

Trials of the Elements
Part 7

Evening Star and Big Macintosh lay side by side in the Tower Library, reading the ancient book labeled The Elements of Equestria. The book was a reference guide for the Elements and detailed their workings. The two ponies sat in awe of the original bearers of the Elements. Their deeds were astonishing and their sacrifices and suffering even more so. They would periodically take a break and discuss what they had discovered. Evening Star finished the part they were on and raised her head, silently waiting for Big Macintosh to finish as well.

Big Mac finished a few minutes later and raised his head, looking straight at Evening Star,
“Ah just can't believe all this.”

“I know! It's amazing! Princess Celestia and Princess Luna **made** the Elements, and not just that, from what this book says, they sacrificed a permanent part of their own power to make them. From what I've gathered, it looks like your sister can wield a small part of a Goddess' power.” Evening Star said.

Big Macintosh shrugged,
“Ah was referrin' to the Elements of Peace.”

“Yeah,” Evening Star said eye wide, “I can't believe nopony's ever heard of them! I mean a whole other set of Elements? The book seems to indicate they were the opposite of the Elements of Harmony. While the Elements of Harmony were 'offensive' the Elements of Peace were 'defensive'. The Elements of Harmony seem to have always been mares, and the Elements of Peace seem to have always been stallions. I suppose that makes sense actually. It takes a stallion and a mare to make a family, right?”

“Depends on your definition of family Ah suppose.” Big Macintosh said sagely.

“Yeah good point.” Evening Star admitted, “This day and age you have stallions with stallions and mares with mares and they just adopt. But for the time, it looks like it was symbolic of a perfect pairing. It says that each of the Elements had synergy with their counterpart. See here?” she said pointing to a picture in the book, “It says that the Element of Honesty and the Element of Acceptance were a matched pair because they were so much alike. That would indicate that each Element, once paired, could seemingly operate independently from the others of their type. Like a Royal Guard and a Princess, like a husband and wife, or like . . .” Evening Star trailed off as a thought hit her.

Big Macintosh didn't quite follow her,
“Did you think of somethin' else?”

“Or like brother and sister.” Evening Star said turning to the huge Earth pony, “You said you sister was the Element of Honesty, right?”

“Ayup.”

“What if . . . What if you are the Element of Acceptance?” Evening Star said.

Big Macintosh raised an eyebrow,
“Ah don't think so. Ah'm nothin' special, just a work pony.”

“Did your sister think she was special?” Evening Star asked.

“Ah don't think she ever gave it much thought, and Ah don't think any of us even knew about the Elements of Harmony until Twilight came along.” Big Mac said openly.

“So why is it impossible for you to be an Element as well? It would make sense. The book says that the Elements passed on generationally but always stayed with a family. Logic would dictate that somepony in your family is the counterpart to Honesty. Why can't it be you?” Evening Star asked.

“Ah just don't think it's likely. It was a pretty nice coincidence that Twilight just happened to make friends with the Elements of Harmony, but that's all it was. Besides, if Ah was the Element of Acceptance, Ah wouldn't be arguin' with you about it now would Ah?” Big Macintosh said logically.

Evening Star deflated slightly,
“Yeah, good point. I just don't quite believe that this is all coincidence. It's **too** coincidental; it's **too** perfect. There must be a reason for this. Let's read some more, maybe we'll find out something else.”

“Mah eyes hurt, but Ah do want to hear more. Could you read it out loud?” Big Macintosh asked, laying his head down.

“Sure thing.” Evening Star said turning back to the book, “The Elements of Harmony are by far the more powerful of the set but the Elements of Peace are just as vital. The two groups must often work together to solve problems, but therein lies the dilemma of independence. The Elements of Harmony do wield awesome power but they take time to come to full power, like a unicorn casting a spell. The simplest terms are that of pregnancy and foaling. The Elements of Harmony are 'pregnant' with power but take time to come to fruition, like a mare who is with foal. While the magic, like a foal, is growing, it and its 'vessle' must be protected. The Elements of Harmony are like pregnant mares who embody and hold the magic until it is time for them to 'deliver' the magic to an end. While the magic is growing, the Elements of Peace, like a stallion, must protect the mare while she is vulnerable. Yet again, we see the reference to a family unit. The symbolism is profound and yet simple in its complexity. It has been theorized that a great many answers to questions regarding the Elements of Equestria can be solved through intimate

knowledge of a family unit and its inner workings.”

“Sounds . . . simple.” Big Mac said smiling slightly.

“Right, on to the next part. The Elements of Harmony.” Evening Star cleared her throat, “The Elements of Harmony are the power beyond power, limited only by the bearer's imaginations. As such, they represent a great risk and a greater responsibility to whatever pony wields them. Princess Celestia created the Elements of Harmony to be the ultimate power for solving problems where she and Princess Luna were not able. The Elements of Harmony are Honesty, Kindness, Laughter, Generosity, Loyalty, and Magic after the original six mares who personified the needed personality traits to bring harmony to Equestria. They have generally been used only in a time of great need, but when invoked can harness the power of creation itself. For a mare bearing an Element of Harmony to invoke it, she must focus on her Element. For example: for a mare bearing the Element of Laughter to invoke her Element she must focus on every memory she has had which involved Laughter like births, marriages, parties ect. As the bearer of each Element gains more memories that coincide with their Element, the Element becomes more powerful and the bearer more able to wield it. The bearers of the Elements continue to grow in power until their deaths. Some of the bearers of the Elements of Harmony have gone so far as to be able to do, by themselves, what would have at first been only possible through a group effort by all the Elements together. A bearer of an Element of Harmony need not concern themselves with permanent physical impairments such as dismemberment. The Elements of Harmony, when invoked, will manifest powerful pseudo-members of their bearer's bodies to aid them in whatever task they undertake even if the task does not directly concern the use of said members. In the cases of minor things such as loss of mane or tail the missing part will be re-grown as if it had never been missing at all. The Elements of Harmony physically manifest as pieces of jewelry so that other ponies can look upon them and know the beauty of such traits. The Element of Magic is the 'leader' of the Elements of Harmony, or more accurately, the catalyst. Without the Element of Magic to call them out, the other Elements often fail to manifest the first time they are used, and only the Element of Magic can combine all the Elements and produce what is known as the 'Rainbow of Light' The 'Rainbow of Light' is the manifestation of the combined might of the Elements of Harmony when guided by the collective efforts of the bearers. When using the 'Rainbow of Light' the Elements of Harmony are at their most powerful and can produce results which in the past have been simply astonishing. There has been some speculation as to why the 'Rainbow of Light' is referred to as such. Ancient legends say there was such a thing as a 'Rainbow of Darkness' but any significant facts regarding it have been lost to the dust of time and no current knowledge exists that reference it. The power of the Elements of Harmony has, throughout history, been a testament to the determination of ponies everywhere and will be for generations to come.” Evening Star finished and turned the page.

“It sounds like an awful lot of power for anypony to wield. Ah don't know if Ah would want that kind of responsibility. Ah'd be afraid to misuse it.” Big Macintosh observed.

“Would you like to hear about the Elements of Peace next?” Evening Star asked.

“Ayup.”

“The Elements of Peace are the opposites of the Elements of Harmony yet perfectly compliment them in every way. The Elements of Peace are the ultimate bulwark against any foe that would threaten pony kind. Princess Luna created the Elements of Peace to provide protection and as a physical deterrent. The Elements of Peace bring to bear, the strength and resiliency of Equestria herself. The bearers of the Elements of Peace are stallions who use might and body to accomplish the lesser tasks to which the more powerful Elements of Harmony are ill suited, such as physical battle. The Elements of Peace are: Acceptance, Forgiveness, Patience, Discernment, Perseverance, and Hope after the six stallions who personified the needed personality traits to bring peace to Equestria. The Elements of Peace have been called upon for lesser tasks and are slightly better known than the fearsome Elements of Harmony.” Evening Star stopped reading and looked over to Big Macintosh, “If the Elements of Peace were better known, why hasn't anypony today heard of them?”

“How should Ah know? Maybe Equestria hasn't needed any of the Elements for a long time.” Big Macintosh responded.

“But there should still be legends and folklore. This doesn't make any sense. I don't get it.” Evening Star pondered the possible reasons for a few minutes until Big Macintosh came up with a reasonable answer.

He raised his head and regarded her simply for a moment before speaking, “Ah guess out of sight means out of mind. If you spent a month away from the Library because you were too busy with issues in your life then you wouldn't remember what book you were reading would you?”

“I don't know about that. I love my books.” Evening Star countered.

“Did you know about Princess Luna before she came back?” Big Macintosh asked.

“Well no, I don't think anypony did.” Evening Star admitted.

“Well then how could anypony not know about her? There should be tales and so forth for her too, but nopony remembered.” Big Macintosh explained.

“You do have a point there. But by that comparison, then the Elements would have to have fallen out of service, if you will, about the same time Princess Luna was banished. That's a thousand years ago.” Evening Star referenced.

“Is there anything else about the Elements of Peace?” Big Macintosh asked.

Evening Star shook her head to clear it, “Oh duh, yes. I'm sorry.” she turned her attention back to the book, “For a stallion bearing an Element of Peace to invoke, it he must focus on his Element. For example: for a stallion bearing the Element of Forgiveness to invoke it he must actively focus on his Element, remembering

every action concerning his Element like coming to terms with a pony who has wronged him in some way. As the bearer of each Element gains more memories that coincide with their Element, the Element becomes more powerful and the bearer more able to wield it. The bearers of the Elements continue to grow in power until their deaths. The notion of bearers of the Elements becoming more physically powerful as they age has been in question for hundreds of years but it does indeed seem to be the case. The bearers of the Elements of Peace never suffer the ill effects of aging, but do continue to age as per the normal cycle of life. Eventually they grow old and pass on, but in near perfect health. In short they simply pass on in their sleep. This is not to say that they are invulnerable, indeed some bearers of the Elements of Peace have been gravely wounded in battle and some even killed, but these are rare occasions in which the bearer was generally alone and was overwhelmed by sheer weight of numbers. A bearer of an Element of Peace need not concern themselves with permanent physical impairments such as dismemberment. The Elements of Peace, when invoked, will manifest powerful pseudo-members of their bearer's bodies to aid them in whatever task they undertake even if the task does not directly concern the use of said members. In the cases of minor things such as loss of mane or tail the missing part will be re-grown as if it had never been missing at all. The Elements of Peace physically manifest as suits of armor so that other ponies can look upon them and know they were not simply an ideal but a physical representation of protection. Unlike the Elements of Harmony, the Elements of Peace do not have a 'leader' but they do have a catalyst of sorts. The bearer of the first Element to recognize who and what they are **must** call them out in order for them to physically manifest the armors, while the pseudo-members, for any bearer who is physically impaired, may be used without invoking the armor and may simply appear when the bearer personifies his Element. When acting in accordance with their Elements, the bearers of the Elements of Peace have the ability to invoke what has been named 'Inspirational Manifestation'. When invoking 'Inspirational Manifestation' the bearers of the Elements of Peace gain special abilities which directly link to their Element. These have been carefully recorded and catalogued according to each Element. The 'Inspirational Manifestation' for the Element of Perseverance is the ability to continue acting after logic would dictate the bearer would normally falter or fail. One recorded instance when this occurred was during the Great Griffon War. The bearer of the Element of Perseverance fought for two days straight and held a battle line by himself until the other Elements of Peace arrived with the Elements of Harmony. That particular battle was won with no loss of life, but plenty of injuries. The bearer of the Element of Forgiveness can heal grievous injuries to themselves or others either in battle or in the aftermath. The bearer of the Element of Discernment can gauge the actions and intentions of any being within the range of their perceptive senses providing knowledge of wounds or enemy actions. The bearer of the Element of Patience can calculate perfect timing for any actions whether in battle or in negotiating peace. The bearer of the Element of Acceptance brings peace to troubled bodies and minds and calm emotions and feelings; easing pain and soothing fear. The bearer of the Element of Hope can inspire others to act as they should even in the face of overwhelming odds or the most taxing and difficult tasks. A cautionary note to any bearers of the Elements of Peace: do not hesitate to do battle but do not fall prey to bloodlust. The taking of a life should be the absolute last resort and should never be perpetrated against another sentient being; there is no excuse for it. Broken bones can mend but all life is precious and death cannot be mended. The Elements of Peace are, above all, guardians of life. The Elements of Peace are well renowned for being powerful but it should be noted that the power of a single Element of Harmony could easily

overpower the combined might of the Elements of Peace.” Evening Star finished and huffed out a breath.

Big Macintosh was deep in thought; something was itching in his mind, “Read the part about them pseudo-thingies again.”

Evening flipped pages for a moment then began reading, “A bearer of an Element of Peace need not concern themselves with permanent physical impairments such as dismemberment. The Elements of Peace, when invoked, will manifest powerful pseudo-members of their bearer's bodies to aid them in whatever task they undertake even if the task does not directly concern the use of said members. The Elements of Peace physically manifest as suits of armor so that other ponies could look upon them and know they were not simply an ideal but a physical representation of protection. Unlike the Elements of Harmony, the Elements of Peace do not have a 'leader' but they do have a catalyst of sorts. The bearer of the first Element to recognize who and what they are **must** call them out in order for them to physically manifest the armors, while the pseudo-members, for any bearer who is physically impaired, may be used without invoking the armor and may simply appear when the bearer personifies his Element.” Evening Star looked up at Big Macintosh, “Why did you want me to read that part again?”

“Well Ah'll be. Ah knew Ah wasn't seein' things.” the massive Earth pony said slapping his leg with a flat hoof, “Valiant's got to be one of them Elements of Peace.”

Evening Star cocked her head, puzzled, “What do you mean?” she asked.

“Did Valiant tell you about how he saved four ponies from a fire?” Big Macintosh asked.

“Yes. He told me, but he said he didn't remember much; he said it was all pretty blurry.” Evening Star admitted.

“He got burnt up pretty bad, and he was dyin' but he didn't let that stop him. When he heard mah Granny had died from the smoke, he forced himself up and managed to get her heart goin' again. When he was doin that Ah know Ah saw a pair of pretty, gold wings on his shoulders where his original wings ought to be. It only happened for a moment, but it was there. Does the book say anythin' else about these pseudo-thingies?” Big Macintosh asked.

Evening Star turned to the index at the front of the book, “Pseudo-members page 209.” She flipped through the pages quickly and found the entry, “It says, pseudo-members are magical representations of the bearer's true form, for only the physical body is injured but the spirit is whole and untouched. The Elements and their bearers are a combination of spiritual and physical representation, merged into one and able to access their power through that merger. In this way the Elements take the imperfections of the bearer's body and makes them whole again so as to aid in any given task in which the missing members may be vital. One case reports that the Element of Kindness allowed a disabled bearer to speak after

she was born mute; another allowed a paraplegic to walk again after an accident rendered him unable to use his back legs. These pseudo-members are only temporary and will disappear after a time, leaving the bearer disabled until the next instance of manifestation. The pseudo-members have been recorded to impart additional gifts when they manifest. The above reference to the bearer of the Element of Kindness could articulate perfectly even having had no prior experience speaking at all and could sing so beautifully as to bring the most hardened heart to tears within moments. The second reference mentioned above allowed the bearer to run and jump to great heights well above the limit of normal ponies. There have been precious few instances where a pseudo-member has come into play but when it has occurred, it has been greatly to the benefit of the bearer. As yet there are but five recorded instances of pseudo-members being imparted to bearers of Elements.” Evening Star raised her head, “Are you sure of what you saw Big Macintosh?”

“Ayup.”

“If Valiant is the bearer of an Element, which one do you think he is?” Evening Star asked.

“Ah have no idea.” Big Mac responded.

“Oh, come on think about. You know him better than I do. Surely you must have some idea.” Evening Star said pressing for a response.

“He don't fit none of the Elements to well. He's always in a hurry so Ah don't think he's Patience and he's about as discerning as a pinecone so he don't fit Discernment to well either. He sure knows how to hold a grudge against himself so he doesn't seem like Forgiveness, and when Ah first met him he was over his head in despair, so Ah don't think he's Hope neither. He . . . “ Big Macintosh was interrupted by his newest friend.

“Maybe it's something he's worked past. I've heard the story about how each of the Elements of Harmony had to work past certain trials to demonstrate and bring out their Elements. Maybe it's something he's worked past. What is the biggest thing he's worked past?” Evening Star asked.

Big Macintosh gave it some earnest thought,
“Ah just can't think of what it could be. Ah know Ah ain't Discernment at least.” he chuckled,
“Let's not worry about it for now.”

“Why's that?” Evening Star asked.

Big Macintosh looked out the gaping window up at the sky,
“Because it's about time for Live Wire to get off work.”

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Valiant sighed happily as he slid his saddle-bags over his flank. The time was 2:15 and he had to meet Dr. Mend at the clinic.

Valiant turned to Mrs. Soothe,
“What time should I come in tomorrow?” he asked cheerfully.

“I open the store at 8:00 a.m. be here at 7:45. I do hope you can stay longer tomorrow.” Mrs. Soothe said.

“I’ll be here from sun up to sun down if that’s what you need. But once the new semester starts I’ll have to get back to you on that. I might have to cut down on the hours. I have to make sure I do well in my classes and all that.” Valiant said heading for the door.

“Let me know as soon as possible. I do need help still.” Mrs. Soothe called as Valiant opened the door.

“Will do . . . “

“Boo!” a voice yelled from above Valiant.

Valiant startled, stumbled, and fell right onto his posterior,
“Who the . . . “ he began.

Looking up, Valiant saw Evening Star leaning far over the edge of the roof of the apothecary. She was smiling hugely. The sun shone bright behind her feathers, outlining them and their owner like a celestial being. Her mane and tail wafted gently in the breeze; she almost seemed to be sparkling. Valiant smiled, *‘I do miss you Arabesque, but I think I might be falling for another filly already.’* he thought. Evening Star covered her mouth with a hoof, stifling a fit of the giggles. Valiant’s smile widened as he stood up, only to bump his head against something as solid as a rock. He fell back onto his backside, rubbing his head, *‘That’s what I get for not paying attention.’* he thought. Turning his head he beheld a red wall in front of him and looked up puzzled.

Valiant shot to his hooves as he recognized Big Macintosh,
“Hey! What are you doing here?” he asked hugging his unusually large friend.

Big Macintosh hugged him back,
“Ah was wonderin’ if a friend of mine could use a little help with a unicorn problem he’s been havin’.”

The reminder sobered Valiant up immediately, washing away any good feelings he was entertaining,
“Yeah. I’ve been wondering about that myself. Do you have any ideas?”

“Nope.” Big Macintosh said gesturing over his shoulder, “But he might.”

Valiant craned his neck to look over the massive Earth pony, but decided to simply look

underneath instead, it was closer,

“Hey, Live Wire. Is everypony I know coming to see me today?” he asked the citrus colored unicorn standing behind Big Macintosh.

“I don't think so, but that would be nice wouldn't it. Big Mac and Evening Star came to see me when I got off work. I wanted to scare you, but Evening Star won the bit-toss, so she got to do it. I think we should all go do something since you're off work now. You sure did get off work early. We were expecting to be here for a while and I was hoping Evening Star would get bored and let me scare you, but you got off work early so that's gone, but at least now we have more time to hang out right? I mean, now that I actually have friends and all, I want to spend as much time with you guys, and girl, as I can. I've never been able to hang out with friends much cause I didn't have any; so what is it that friends do all the time? Should we go off and get something at the park? They always have nice snack-carts out and everything. Or maybe we should go to the roller-skating rink . . . “

“Live Wire . . . ” Big Macintosh said.

“Or there's that awesome night-club that's open until all hours of the night. I've heard they have the greatest D.J. Of all time! I think she's called Scratch or something like that . . . “

“Live Wire . . . “ Valiant said slightly louder than Big Macintosh.

“Oh, I know! We could go watch the Wonderbolts practice! Those pegasi are amazing! Their aerial stunts . . . “

“Live Wire . . . “ Evening Star addressed raising her voice.

Lemon Lime continued on, he hadn't heard a thing. Valiant looked at his other two friends and mouthed, *'One . . . Two . . . Three.'*

“**LIVE WIRE!**” the three ponies yelled in unison.

Lemon Lime stopped mid-sentence and looked up, blinking owlishly,
“Did you say something?”

The three ponies, all burst into gales of laughter at their machine-gun-mouthed friend.

Lemon Lime was puzzled for a brief moment, then he figured it out and was slightly hurt,
“It's not *that* funny.” he said sourly, ears low, “I'm sorry if I got off on a tangent, but you don't need to laugh at me. I'm just excited that's all.”

Big Macintosh was the first to recover, and he did so quickly,
“Ah'm sorry Live Wire. We just thought the situation was funny. We weren't laughing at you. Well, we were, but not in a bad way.”

“Yeah,” Evening Star interjected, “We just thought it was funny that's all. Besides you're kind of endearing.”

“Don't take it personally Live Wire. Some things are just funny, and the fact that you didn't even know we were all calling for you just made it even funnier.” Valiant finished.

Lemon Lime was quiet for a long moment as he digested the statements, then perked right back up,
“So what do **you** want to do?”

“I have to meet Dr. Mend at some clinic so he can administer the healing potion to a pegasus who was injured by our resident mentally unstable unicorn.” Valiant began, “After that I'm free.”

“Hey Valiant,” Lemon Lime addressed, “You never did tell me how you hurt your leg, and it looks like it's completely healed. I take it, that's your potion at work?”

Valiant smiled proudly,
“I bit myself to prove that the healing potion really works.”

Lemon Lime was floored,
“WHAT!” he exclaimed, “Valiant, that is not healthy! What made you think to bite yourself? What kind of a pony does that?”

Evening Star landed beside Valiant,
“He's right. That's not healthy behavior at all. No pony would even think about biting themselves and draw blood.”

“Ah agree. Are you feelin' alright Valiant?” Big Macintosh added.

“Yeah, I'm fine. It's no big deal. I just did it to prove a point.” Valiant defended.

“It is a big deal Valiant!” Lemon Lime said emphatically, “I've only seen suicidal ponies do something like that. Self-mutilation is not alright, and it is most definitely a big deal.”

“Okay!” Valiant said defensively, “If it's that big of an issue I won't do it again. Yeesh!”

Lemon Lime narrowed his eyes at Valiant, and took a step toward the wingless pegasus, head low,
“Don't you 'yeesh' me Valiant.” he said softly, “I know what I'm talking about and I'm not going to let any pony hurt themselves while **I** have something to say about it.”

Valiant had to admit that when the smaller unicorn was determined he could be pretty intimidating,
“Alright, alright.” he said calmly, “I apologize. I didn't know you felt so strongly about it.”

Lemon Lime took another step forward, posture unchanged,
“I've seen ponies waste away, I've seen ponies mutilate themselves, and I've seen ponies that I've tried to help, end up killing themselves. They all had that same attitude, and I won't stand for it. Do. Not. 'Yeesh'. Me. Or I will levitate your backside to a psychologist so fast you won't be able to get your bearings until you're already doped up on medication. That isn't a hollow threat, I've done it. And so help me I'll do it again if I have to. This is serious matter and you will treat it as such.”

Big Macintosh held out a leg, halting Lemon Lime,
“Ah think he gets the point, Live Wire.”

Lemon Lime seemed to come out of a trance; he shook his head and banged a hoof on his left temple, just in front of his ear,
“Ooh.” he groaned, “I do not like doing that.” he looked up at his friends and smiled sheepishly,
“Sorry, but when I get onto a subject that I'm passionate about I get kind of . . . intense.”

Evening Star shot Valiant a perturbed look,
“That's fine. I agree with what you said Live Wire. Maybe a visit to a 'shrink' is in order if this happens again. Hint, hint. As in, it had better not happen again.”

Valiant sighed dejectedly,
“Alright. I get the point. I promise I won't do it again.”

“But do you understand why you shouldn't do it again?” Big Macintosh asked.

“Because it's self-destructive, I guess.” Valiant said.

Big Macintosh nodded,
“Ah've seen you do enough self-destructive things to last me a lifetime, and Ah don't want to see it anymore. Or do I need to get mah sister to give you another talkin'-to?”

Valiant stood up ram-rod straight,
“No need for that. Message received loud and clear.”

Evening Star broke the tension,
“Well if that's all cleared up, why don't we go with you and see this miracle stuff ourselves?”

The suggestion was well-received. The four friends turned and headed for the predesignated meeting place. Valiant smiled to himself, *'I may not have a family, but this is probably as close as I'll ever get.'* he thought to himself.

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Dr. Mend gently pushed along a supply cart in front of him while Dr. Avalon trotted next to him, examining the unassuming vials which lay on top. Mend was dreading going back to the

dormitory. He could feel the voices in the back of his mind buzzing like a hive of bees. He knew once he got back, they would start up again. He drew in a deep breath and let it out slowly.

Dr. Avalon took note of Mend's actions,
“Nervous?” she asked.

Dr. Mend shook his head,
“Just have a lot on my mind. I already know this will work.”

“Then what's bothering you?” Dr. Avalon asked.

Dr. Mend straightened up and pushed the cart a bit faster,
“I have some . . . personal issues that I need to deal with. Don't worry, I won't let it affect my performance.”

Dr. Avalon smiled warmly,
“Well, if you ever want to talk about it let me know.” she invited.

“I wouldn't want to burden you, Dr. Avalon.” Dr. Mend responded.

Dr. Avalon placed a gentle hoof on the cart and brought it and Dr. Mend to a halt,
“It's not a burden, if I offered. I mean it. If you want to talk about it, I'm here.” she said looking Dr. Mend directly in the eyes.

Dr. Mend didn't really know what to say,
“I . . . Well, thank you. I appreciate that.” he finally said pushing the cart into motion again.

“Take a left here.” Dr. Avalon said, guiding Dr. Mend toward Trooper's room.

“Has Trooper woken up yet?” Dr. Mend asked.

“Yes,” Dr. Avalon responded, “He woke up earlier and I spoke with him about the treatment. He's eager to give it a try. I brought him the waver and he signed it without delay.”

Dr. Mend smiled, actually smiled,
“Did you give him the whole 'shpeel' about inherent risks and so forth?”

Dr. Avalon shot Dr. Mend a playfully pouty look,
“Really! Do you honestly think I would neglect that kind of a detail? You don't think much of me at all do you?”

The playfulness was both lost and wasted on the serious stallion,
“No! That's not what I meant!” he said frantically, “I just wanted to double check. I'm so used to running my own clinic it's a habit to double check everything. I meant no offense Avalon, I do trust you. You're a fantastic doctor and I never meant to insinuate you were otherwise.”

“Whoa there,” Dr. Avalon said, surprised, “I was only playing. I know you didn't mean it that way, I was teasing you. You know, sarcasm.”

Dr. Mend felt like a heel,
“Oops. I guess I was a bit too serious huh?”

“You think? And since when have we decided to dispense with proper titles?” Dr. Avalon asked, poking Dr. Mend in his side playfully.

Dr. Mend blushed furiously,
“I apologize Dr. Avalon. I had no intention of pressuring you to over familiarity. It was merely a slip of the tongue.”

Dr. Avalon decided to cease with any hints and subtle messages,
“I never said I didn't like it, now did I?” she asked.

Dr. Mend was being particularly dense at the moment,
“Well no. But if you didn't mind then why mention it?”

Dr. Avalon had never wished for a pillow to scream into, so much in her life,
“Never mind.” she mumbled moodily.

“What was that?” Dr. Mend asked absent-mindedly.

Dr. Avalon decided to change the subject,
“Isn't your friend supposed to be here when Trooper begins treatment?”

“Yes, he is. I don't know why he's late. But I suppose that's my fault, I didn't tell him where to meet me. He's probably in the waiting room.” Dr. Mend said.

“I'll go get him. What does he look like?” Dr. Avalon asked.

“His coat is royal blue and his mane and tail are light brown. His cutie-mark is a mortar and pestle with some herbal ingredients in it. He's a pegasus, but he looks like an Earth pony.” Dr. Mend described.

Dr. Avalon turned her head toward Dr. Mend, unsure about the description,
“He's a pegasus but he looks like an Earth pony?” she asked, hinting at clarification.

“He lost his wings. I should know, I had to saw off the remainder of the bones.” Dr. Mend said.

“Accident?” Dr. Avalon asked.

“Animal attack.” Dr. Mend clarified.

“Take your next right and Trooper's room is number 23. I'll be there in a minute or two.” Dr. Avalon said heading off to the waiting room.

* * * * *

Trooper had never felt so helpless. All four of his legs were slung up above him in traction, forcing him to lie on his back and press the full weight of his body against his wings, which were sure to be sore after he recovered. His tail lay straight out behind him and drooped off the edge of the bed exposing his backside to the open air. As if all that weren't enough, his legs itched fiercely and the slightest movement of his torso sent flashes of pain shooting all through his whole body which was absolutely slathered in ugly bruises and bumps. He detested having to ask anypony to do things for him and now his independence was completely non-existent. He never once uttered a single complaint, but oh how he wanted to.

Trooper began grumbling to himself to pass the time, “Of course this would not have happened had it not been for that detestable unicorn. So then, here comes Trooper to selflessly save the day. And what do I get for my bravery? Not one, not two, not even three, but **four** broken legs!” he griped, “I shall save you! The hero called out to the frightened mare. He swooped down and deftly caught her, mere moments before she would have fallen to her death. As he set her down gently, the wicked unicorn laughed brazenly, taunting him 'I will have that money!' The intrepid hero stood up to her boldly, 'Nay,' he said, 'You shall not harm a hair on her lovely head, for you now face the bravest of heroes, Trooper the Magnificent. Be gone from here wretch!' His words hung in the air like golden motes, glimmering in the afternoon light, bringing hope to all of Equestria.” Trooper's imagination was having a field-day, “He took to the air in his immaculate glory and swooped down toward the evil unicorn, 'Prepare thyself, fiend! For your doom is at hoof! I shall vanquish you without breaking a sweat!' he dove down toward her valiantly.” Trooper flopped his head back in frustration, “But instead of fleeing, she wrapped up his wings and flung him into the air only to fall onto the ground like a sack of potatoes.” he sighed irritably, “Thank Celestia, that only my legs were shattered. It could have just as easily been my whole body. I can see it now. My mother weeping brokenly over my headstone. My epitaph would be 'Here lies Trooper, best known for his impression of a pancake.' I do hope the doctor returns soon. I need to be out of this bed.”

Dr. Mend opened the door to Trooper's room and pushed the cart in, “Hello Trooper, how are you feeling?”

“As well as I can I suppose, all circumstances considered.” Trooper responded honestly, “I could be doing much worse. And hopefully you are here to help me with my recovery? With some radical new treatment I heard about?”

Dr. Mend pushed the cart up along the left side Trooper's bed and locked the wheels with his hoof,

“Correct. All we're waiting on is for the pony who found this new treatment to arrive.”

Trooper looked toward the ceiling, face enraptured,
“I can just imagine her now. She must be an older white unicorn mare with a shining silver mane and tail who exudes a matronly air of tenderness to all she encounters. The very embodiment of a caring matriarch.”

Dr. Mend shook his head, quite amused,
“You couldn’t be more wrong. **He** is a young, pegasus stallion about your age . . . “ Dr. Mend was cut off as the door to Trooper's room opened.

Evening Star, Lemon Lime, Big Macintosh, Valiant, and Dr. Avalon entered the room, making it seem quite cramped. Dr. Mend's face brightened significantly when he noticed the large, red Earth pony farmer. Big Macintosh, similarly cracked a smile and nodded to Dr. Mend.

Trooper's eyes bulged at the sight of Valiant,
“Doctor, were I not in traction, I should have to accuse you of showing me a mirror. This fellow and I seem to favor each other in a most distinctive way.”

Valiant analyzed Trooper carefully, *'His mane and tail are the exact same shade as mine, his coat too. Our faces are nearly identical as well. I've only ever heard Rarity talk like that though.'* Valiant's eyes drifted down to Trooper's flank, his brow wrinkling in confusion, *'Hmm, he doesn't have a cutie mark either.'* he thought to himself.

Trooper looked at each pony in turn and finally settled on Evening Star, since she was the only pegasus in evidence.

Trooper craned his neck over toward Dr. Mend and whispered,
“I say, he seems to be a bit on the effeminate side.”

Dr. Mend, for all his seriousness, couldn't help but to laugh at Trooper's poorly informed statement,
“No, no, no.” he chuckled, “Valiant is the one who looks like you.”

“But you said he was a pegasus around my age. There is only one pegasus in the room.” Trooper said confused.

Dr. Mend finished laughing and resumed his serious expression,
“He **is** a pegasus, he lost his wings.”

Dr. Avalon cleared her throat loudly,
“Ahem. I believe we are all here.”

Trooper caught on easily,
“Ah yes, much to do, much to do. Making medical history and all that.” he raised his head, as much as he could, “The proverbial test subject is ready whenever you fine ponies are.”

Dr. Mend picked up a vial carefully with his hooves and pulled out the cork with his mouth,
“Open up.” he said spitting out the cork.

Trooper opened his mouth and rested his head as far back as he could, so as to minimize the chance of any of the potion spilling. Dr. Mend held up the vial in his hooves and gently bit onto the side of it with his mouth, careful not to shatter it. He tilted his head and poured the contents down Trooper's throat.

Trooper swallowed hard and made a face, whipping his head back and forth,
“Bwa! Beastly, vile-tasting stuff!” he scraped his tongue against his teeth several times, then closed his mouth and adopted a look of thoughtfulness, “Hmm, I do rather like the hint of mint and sage though. So, when should I expect to be mobile again?”

“If you take regular doses every three days, about a week and a half.” Valiant provided.

Trooper brightened up like a flash,
“I say, absolutely top-hole! If this stuff works like you say I could be back out saving damsels in distress in no time at all!”

The collective ponies looked at each other, but Evening Star beat everypony to the punch,
“Yes, about that. What can you tell us?”

“Ah . . . yes. About that,” Trooper's good mood evaporated like vapor in the summer sun, “Well it is all quite simple really. As much as I would love to portray myself as the brave hero, I am afraid that I am not.” Trooper's ears fell and he shrunk back into the bed as if he was trying to hide, “I was flying along, minding my own business, when motion in an alleyway caught my eye. I banked and came around and . . . Well I would have had to be blind to miss what was going on. A unicorn in a dark cloak was levitating an Earth pony filly right up above the surrounding buildings. The filly was scared to death, she was crying her eyes out, but the unicorn simply ignored that and kept demanding the filly drop her bits. Any pony could see the poor thing was not wearing saddle-bags. Where was she supposed to be hiding a bit-purse?” Trooper sighed, “Well the unicorn clearly did not care a whit about that fact and simply dropped the poor thing. Now, I am not a genius, but neither am I a fool. That unicorn meant to **kill** that poor filly. I never had a chance to think, I just acted,” Trooper snorted in a half-laugh, “I acted like an idiot. I caught the filly and, like a moron, I set her down right in the same alley as the unicorn. The unicorn bound my wings to my sides and flung me right up into the air, then teleported away. I thought I was going to die and that has to be the strangest thing. As I was falling, the only thing I was thinking was that I was glad the unicorn had let the filly go.” Trooper sighed again, “I do not even recall when the spell binding my wings ended or even how I arrived here. I hope that has been helpful.”

Dr. Mend and Dr. Avalon looked at each other and nodded,
“I'm afraid we have rounds to make, but you four are free to stay and visit Trooper for a while. I'll come back when visiting hours are over.” Dr. Avalon said.

The two doctors left the room, taking the cart with them, and closed the door, leaving five ponies to stay and chat. Trooper couldn't help but notice that the yellow and green unicorn was staring at his backside. He chose to ignore it for the moment and turned his attention to the other ponies in the room, none of which he knew well.

"If it is not too much to ask, Valiant was it? Yes um, how is it that we look so much alike and how, in the name of Equestria, did you lose your wings? I am simply dying to know." Trooper ventured boldly.

Valiant was surprised by the salvo of inquiry but he had some questions of his own, "How about a trade? Information for information, you scratch my back I'll scratch yours."

Trooper gave the notion some thought, "Sounds reasonable enough. You first."

"Back at you. How **do** we look so much alike? I don't have any relatives that I know of. Do you have a missing twin brother or something like that?" Valiant asked.

Trooper shook his head, "Sorry, afraid not. I was the only foal my mother ever had. My parents married young and my father died when I was quite young. I do not even recall what he looks like. My turn. How did you lose your wings?"

"Do you want the long version or the short one?" Valiant asked.

"I believe I will take the short one." Trooper replied.

"I was helping a bear whose back legs were trapped under some fallen rocks. I had to get close and the bear made a meal out of my wings." Valiant said.

Trooper pursed his lips, "I was honest with you my good stallion. I will thank you to be honest with me." he said frostily.

Valiant opened his mouth to speak, but Big Macintosh beat him to it, "Valiant don't lie to nopony. He's tellin' the truth."

Trooper hadn't heard Big Macintosh, he was distracted by Lemon Lime, who was still staring intently at his posterior, "What is it exactly about that particular region of my backside do you find so incredibly enthralling?"

Lemon Lime looked up sharply, "I . . . I uh . . ."

Trooper settled down a bit and took on a softer tone,
“If you are compelled to look, feel free to do so, but I will ask you not to touch without my permission. And just to save any embarrassment, my tastes run to the mares.”

Lemon Lime's eyes were as large as saucers and his face instantly turned beet-red,
“No . . . no. I was . . . it's just that . . . “

“Oh come now. Do not be ashamed of who you are. I take it as a compliment and I am well aware of the modern age in which we live. I am as accepting as the next pony and I certainly cannot judge you for your preference. If it pleases you to look then look. So long as you do not invade my personal space, I have no issue with it.” Trooper said.

“But . . . it's not . . . I mean . . . “ Lemon Lime was stuttering more than he had when first meeting Evening Star.

“Good Heavens!” Trooper exclaimed, “It is not the end of the world! If you see something you like then fine! If it is that much of a big deal, I have some friends who . . . “ Trooper was interrupted by Lemon Lime.

“You don't have a cutie-mark.” the unicorn said quietly.

Trooper stopped mid-sentence, mouth still open,
“Oh that. Yes well, you see, I simply never developed one. I do not have a special talent that I am aware of.” Trooper's ears fell, “Oh my. I apologize profusely if I embarrassed you. I seem to have made an ass out of myself in regard to my ass. My mistake, but my statement still stands.”

The tension in the air was so thick, the assembled ponies could almost taste it. It was the awkward silence to end all awkward silences. After a full minute of loud crickets, Big Macintosh cleared his throat.

“Ah think we need to talk about this rogue unicorn and what we're goin' to do about her.” the massive Earth pony initiated.

Lemon Lime, glad for the subject change, piped up quickly,
“I have an idea!”

The other ponies waited for him to expound on the notion, after a moment, the short unicorn got the picture,
“I think we should ask the Elements of Harmony to deal with her.”

Evening Star shook her head,
“Can't. Big Macintosh already hinted at that to Princess Celestia. She said we should try to solve it on our own. She seemed inclined to think that Big Macintosh would be in on it though.”

Valiant turned a surprised eye to his huge, red friend,

“Really? When did you get an audience with Princess Celestia?”

Big Macintosh shrugged,
“Ah didn't do it on purpose. Live Wire told me to find Evenin' Star while he was at work. Ah went to the Library and overheard a conversation. Ah tried to sneak away, but the Princess caught me, so Ah just said what was on mah mind.”

Trooper was surprised to say the least,
“Do you mean to say, that you were, essentially, privileged with a private audience with the dominant ruler of Equestria?”

“Ayup.”

“Had I known that, I would have been keeping the company of work-ponies from day one.”
Trooper said magnanimously.

Big Macintosh ignored the statement and focused on the topic at hoof,
“We still need some kind o' plan. Any other ideas?”

Every ear in the room instantly swerved toward Evening Star when she said,
“I think we should try to find the Elements of Peace.”

“We have already discussed the Elements of Harmony.” Trooper reminded.

“No, the Elements of Peace, the other set of Elements, the other half of the Elements of Harmony.” Evening Star said emphatically.

Valiant rubbed his head with his hooves,
“Look everypony, Elements or no Elements, we still need a solution. I don't think we have time to seek out another set of Elements even if they do exist. I'm not saying I don't believe you Evening Star, but we need a solution right now. This unicorn is suffering from 'Caster's Stroke' and she isn't going to stop on her own. She's accelerating and next time there may not be anypony around to save her next victim. Mend and I discussed this briefly, and he had an idea. What if we could manage to get this unicorn to ingest an elixir that would knock her out, put her to sleep?”

Lemon Lime caught the direction of his wingless friend's thought pattern,
“Then we could keep giving her doses of it until the C.M.E.S. wears off. We would have to care for her while this is going on, but that's no problem. I have plenty of room in my house and more than enough money to pay for her food and such. But the question is: how do we get her to ingest it? If we could put it into a syringe, I could administer it to her that way, but the chemical makeup would have to be different. If all we have to work with is a compound that has to be ingested, then somepony would have to hold her still, somepony would have to pry open her mouth, and while all that's going on, a unicorn would have to cut her off from her power to make sure she didn't teleport away.” Lemon Lime put a hoof to his chin and began muttering

calculations quietly to himself.

Trooper opened his mouth to speak, but Evening Star hovered over to him with a hoof to her lips,

“Shh. Let him work. He has Cerebral-Lingua Accelerari; his mind works four times faster than any of ours could.” she whispered.

After what Big Macintosh counted out to be three minutes and twelve seconds, Lemon Lime looked up,

“I've run the numbers. Thank Celestia I work as a physical therapist or I wouldn't know this. The average pony's reflexive time scale is roughly 2.6 seconds when their adrenaline is pumping, with a variable of .4 seconds to account for the C.M.E.S. . . .” Lemon Lime began, but Evening Star cut him off.

“Is it possible, Live Wire? Can we do it?” she asked hopefully.

“Yes. I believe we can do it, but we need to be organized. Let's go over what we have available. We need to know who is going to be participating in this, then write up a list of our strengths so we can utilize every advantage while minimizing our weaknesses and be able to act with the most efficient effort and keep the possibility of injury to as small a percentage as possible.” Lemon Lime said.

“Let's start with who's going to be doing this.” Valiant said, “I'm in.”

“So am Ah.” Big Macintosh said next.

“I have to be there. I'm the only one who could match her in strength, besides I can catch a pony in a heart-beat.” Lemon Lime interjected.

“I will go as well.” Evening Star said, “If she's suffering from 'Caster's Stroke', being confronted by a bunch of stallions in a dark alley way could send her into a true panic. I think I can calm her down.”

“I shall be glad to help as soon as I am recovered.” Trooper volunteered, “I can scout around for her. I am no hero, but I can be your eyes.”

“I'm pretty sure Mend would want to be there too.” Valiant said, “If for no other reason, than to be present to provide his expertise if somepony gets injured. That's six so far. How many do you estimate we need Live Wire?”

“I'd say, with the sheer amount of variables we have working against us. We will need a minimum of seven, preferably eight, but we could pull it off with seven.” Lemon Lime estimated.

“O.K. So who else can we ask to help us?” Valiant asked.

Lemon Lime and Big Macintosh looked at each other, seeming to think the same thing, “Danger and possible violence . . . “ Lemon Lime began.

“Physical strength and boldness . . . “ Big Macintosh continued the thought.

“Cantankerous.” The two stallions said in unison.

* * * * *

Across the capital city of Equestria, away from the clinic, a unicorn stallion and his daughter trotted toward home after a fun-filled afternoon at the park. Father and daughter trotted along happily underneath Princess Luna’s waxing Moon. The night had begun to take on a slight chill, soft breezes began drifting in, out of the West and the temperature was dropping steadily. They walked along a familiar back-road, certain of their safety. Patch was pleasantly fatigued from her rambunctious playing with all the other Fillies and colts at the park and could proudly boast she was named the ‘tag queen’ of the day. The two unicorns were beginning to pick up the pace. The temperature was dropping more quickly than they had first thought and they longed to be back in their own home. Little did they know that in the growing obscurity of the evening a living shadow had detached from the darkness and was following them. The figure looked out from underneath her hood and her muddy purple eyes focused on the oblivious pair.

The turquoise unicorn stallion heard a rock clack in the darkness of an alley way behind he and his daughter and turned his head to the deepening shadows. He turned, quick as a flash, his hoof shot out to the tiny unicorn filly next to him, keeping her still. Patch froze, almost instantly, fear beginning to creep into her thoughts.

“What is it Daddy?” little Patch asked.

“Quiet, baby.” he whispered tensely.

His ears twitched this way and that, trying to focus on any possible threat, his eyes searching the ever-growing layers of gloom for whatever had made the noise. Sea Blue stood still as a statue for several full minutes, reaching out with his senses into the pitch black of the surrounding alley ways. Patch was frightened and held as still as her father. Neither pony dared to move a muscle. The night continued to cool, the temperature dropping more quickly. The two ponies could see their breath in front of their faces, but still they dared not move.

Sea Blue knew he had heard something and began gathering his magic for a 'Light' spell. It was one he had learned when he had taken a self-defense course. He focused on hiding the glow of his horn so as to have the element of surprise. Sea Blue had fervently hoped he would never have to actually use the spells, but ‘better have it and not need it, than need it and not have it’; and now life seemed to be indicating that he needed it. He took a deep breath and began calming himself, clearing his mind and opening himself to the full spectrum of his admittedly limited magical power. He sent up a silent prayer to Princess Luna, whose night it was, and asked

for what every parent would want, the ability to protect his daughter.

“Close your eye, Patch.” Sea Blue whispered to the little filly.

In a blindingly brilliant flash of sudden light, Sea Blue finished casting his spell. He closed his eyes for a brief moment so as to not be blinded, as was the spell's intended use. He opened his eyes quickly and took in the surrounding area, illuminated by the spell. Eight paces to his left stood the wall of a pottery house, the heat from the kiln in the back wall still sending trace amounts of warmth into the night. Six paces to his right stood the abandoned bulk of an old textile factory, spooky enough in the first place. Directly behind him a good 23 paces, was the main road, a place he suddenly wished he and Patch had stayed on. Directly in front of him, illuminated by his spell, Sea Blue discerned the silhouette of a cloaked pony, not ten paces away. Sea Blue could not make out any particularly identifying characteristics in the darkness, which made the phantom pony so much more terrifying. Sea Blue took an involuntary step back, eyes hardening, preparing to fight. For several solid minutes, the phantom pony stood stock-still. Sea Blue thought his eyes were playing tricks on him, the wind was blowing, but in the outline he saw, the other pony's cloak was still as a tomb-stone. Not a single piece of the phantom seemed lively, the mane hung loosely, the tail still as a stone, it didn't hardly seem to even breathe.

With a sudden, terrifying explosion of motion the cloaked pony charged, forward, horn glowing brightly in the darkness.

“Run!” Sea Blue yelled to Patch, “Run Patch! Run home and don't stop till you get there!”

The tiny filly took off like a shot while her father braced himself and began gathering his magic for another defensive spell, “STOP!” he bellowed, “Don't take another step!”

The cloaked pony only increased her speed. She flashed out of Sea Blue's sight and re-appeared right in front of him. Sea Blue realized what was happening and had to decide between dodging and casting his incomplete spell. He decided to throw up his incomplete spell, hoping it would be enough to stop his apparent enemy. The spell was too weak. Sea Blue seemed to see the world in slow motion. He saw the flash of his own spell illuminate his enemy, her muddy purple eyes now dimly glowing in the night. Her head was low, using her natural weapon as unicorns had been want to do in ages past. Sea Blue tensed his body, preparing for an impact he was certain would come close to, if not outright pierce his heart. The unicorn's horn pierced his chest, the impact throwing him to the ground.

Sea Blue felt a white-hot pain seared through his whole body, and to his infinite surprise, he felt a second wave of agony shoot throughout his body as his enemy delivered a spell, right past his natural defenses. The spell wracked his body with the fiery intensity of a thousand white-hot Suns. His muscles locked tightly then seemed to short-circuit, leaving him to fall limply onto the ground like a rag-doll. Sea Blue cried out in pain, and to his horror, he heard the scream of little Patch as well.

Sea Blue struggled to rise to his hooves, but the impact had left him winded and his

muscles felt like jelly. His sanguine life essence began to slowly spill out of the open hole in his chest, staining the ground. Sea Blue focused his remaining strength and just barely managed to turn his head toward where he heard Patch's cry. The unicorn stallion's fears were confirmed, coming to terrifying proportions. The cloaked pony stood in front of his daughter. Patch was shaking, frozen with fear. The blindness was only supposed to last for a few brief moments and Sea Blue wasn't even sure it had been effective at all.

The figure held up a hoof, underneath Patch's chin, lifting her head. The terrified filly complied tearfully. The unicorn examined Patch's missing eye and turned swiftly to Sea Blue, "This is your doing! How dare you!" she accused.

Patch came to her senses, and kicked the cloaked unicorn with a front hoof, "No!" she cried, "Leave Daddy alone!"

The cloaked pony's hoof shot out and snaked around Patch's shoulders, "Come with me, little one. I'll keep you safe. No pony will ever hurt you again."

Sea Blue's blood ran cold, all color draining from his body. He struggled to stand; he struggled with all his might. He focused his will and slowly forced his senseless legs to comply. The unicorn turned back to Sea Blue, and for the first time, he managed to get a good look at her expression: she was shocked.

"What!" she cried, "Impossible! No pony can shake off my 'Paralysis' spell!" she sneered, "It doesn't matter! You will never hurt her again!"

With a bright flash of magic, both the unicorn and little Patch were gone, leaving Sea Blue alone on the street.

"Patch?" he called out weakly to the darkness.

Sea Blue's call met only the dreaded silence of night, and his heart shattered, "no," he whispered, "Oh baby no, no, no, **no, no, nO, NO, NO!**" he began frantically trying to force his body to respond, "**NO!**" he cried, "No baby, you can't be gone! NO!" it was no use, his body wouldn't respond fast enough. He managed to get his front hooves underneath him but his equilibrium was shot and he pitched over onto his side, throwing up a small cloud of dust, "Not her! NO CELESTIA, LUNA NO! Not her!" he cried furiously, "NO, PLEASE NOT HER! **PLEASE! I BEG YOU! NOT HER! NO!**"

Sea Blue used his front hooves to drag himself toward where he last saw her, "No baby, no. You can't be gone. No. No. No. No." each word was whispered as he drug himself inch-by-inch closer to where she had vanished, his voice croaked through his sobs, "I can't lose you." he whispered, "Please Patch, come back. Bring her back. Don't do this. Don't take her away from me."

Sea Blue reached the spot and looked around frantically for his precious daughter, his

mind, unwilling to accept that she was gone,
“Where is she?” he asked the darkness, “Where is she? I have to find her. Where is she? Patch?”
he called, “Patch? Come back baby. Daddy's alright, it's O.K. to come out now. Patch? Patch!” he
cried.

Reality finally sunk in to the poor unicorn's tortured psyche. Sea Blue collapsed onto the
ground and cried, expressing a pain that only a parent could ever know. In that moment, the
playful counselor wanted to die.

Sea Blue's mind began to fade away, his vision leaving him cold in the street,
“Patch . . .” the name of his daughter was the last whisper come out of his mouth that night.

* * * * *

Author's note:

***This was one of, if not the most difficult chapters to write. I will cherish every single comment
that anyone wants to post. This is a chapter that I want A LOT of comments on. Especially in
regard to Sea Blue's reaction to Patch being taken away from him. Please give me your
thoughts.***