



# Chapter 1

## Run Five, Beginning

Just as Fluttershy swooped in, hovering in front of princess Twilight Sparkle, she jumped straight up and tried to hide behind a ceiling fan. This was because there had been an arcane 'pop' as Celestia had appeared in the room, also hovering though there was scarce room. Not only was Celestia here, she had turned from Twilight to shout at the yellow pegasus "Fluttershy!"

"Ce . . . Cel . . . Celestia?" Twilight managed to stammer. The elder princess turned back to the younger, and stared harshly for almost a second.

Without any further explanation Celestia shouted "Twilight!" to which the younger princess began to hover also. "You two need to find Starlight Glimmer immediately! I'm going to retrieve the human. Fluttershy!" The elder princess again turned, eyes boring holes into the not very well hidden pegasus. "Which way is your cottage?" She commanded. Fluttershy eased out into the air, and oriented herself so when she pointed out, it was indeed pretty much aimed at some point on her property, thought having just weaved through some open windows and not one door, the poor disconcerted flier was disoriented.

"Is he dangerous?" She managed to squeak out.

Celestia didn't answer right away. Softly, she did answer, saying "Yes, but only if we mistreat him. I'm going to introduce myself, and if what I was told is right, you will need to be an important part of keeping him under control." Still hovering, the alicorn rotated to face Twilight again, adding "I'll make sure there's enough booze to make it all possible, but you will have to find some ponies willing to." She stopped, seemingly unable to finish her thought.

"Booze? Cider?" Twilight was confused, and unsure if she was supposed to be afraid, or needed to be brave for either the country, or just her mentor.

"Or whisky if you like. But I need to introduce myself, and I'm going to let Starlight get you up to speed." So saying, her horn illuminated, and the resulting disturbance from so large a pony teleporting out of so small a room pulled a bookshelf over, and four small books were pulled off their shelves to the floor from the opposite side of the room. *At least nothing fragile broke.*

Twilight mentally shrugged, outwardly pointed, and together the two remaining ponies flew towards Starlight Glimmer's quarters.

### 1.1 Future Problems

"No, no. It says I was to expect Heavy Boots and Artillery Tread, not the princess herself." Starlight pointed at some chicken scratch that had been artfully burnt into a mostly empty square to one side of a wooden box.

The scratched letters were related to Ponish, and in the margins of the notes was clearly a spell, which flabbergasted Twilight when she finally realized what she was seeing. "That's a mind control spell." An accusing glare accompanying her next words, the princess told her student "What would cause our princess to let you give yourself this spell?"

The deeper purple unicorn nodded, trying to assuage her mentor's fears. "I'm only putting it on the human's roommates. They'll respond as if they were slaves but all the rest of town will understand only they're assistants, sent to help him adjust to pony life."



the human does is normal and does not bother you. You want to help him feel comfortable in Equestria. If Starlight Glimmer, or Twilight Sparkle tell you to do a thing, you must do that thing specifically as you were told."

The glow faded, and Applejack smacked her lips a few times, looking around the cul-de-sac that had two cots and a bed. "Think he'll feel comfortable here? I could make some space in my hay barn." But her attention whipped to the unicorn when she replied.

"There are some spells that will make this more suitable, such as a sound dampener. Why don't you wait out in the hall while Rarity and I have a chat about the human." Without hesitation the earth pony turned and trotted out. As Starlight was waiting inside the "room" she couldn't hear what Applejack, but she pointed with a front hoof at the opening behind her, and Rarity looked over Applejack's back to make eye contact with Starlight before turning to ask something of Applejack, who raised her head smartly, and after a breath nodded before pointing again.

Rarity hesitated in every step but did make her way past the sound shield. An experienced magic user, she noticed the sudden shift and looked up, and around her as she crossed the invisible shield. "Oh. So I don't get to hear what she said when the spell descended on her." Carefully sitting against the wall/door, she added "Nor she, what I say in response."

Starlight focused on staying as calm as possible, saying "It might be you two will different directives. I'm not going to specify if you do or don't. Again, don't worry we won't leave you in here long." And with that, again she energized her spell, and as it enveloped her, Starlight said to the entranced mare, "The human is your friend, and you want to help him feel comfortable. But if a princess gives you an order you have to follow that order regardless of who it makes uncomfortable. You can't believe I would ever lie about what I heard a princess tell me, especially if I was asked to pass those words to you."

With that over, Rarity blinked a bit at Starlight, as if it was suddenly too bright. "Was that it, then?"

Starlight nodded, and started walking out. "We should go see if the human has arrived in town yet. I'm at least slightly sure Celestia herself will be bringing him personally." Which caused Rarity to practically jump into the air before falling into an almost normal walking rhythm beside Starlight. Once the three of them were in the hallway headed to the stairwell, she casually said "Can I ask you two something?"

Applejack whipped her head around smartly, making eye contact as she continued to walk down the hallway. "Yes." Whereas Rarity responded with a more genteel monosyllabic affirmative.

"Do either of you remember what your instructions were? I just am curious if it's a nagging suspicion at the back of your head, or if you're comparing everything you see and do with the exact words I spoke."

Which again, got a precise and direct answer from Applejack of 'exact words' where Rarity stared thoughtfully off into the distance, where she lost her smile, and peering back with utmost caution at Starlight, finally said "Yes. I know what you said, and while I would caution another pony who thought someone did that to them, I can't imagine it as anything but a simple, unyielding truth, the way you put it." As the trio started going down the stairs she finally regained her walking pace, but asked "Can I ask a question of you, then?"

Starlight, looking glassy eyes, swallowed hard and replied "No, I don't think so."

Which caused Applejack to completely straighten her neck again, as she said "Okay, then!"

## 1.2 First Meeting, Again

"There, coming in on that road." Starlight pointed, and tried to not say anything too loudly, but Celestia was fairly obvious even at four hundred hooves distant, and several other ponies in town had noticed she was walking alone.

The two enscorelled mares immediately picked up a trot, with Rarity holding her head high, searching for her friend she hadn't met yet. "Where is he?"

"Ah assume it's the shamblin' pile o' mud." Applejack pointed with her nose, and the trio could make out a biped, hands in pocks of what was supposed to be a jacket but it had been stained by nearly every plant in the swamp, it seemed. The pants were various colors of drying mud. But the mane and forelock seemed relatively free of mud, assuming that shade of brown was natural. As it didn't match any of the browns of the mud on his person, it seemed right to assume that.





up a couple steps so she could see to turn the faucet off. "This will take a while." She started pouring energy into heating the pot, but not so much she couldn't concentrate on what her student had to say.

"I was sloppy the last time. It turns out the more energy you put into being specific about what the command does, the more nearly normal the pony can act all the rest of the time." She took a deep breath, and looked over her wet hide, and carefully sat down. "Also I remember how bad the hangover was so I'm hoping this won't be like that."

"Well, don't worry about this being different. If it was the same, we'd get the same result, right?" Starlight nodded, flinging drops of sweat in several directions.

Starlight yawned, suddenly aware of how much it had taken out of her to cast those two spells. With half lidded eyes, she told Twilight "Look I need to tell you too, the notes, and Celestia confirmed she was told, that in this all goes toes-up colicky, that we need to surrender to the human. Let him do and take literally whatever he" Again she yawned. "What he wants and we'll try better next."

Twilight had rarely exerted herself that much, but she recognized the signs. Pointing down the hall at a room that didn't have a purpose or any contents yet, she teleported a couple dry bath towels into it. *Probably*. And told Starlight "Go dry off and make a cot with the towels and I'll get you later when you can see straight."

She obligingly stumbled into the room, needing to use a fetlock to open the door since she had forgotten how to levitate. *She'll need a half hour, tops*. Walking over to close the door behind her exhausted student, she stared down the hall to the kitchen, and teleported some tea to make herself a pot all to herself.

### 1.3 Debuff, Refine, Buffup

"Wait, he was doing what?" Rainbow's voice rose to it's highest, scratchiest refusal.

Applejack, now free of Starlight's hastily constructed spell, was sipping on a glass of spiced cider. She didn't look up from her cup as she repeated for the assembled friends "Rarity's back legs were balanced over his shoulders and he was making slurping sounds under her tail."

"And you didn't think I was doing anything unusual?" Rarity's 'throne' was covered in pillows, pads and blankets as she had strained and pulled several important muscles and ligaments trying to find what position the human actually liked best.

"If he thought it was reasonable to prepare for his bath that way than I figured you two had it straightened out." Applejack closed her eyes so she could avoid rasing her gaze from her cup.

Fluttershy was coiled in on herself, like a cat sitting on her chair, front legs crossed, lips agape but she managed to keep too much of her sense of horror from reaching the rest of her body. At least too much, but she couldn't unglue her wing to point at Rarity as she managed to stammer out "He doesn't like to do anything weird, I mean, like dangerous does he?"

Rarity eased back into her blanket and against the chair's back and breathed a couple times before replying. "Without the particulars of that spell I probably would have scared him off but even if I hadn't he seemed mostly satisfied mounting a mare from behind, and behind closed doors."

"Except for the times when it was out on the balcony." Applejack was forced to look up from her cup as it was empty, and the bottle of mulled wine Twilight had promised hadn't been opened yet as she and Starlight were talking to Celestia, who had arrived just before this meeting was scheduled to start.

"Well, what does he like?" Pinkie was nibbling on a marshmallow ricecake, but had stopped between each square piece to collect and eat all the crumbs that were sticking to her coat.

Both the formerly encorcelled mares paused for a long moment while they considered their answer. Rarity's was "Mostly it's not asking if you're ready, or if now is a good time."

While Applejack eventually looked up and said "using his tongue first." After a moment she added "Three different times he asked if I was off pee. The two times I said yes he followed so he could watch and clean me up." Then as she looked around the table, her eyes rested on Pinkie Pie's, which prompted her to ask "Did he tell you the parable of the milkshake?"

The other earth pony nodded, adding verbal assent to the motion. "I had brought up a bowl of oatmeal and was talking about ice cream and things you can make with it, and he walks around to hug me and

scratch my lower chest." A forehoof reached out to indicate the audience's disbelief, which she indicated by saying "I mean, it's not like I itched there, but I guess he was just seeing if I'd be weirded out if he went, y'know. . ."

"Exploring," offered Rarity, unmoving now that she had achieved temporary comfort.

"Yeah, but I figured if you two were asked I should try to be normal about it. So, anyway" Pinkie shifted in her seat, vacuuming up her crumbs and setting the ricecake back onto her plate. "He starts tracing the edge of my ear and asks if he could tell me about something he'd like to see me eat. When I asked if he meant food or something else he unsheaths and did you know stallions relax, I mean relax a lot, when they're drunk?"

Fluttershy mumbled "I saw Applejack and the human in a hallway in the afternoon. He must not be very big back there if you can avoid scraping him with your teeth."

Pinkie dismissed her concerns with a snort. "Almost nothing came out; I woulda worried I did it wrong but he was so happy afterwards I almost offered again today."

A door slammed open, and Twilight Sparkle came in at a trot, with another bottle of mulled wine. She stopped suddenly, seeing the first one unopened. Starlight Glimmer trotted on past, levitating a vertible chalice of some kind, dark stained wood with basic carvings and a tall stem to hold her drink off the table. "Go ahead and open it we're going to need the reinforcement since it looks like it's going to get weird." So saying, she force-levitated the cork out of the first bottle, and poured herself a glass, or rather woodfull.

Once Twilight was seated and everybody had gotten a glass with at least a few drops, both Fluttershy and Applejack had only a few ounces of the alcoholic beverage poured which prompted Starlight to fill her vessel to the fullest. "I'm sorry about the interruption, girls. Celestia personally brought out his, I mean, the human, he has new roommates."

"And I've learned to refine my words, thank you two for not killing yourselves, then or now." Starlight said after gulping down some wine.

"Do we really want them thinking any hay-cutting thing is 'normal'?" Applejack glared at the unicorn over her glass of wine, and Rarity added "In public, and unannounced, at the very least."

"Do we have to play along with the weirdness? And if so, the roommate's form of weird, or the human's version of the tale?" Fluttershy, ever concerned with looking normal, and not offending by being weird, asked the most direct question first.

Twilight nodded and told the group "We're going to have to cover for them a couple times because he seems to disbelieve he's grown up and moved out of the parent's basement yet. Wild parties aside we're hoping a year" This word caused Rarity to choke on her dainty sip of wine, and Pinkie giggled into her glass, causing several bubbles to form and float a distance before popping. "or two from now he'll completely hide his unrestrained side while still seeking satisfaction from the ponies here in town."

Starlight plunked her wooden chalice down without spilling whatever contents remained. "There is one tiny weird thing. He responds badly to the new gals if they have the wrong name. I was up all night figuring out how to prevent him from kicking one of them out in the next year and here's the deal." She had been aiming her eyes simply across the table, all the way through the wall and aimed at nopony. But now she stopped to make eye contact with each of the mares in attendance. "Heavy Boots will go by Heavy. All the time. And Artillery Tread will be Treads. Always Treads. Heavy and Treads are staying with the human until." She paused and looked at Twilight for guidance.

"I didn't make anything up." The alicorn answered with some concern. "Celestia suggested they were here for training but you nixed that."

Starlight swallowed, her head nodding slightly with the deliberate effort. "I know that her third suggestion was going to be the good one but I was laying the spell on Boots when she. I mean, Heavy. I was meeting with Heavy as she got off the sky wagon when Celestia would have named her third idea aloud."

Twilight blinked rapidly. A deep silence could be heard as she racked her brain for the order the suggestions came in. "The fourth one was they were college students but I nixed that because it won't be long before he realizes there's no college campus in town."

"The second was she started to suggest just saying these were the replacement marefriends but that's I guess too confrontational. I saw him getting mad and leaving to find his own marefriends."

Twilight's face scrunched up in concentration for just a moment, as she added "The next thing out of her mouth was just the idea of visiting relatives." Looking over at Starlight she waved a hoof in dismissal of this idea, saying "But they'll almost never leave the room."

But Starlight was nodding, saying "Visiting relatives it is. We'll need to decide who the relatives are since eventually he's going to ask." Fluttershy asked if any of them needed to not speak to them, or not mention particular ponies to the visitors, since Pinkie had mentioned receiving a greeting in a dream to Rarity, who had broken down into tears for no clear reason. Starlight answered Fluttershy with "Just me. My word is law to them so I'm going to stay hidden or at least keep quiet. So." Again she looked at each mare, and asked of them "If you talk about me, especially if you realize you're about to quote me, make sure to attribute it to some other pony, or just a generic pony from a certain day."

Applejack raised one eyebrow, Rarity scrunched hers together, but Pinkie got off her chair to stand next to Starlight Glimmer and hug her, saying "Okay random friendly pony." before striding and smiling back to her chair, where she picked up her sweetened ricecake again.