

The first thing Twilight felt was somepony lightly shaking her. There was a brief pause before it started once more.

“Mmph... five more minutes...” she muttered, rolling over.

She slowly drifted back to sleep, before it started again, this time from the other side of the bed.

Now thoroughly irritated, she sat up in bed ready to verbally assault the offender. But when she opened her eyes, her will crumpled. Instead her face took on a genuinely shocked expression.

“Morning!” Dawn chirped, sitting on the other end of the bed. In front of her was a tray of food - toast with apple jam spread unevenly on the surface, a small plate of hay fries, and a very pretty bouquet of flowers and grass, made to look like a miniature hill. Besides that, there was a teapot on her nightstand still steaming, “I wanted to thank you for everything.” She glanced back at the open door, wincing as Rainbow Dash glared right back, “...and to apologize for sneaking onto the train.”

“I... I uh...” Twilight tried, but she was still lost for words. On the one hand, her daughter had just brought her breakfast in bed - a daughter she hardly knew. On the other hand her social awkwardness and complete lack of knowledge on how to **be** a mother made it hard to think of what to say.

“I made it myself,” she said proudly. Rainbow raised an eyebrow before walking away. “Rainbow helped make sure I didn’t burn the kitchen down like the last time.”

“Thank y- Wait, what?!” Twilight switched gears almost immediately from her calculated response to wild concern, flailing her forelegs for emphasis. This was followed by a yelp as she connected her foreleg with the scalding hot metal of the tea kettle. She grumbled some choice words for her luck.

“Are you ok?” Dawn asked, wincing a little after witnessing her reaction and subsequent injury.

Twilight regained her composure, “Yes. Just fine. Thank you for making me breakfast in bed. It looks- tasty.” She wasn’t entirely sure that was the case.

Dawn beamed at her, practically glowing with joy. Twilight’s magic grabbed the piece of toast, floating it up to her mouth, before taking a big bite. Her eyes widened in surprise. She practically swallowed the whole thing.

“That’s not bad,” Twilight added, picking up another slice.

“I hope so. I’d be really upset if I messed up toast.” Dawn leaned over the bed and picked up her own plate, chowing down on another miniature hill.

Twilight took a piece of her own bouquet and popped it into her mouth. She was taken aback at the complexity of the food. In between the grass, stalks of lavender and chamomile had been weaved. A hint of lemon juice and oil made the piece moist, and most importantly, delicious.

“Where did you learn to make that?”

“Oh. Rainbow taught me how to prepare it. But I have trouble wrapping it together, so she did that part.”

Rainbow walked into the room, carrying a teacup in her teeth. She set it down on the nightstand, “You forgot the cup, Dawn. Morning, Twilight.”

“When did you get so good at cooking?” Twilight asked, baffled. “More importantly, since when have you been up this early?”

“Both took a lot of practice. But, when you’ve got two fillies that have to go to class, it gets easier.” She ruffled Dawn’s mane, who giggled in response.

Twilight still had a jumble of emotions surrounding her friend being forced to take care of her fillies. If things were different...

Twilight went quiet, trying very hard to cap her emotions while trying to find something to change the subject. She didn’t notice Dawn reaching over the bed for something, nor Rainbow’s long-winded explanation of her cooking experiences.

“Hello? Twilight, Dawn has something for you.” Rainbow waved a hoof in front of her face, knocking her out of her trance.

“Huh?” Twilight said.

Dawn pulled the book from her hiding place, placing it gently on the bed. It was as pristine as it was when she found it. The only thing in her bag that didn’t get crushed or left behind in the crash.

Twilight’s eyes began to water, “What.... how... my book?”

Dawn nodded.

Twilight was lost for words. She hesitated to find something to say, but instead drew Dawn into a hug. Her grip was tight, though gentle, treating Dawn with the same care and love she had treated her books, her family - even her friends.

Rainbow smiled, backing out of the room and shutting the door.

“Good Morning... uh, Rainbow Dash, was it?”

The pegasus mare turned to face the voice directed at her. The other unicorn in the house - Stormbreaker - stood in the hallway with a towel over his head. His coat and mane looked wet.

He must have come from the bath, she thought. Rainbow nodded at his question, “Morning.”

“How are you feeling? I was afraid you had gone into hypothermia when you arrived.”

She waved a hoof in front of her face, “Nah. It was like the times I’ve flown too high. Pegasi are built for the cold.”

He raised an eyebrow questioning her logic. But, his face softened into a genuine smile, “Right. Just don’t try to tackle storms up here like that. That wasn’t even close to what we call a blizzard.”

Now it was Rainbow’s turn to look questioningly at him, “But we make the weather. That was a grade A blizzard Skymount must have sent.”

He chuckled, “No. It was a regular snowstorm. But up here near the mountains, pegasi lose control over the weather. Kind of like when storms accidentally pass over the Everfree Forest.”

He did have a point. Outside of Equestria, it had long been observed that places without ponies had wilder weather. Other races weren't able to manipulate the land as well - some didn't even bother. She shuddered at the thought.

"I understand you're on a journey with Miss Sparkle?"

Rainbow nodded.

"She filled me in on your... situation," he hesitated, trying to ensure he was careful about his word choice. "As it so happens, we will be travelling in the same direction for a short while. I'm sure you would love to have some extra company."

"Oh. Well, I guess that's alright."

"Excellent. I believe Miss Applejack is still sleeping, so if you would like, the bath is all yours."

Rainbow perked up at the thought of a hot bath. Sweet Celestia, she'd been dying for one since she found out the one in the train car was ice cold. She nodded happily at the offer.

"Upstairs. Its the door to the right of the fireplace."

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"Are ya' sure its safe to be usin' that kinda magic? Especially when the Princess thinks somepony's tryin' to control ya?" Applejack was standing by the front door, putting on her clothes for the journey outside.

Stormbreaker pulled a scarf around his neck, using his magic to zip up his own winter coat. He furrowed his brow. "While that is rather concerning coming from the Princess, rest assured that if anypony was trying to control her, it would be completely useless in here. Not only does this shield us from the wind, it shields us from malevolent magic. Spying and controlling magic gets nullified. Of course, you could just walk right in the door."

Twilight adjusted the freshly conjured coat on Dawn's body, ensuring that it did in fact fit. While she was fussing with some of the buttons, she listened intently on the end of the conversation. There wasn't any mention of this kind of structure already having those protections up.

That must have meant he put them up himself... But that would take an enormous amount of magic to sustain! I mean, he should be unconci-

"Too tight!" Dawn squeaked, snapping Twilight out of her thoughts.

She had used the wrong button, tightening the clothes significantly more than intended. The button came undone along with all the others, as they were magically rearranged into their rightful places. "Sorry," Twilight apologized. "Stormbreaker?"

"Mmm," he mumbled.

"How can you maintain all of those wards without collapsing? Magically speaking you should be--"

"In a coma? Yes. That would be the case if I **was** holding up the wards. But I'm not, and neither is Trixie."

A voice shouted from the other room, "What about 'Trixie'?"

"Nothing, love," Stormbreaker shouted back, "It's an artifact passed through my family from the time of the three tribes. We have had no need to make anything like it, simply because there is no war - 'till recently of course. My ancestors used this in their travels to protect themselves from being followed, or looted by bandits looking for earth pony grown food.

"It only takes a little bit of magic to unpack or pack the entire house, including the basement. Nothing gets shifted around or squished or anything like that. We can't stay inside when we close it though - its not meant to be a prison."

Applejack and Twilight gawked at him. The farmer was first to react, "So... this is like some sorta glorified tent?"

"Essentially, yes. It even has running water and storage space for food. Its very complicated, not to mention, one of a kind."

Twilight cleared her throat, "Can it... break?"

"Oh yes, I'm sure it can. It would be difficult to do so. It's certainly not burglar-proof and while it does give the illusion that the house isn't there, ponies can stumble upon it rather easily."

"How do ya pack up a whole house?" Applejack asked.

"You get some boxes and call a mover, AJ," Rainbow added, passing through the hanging blankets to enter the hallway. "That's what the music shop did when they found a bigger place in Canterlot."

"That's not what she means, Miss Dash," Stormbreaker sighed. "This house packs into a very small necklace - easily worn."

Rainbow looked like she was about to say something, before she sighed in defeat. She gave a shrug and rolled her eyes, "Y'know, there was a time when something like that would have freaked me out or made me drool with how cool it sounded."

Twilight and Applejack giggled, Applejack's more nervous than at Rainbow's expense.

If Rainbow noticed, she didn't let it show. Her face turned into a pout, "What? It's true."

"So is the fact that we're wasting precious daylight. We can't just appear in a Gryffon city," Trixie said as she further crowded the small hallway. She wore a light grey jacket, accompanied by a deep blue scarf, tinged with white stripes. "Are we ready?"

"Just about," Twilight said, giving Dawn a once over before opening the door.

Needless to say, it was cold. But instead of a storm, they stared out into an open blue sky. The sun shined brighter than they expected, reflected off of the crisp white snow in every direction. Twilight shielded her eyes with a fore hoof, waiting for her eyes to adjust. The other ponies walked out behind her while Rainbow flew overhead.

It felt good to feel the wind in her face once more - being cramped in a small space was a bit unsettling for a pegasus. Luckily, she had practice and it helped that she was unconscious for the majority of the time.

When she set back down, Trixie herded them into a small circle which Twilight etched into the snow with her nose. Three other circles were evenly placed along that one, big enough to hold

one unicorn. With a finishing touch, a larger circle was used to surround everything they had drawn.

“Stormbreaker?” Trixie asked. The stallion stood in front of the cottage, gathering a small amount of magic around his hoof.

“Home is where the heart is,” he muttered, closing his eyes and pushing his hoof through the wall. The cottage flickered and contorted, slowly being dragged towards his missing hoof. The image shattered, turning to a burst of snow. Hanging around his hoof was a silver chain, a seven-pointed star dangling above the ground.

“We’re burning daylight, dear,” Trixie said, tapping her hoof impatiently.

“Coming,” he said flatly, tossing the chain around his neck.

The grey stallion took his place in one of the circles, matching Twilight and Trixie’s stance. Magic burst from their horns, coalescing above the center of the circle. Trixie and Stormbreaker took the lead, guiding the magic to cover them, wrapping around them like a domed blanket. Twilight looked on as the dome displayed memories of different places in time.

There was some sort of college setting with a very young Stormbreaker practicing spells on some clay figures. He looked proud as they took on the desired effects. Another was of a young filly - probably Trixie - jumping for joy for some other stage performer in Canterlot Castle.

But one specifically caught her eye. It was the image of her and Princess Luna by the fire, covered in each other’s magic. Their horns closely crossed and their eyes closed. Her breathing slowed with theirs in the image. The memory was as fresh as day.

“Twilight! Focus,” Trixie snapped.

The memory faded from the dome above her. Trixie’s faded as well, allowing Stormbreaker’s memories to flow into place.

“There, off center,” Trixie pointed to one in particular.

The image portrayed the two of them outside the cottage in the middle of a field. In the distance a city peered above the hills, the air above them occasionally occupied by a Gryffon overhead. They spoke with two other Gryffons, which lounged on the ground, drinking from a coconut.

“Too far. That’s on the western coast. Even three of us putting in all of our magic, we can’t cross half the world,” Stormbreaker said. He tossed that memory aside, digging deeper into his own memories.

The tiles began to disappear, as a singular image occupied the dome. Stormbreaker as a colt with a filly that was probably his sister, as well as an older stallion in a park. While the two young ones played, the stallion spoke to a Gryffon. Both were dressed in regal clothing.

“The park? Isn’t that a bit noticeable?” Trixie asked.

“Its either the park or a week of walking through snowstorms.”

Trixie sighed, “Park it is.”

The memory shaped around them, slowly removing the ponies and Gryffons in the picture. Leaves turned red and orange on the trees, occasionally falling onto the ground below. The mid-day sun shone brightly over the the scene, ushering in feelings of tranquility.

The pattern in the snow glowed brightly for a moment before they disappeared from sight, leaving behind a crash of thunder.

Silence settled over the peaceful snow covered hills, a gentle breeze flowing down from the mountain. A cloud floated overhead, casting a shadow over the ground. A serpent's tail flicked back and forth - just visible from the ground. That too vanished with a soft snap of fingers.