

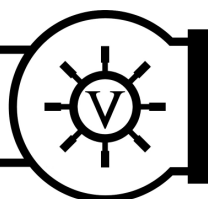
# The Keepers of Discord

Hoopy McGee

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PONY FICTION VAULT



You would think I had enough troubles, wouldn't you? I was finally free after thousands of years, released from my prison and ready to spread chaos and insanity across the earth, only to be stopped in less than a day by a mere handful of colorful, goody-goody, near-juvenile mares.

Not only that, but I was once again encased in stone and unable to move, and in an even *more* uncomfortable and undignified position than the first time. And, not that I had a mirror to check, but I'm pretty sure the expression on my face was ridiculous. At least, judging by the "trying-to-hide-how-funny-I-think-this-is" expressions on all of the little ponies who saw me.

In addition, I was once again stuck back in the gardens, though this time far away from regular traffic, in a sealed off area where very few ponies would tread. Why, I couldn't even watch the pretty little ponies prance by while I imagined all of the wonderfully chaotic things I would do to them if I were free!

No, the universe had decided that all of *that* wasn't enough punishment for my hubris. In addition to all of the above, I was also given one wicked itch on my left nostril. How does that even work? I don't currently have *skin*, how can I *itch*?

The final cherry on top of my humiliation Sundae, of course, came from dear old Celestia herself. After several days of me staring at nothing but the hedge across from me, whilst simultaneously being shat upon by Canterlot's many opportunistic small birds, she came to visit me, with a little grey unicorn trailing along behind her.

When I say grey, I don't just mean the color of her coat. I mean that grey is how she appeared to me. Grey and lifeless, completely devoid of anything fun or interesting about her. Her mane, though, was a vibrant red. An irritating red. A red that had no place being in the same vicinity as such a dull creature, let alone being attached to her body.

Needless to say, I loathed the little thing on sight.

"Hello, Discord," Celestia said, and I broke my attention away from the little mayfly next to her. As much as I despised her on first sight, she wasn't actually important in any way. In relation to the span of my existence, her life would be over in the blink of an eye. Blink twice, and there would be nothing but dust left of her. If I could actually blink, that is.

"Hello, Celestia," I failed to reply back. One of the drawbacks of being encased in stone is that it tends to make all of your conversations depressingly one-sided.

“I believe I owe you an apology,” Celestia said, and the little unicorn next to her looked up in surprise. A surprise that I shared, if I must be honest. An apology? From Celestia? This was, by *far*, the most interesting thing that has happened to me in days!

I so hate being a statue.

“When we last talked, you said that it was lonely being encased in stone. I don’t know if that was simply a ploy for sympathy—” Oh, *yes*, Celestia, and such clever a ploy it was! “—or if that means that you are actually still aware while trapped. Assuming that it is the latter, however, I have come to a decision.”

Celestia nodded to the unicorn by her side, and I once again turned my attention to the drab little thing. “This is Ember Spark. She’s one of the staff here at the castle. And, starting today, she has a new position, one that I have created with you in mind. She is to be the very first Keeper of Discord.”

The who of the what, now? The mare next to Celestia smiled shyly and stepped forward, giving a little bow with her head. Not *quite* the proper deference for the incarnation of pure chaos, but my injured dignity will take any salve, no matter how paltry.

“Her position, and those who come after her, will be to maintain and clean your statue and the surrounding area, and... well, to keep you company. She will talk to you, read to you, occasionally arrange to have music brought to you—”

Oh, no. No. Seriously, *no*. Anything was better than this! *Boredom* is better than this! Don’t you dare, Celestia!

“—all in the hopes that you will not be lonely. You are too dangerous to be let free, Discord, but that doesn’t mean that I want you to suffer.”

Then why arrange for my torture? Oh, you tyrannical, grim-faced, sour old nag! You’re doing this on purpose, aren’t you? Do you *really* think that driving me insane will make me *less* dangerous once I manage to free myself?

Oh, and I *will* free myself, I silently fumed while Celestia babbled on. Those Bearers of yours, even your beloved Twilight Sparkle, they won’t last forever.

And once they die? Well. Once they die, the seal will weaken once again. And then I will be *free*.

• • •

“This is so stupid,” Ember Spark muttered in my ear.

*You’re stupid*, I wanted to tell her.

“I don’t even know if you can hear me,” she sighed, as she used her magic to clean pigeon crap out of my ear with a brush.

*I wish I couldn’t, you boring mule.*

It was the third day of this nonsense. Ember Spark would drag her dowdy grey behind to my little enclosure to clean me. Then she would sit at the base of my ‘statue’ and read out loud from a truly *dreadful* romance novel. I believe the mares refer to those as ‘saddle rippers’.

If I believed that there were any gods around that would actually listen to my prayers, I would have prayed for an industrious pony with a hammer and chisel to come by and knock my ears off. Sadly, I’d burned all of those bridges ages ago, and none of those stuck-up jerks would so much as lift an eyebrow to help me.

“I guess I just expected more when Celestia said she had a ‘special position’ for me,” the drudge gabbled on.

*Hate. Hate. Hate. Hate. Hate!*

“My friends tease me, you know.”

*Not a surprise.*

“They call me the Royal Bird-poo cleaner.”

*Please stop talking*

“My friend, Sunny Fields, says...”

Another thing that really is very unpleasant about being encased in stone? I can’t simply ignore ponies who twitter on like idiots.

• • •

“Can you believe it?” Ember said with a laugh in her voice. “She took down the *whole table* when she tripped! Oh, the look on her face was just priceless!”

*Ha ha. I'm sure it was very amusing. By the way, you missed a spot.*

"There was cake all over the floor, and punch, too. Merry was all upset because her wedding was ruined, but I'm sure it will just be a funny story when they look back on it in a few years."

*You ponies sure set a low bar for 'funny', don't you?*

"Anyway, you'll never believe this—" *Technically true, as belief requires care and I have none.* "—but I found a special somepony!"

Oh, *wonderful*. Now I bet she's going to just keep talking about him ad nauseum.

"He's a pegasus, but he's so dashing and handsome."

Ah. Called it.

"I can't believe he'd be interested in a mare like me!"

*Oh, girlfriend, tell me about it! He must be just as boring as you!*

"Anyway, we're going on another date..."

Seriously. Just let the bird shit pile up in my ears. Maybe it will muffle the sounds of your banal twittering.

• • •

The months dragged on and on, and the routine became just that. Routine. Boring. *Dull*. Did none of these ponies understand how vital it is to a being's sanity to shake things up now and again?

It was getting late in the year, now, the leaves changing ever so slowly from green to reds, yellows and oranges. I stared (not that I had much of a choice) as bane of my existence let out a loud 'oof!' sound as she dropped the ladder next to me. I regarded her with some amusement.

*You're getting quite fat, my dear.*

And, she was, too! She was like a barrel on legs. A dingy grey barrel with a fiery red mane that had no business being near such a dull mare.

“Good morning, Discord,” she said, maneuvering the ladder around with her magic. She then climbed it once again, hauling the bucket of water and rags with her to begin my cleaning.

I will say that it’s nice to be regularly cleaned off. Not that I was grateful, mind you, but I’ll take whatever small comforts I can get, given my current situation.

One thing was slightly different this morning. Ember seemed to be in extremely high spirits, for some reason. It wouldn’t have taken me long to find out why. After all, the mare ran her mouth like a faucet. It’s just that I’d long since learned to tune her out.

• • •

I find myself to be quite annoyed. And, furthermore, I am annoyed by the fact that I am annoyed. Here I am, winter snow piled up around me, almost burying the pedestal on which I stood, and not a single visit from that tedious grey mare.

Not that I wanted her here. *Definitely* not that I missed her. However, there was a lump of frozen bird crap on the tip of my nose, and I’m stuck staring at it until that lazy mare gets back out here and fulfills her doodie duties.

Just do your job, you corpulent, slothful wretch!

• • •

Four weeks. That’s how long it took for her to show up once again. Four weeks of staring at a lump of frozen feces, with a backdrop of frosted white hedges, and not a whole lot else. Oh, wait. I’m forgetting about the rabbit. There was a rabbit that hopped by, leaving tracks in the otherwise unblemished snow. It looked at me, wriggling its little pink nose, then hopped away.

That’s it. That’s all the activity I’d had to break the tedium since Lazymare decided to abandon me to the winter. Probably it was too rough on her. She now had a *lot* more flesh to expose to the cold weather, naturally, though I’d imagine that layer of blubber would probably have insulated her quite nicely.

Hold on. She appears to have actually dropped some weight. Maybe it’s just comparing her to the beefy Royal Guards who are escorting her, using their magic to clear a path through the melting snow, but she seems to have...

Ah, of course. Silly, silly me. She wasn't just *fat*, she was *pregnant*. Well, that explains a few things. I probably would have picked up on that, if I hadn't made a habit out of ignoring everything she said.

She set up her ladder as soon as the guards had cleared the snow, then levitated a small whisk broom around, sweeping the snow off of me. Then she saw the bird leavings on my nose, and levitated up a steaming bucket of hot water.

"Oh, you poor thing," she said. "I've left you so neglected, I'm sorry."

She wiped away the mess, leaving a skim of ice upon my muzzle. But better the glare of ice before my eyes than the sheen of shit.

• • •

The winter snows had melted, the hedges around me had once again gone green. And on one particularly nice day, Ember Spark decided that it would be a good time to show me her new daughter.

"This is Evening Breeze," she said. The filly in question was a light purple unicorn with a red mane, though hers was not nearly as vibrant as her mother's. Instead, it was a dull, listless red. Completely unflattering, and therefore probably appropriate.

*I'm sure she smells like poo.*

That visit was just odd. The filly burped and stumbled around my little enclosure like a brain-damaged kitten. And, believe me, if I could have looked away during nursing time, I would have. Even more so during diaper changing time.

*Please stop torturing me. Nobody cares about your ugly baby.*

And yet, Ember proved to be too much of a dullard to pick up on my silent entreaties, and our book that day, read more to the foal than to me, revolved around the attempts of a small rabbit to carry a large carrot back to his burrow for his mommy and daddy rabbit. He ended up having to enlist several other small animals to help him with the enormous root vegetable. There were pictures and everything.

Children are *boring*.

One thing, though. I finally got some appreciation for how my face was frozen, because when little Evening Breeze finally focused her dull violet eyes upon me, she let out an

unholy squawk of fear and began shrieking at the top of her lungs. No matter what she did, Ember was unable to calm her daughter, so she finally loaded her up into the carriage and took off.

Aww, she didn't even say goodbye to me!

Another thing happened, then. Silence and inactivity only seem boring when that's all you have. When you spend time with little baby ponies, it instead becomes a welcome relief.

*Good riddance!* I thought after Ember's quickly-fleeing and, thanks to the baby, now much wider backside. *Please stay away forever!*

• • •

Of course, I had no such luck. The years spun by, and things kept on pretty much the same as always. It took Evening Breeze several years before she was comfortable in my enclosure, and could look at my incredibly handsome face without flinching or hiding behind her mother.

Then, one day, she simply came up and stared at me, while her mother was trimming the hedges in my enclosure.

"I'm not afraid of you," the filly said.

*That's because you're too stupid to know any better,* I would have liked to inform her.

I saw less and less of Evening Breeze after a while, though she'd still occasionally come out and help her mother out. Apparently, she was in school, or something. Not that I minded. On the occasions that her mother managed to drag her out here, she usually spent the whole time sulking.

"She takes after her father," Ember told me one day. "He hates being forced into things he doesn't want to do."

My rage could have shattered mountains. Forced into things? How about being stuck as a living statue, try that on for size! Had I access to even a fraction of my power, I would have likely done something horrible to both of them right then. Turn them into slugs, for example. Or, oh yes! Turn Ember into a bird, and Breeze into a worm, and let them work out their differences that way!



Ah, what torture this is. My mouth is frozen, and I must giggle.

• • •

The first thing I wondered was, *why is she wearing black?* The second thing I wondered was, *why should I care?*

“My husband passed away last week,” Ember Spark told me eventually, smiling sadly.

Oh, *lovely*. Now I get to deal with a mare in mourning.

There was a marked difference in the routine after that. Over the last couple of decades, Ember had chattered aimlessly about her life, and she did her job, but now... *now* she was just going through the motions. She barely talked, and she would only wipe down my statue once every three days or so. No further sitting in the grass and reading, no singing, no happy talk.

Not that I *missed* any of that, naturally, but she *was* kind of being a downer.

*If you aren't going to do it properly, just leave*, I thought at her viciously.

“I can't do this anymore,” she said a few days after that.

*Fine. Leave me, then.*

Oh, but fate had a much worse... er... *fate* in store for me than just that. Because a few days later, an adult and obviously unhappy Evening Breeze came by with her mother, whose mane was now turning as grey as it always should have been. Ember told me that her daughter would be taking over the family business of being a Keeper of Discord.

Oh, *goody*! I can hardly wait!

• • •

I almost missed Ember Spark. That's how dull and annoying Evening Breeze was. She never read to me, she barely cleaned me, and she never, and I mean *never*, did anything about the weeds and plants in my enclosure until they got to the point where she had to struggle just to get in. Then she'd rope some poor slob of a gardener into cutting the grass, or rather the weeds, down to a manageable level.

Like Ember, Evening Breeze was also a mother. By the time she'd started working as a Keeper, she'd already had two foals. The one nice thing I can say about this nag was that, unlike her mother, she at least didn't torture me with her foul brood's presence.

Well, until one day, that is. See, I'd recognized the signs of a mare getting fat, and I gave it a 50/50 chance that she was pregnant, or she was just *really* constipated. Then she pulled a vanishing act like her mother did, and came back a couple of weeks later.

No new foal for me to meet, though, which was nice. Still, I almost miss Ember Spark's attentions. She, at least, would keep the enclosure clean and maintained, though I had a certain fondness for the chaos that reigned now amongst the plant-life. Evening never did anything but the bare minimum, and then she left. Sometimes, she wouldn't show up for days.

Oddly, I felt neglected. And confused. And, now that I think of it, *perturbed*.

• • •

"Oh, Sunny, *no*," Evening Breeze whined at her daughter, apparently named Sunny Meadows, who was currently engaged in climbing up my draconic back leg.

"I'll murder that foalsitter," the mare muttered darkly as she snatched her infant away from me. The filly in question was a pale green pegasus, with the wings probably due to her grandfather's genetics, and sporting a vibrant red mane that reminded me of Ember's, except that it was much more alive. It was almost like a fire, or a sunrise. It's as if all of the color and life that should have gone into Evening Breeze's mane went to her daughter's, instead.

The filly giggled excitedly as her mother plucked her off of me and deposited her firmly on the ground. I eyed the foal warily, and she eyed me back, sucking idly on a hoof as she did. Then, her little wings buzzing, she lifted unsteadily off of the ground and came straight up to my frozen face.

She looked at me with curiosity. I regarded her stonily.

I was expecting the same reaction her mother had given when she first got a good look at my face. Namely, shrieking, fear and crying. Instead, Sunny Meadows burst out laughing. Then she reached out and tapped me lightly on the nose with her soggy hoof!

Seriously! This filly just booped the nose of Chaos Incarnate!

“Funny face!” the filly squealed joyfully. It’s fair to say that I liked her already.

“No! Sunny, get away from there!”

The filly, dragged by a telekinetic field away from me, looked at her mother’s face. And *then* she started wailing.

*Ha! How do you like it, you sourpuss!*

Heaving an exasperated sigh, and glaring at *me* as if this were somehow *my* fault, Breeze took her daughter away. The filly looked back at me tearfully, reaching out with both hooves, obviously unhappy to be going.

For the first time in my life, it felt like I had an ally. Just my luck that it had to be one that pooped herself on a regular basis.

• • •

“How come you don’t read stories?” Sunny Meadows, who was just barely out of diapers at this point, asked her mother as she went bouncing excitedly around the enclosure. “Gran says you’re supposed to read stories.”

“He’s a statue. I’m not reading stories to statues. It’s stupid.”

*Said the moron.*

Sunny frowned and stopped bouncing.

“I think you should read him stories, momma.”

*Oh, goodness, no.* I thought frantically. *I appreciate the thought, kid, but I appreciate the silence more.*

“If you want to read him stories, go ahead,” Breeze said with strained patience. “I just want to finish this up and go.”

Sunny just looked at her mother for a while, then looked up at me. She winked, and then whispered to me, “I’ll bring a book tomorrow, Mister Discord.”

What a sweet child. When I get free, maybe I’ll do her a favor and just leave her alone.

• • •

“You want to take over? Fine, then! This is a stupid job, anyway!”

Sunny flinched as the bucket was hurled towards her, even though it landed nowhere near her.

“Fine, maybe I will!” Sunny yelled back as her mother marched out of the enclosure. “And I’ll do a better job than *you* ever did!”

“You do that. Maybe you’ll learn how, how *stupid* this all is. But you’d better not let it affect your grades!”

“I won’t!” Sunny said, stomping a hoof.

I watched Breeze walk stiffly away. I felt something odd. Unusual. Not quite anger. I’d felt that before, but it felt similar. I couldn’t quite put a name to it, but something about the way she’d thrown that bucket had stirred something in this old stone heart of mine.

And now, I had yet another new Keeper.

• • •

“There we go, Mister Funny Face,” Sunny said on the first day of her second week.

I had to admit, things looked better. The grass was cut, though there were bald patches where weeds had been pulled. The hedges were neatly trimmed. And me? Well, I practically *gleamed*, I was so clean!

“An’ now, it’s story time!”

And, just like that, my mood plummeted.

*Ah, come on kid.*

“I thought a lot about what stories you might like, an’ I figured that you’d probably like funny stories. Y’know, being the Spirit of Chaos an’ all that. So, I asked the librarian for a funny story book that had lots of chaos in it. I hope you like it!”

*I appreciate the thought, kid, but—*

“The Clockwork Knight went ‘sproing!’” Sunny recited.

And she started reading. No saddle-rippers from this little filly, oh no. Instead, this was the first in a series of short stories, each one more nonsensical than the last. And, if I'd had possession of my vocal abilities, I might have even *chuckled* once or twice!

*This... may not be so bad.*

• • •

"Ready? Okay... One, two, three, GO! Tag, you're it!"

Giggling, Sunny Meadows ran off, hiding behind one of the nearby hedges. After a minute, she popped her fiery red head up, frowning at me.

"You're never going to win at this rate, Mister Discord," she scolded, then burst out giggling. "That's twenty-seven to zero for me!"

I would have rolled my eyes, but, you know, *statue* and all.

Statue tag was only one of the things Sunny did when she was here, and she was here more often than not during the day, now that school was out. During the school year, sometimes she'd bring her homework and, apologizing to me, work on it right there in the clearing.

It was a price I was willing to pay, since the alternative was that her mother would come back and take over again.

The enclosure was much different now than it had been two years ago. It was larger, for one. Several hedges had been cleared away or moved back, allowing more space. And, in that space, Sunny had planted flowers of all kinds.

She had a delightful way of starting her garden. It definitely wasn't what I had expected. First, she tore up a large part of the turf, raking and plowing until the ground was nice and torn up. Then, she came up to me to show me what she was planting.

"Geraniums. Violets. We got some daisies, and lillies, and marigolds."

She went on and on, showing me all the different seeds, bulbs, and such that she had on her little cart. Truly a staggering variety.

"I put a lot of thought on how I was going to plant these, Mister Discord. And, do you know what I decided?"

*No, kid. I really don't.*

"I'm going to plant them with *chaos*!" She grinned at me, then grabbed a bunch of seeds and bulbs and just *flung* them at the soil.

"Whee!" she said, then laughed, flinging hoof-full after hoof-full of flowers towards the tilled soil. Once she was done, she wandered around, making sure that each was planted properly where it had landed. Then, struggling with her underdeveloped wings, she zipped up into the sky, returning moments later with a black cloud, which she jumped on until it dissipated, pouring its rain onto the garden below.

"And there we have a Chaos Garden. Isn't it cool?"

*Pretty cool*, I would have agreed if I could have. But that wasn't all. While she'd been flinging the seeds around, she'd been too caught up to notice what else had happened. But now that she had settled down, it was only a matter of time before she saw—

"My cutie mark!"

Sunny was staring wide-eyed at her haunch, where a brightly-shining sun was now looking back at her. Literally, as the sun had a grinning smiley-face on it.

"Eeeee!" Sunny squealed, running around the enclosure with sheer delight, and more than once taking briefly to the air, though her wings were still not up for much flying yet.

*I get it, kid. You're happy. Now, would you kindly shut it?*

She did, but only because she came up and hugged my leg. What the heck was with this pony? Always with the hugging! None of my *other* Keepers ever hugged me!

"Thanks, Mister Discord!" she said warmly. "I never would have gotten my mark without you!"

*That's not how it works, kid. But, 'you're welcome', I guess.*

"Oh! I gotta go show everypony! I'll see you later, Mister Discord!"

With that, and still laughing, Sunny Meadow ran off, her short-cropped mane and tail ruffling slightly as she ran.

*Finally, some peace and quiet.*

But, oddly enough, the peace and quiet felt...

• • •

Lonely. I feel so lonely. It's almost like Sunny has forgotten about me, and I'm surprised to feel myself resentful of that fact.

Granted, both her mother and grandmother had left me for longer stretches than this, but that was usually due to pregnancies. Sunny hadn't gotten fat. And, besides, she would have told me if she'd met anypony. So, I knew it wasn't that.

Maybe she'd forgotten about me?

• • •

I wanted to scold her, but she just seemed so downtrodden. Not that I *could* have scolded her, anyway. But it had been nearly a week. How dare she come slinking back, as if nothing had happened? As if she hadn't just left me alone for so long? And, how dare she come in looking so sad, nearly robbing me of my ability to be angry with her?

Look at her. She's been crying, and everything! What could possibly excuse—

"Grandma Ember died," she said, sniffing. "I'm sorry I haven't been 'round much, Mister Discord. But, we were kind of close. Me an' mom, we always fought, but Grandma was always there to talk to me. It... hit me kinda hard."

She slumped down at the pedestal on which my statue rested, then leaned her back against it.

"I don't have a lot of friends, Mister Discord," she confessed to me. "The others think I'm weird, 'cause I work with you. An'... I guess I can be annoying, sometimes. But Grandma always had time for me. Now I don't have anyone left who cares about me, 'cept mom, an' even though she loves me, sometimes I think she also hates me."

I turned my attention to the Chaos Garden, which had only gotten bigger and more outrageous every year since the first. Sunflowers towered over gladiolas, and a small rose bush was trying to choke the life out of a patch of forget-me-nots. Ground ivy crept along, battling it out with a field of clover. It was ever-changing, as some of the plants were detrimental to others, and the unstable nature of the garden suited me nicely. There was even an enormous orange pumpkin that had somehow found its way in there, though Sunny was pretty sure she'd never planted it.

I returned my attention back to the sobbing filly at my feet. And, for the second time in my life, I felt that unfamiliar emotion. Not quite anger. Not quite joy. Maybe some possessiveness as well, or some weird mix of the three that was something completely different. I wish I knew what it was, so that I knew what to call it.

*You aren't alone, kid*, I thought fiercely. *You're never alone.*

Whew, *that* was embarrassing. Where the heck did *that* come from?

• • •

I'm glad to say that the routine returned shortly after that. Sunny spent more and more time with me, reading to me or even just sleeping in the enclosure. She would even bring some bongo drums sometimes, and sing to me while patting out a rhythm.

But, even more interesting to me was when she would bring in paint and a canvas and try painting my picture. She tried many times, and all of her attempts were horrible. And, even though she'd fully admit that she couldn't paint worth a damn, she'd always show the picture to me, and laugh at her own ineptness.

After a couple of years, though, the paintings started looking, well, kind of *good*.

"The secret is to stop trying so hard to make it perfect," Sunny confessed to me, after one of her paintings turned out particularly well. "I just kinda turn my brain off, and let it flow." She looked critically at the painting, then shrugged. "It could still be better, though. I don't have your handsome face down quite right, yet."

Then she booped me on the nose.

• • •

Fall was just about over again. The Chaos Garden was shriveled and mostly dead. Frost was on the ground most mornings, and sometimes would still be there well past noon. Winter was only a hairs' breadth away. And, now, this stupid filly was going to abandon me.

*Yeah, fine, whatever*, I thought sourly. *Leave, then.*

"It's only going to be for a little while, I promise," she said, smiling the biggest smile I'd ever seen her smile. "Just until the honeymoon is over."



I was angry. *So* angry. Why was I so angry? Sunny was getting married, fine, why did that have to affect me at all?

*That stallion had better treat her right*, I thought darkly. Then I caught myself. *Wait, why do I care how he treats her?*

“I wish you could be there,” she said, sadly. “I even asked the Princess if she could move your statue to the reception, just for the day. You’ve been my only friend for most of my life, Discord. I’m going to miss seeing you every day.”

Then she started *crying*.

*Ah, dammit.*

• • •

Sunny was definitely no good with pregnancies. On the one paw, I was glad it was over. No more grouching about feeling sick and bloated, or groans as she tried to flit around cleaning me off. No more unexpected vomiting.

On the other talon, I was, frankly, annoyed that there was going to be yet *another* pony taking Sunny’s attention away from me.

You see, I’d figured it out. I knew, now, why I’d been upset. Her husband had captured her eye and her heart, and now there was this foal, as well. These ponies were conspiring to take my Keeper away from me.

It wasn’t that I *cared*. It wasn’t because I was lonely, and it certainly wasn’t because of anything as silly and pointless as jealousy.

It’s because she was *mine*. And I don’t like sharing.

• • •

“Her name is Winter Magic,” Sunny said with a smile, as she presented the tiny unicorn foal to me. “Three guesses as to why we named her that.”

Sunny giggled and blushed, and I stood there (not that I had a choice), confused.

*Well, let's see, what happened this last winter?* I pondered it for a while, then I suddenly realized that was when Sunny had gotten hitched. *Oh, eww. I don't want to think about that. You're still just a kid!*

• • •

I'd been so certain that I'd be seeing Sunny Meadows less and less often, now that she had a family. I was in for a surprise.

Instead of coming less often, like her mother had, Sunny actually came *more* often, bringing her foals with her. In addition to Winter Magic, there was also Cloud Runner, a pegasus colt, and Summer Sky, another pegasus, this one a filly.

Winter was a light blue filly with a frosted white mane. Her brother was a darker blue, with a rose-colored mane that I was sure was going to be the target of much teasing when he finally went to school. Summer Sky, though, was a picture-perfect replica of her mother in miniature.

And, rather than abandoning me and just paying attention to her foals, Sunny instead had a playground built in the ever-expanding Discord's Grove (as it was now called). Her foals played near me, around me, and sometimes on top of me. And, though I rarely saw her husband (a blue unicorn stallion named Jumble, a pony that I loathed on sight), I almost knew what it was like to have a family.

It was mostly really, *really* loud.

• • •

"Cloud Runner, could you bring me the scrubbing brush?" Sunny asked, perched on a ladder near my back wing. "I don't know what this bird ate, but it's not coming off easily."

"Eeww, mom, that's gross!" Winter Magic said, wrinkling her nose. That filly was far too uptight for my taste. Something about being the oldest and having just gotten into school seemed to make her think that she was the boss of everyone.

Cloud Runner shrugged, took the brush handle in his teeth, and flapped his way up to his mother. As she took it, he asked her, "Why don't you just fly, instead of using the ladder?"

"Because this bucket is heavy, and I don't want to slosh it all over while I scrub."

“Why do I even have to be here? This is stupid,” the ever-disappointing Winter Magic whined.

“You sound like your grandma,” Sunny said with a sigh. “We’re here because this is our job. Our family are the Keepers of Discord. Celestia herself gave this role to your great-grandma. And, when I die, then it will be your jobs to take over.”

“D’ya really think he’s awake in there?” Summer Sky asked softly. She rarely spoke up, as she was always being overridden by her much louder older siblings. As much as she looked like her mother, she really had inherited none of Sunny’s disposition.

“Not even Celestia knows for sure,” Sunny replied, scrubbing away. “But I always believed that he was. That’s why this job is so important.”

“But, he’s all evil, and stuff,” Cloud Runner protested.

*Evil? Evil?! My boy, I’ve seen evil! And let me tell you, a little bit of chaos ain’t got nothing on true evil!*

“It doesn’t matter,” Sunny said firmly. “If he’s trapped and aware, then he deserves to be treated with as much kindness as we can muster.” I heard the brush drop into the bucket with a loud ‘thunk’, and then Sunny continued. “Besides, a little chaos can be a lot of fun.”

I could practically hear the grin on her muzzle as she descended the steps on the ladder. And then, I heard the bucket fall, and Sunny’s foals around me all gasped in shock. There was a loud cracking noise, and a shriek of pain like I’d never heard before, and then there was immediate chaos.

For once, I found myself not enjoying it.

“Momma! Momma, are you alright?” Winter Magic screamed. The other two were crying, and Summer Sky was just repeating “Oh no, oh no, oh no” over and over again.

Sunny, behind me, sucked in a deep breath, then said, “Momma’s fine, sweetie. But I broke my leg on this stupid ladder. Cloud Runner?”

“Yes, momma?” the young buck said, detaching himself from his weeping younger sister.

“Can you be a brave boy for me? I need someone to fly back to the castle and get help. Tell them I fell and broke a leg, okay?”

“Okay!”

I’d never seen that colt fly so fast in his life.

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“You should do it because I said so,” Winter Magic said with a tone of voice that just grated down my spine like talons dragged across sheet metal. “I’m the oldest, so I’m in charge.”

“I don’t see why. You’re only a year older than me,” Cloud Runner shouted back.

“Um. We shouldn’t fight,” Summer Sky said, far too softly for her quarreling siblings to hear. “Momma wouldn’t want us to fight.”

“Momma put me in charge when she got hurt!” Winter Magic said, stomping a hoof for emphasis.

“Well, Dad put *me* in charge when he left!” Cloud Runner shouted back. “He said I was the stallion of the house, now, and I had to take care of things!”

Wait, what? Jumble left? What was all this about? Sunny hadn’t told me anything about that!

“That’s stupid. You’re just a colt!”

“And you’re just a filly! Don’t think you’re better than me because you’ve got your cutie mark already!”

The argument between the older brother and sister continued to degrade, until finally, Winter Magic levitated a bucket of water over her brother’s head and dumped it. One scream of pure rage later, and she was doing her best to keep away from her brother, who was running, and occasionally flying, after her for all he was worth. Poor little Summer Sky just sat at the base of my pedestal and cried.

I almost had to thank these three for the new experience they’d given me. For the first time in my life, I was finding chaos to be annoying.

• • •

It was two weeks later when Sunny finally returned. Two weeks of squabbling from the older two. Two weeks of fights and arguments almost non-stop, while Summer Sky did her best all on her own to at least keep me clean. Reading or talking to me was out of the question, though, as the other two just kept on fighting.

I have to tell you, I was pretty happy to see that light green mare come wheeling in, her back left leg in a cast, and bandages around her ribs.

“Hi, Funny Face,” she said with a smile as Cloud Runner pushed her wheelchair up to me. “I missed you. Sorry about that, I shouldn’t have been so clumsy.”

No kidding. I can’t imagine it’s exactly common for a *pegasus* to hurt themselves falling off of a ladder.

“Turns out I had a broken rib or two, as well. I’m under doctor’s orders to not do any work, but I can at least make sure these three do their jobs right.”

She turned her wheelchair around and stared at the three guilty-faced foals before her. “So. This place is a mess. Here’s what we’re going to do.”

In a surprisingly short amount of time, the weeds were pulled, the dead plants removed from the Chaos Garden and new ones planted, and my statue was scrubbed down. Then, as a reward, the youngsters got to eat from a picnic basket while their mother read to me a story that she’d written.

See, there are only a certain number of stories that can be considered “chaotic and funny” in the world, and Sunny had read most of those to me in her first couple of years. She’d then taken it upon herself to write more of them, and occasionally came back with something completely new.

Her stories were terrible, at first, much like her paintings. But, hey, they grow on you.

• • •

Eventually, Winter Magic and Cloud Runner stopped coming along. Something about ponies after they get their cutie marks makes them think that they’re too cool to do the things they did when they were foals. I’d get updates on them, though.

Winter Magic, living up to her name, had been accepted into Celestia’s School for Gifted Unicorns, and was boarding there now. She got pretty good marks, according to her

mother, though the filly's assumption that she was always right tended to get her into trouble with her teachers from time to time.

Cloud Runner went the exact opposite direction, which isn't surprising for pegasi (or so I was told), concentrating more on the physical side of things. He was heavily into playing cloudball, and was even getting some attention from professional teams, who assured him that, if he kept up his training and kept improving his skills, he might have a chance at getting into a pro team after graduating.

She tried to be coy about it, but I knew Sunny well enough to know that she was almost bursting with joy and pride at her children's accomplishments.

I finally learned about Jumble during a heartfelt conversation between Sunny and Summer. Apparently, that idiot had found 'another mare'. As if any stupid *pony* could possibly be better than Sunny. I was stuck between thinking 'Good riddance', and being outraged on Sunny's behalf, but she seemed remarkably calm about it.

"Your daddy still loves you, sweetie," she told Summer Sky when the filly had asked about it. "Sometimes, things just don't work out between grown ups, but it's important to remember that he still loves you."

"But he doesn't love you, momma?" Summer asked, tears in her eyes.

"It's... I think that he still cares about me," she replied carefully. "But his heart has moved on."

"Do you still love him?"

"Oh, sweetie. Even though I'm mad at him, I still care about your daddy very much. But, lucky for me, there's so much love in my heart from the three of you that it doesn't really hurt at all, now that he's gone."

I could tell she was lying. But just a little bit.

Summer Sky, compared to her siblings, was just quiet. "Sweet", as her mother put it. Sunny doted on her, and Summer bloomed like a rose, eventually becoming more confident. She was quite the able assistant, as well, and helped her mother write the stories they read to me. Much to my surprise, Summer Sky had a wonderfully inventive mind, and the stories she helped write (and, later on, wrote herself) were charmingly off-kilter and amusing.

• • •

Well. This sure has been an exciting day for me! I was roused out of a semi-trance in the middle of the night by a sense of something snapping, and the feeling of the cage that bound me becoming just a little less solid.

I'm not sure which one it was, but apparently one of the Bearers of the Elements has passed away! Hurray for Discord! One down, five to go, and then all I'll need is a quick burst of chaos, and away I'll go!

And I won't be stupid enough to play games, this time. No hiding the Elements in a book. No riddles. No jokes. First thing I'm doing is dumping those blasted things in a volcano somewhere.

• • •

"My mother is dead," Sunny said with a sad smile. "Heart attack. She died peacefully in her sleep."

Wow. Evening Breeze was dead? Really? I mean, I suppose I shouldn't be surprised. Two more of the Bearers had passed already, and my prison was that much lighter now. But, still, wasn't she just a filly a little while ago?

"It's funny, I guess," Sunny said, while scrubbing my ear. "I always thought there'd be enough time to put things right between us. She never approved, you know. Not of me doing this job. Not of me marrying Jumble, though I have to say she might have been right about him."

That last bit was said quietly, while she looked out of the corner of her eye at her filly. Summer Sky was tending to the Chaos Garden.

"Things were better, at least, towards the end," she continued, switching to my other ear. "She'd gotten over a lot of her anger towards you."

Wait, what? Why would she be mad at *me*? Sunny had the answer, luckily, so I wouldn't be eaten alive by curiosity.

"When she was little, she felt that you were taking my grandma away from her. She felt Gran spent too much time here, when she could have been spending with her. Also, she said you have a scary face."

She smiled, then kissed me lightly on my now-clean cheek.

“She sure was wrong about that, wasn’t she, Mister Funny Face?”

• • •

“I’m just saying, this would work a lot better if it were more like other gardens!” Summer Sky insisted.

“That’s the whole point of the Chaos Garden, though,” Sunny replied in what Summer obviously took as an obnoxiously reasonable voice.

“But it gets so hard to fertilize and water. Can’t we at least move things so that they’re in rows?”

“It’s not about easy, dear. It’s about a little bit of contained chaos for Mister Discord, here.”

The younger mare, looking so much like her mother that it was almost as if I were looking into some sort of time vortex into the past, snorted and stomped her hoof.

“Why bother, then? Why not let it all go to chaos?”

Sunny smiled while she tended the garden, digging up and tossing out a lily that had passed on, and planting a randomly-grabbed shrub in its place.

“When you step back, what do you see?”

Summer grumbled but complied, taking a few steps back and then looking.

“I see a mess,” she said. Sunny laughed.

“Try taking a few more steps back, then look wider.”

“Wider?” Summer peered towards her mother, who was clad in soil and had a kerchief tied around her mane, which, for some reason, had a little grey in it. “I see... I see the garden, which is a mess.”

“What else?” Sunny prompted.

“I see... you?” When Sunny motioned for her to continue, Summer looked around and then said, “I see the hedge maze, and the grass.”



“And how do those look?”

“Neat. Orderly. Except right by the border of the Chaos Garden, where weeds keep creeping out. I keep telling you, a retaining wall—”

“I never wanted to put a wall around the garden, dear. It didn’t seem right to fence it in.” Sunny grunted with the effort as she got to her hooves, wiping her brow with a towel. “What you’re seeing is order, all around the Chaos Garden. Trimmed grass, sculptured hedges, clean walkways. If we put a wall around the garden, we’d rob it of its power. If we let it go everywhere, it would corrupt the order of this place—” *sounds good to me*, I thought, “—but that would rob the garden itself of what makes it special.”

Hmm.

“Chaos and order go together like oil and water,” Sunny said, piling her gardening tools into a cart. “They don’t really mix all that well, but if you take one away and just leave the other... well, it gets boring, doesn’t it?”

“Order isn’t boring,” Summer protested.

Oooh, I’m so giving you a noogie once I’m free, little filly!

“Pure order? Of course it is,” Sunny said sensibly. “We need order to have a stable life, but we need chaos to make that life interesting enough to live.”

Still chatting, the two of them left the grove. I barely noticed. I was too busy looking at the garden.

• • •

“Her name is Wind Whisper,” Summer Sky said, presenting the foal to me. “Windy, this is Discord. Our family takes care of him.”

The foal gurgled up at me, wide eyed, while I just reeled with confusion. Summer has a foal now? She’s just a filly! Granted, a filly who got her cutie mark... wait, how many years ago was it?

I had no idea. I had no idea how long I’d even been in this statue. The only thing I knew for sure was that there was just one Bearer left, one string holding my prison closed, and that had to be near snapping. If I had to bet, I’d say it was probably Twilight Sparkle.

She's just too obstinate to give up, a trait I could admire her for if it weren't for the fact that it was keeping me locked up tightly.

"She's so beautiful," Sunny said from behind her daughter, tears in her eyes as she looked down at her grandfoal.

Another new experience. Now I knew what it was like to feel old.

I didn't like it.

• • •

Sunny had been sick. A cough, she told me one day. Just a cough. But it was enough to make it so that her latest doctor (she'd outlived her last two) had insisted that she take some bed rest.

Summer Sky was doing her best, along with little Wind Whisper. The filly, though she was a silvery grey and looked nothing like Sunny, reminded me a lot of the older mare. She was inquisitive, and loved to laugh. And she, too, called me Funny Face.

It was now a week after I'd felt that last thread snap. The only thing holding my prison shut now was wishful thinking and a lack of a concentrated burst of chaos. Anything would do, really. A war. A fight. Even an argument. Heck, get Winter Magic and Cloud Runner back here, I'm sure I'd be free before I could blink!

Summer Sky was walking towards me, slowly. For once, she didn't have her daughter with her. Summer had followed in her mother's hoofsteps and turned being a Keeper into a family affair. For Wind Whisper to not be here... I vaguely hoped the filly wasn't ill.

And then I saw Summer's face. She'd been crying, hard.

*No.*

"Hi, Discord," Summer said with a wan smile. "Um. I'm sorry, I can't... Mom wanted me to come and see you. She was sicker than we thought."

I could feel the turmoil from the mare, chipping away at the last of my bonds.

*No. Dammit, no!*

"I'm... I don't even know if you can hear me, or care if you do, but... it was quick, at least. Peaceful. Everyone was there, even my brother and sister."

A crack in the stone. Summer didn't notice.

*Not like this*, I thought furiously. *Not because of...*

"She... she wrote you a letter. It's here." Summer took the letter from a thin saddlebag by her side and placed it by my feet. "She didn't want me to read it. She said it's just for you."

Summer Sky started crying again. Another crack appeared. And, for the first time in my existence, I sought to keep myself imprisoned. Even if you asked me now, I couldn't say why.

"I'm sorry," Summer said, wiping at her eyes. "I'm so sorry. She wanted to come and see you, but she couldn't. She had no strength left, at the end. She... I know she loved coming here. And... And I don't want you to worry. I'll keep doing my best, and I know Wind Whisper will as well, and... and..."

The mare collapsed, sobbing. The stone cracked again, this time audibly, the snap of it breaking filling the grove. All of my efforts meant nothing. I was being freed.

Summer looked up, shock and fear in her eyes as, for the first time in who knows how long, I began to straighten up. Grey stone flaked off of me as I rose, and as I moved, so did Summer Sky, scrambling to her hooves and looking at me with disbelieving eyes.

I reached down and took Sunny's letter in my talons. I looked at her daughter, who was staring at me with a combination of awe and terror.

"Thank you," I said to her, and she nodded and squeaked something in response. "Are you afraid of me, my little pony?" I asked, stepping down from my pedestal and feeling the grass beneath me. My senses were being flooded, now. The stone kept me dulled, but now my awareness was free. Summer Sky's heart was beating fit to burst. The smell of fear flooded off of her, and I could see her limbs trembling.

"Yes," she whispered.

I strode towards her in a flash, and took her muzzle in my lion's paw. Leaning down, I looked into her eyes.

“Neither you, nor anypony in your family, from now until the end of all things, will ever have need to fear me. I promise you this.”

Summer Sky blinked at me in confusion. Then the tension flooded from her.

“Thank you,” she said softly.

“You believe me? I *am* the spirit of chaos, after all.”

“I believe you.”

“Why?”

“Because my mother would have,” Summer Sky replied. And once again, I saw Sunny Meadows in her features. I did the only thing I could think of at that moment. I fled.

A burst of will later, and I was miles away, in a cave that was inside of a mountain that hadn’t been there just a moment ago. I reached up and turned on the lamp that I called into existence, and then collapsed into a recently-materialized chaise lounge. And then, feeling a trepidation that was completely foreign to me, I reached out a talon and opened Sunny’s letter.

“So, it has come to pass,” I said as I landed on the side of the brand-new mountain that had sprung up in the wilderness.

The draconequus regarded me sullenly as I folded my wings across my back. I was braced for anything, or so I’d thought. Discord’s response surprised me, though.

“Not now, Celestia. I’m not in the mood.”

I blinked, surprised. I’d never seen Discord upset before. At least, not like this. He had his moods, certainly, but those typically ranged from amusement to annoyance.

“I’d like to just leave you alone, Discord. But you know that I can’t do that.”

“Celestia, I swear, if you two don’t leave me alone, it’s going to end badly for you both.” I felt a chill as I realized that our ruse had already been uncovered. “Oh, yes,” he said, seeing my surprise. “I can sense little Luna sneaking up behind me, bearing the other three Elements. Did you think I wouldn’t know?”

“I was hoping you wouldn’t, yes.”

“I’m not in the mood for games, Celestia.”

“Since when?” I asked.

That was a mistake, one I regretted instantly as the enraged Spirit of Chaos spun to face me. I’d seen Discord angry before, or so I’d thought, but what I was witnessing now was an incandescent fury that I’d never expected to see from the ordinarily urbane spirit.

“***Since you put this leash on me!***” he roared, and I stepped back, afraid for my life for the first time in a *very* long while. Discord’s voice echoed down the mountainside, and here and there the stone cracked, falling down in random avalanches.

“What...” I swallowed, trying to work some moisture back into my mouth. “What leash would that be?”

“These infernal Keepers of yours! Why did you do that?” The rage faded somewhat, and I was amazed to see... pain? Could it be?

“I... I only wanted you to have company,” I said, suddenly unfamiliar with creature I was facing. “I wasn’t even sure if you were aware...”

“Oh, I was aware. Every single second of every day. And, honestly? I could not have cared less for any of them. Any of them except Sunny Meadows.”

“Ah, the last Keeper,” I said, then flinched as he glared at me.

“Yes, the last, *late* Keeper,” he replied.

I looked away from his face, and then something caught my eye. Clutched tightly in his eagle’s talon was a bundle of papers. A mystery for another time, perhaps.

“Why, Celestia?”

“Why?” I repeated.

“Why did you do that to me? Why did you give me servants, though I was entrapped in stone? Why did... Why... Why do they die so quickly?”

“Ah.” I said. In order to hide my surprise, I looked away, towards the sky, and saw Luna on her approach. I caught her eye and shook my head. Confused, but trusting me, Luna turned and banked away. “It’s the cost of immortality, Discord. Those who are mortal, no matter how long they may live, pass away before we truly get to know them. Then we spend the rest of our lives mourning them.”

“It’s not really worth it, then, is it?” he said, as he held out his talon. A burst of fire, almost too bright to look at, consumed the letter in an eye blink.

“It’s worth it,” I replied. “To me, at least.”

“Oh? How so?”

“Because the alternative is to never get to know them. Those lovely, wonderful, and above all *brief* ponies would live their lives and die without us ever knowing them at all. We would deny ourselves the joy and the beauty of their time on this world, and our own lives would be the poorer for it. And, because... Well, they say that nopony truly dies while someone keeps them alive in their hearts.” I stepped forward and bowed my head. “And, as we are immortal, that means that those precious to us will never truly die.”

Discord let out a bark of what almost could have been laughter. “That brings me surprisingly little comfort now, you know.”

“I know. But it will get easier to bear.”

He grunted, then sighed.

“So, what now?” I asked him.

“What now?” he repeated. “Now, I spend some time thinking. Some idle reflection, listless contemplation.”

“And, once you are done thinking things over?”

“Then we’ll just have to see. I *am* the Spirit of Chaos, after all.”

“I see.”

Discord stood and stretched, then looked at me. “Out of curiosity, Celestia, can you tell me what this emotion is?”

“What em—”

The feeling hit me hard, streaming from Discord straight into my heart. It felt a little fierce, like anger, but also giddy, like joy. Happiness, protectiveness, fear and courage... it had aspects of all of them, but was made of none of them. It was its own emotion, and one I knew well.

“That, Discord, is love.”

He snorted with contempt. “Love? No. I know *love*. I love chaos. I love the unexpected. I love—”

“You *enjoy* those things, certainly,” I interrupted. “But you don’t *love* them. You’ve felt this emotion, Discord?”

“Yes. For Sunny Meadows.”

“I... see.” That was beyond surprising, to say the least. And now, I was beginning to understand his behavior. “Then, I am truly sorry for your loss.”

He simply stared at me. For over a minute, he stared at me. Then he snorted.

“A few last requests, Celestia.”

“I’m listening.”

“The grove. *My* grove. The Keepers will tend to it, like Sunny did, for the rest of time. I may want to visit it from time to time.”

“Granted,” I said. “Anything else?”

“She gets a statue.”

“Sunny Meadows?”

“Yes. A big one. And make sure everyone knows that she’s the only reason Canterlot isn’t being flooded with hot fudge, or worse, at this very moment.”

“Very well. I’ll get my finest craftsponies on it right away. Where would you like it?”

“In the grove, of course. Don’t ask silly questions.”

“It will be done. And, now?”

“Now, I’m leaving. Like I said, I have some things to think about.”

“Such as?” I couldn’t resist asking.

“Such as how Chaos isn’t any fun without Order. And how Order isn’t any fun...”

“Without a little bit of Chaos.”

“Well, perhaps more than a *little* bit, Celestia,” he said with a grin. “Fare well until I see you again. Oh, and give your sister a kiss for me, would you? She was always my favorite.”

He disappeared in a puff of smoke that smelled slightly of cheese. Luna glided in and landed next to me.

“That went better than expected,” I said. And that’s when the entire mountain turned into a large, shifting pile of rainbow-colored gumballs.



The place existed nowhere in rational space. It was created out of pure imagination and chaos, with just a smidge of order to give it structure. The barest amount, honestly.

If one squinted just right, it could almost look like a grove of some kind, with a large garden full of strangeness.

Around the constantly shifting non-walls of the place were hung, draped or propped up a variety of paintings, most of which were of a certain statue in a certain grove in Equestria. All of them were by the same artist, all of them were of questionable skill, and none of them were signed.

There was also a bookshelf that could be wherever you wanted it to be at a given moment. It was filled with notebooks, which contained hoof-written, one-of-a-kind stories that you would find nowhere else in any reality.

The master of this place, who looked like everything and nothing all at once, at least when he wasn't concentrating on maintaining his appearance, reached into nowhere and pulled out an envelope, and a single piece of paper. He settled down and, once again, read what his friend had written to him.

*Dear Discord,*

*Well, the doctors say that this may be it for me. I didn't want to believe it, but it's seeming more and more like it's true. This cough isn't just a cough, it seems. I won't bore you with the details, but it doesn't seem likely that I'm getting back out of this bed for anything but my funeral.*

*I wanted to say thank you. I know that probably sounds weird, since you didn't have a choice and all, but honestly? I had a great time being a Keeper. Tending the garden, cleaning your statue, writing my silly stories and making my terrible paintings, it was all just too much fun! I'm the luckiest pony in the world, to have had that job. I just wish my mom could have seen how lucky I was.*

*And my foals being a part of it? Well, that was just the icing on the cake, as it were. Winter and Cloud won't want to be Keepers themselves, I know, but I'm pretty sure Summer will. She's my darling little girl, and I know she'll take great care of you.*

*If I have any regrets, it's that this is happening before I have a chance to meet you, to see if what I did had any impact, made your stay even a little bit more tolerable. It can't be fun,*

*being trapped in stone. I hope I helped make that easier for you. I hope... gosh, I really hope I didn't make it worse! If I did, and you ever get out, please don't blame the children for that. They're only following in my hoofsteps.*

*I'm going to have to go soon (both figuratively and literally, ha ha), but I wanted to thank you, again. I wish you all the best, Mister Funny Face. And remember, a little bit of chaos is fun and special. A lot of chaos? It's just a big mess.*

*I wish I could have seen you once again before the end.*

*All my love,  
Sunny Meadows*