

Chapter 1 - Spark

Equestria was a large land, taking up over half of the continent it was named after. Most of it was adorned with rolling hills, fair plains and temperate deciduous forests. It was also well-known for its unnaturally tall mountains that defended it from the Northern frost, known as the Canterhorn Peaks. Notably, its capitol city of Canterlot rested upon the tallest summit of the peaks.

All in all, Equestria was fair and mild. Rain would certainly pour, and snow would fall every winter. However, a scar upon the land had persisted since the fall of Nightmare Moon one-thousand years in the past during the solar eclipse that spelled the supposed end of Princess Luna's reign. In the Everfree Forest, the animals were untamed, the storms wild, and the winters harsh. It was here that in the modern day, the Sun's chosen foal and her newfound friends had purified the dark princess, restoring her to the light and eradicating the monster that had corrupted her. It was also here a mighty storm would rumble far above, illuminating the abandoned ruins in the very heart of the Everfree.

Curiously, as lightning flashed and thunder roared, a dark cloud had formed on the very podium within the center of the castle. Nothing more than the ancient whispers of magic long dispersed. Yet, it was spurred on by the storm. It churned and roiled, growing larger and larger with each passing second, until-

A mighty bolt arced down from the skies, slashing the dark cloud within a microsecond. It dispersed, the magic gone as quickly as it had appeared.

In its place, a dark violet alicorn mare laid upon the cold stone. Her mane was like drifting nebulae; a wide range of pinks, purples and blues that softly illuminated her silky dark coat. Within the nebulous mane and tail she possessed there seemed to be young stars drifting with the invisible current. Strangely, her horn was not the straight spiraling growth that alicorns typically possessed. Rather, her horn was smooth and curved back, a trait more synonymous with Eastern Unicorns and Kirin. Its color was also peculiar, fading into a near-black shade at its tip that was shared with her cloven hooves. Curiously, she also seemed to possess a cutie-mark of an unknown constellation.

Rain began to drip from the clouds above, gradually wetting the old bricks of the ruins. The rain eventually became a torrent, soaking the alicorn's coat terribly. The mare simply laid there, unconscious, unknowing of the world beyond her dreams.

It seemed like hours, but was in reality only 15 or so minutes before a hooded figure loomed over the unconscious mare. The figure tsk'd from under her hood, and a striped zebra's hoof slipped out from her shawl to prod the alicorn.

"Awaken, filly. You may find yourself ill if you remain in this torrent," a deep feminine voice rumbled smoothly, causing the alicorn to stir.

"I... figured..." the alicorn meekly spoke. She took a sip, and her eyes lit up, "this is good!"

"Mmm. Perhaps Ether," Zecora suggested, and the alicorn furrowed her brows.

"Why Ether?" she questioned. Zecora shrugged.

"It is what first came to my mind upon seeing your mane," Zecora, "to be named after the very essence that wraps around our world would be very fitting for you."

'Ether' thought about this for a moment, then smiled softly.

"I like it."

Zecora nodded and took another sip of her tea, "you will need to remain close by, Ether. Ponies, mortal ponies, exist beyond the reaches of the Everfree. You are lucky it is I who found you, and not one who would fear you."

"F-Fear me? Why would they be scared?" Ether frowned, "and mortal?"

"You are an alicorn, child. Alicorns are rare, powerful and worshiped by many ponies who call the land of Equestria- where we are now- home. A typical pony possesses only a horn, only wings, or only unusual might. You possess all three. Mortal ponies... they live only a century at most. You do not age. You are, for all they can see, a living Goddess.

"I cannot say why you appeared as you have. It is typical of an alicorn to first be born as a pony, rather than manifest in such a manner," Zecora shook her head, "no, you are different, and they will fear you."

"There's others... like me?" Ether smiled suddenly, "then we can just talk to them, right?!"

"No..." Zecora sighed, "we know little, and the Princesses of Equestria, as benevolent as they are... I would advise you do not approach them, not now. Remain with me for a while longer, Ether. I can teach you the ways of this world, at least."

Zecora hoped dearly that the alicorn would stay, if only for her own safety... and to keep an eye on her. While Zecora was certain that Ether was not Nightmare Moon herself, if she did recall anything from her destruction or banishment, Zecora would at least quarantine her within the forest until she could be dealt with.

However, she prayed it wouldn't come to that, and that Ether was someone else entirely. The color of her eyes and magic could have just been residual, and not telling of anything more. But the lightning that struck the ruins... Zecora was not a stupid mare. Even though she was hock-deep in all manner of metaphysical, her head wasn't so far in the clouds to not see that something, some force, attracted that lightning. *The spark of life.*

"Very well, Zecora," Ether accepted Zecora's explanation, though she still had many questions. Zecora had soon finished her tea, and Ether's cup was empty as well. The evening continued on

