

<Mercy> It is early morning and the party has been brought to the ponyville train station. The train seems to be running a little late, so various party members are just milling about on the station platform. Artifica has a tight grasp on Berry, to stop her playing on the tracks (because momsense), and Twilight is 'arguing' with a junior station master who looks less and less like he wants to be there.

<Mercy> The party (plus Twilight and friends) have the platform to themselves. It's large enough for small groups to have private conversations.

* Watch shifts a bit and looks about. He was a little uneasy...less because of the train and more because of what lie ahead...how does one really react or act around royalty?

* Milia glances over to Twilight, picking up what little she can of her... heated exchange. One of her eyebrows raises up curiously. "Yeesh! You'd think it was the end of the world or something..."

<Watch> "It kinds is"

* Jasmine_Mistplume was sitting on a bench on the platform while Twilight argued with the station master, much like how a certain seafoam green unicorn from this time period might. In her lap she held the pages of her newly finished book recreation, fidgeting with the pages nervously, like some kind of compulsive tic. She glances every once in a while towards Rainbow Dash, and every time she does, she

<Jasmine_Mistplume> attempts, and fails to muster up the strength to get up and approach her, losing her nerve the moment right before her paws touch the ground.

* Milia blinkblinks. "Oh yeah. It is, isn't it? Well... it's not /that/ dude's fault, in any case. Unless it is, in which case... well, keep on rantin', purplesmart."

* Mercy lands lightly on Jasmine_Mistplume's shoulder. "What 'cha doing?"

* Watch paces about a bit of his anxiety showing.

* Milia watches the stallion pace. "...You're gonna wear a track into the train platform, Watch."

<Watch> "sorry..." He briefly stops in his pacing....before resuming it again. "It's just...well we're going to be meeting Princess Celestia...and I have no idea how to act in front of royalty..."

* Jasmine_Mistplume 's talons reflexively grip down on the binderless book, as Mercy takes her by surprise. She had been distracted, and did not notice her even approaching! "A-ah..!" she looks up over her shoulder, and forces a smile at the sneaky spirit, and laughs nervously. "H-hey, Mercy! You surprised me there..! Did you get ahold of the box again?" she jokes, before falling silent. She looks down at the

<Jasmine_Mistplume> paper held in her talons and clears her throat a bit. "...Oh... I was just... yaknow..." she holds it up for Mercy to see. "I was wondering when the right time to give this to

Rainbow Dash was."

* Mercy sticks her hoof up in the air like she was a school filly who wanted to answer Mr. Watch's question. "Ohohoh! Try lots and lots of worship!"

<Watch> "so...what...do I praise the sun?"

* Watch seamlessly shifts from pacing to the open arm position.

* Milia thinks on that. Milia wasn't exactly familiar with customs or well acquainted with the concept of prostrating herself before somepony in reverence. Well... except for Mercy... aaaand maybe Lavender. "/I/ was just gonna be... you know... friendly. Isn't it just like meeting someone new for the first time? You've met alicorns before!"

<Watch> "alicorns aren't really royalty...or ponies in positions of power...and somehow I don't think it'll be like talking to the mayor back home..."

* Mercy returns Jasmine's smile. "Ohh, a tribute for the pony you like!"

* Milia chuckles. "Nah, probably not... I dunno; we're not from this time. That basically gives us a free pass to fuuuuu...dge up our manners and no one can call us on it! You could totally walk in and just start smooshing their cheeks together and claim it's how we greet people in the hellscape of a future we call home!"

<Watch> "right we can just say it's normal...which for me it is kinda normal..."

* Milia yanks Lavender off of her back and starts gently smooshing her cheeks together. She may or may not be making a kissy face while she does. "Just like this~!"

* Watch blinks and giggles. "of course princess it's normal that we kiss those authority figures."

* Mercy cheers. "I like Watch's plan!"

* Milia snickers. "I think for Mercy that /is/ actually true..."

<Watch> "...now I'm tempted..." He chuckles.

<Mercy> Lavender's expression is hard to read through the face-smooshing. It seems to be resignation... but it doesn't look like she minds.

* Milia giggles and releases the poor memory spirit. She chirrups a short melody in apology.

* Milia then offers a gentle nuzzle to Lavender.

<Watch> "I needed that laugh..." he finally stops pacing.

<Mercy> Lavender replies in kind and smiles at the nuzzle.

* Jasmine_Mistplume blinks at Mercy. "Y-yeah... I do like her." She replies and just sits there for a moment, ruminating on the thought. After several moments, her expression suddenly changes to shocked, and her face starts to redden. "I-I-I mean...! Shes really cool, and It was cool to be able to meet her and..." She couldnt quite understand it herself, really. After meeting Rainbow Dash, she was very much

<Jasmine_Mistplume> feeling things she had never experienced before. It was... confusing to say the least. "Shes just..... really.... cool!" Jasmine wasnt able to come up with a more elegant response.

* Mercy giggles at Watch, Milia, and Lavender, then looks back at Jasmine with a smile. "And she makes you feel all tingly inside."

* Milia 's eyes widen at Lavender, and she bites her lip. Then, the zebra gives a tiny nod of acceptance.

<Watch> "you know Milia...everytime I hear you guys sing I find myself wishing I understood it..."

<Jasmine_Mistplume> "ITS THE BEES AND THE BUTTERFLIES!" she suddenly shouts in a moment of panic.

<Watch> "What?"

<Mercy> Lavender blushes at Watch, and is thankful for Jasmine's outburst.

* Milia was about to respond to Watch Tower, when Jasmine /yells/ and causes her to wince.
"Insect war... no stomach is left untingled by its rampage..." she mutters quietly.

<Mercy> Jasmine's announcement draws some attention. A rainbow maned blue pegasus flies over to investigate. "Hey, are you okay Jasmine?" asks Rainbow Dash.

* Milia watches Rainbow Dash descend. "And /here/ come the reinforcements..."

* Watch leaves Jasmine to Dash. yup not getting into that talk.

<Watch> "so uhh...where were we?" Watch says a little awkwardly. "preferably as far from birds and or bees..."

* Milia waves a hoof dismissively. "Pfffft. /Butterflies/ and bees. It's different. They're at war, you see..."

* Watch takes a long step away from Milia

[illegible]

few moments, before she is even able to reply. "hhhhhhhhhhey.... Rainbow Dash...." she starts fidgeting with the pages in her talons once again.

* Milia regards Watch Tower curiously.

<Watch> "I said and or...bees...and that was an or." He chuckles

* Milia nickers. "Touche..."

<Watch> "so...small talk..."

<Mercy> Rainbow Dash nods at Jasmine. That was /an/ answer at least. "O-kay..." She notices Mercy on Jasmine's shoulder, and blinks at the spirit. "You're that fire-ghost, right? Weren't you bigger at the party?"

* Mercy corrects. "I'm Strange Mercy. A spirit of pas-"

<Mercy> Rainbow Dash leans in for a closer look at Mercy, which also happens to bring her face much closer to Jasmine's, causing the griffin's heart to beat rapidly in her chest... Dash suddenly pulls back, still looking at Mercy. "Woah! Did your mane get brighter?"

* Milia suddenly feels much, much brighter as well. Good lord Jasmine was radiating girl-crush right now. She could /feel/ it through Mercy. "I swear to fluff If she so much as brushes up against Jasmine, I'm going to burst into flames..." she mutters.

<Watch> "what?" Watch blinks confused

* Mercy was waaaay ahead of Milia there.

* Watch looks over the Mercy and Jas and Dash and pieces things together. "OH!"

* Jasmine_Mistplume 's face gets even redder as Rainbow Dash's face gets closer to hers. There were a million and a half things colliding in her mind. It was pure chaos. She tried speaking, but her tongue decided to go numb, so all that came out were inaudible blubberings. Finally, she lowered her head to look away as Rainbow Dash pulled back, and then almost shoves the stack of papers in her face. "FORYOU!" she

<Jasmine_Mistplume> managed to eke out

<Watch> "isn't she like...almost half her ages..." Watch says quietly...,but hell he realized the Arti was much older than Milia...so he shrugs. not his buisness

* Milia comments to Watch, trying to... you know... /not/ do what she just said, "Nothing... my gaydar is just like... crazy on point now thanks to Mercy. That's all. And it's currently picking up some real big blips over yonder." She gestures towards the scene. "Some really... really... mega gay blips."

* Watch waves his hooves. "none of my business" He chuckles. "I've enough issues of my own

without gossiping over bird crushes."

<Mercy> Rainbow Dash spots the papers for the first time. She looks at them curiously, Mercy forgotten for the moment. "What is it, Jasmine? Did you draw that picture?" Dash takes the offered 'book'.

* Jasmine_Mistplume shakily points at the front page. On it lists the title of the book, along with the name of the Author; A.K.Yearling. It was the entire book, written in crayon, the only writing utensil she had on talon. The writing was slightly messy, but perfectly readable, and Rainbow Dash probably wouldn't have any issues with legibility.

* Milia chuckles. "At least it's nice gossip," the zebra says, then following up with a few beats of silence. Her mind had been occupied, too. Something she had been thinking about actually since before Aquaria, and something she had to admit was only more prominent in her thoughts ever since last night.

<Watch> "yeah..." He says her silence being matched by his own.

<Watch> "You seem distracted..." He says trying to avoid thinking about his own thoughts.

<Mercy> Rainbow Dash looks at the book, then at Jasmine. Back to the book. "Written by A.K. Yearling? It's like, a Daring Do book but all in crayon... I don't recognise the title." Dash blinks, then looks back at Jasmine. "Wait, is this that book you were telling me about last night?"

* Milia blinks slowly a few times, staring off into space. Even Twilight's ranting was mere background noise as she spaced out. "Hmmm?..." she dreamily responds to Watch Tower, well after he made his comment.

* Milia turns to look at him. "Sorry, what?"

<Watch> "you're spacing out..."

* Milia shakes her head. "Oh! A-ah, woops. Sorry. Just thinkin' about stuff."

<Watch> "couple of caps for your thoughts?"

* Milia hums out. "What's in a name, you think? I remember back when I made that talisman, we sorta spoke about it a bit."

* Jasmine_Mistplume doesn't manage to be able to say 'yes', but her head shakes up and down almost violently. "I WROTE IT ALL DOWN FOR YOU!" she bit down lightly on one of her talons to try to calm herself down. It didn't work

<Watch> "I...don't really know..." He says. "I mean...lately I've been wondering if I bring tragedy...but...honestly...if I had to say I think a name is what you make it."

* Milia glances back to Lavender. "How about you?"

<Mercy> Rainbow's eyes light up. "You wrote down the whole thing? Cool!" She takes the papers from Jasmine eagerly. "This is the story I'm in, right? Oh! That's me on the cover!"

<Jasmine_Mistplume> "I hhhhhhhoop you like it" Jasmine went from very loud and flipping the fuck out, to very timid and quiet, as the book is taken from her talons. "B-be careful with it though..... I didn't have anything to bind it with....so they aren't connected together..." She could feel her face warm up considerably.

<Mercy> Lavender hums in thought. "If I looked back... If I really looked back... I might be able to remember what my name was." She looks up at Milia and Watch and smiles a little. "But I don't think I want to. I like the name you've given me, and the memories we've made since then," her smile widens, "and the family I have now."

<Mercy> Rainbow Dash plops down on the bench next to Jasmine. "I'm gonna read it right now!"

* Watch nods. those words...reminded him a lot of what he'd been afraid of recently...,but hey...Twilight said timelines might exist...that might help right...it had to...

* Milia can't help but giggle. That answer made her feel good. She leans in and gives the spirit a little affectionate peck. "The memories have been amazing, Lavender..."

<Watch> "yeah they have." He says a little late

* Milia releases a sigh. It is not a sad sigh. More of a melancholy sigh that borders on introspective. "I dunno though, something Arti said last night just prodded me in a spot that my own brain's been prodding for a few days now..."

<Watch> "is it about settling down?"

<Mercy> Lavender Dream tilts her head. "What it is, Milia?"

* Milia shakes her head at Watch Tower. "Nah, not that."

<Watch> "oh...because..." He looks over at berry. "I was thinking for berry's..." He shakes his head. "what's been on your mind?"

* Milia looks back to Lavender. She hesitates to begin. "When we were talking about Spike... she asked me: 'Do you think he'd remember everything from when he was a baby? Would /you/?' And... that got me thinking."

<Watch> "I think he'd remember this. He remembered a lot of his days with the ministry mares..."

* Milia continues staring right at Lavender. "With you... I probably could."

<Mercy> Lavender nods.

<Watch> "what is on your mind?"

* Jasmine_Mistplume 's body stiffens considerably as Rainbow Dash sits down /RIGHT/ beside her. "Y-yes... good! Great! Im glad you like it aaaaaahaaaaahaaaaaa" She looks up at Mercy, and sees her radiating quite brightly. She cant help but cover up her face bashfully, but that only made things even more intense.

* Milia explains, hoping to /eventually/ land upon her point. "Ever since I... you know... died, and all this shamanism stuff started, I've felt more and more lost as time goes by. Like... the person I thought I was, /isn't/ the person I am anymore. Not completely, at least. And, I mean, hey; that's normal. We all change. Just... I've changed in a way that-" Oh, look at that. Her arm was on fire. She'll just... take a minute to pat that out...

<Watch> "believe me...I know what that is like. my body and sometimes my mind aren't my own..."

* Milia continues, "Anyways. I feel a little... overwhelmed. Like I have no foundation to work from when it comes to how to be..." she gestures to herself. "-/this/."

<Watch> "being a shaman?..."

* Milia takes a moment to gather her thoughts. She gazes off into town. Watches the ponies go about their business. "Yeah... or, I guess, how to be a zebra. How to embody /this/ kind of zebra, anyways."

* Watch looks to Lavender and to Mercy..."it seems to me...like you get friends and family and a bond that lasts your entire life..."

* Milia nods to Watch Tower. "And I'd be dead for /real/ if I didn't. Trust me, I'm not whining about that. I thank whatever force out there that gave me the second, third, fourth, /fifth/ chances I've been blessed with every single day. I know what I have right now is more precious than anything else in the world."

* Watch sighs. "that kind of security is nice...I guess I could see how you'd be unnerved...,but I'm envious..."

* Milia turns back to Lavender. "But, one thing I've always been curious about... and what I've /really/ wished I could know..."

<Milia> "...What's my name?"

<Mercy> Lavender cocks her head, looking up at her shaman a little confused.

<Mercy> "You're... Milia. Aren't you?" She answers.

* Milia laughs, seeing the blank look she's getting. "Sorry, sorry... like, okay. I'm called Milia. That's what I've gone by my whole life, and it's what the ponies who 'adopted' me when I was a

foal named me, but... I had another name. I must have. I mean... I popped out of /someone's/ crotch, and unless she was the least creative zebra to walk the wasteland, my mom /had/ to have named me something different."

* Milia fidgets awkwardly. "I dunno... I just... kinda always wanted to know what it was."

* Watch smiles...it felt like wearing a mask...Milla's words...had more than anything reminded him of just how much he hated the way he was right now...and the fact others seemed to like him more...made him feel sick...

<Mercy> Lavender nods, giving Milia an understanding smile. "I see. Would you like to find out?"

* Milia actually looks ashamed. Like she had to justify this. "Just... ugh, it feels stupid to say, but I think it would help... I don't know. Ground me? Maybe? Like... give me some proof that I'm actually connected to this whole 'zebra' thing."

* Milia nods meekly. "So... yeah, I think I would really like that... if, ah... if it wouldn't hurt you or anything!"

<Mercy> Rainbow Dash eagerly reads through the loose-leaf book Jasmine had made her. She passes each page to Jasmine when she finishes with it. Dash smiles and laughs and squeals with delight, pointing bits out and reading them aloud to Jasmine as well.

<Watch> "You are attached this zebra thing..." He sighs. "or at least you're able to embrace it."

<Mercy> Lavender nuzzles her shaman. "It's something you want to know."

* Milia nods at Watch Tower. "I'm trying, in any case."

* Milia was grateful for the nuzzle. A gesture to let her know: it was okay. It was okay to want to know this.

* Watch sighs. "I'm going to hit the restroom" Watch is a pretty terrible liar. He does head for the restroom. "lemme know your name after all is said and done." He trots for the restrooms...he can't help but wonder if the way Milia was sounding to him was the way he'd sounded to her when he felt he didn't belong.

* Milia nuzzles back gently and manages a smile. It falters as Watch Tower leaves, however. "A-ah... yeah, sure."

* Jasmine_Mistplume makes SUPER DOUBLE ABSOLUTELY SURE that she keeps them in the right order, as each page is passed to her. Each time her hoof brushes up against her as she hands over the pages, Jasmine feels a tingle in her arm. Her feathers stand up, briefly ruffled. She laughs alongside Rainbow Dash as she reads the passages, and gradually, she becomes more comfortable around her, even when her entire body

<Jasmine_Mistplume> was going crazy with nerves, her mind was able to relax somewhat. "Yeah, I really love that part, too!" she says energetically. "Ahuizotl is such a dork!"

<Mercy> "He totally is!" Rainbow Dash agrees. "Do you remember that part in Daring Do and the Sapphire Stone where he's all gloating and then Daring Do just swings in and takes back the Sapphire Stone right from under his nose!"

* Jasmine_Mistplume grows silent. She feels embarrassed that she had no idea what Rainbow Dash was talking about. She only had her one book. She never got to read any of the others. "...Oh... um... Ive only read Daring Do and the Ring of Destiny... I didnt have any of the other book.."

<Jasmine_Mistplume> ((books*))

<Mercy> Rainbow Dash gasps at Jasmine. "Ohmaigosh! You've totally got to read them. I've got them all, I can lend them to you!"

* Milia then turns back to Lavender. Her worry showed. But... deal with one thing at a time. "S-so... how would this work? I mean, can you just... pop in and find out, or... do I need to sing with you to help, or something?..."

<Mercy> Lavender smiles at Milia. "Going back so far will take time, and I will need to prepare. I will let you know when I am ready. Then we need only find somewhere calm."

* Watch ends up proving this is not such a place...there is the sound of an impact and shattering glass from the bathroom.

* Milia 's visible nervousness nearly instantly melts away. Lavender's calming smile was a remarkably powerful force of healing. She reaches out and wraps the spirit in a tight hug. "Thank you... so much..." she murmurs. "...if you could get big right now, I'd give you a big ol' smooch."

* Jasmine_Mistplume 's eyes widen at Rainbow Dash's proposal. "Y-you will?! Oh... thank you, thank you so much!" She reaches out and grabs her hooves, and shakes them up and down in gratitude. It takes her a moment to register what she actually just did, and soon her face turns into one of shock. She quickly withdraws her talons, and jumps up. "S-sorry..! Sorry!!! I'm so sorry!!!!!!!" she covers her face with her

<Jasmine_Mistplume> talons, and starts to run off. Grabbing ahold of Rainbow Dash's hooves was an innocent enough gesture; it looked like a hoofshake. But holding her hooves, if only for a brief moment, gave her an overwhelming feeling of bashfulness, which both Mercy and Milia could no doubt feel very intensely.

<Mercy> Lavender giggles at Milia. "Yeah, I'd like that. Too bad Mercy is busy right now."

<Mercy> Rainbow Dash is left stunned by the reaction. It was only luck which stopped her from

dropping the remaining pages. "Huh... cute kid."

* Milia was starting to catch fire again. Really, really gay fire. "She may be enjoying Jasmine's self-torment a little too much..."

<Mercy> The sound of a steam whistle announces the train's arrival at Ponyville Station. From the look of relief on the station master's face, you'd think Celestia herself had just flown down to give him a kiss.