

He was asleep when his sister came in after dinner, and still asleep when the village farrier / blacksmith came to get him.

Hooves pounding, a heavy, wide and tall bundle of muscle and bone ran up the short ramp and into the doorless entry. "Caem kweek fer ther a pone wha ah ner done see. Kin tok bu all melta and kin flae; she ha sma wagn wha flae wi her and ah thi she wan tra bu she say ma tung too thick fer er." The yellow pony with green eyes was almost shouting for joy.

In his state of stupor her words hadn't formed meaning yet. Mjoelnir's accent, which Grey thought of as a 'country bumpkin' accent for lack of any better frame of reference, had always required concentration for him to follow. Pear, more the socialite in her youth and less the bookworm, had learned it better and was already conversing as she jumped up from her sleep.

It was still dark out, he noted finally opening his eyes.

"So, he's, what? A sky-rat?" Upright, but not used to being woken this way. Pear was rubbing sleepy dirt out of her eyes now.

"Nae."

Grey rolled upright more slowly. This was no invasion; just a single pony-like thing. But, flying and not a pegasus? "So, one of those bird-things? With claws instead of hooves." He was upright now. Why was Mjoelnir bursting in here, again?

"Greeon; nae. Lak skyra bu all melta." The sizable pony danced a bit in anticipation, before stopping mid-dance, a foreleg poised high. She called again for the aid of young Grey, and his tradables, in process explaining the trader was a 'she.'

Of course the first trader in months would be yet another mare. "Best shiny bits. Right. Let her know the resident egghead is interested in trading maybe?" The sibling came out of their bedroom to see Vine standing bewildered in her living room.

"Ah-oud bu shae cannae unnerst meh. Sae mah tung be t'thick." Turning to Vine she nodded politely. "Tahppa th morn tya Vahn Wee"

Blinking her surprise back, Vine just suggested "I'm not sure we've climbed far enough up the clock to call it that, but yes Mjoelnir. What's gotten you up in the middle of the night?"

"A trader. And a strange looking one by the sound of it." Pear explained, her voice sounding sleepier than her face implied. "Not a griffon, not precisely a – oh, wait. Melted, Mjoelnir? Like, too long out in the sun?"

"Aye."

"What." Vine's ears were pinned, her weight unconsciously shifting backward. "Why would one of those things pretend to be a trader."

His pack over his shoulders, Grey started levitating some of his assembled items into the bags. "Apparently this one can talk. Just can't understand Mjoelnir but her cave accent is thicker than many others'." bags filled with the most expensive of local items, albeit also the most narrowly interesting, he waved their visitor on. "I'm sure it's fine, Mom."

The blacksmith rared in excitement, and ran off, her hooffalls echoing loudly as she turned left, probably to get the alchemist who made gunpowder for the village. It was still dark and hers were the only steps being heard. Grey was walking more carefully, although most of that could be attributed to fatigue.

The walls were actually vey thin; also only about forty hooves tall. But the . . . thing waited politely outside, still in the traces of her wagon which was barely visible in the little bits of artificial light that spilled out through the gate. A unicorn and an earth pony sat to either side, a respectful distance but leaning on their spears should something less well intentioned arrive to investigate the open doorway.

It did indeed look melted. Grayish brown, hairless except in a few patches, and raw bones sticking out from her sides. The poor lighting and the odd damage to the visitor's eyes made it hard to tell for sure, but Grey thought the eyes weren't lining up very often. But it had lips, and was smiling broadly as he approached.

"Hello!" Its voice sounded like a grinding machine getting stuck on the pile of steel wool just dumped in. "My name is Ditzzy Doo and I'm a wasteland trader looking for new routes and new friends and great cooks because I love a good muffin or even parasprite pancakes because nothing cements friendship like food! How are you!"