got up from her chair to comfort her dear friend, but, just as she did, something happened.

Deep down inside the embarrassed, and disappointed, unicorn, a magical plug that had been blocking her potential ability, shattered from the stress of the spell. Power was suddenly flowing inside of Star as it never had, and the buildup of magic, from as far back as her foalhood, shot out in a burst. Starlight looked up at her friend, no longer frowning, no longer crying, but instead smiling as a slight aura started building up around her.

Without saying another word to the room of students, Star attempted the spell again. At first her horn glowed with a thick yellow magic, but then her entire body was consumed by her energy. Slowly her body began floating off of the floor, body hanging in a cross like stance. Bright brilliant light began shooting out of Star, the yellow aura around the unicorn intensifying as it consumed the room.

Professor Dawning Dream was in shock, “Miss Sparkle,” she bellowed out from across the room while she bolted out of her chair down to the podium where the mare was.

The student’s jaws dropped once more as the worst caster in the entire class suddenly was emitting magical energy that was literally blowing them away due to sheer power.

The Professor had finally reached Starlight to try and restrain her and calm her body from its intense powerful emission, however, Dawning Dream was instead met by an invisible slap in the face that sent her flying back 10 feet.

“Starlight!” Diamond shouted from her seat, a panicked look on her face.

But Starlight could not respond. She began to black out. Her body was numb and her thoughts were obscured by thoughts of the distant past. Then, as consciousness slipped from her grasp, the light intensified for a moment, blinding everyone in the room for a moment. While a percussive clap like the sound of thunder nearly shattered everypony’s eardrums, making them all cringe, holding their ears with their hooves. Then, the lights disappeared in an instant, the feeling of power that had consumed everyone in the room, vanished.

And then, Star was gone. Her wish had come true, and the adventure of a lifetime was about to begin.

End Chapter 1