

Building tension

by Wen Spencer

I was just going to introduce the monster with “something hit Tinker” but then I thought it would be best to build the tension by having the “something is near” and lead, step by step up to the monster’s attack. Giving the bodyguards foresight worked well, especially making it seem that some females have it, but not necessarily Pony, so that book one still works as written.

Actually, giving the readers clues of what is coming works best because they can start building an image in their minds what is about to come. Suddenly isn't a good word to use in action (although I love it). It's a shortcut that doesn't really work well.

What works better is to set up a flow of action and then break from it, in a jarring manner, and the true action of "suddenly" is there without resorting to the pre-packaged, freezedried word.

Rainlilly drew her sword and crouched into readiness. Instantly all the other sekasha went tense, hand to their weapons, pulling in tighter around Tinker.

“What is it?” Pony scanned the thick underbrush that Rainlilly faced.

“Something is going to attack,” Rainlilly whispered. “Something large.”

“?” Pony spoke a word that Tinker didn’t recognize in question.

Rainlilly nodded.

“What does she see?” Tinker whispered.

“What will be,” Pony made a gesture to back the way they had come. “We’re in an position of weakness. We should retreat to --”

Something huge and sinuous as a snake flashed out of the shadows. Tinker got the impression of scales, a wedge-shaped head, and a mouth full of teeth before Pony leaped between her and the monster. Pony shouted the deep guttural command to activate his magical shields. Magic spilled out of the cobalt blue stones threaded into this hair, traced down the blue tattoos on his arms and flared into a shimmer blue force that encompassed his body.

The creature struck Pony with a blow that smashed him back into Tinker, his shields flashing as they absorbed the brunt of the damage.