

## Mother

This cave is dark.

I don't know why I'm so surprised; caves have a tendency to be dark. No, I'm not surprised. There's another word for it...

Surprised? Shocked? Caught off guard? Wait, no. That's three words.

Whatever. It's not even the darkness of the cave I'm surprised at. No, I'm surprised at why I'm in this cave to begin with.

It all began when those six...*fiends* came into my town. Our Town. The town we had all worked so hard to build. True, I worked a little harder than most of the others, but they certainly put in a noble effort.

But me...Oh, I did all of the hard work. All the traveling around Equestria in order to bring people to this place. All the purchase of necessary materials for housebuilding. Even the initial business deal that gave us this land was largely orchestrated by me. But I'm a fair pony. All of the inhabitants of Our Town certainly did their part to help improve the living environment, even if it wasn't a lot. What little they did brought peace and happiness to the community.

Then they came. Those...those horrible little ponies. Coming in and talking about 'true' friendship...Blech! Don't get me started on them. They were just...Oh, what's the phrase? False Prophets! Yes, that's the phrase! False Prophets, the lot of them! Nothing but lies and deceits and falsehoods and-

Okay, breathe, Starlight. No need to get in a tussy over them. They'll get what's coming to them soon enough.

I glance down at the fire in front of me, the sole source of light in this cavern. It's glowing brightly, fed by stray branches I had gathered as I journeyed deeper into the mountain. Odd that so many branches would be found in this place, but I guess that's just one of life's curious mysteries.

I look back behind me where I had initially came. I keep expecting to hear some trotting hooves or talking. Deep down, I know they aren't. They may have been liars, but they aren't stupid; they probably didn't want to risk themselves to go after me. A wise decision, if I might say so myself.

But as I turn back to the fire, I can't help but think back to those six. I close my eyes and grit my teeth. Oh why, oh why did they have to come to our town? Everything was so perfect and quiet. Looking back, I should have kept to the original plan: Only recruit ponies personally after doing a profile on them and deciding whether they would have benefited the community. A bit harsher, perhaps, but it would have prevented something like that from happening.

But why those six?! Why them of all the ponies in Equestria?! Why couldn't they be some random travelers who stumbled across us on accident? Heck, that was how I got Double Diamond into the Town! I just saw him come down the mountain one winter, skiing down at very dangerous speeds, and he said "Woah! Bodacious town you got here!" And with just a few words (and about 3 weeks worth of re-education), he was fully invested in our paradise! Piece of cake!

Oh, I don't even want to think about them anymore! I'm just going to go to sleep right now and forget about them. Hopefully, my dreams will relieve me of this torturous day...

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I wake up with a start. The fire is still burning hard and fast, and its shadows continue to dance on the wall.

But there's something else. Something in front of me...

Drip, drip, drip...

Water?

Odd. I've been through this mountain tunnel many times, and I've never come across any dripping water. The mountain walls are too thick for any melted snow to drip through. In fact, I don't think the snow would melt at this altitude.

I grab a branch in the fire with my magic and carefully walk forward. Even with the intensity of the flame, it only lights up a few feet in front of me.

Drip, drip, drip...

It's louder now. I'm definitely getting closer.

Drip, drip, drip...

It rings in my ears like fireworks on Hearth's Warming Eve.

Drip, Drip, Drip...

I'm almost on top of it!

DRIP, DRIP, DRIP...

Then I see it. It's...it's...

It's a fountain. Not a natural forming pool, but a stone fountain, crafted by pony hooves. A single pony stands on top of it, rearing in triumph. A few other ponies stand beneath it, holding their hooves out towards the figure in adoration. From the lead pony's perch, a water stream trickles down to the other ponies and falls all the way to the bottom of the fountain. The water glows an unearthly colour, somewhere between emerald green and ocean blue.

"Starlight Glimmer," a voice calls out.

I twist back towards my fire, desperately looking for a pursuer. "Stay back!" I shout. "I won't hesitate to destroy you!"

"Destroy me?" The voice laughed. "My, you must have a lot of power then."

“Don’t act so flippant, you fool! I’ve removed cutie marks before, and I can remove you from this world just as easily!”

“Tsk, tsk, Starlight.” The voice seemed...amused. “You should know better than to talk to your superiors like that.”

“Who...who are you?!” I cried out.

“Look behind you and you’ll know.”

I turned quickly, desperate to catch the voice off guard. Maybe I could surprise her with a quick-

A strange figure floated in front of me. It was light grey and glowed slightly around where its essence ended. It was definitely an equine in shape and form, but it did not look like any pony I’d ever seen before. Her head was longer and her mane was longer than even Princess Celestia’s. In fact, it laid across the entire cavern, glowing that odd grey shine the figure was emanating.

I stared at her for a time, transfixed both in wonder and fear. She stared back, an amused and content look upon her face.

After some period of time, I spoke up. “Wh-who are you?”

“I am Your Mother, Starlight Glimmer. And I want to help you.”

“Y-You’re not my mother!” I cried out.

She smiled. “You never were good with faces, Starlight. Here, let me help you...” She floated toward me, her arms outstretched toward me. I wanted to back away from them, but she was too fast and caught me in her embrace before I could even move.

“What are you-“

“Shhhh...” she said as she tightened her grip around me. “It’s alright. Release these feelings of doubt...”

“I’m not-“

“Shhhh... No words, only emotion.”

“What are you-“

“Starlight, please be silent. And stop squirming.”

I didn’t listen. I continued to writhe, and she returned the favor by squeezing even tighter. Eventually, it got to the point where I could barely breathe.

“Let...me...go...” I stammered with what little breath I had.

“Starlight, pay attention. This is the most important part.”

“What...”

Just then, my mind went white. A billion trillion things flowed into my mind like a dam that had just burst. I think I screamed, but my mind was so full that if I did, I certainly couldn’t hear it.

Eventually, I fell to the ground. My pants were the only thing that made noise within the cave. After a minute, my eyes began to clear and I could see again. And when I gazed up at the figure, I knew who she was.

I threw myself at her feet. "Oh, Great Mother, forgive me! I didn't know it was-"  
"Shhhh..." she said as she put her hoof to my mouth. "No pony ever recognizes me when they first see me. Not until I give them my Loving Embrace do they see me and the world clearly."

"O-Of course!" I continued to stay down at her hooves, scared to even look up at her.

"Starlight... Look up at me." I did it without hesitation.

"Yes, Mother?"

"Do you truly want to spread True Friendship around Equestria?"

"Yes! Oh, yes, very much so, Mother!"

Her warm and loving smile returned. "Excellent." She then turned and pointed toward the fountain. "Then drink the Water of Wisdom and Power, and go forth on your quest."

I looked at the fountain, which now glowed with an intensity usually reserved for gemstones. The water was golden and silver now, dancing along the edges of the fountain like it was ready to overflow. I walked slowly toward it, passing by Mother with extreme reverence. As I reached the edge of the fountain, a ruby goblet appeared and dipped itself into the water. Once it withdrew, it floated toward me without me giving any guidance to it.

I reached out and took it in my two hooves. I looked down into the goblet and saw the water within. It was now red and yellow, reflecting myself within it. I looked back toward Mother. She nodded.

I drank the water.

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CRACK!

"What the hay was that?" Rainbow Dash asked aloud.

"It sounded like the front door being broken!" Twilight said quickly.

"Aw man!" Pinkie whimpered. "Broken doors always ruin fun-tastical sleepovers!"

"Pinkie, this isn't the time for-"

CRACK!

The door to the hallway ripped apart, a thousand splinters of wood flying towards the six ponies. They all ducked quickly, the shards missing them narrowly.

"What in tarnatation?!" Applejack cried out.

"Hello, Sisters," a calm voice called from the hallway. "Have you felt Our Mother's Love today?"