

Author's Note: This story takes place after Study of the Mind Delve and [The Rainbow's Surprise](#). Reading those stories prior to this is recommended, but not required. They add context to the story, however it can be enjoyed on its own.

-WARNING: Story is Grimdark, reader discretion is advised.-

Chapter 1

There was music playing. The quiet melody danced through the air around her, the dulled beats seemed to drag from each chord to the next. As though the instrument hadn't been played for years and was picked up to be played for that very moment. It sent a shiver down her to hear the haunting melody.

The lavender unicorn treaded carefully forward, unable to see any light before her. She was compelled to keep moving forward even though her destination was unclear. It had seemed like she'd been traveling for a long time by now. Her legs were sore, throbbing with everything she had gone through now. She couldn't recall everything, just the constant pain inside of her.

It was then that she saw a light ahead of her. It was dull, only bright enough to show her the details of the world around her, but it was a light. Stepping into it she could finally make out the scenery that was around her.

She was in Canterlot Castle. She would recognize her home away from home anywhere. But the place had not fared well. The normal brightly colored tile floor was now entirely gray, rusted and grime forming over the tiles. The walls which once hosted regal paintings and decorations now hosted the decay and grime that covered the floors. The walls themselves were no longer made of rock and gypsum, but now seemed to be made of blood-stained steel. The once regal stain-glass mirrors now contained steel bars held together by a chain-link fence.

The castle was built like a cage.

The unicorn looked behind her, expecting to see the front door to Canterlot Castle. Instead she just saw a normal dead end hallway. Not even a hint that there once had been a door to the castle. However she had gotten into the palace, she was trapped there now.

She turned her attention back to the path before her. She knew the layout of the castle like the back of her hoof. Without wasting a moment longer she ran forward. The main hall was just straight ahead. It was where Princess Celestia most often greeted expected visitors, standing at the top of her stairwell before the stained glass images of night and day.

It didn't take long at all to reach the main hall but when she reached it she found herself stopped in her tracks. The hall was the same as everything else, falling apart, rotted and stained

with blood. But the biggest change was the large, imposing stained glass feature that now adorned the wall just above the stairs.

It depicted Celestia as a large, towering figure in the center, the single visible eye colored a deep red. Houses and ponies were depicted below her, burning within flames that engulfed everything. The sun and moon sat above her head, eclipsing one another. To each of her sides were two symbols, one a red magic circle depicting three inner circles and surrounded in runic writing. The other was a black magic circle, this time depicting a triangle in the center filled with strange, twisting and contorted lines. The runic lettering around the circle seemed to go around the triangle making it look similar to a clock.

The unicorn's ears were hit with the sound of rattling chains. She craned her head upwards to the ceiling, spotting something looking like a chandelier shuddering and moving above her.

The device hanging from the ceiling suddenly let out a loud snap as it fell. The unicorn had only seconds to move, jumping out of the way of the thing falling straight for her. She dove for the floor and covered her head, expecting to hear a loud crash from it hitting the floor.

Instead she heard the entire device rattle and shake, as if it had come to a sudden stop in mid-air. The sound was followed by a pain-filled, horrifying screech that echoed through the main hall. The unicorn lifted her head and looked back at the horrific sound. What she had thought was a chandelier appeared to be a gigantic set of ornamental decorations, usually adorned for royalty. A giant crown was fused to the top; a tiara was hanging from the side, regal armor and hanging pendants hung from the crown. Underneath all of the decorations was a creature, looking as if it had been welded to the regalia. Its skin was decaying, its back arched up into the crown and it only had two back legs that look painfully malformed. Its mouth hung loose and let out a pitching wail, revealing the row of flat, broken teeth that aligned its mouth.

The regalia shifted and hung from a line from the ceiling. The creature flailed its wailing body trying to reach the lavender unicorn, wanting to sink its teeth down into her flesh.

The lavender unicorn didn't wait around for the creature to get closer to attack. She turned and ran up the stairs, quickly making her escape. The unicorn ran straight for the hallways she was familiar with. She wasn't sure where it was she wanted to run to. She wanted to find her mentor, the one who taught her and practically acted as a second mother to her.

She ran down the hallway, her hooves beating loudly against the bloody metal floor at her feet. She could feel the soft spatter of blood strike her hooves with every step. The hallway she ran down felt almost endless, unable to see anything too far ahead of her as it was hidden by darkness. She ran as the steel cage windows went by her. She could see no light from out of the windows, or even if there was a sky out there.

Her hooves carried her farther. As the hallway continued to move it seemed to change upon itself. The ground seemed to grow hotter, the walls seemed to turn a brighter red and the room seemed to begin to morph. The steel caged windows began to transform from the cage bars into stained-glass depictions of ponies. Each stained glass seemed to depict a different scene.

One depicted a pony being burned to death on a stake. Another showed two ponies clashing, each with a different weapon and set of armor. Another portrayed a pony being hanged from a cord held by the moon. Another depicted a mother throwing her child to hungry alligators below. Another showed a pony standing over the corpse of another, a bloody knife in its mouth. Another presented a dead angel being carried in the arms of a crestfallen pony.

The images blurred by and filled the unicorn with a sense of dread upon seeing them. But not for a moment did she stop running through the hallway that seemed to have no end, running straight for the darkness ahead of her.

Two piercing red eyes appeared in the darkness that she was running towards. She didn't slow down for a moment as the eyes seemed to stare. The darkness that she was running towards began to spread through the hallway. It coiled and wrapped around the structures and stained glass windows, spreading faster than she was running. The darkness crept past her and engulfed the entire hallway in darkness.

The eyes faded back into the shadows as the lavender unicorn ran. She ran into the infinite darkness, never knowing where she was being led.

Twilight stirred in her bed, feeling the end of a fitful sleep. She rubbed her head as she sat up in her bed, groggily yawning. Her nightmare seemed to linger for a moment in her mind, still present, yet somehow fading. She hadn't had such a restless sleep of night in a long time, but she didn't put much thought into it now. She blinked several times, rubbing her eye with her hoof as she tried to get an eyeful of her room to determine the time. However, things simply remained dark.

"...It's too early to be waking up." She grumbled at herself for waking up from such a bad dream before sinking back into the soft covers of her bed and closing her eyes to rest. She tossed around in her bed getting comfortable once more. She would spend a few minutes in one position, before tossing into a new one trying to return to slumber.

This pattern continued until she finally grew frustrated with her own inability to go back to sleep. She sat up once more and rubbed at her eyes, trying to clear the sleep and drowsiness

from them. As she blinked to try and examine her room again, she found herself blind. She raised a hoof to her face and waved it, trying to determine how dark it was. The hoof touched her forehead and yet it was still so dark that she could not see it.

“What the...” Twilight whispered confused, turning her head to the direction of where she knew her window to be. On any normal night there would be the moon and natural lights of Ponyville shining through, allowing her to at least see the faint details of her room in the darkened night. However, the window seemed just as muted as the rest of her room. This darkness that was surrounding her wasn't natural.

“Okay, what's going on?” She grunted to herself as she concentrated, her horn flaring up with the simple light spell that illuminated the room for her. The familiar room appeared before her groggy eyes before she turned to look at the window and letting out a short gasp.

On the outside of the window a piece of plywood had been hammered against it, blotting the sun or moon from piercing through.

“Oh, of all the no good pranks...” Twilight sighed turning her head to the lanterns that hung around her room. With a swift flick of her magic the lanterns burned brightly filling the room with light once more. She dimmed her horn as she heard her young dragon assistant groaning at the sudden intrusion of light.

“Is it morning already?” Spike groaned, sitting up with a yawn and rubbing his eyes.

“Most likely Spike.” Twilight said getting up from her bed, “It seems somepony put up plywood to block the morning sunlight. It was probably Rainbow Dash getting in one last prank before she leaves for her honeymoon.” Twilight motioned with her hoof to the window.

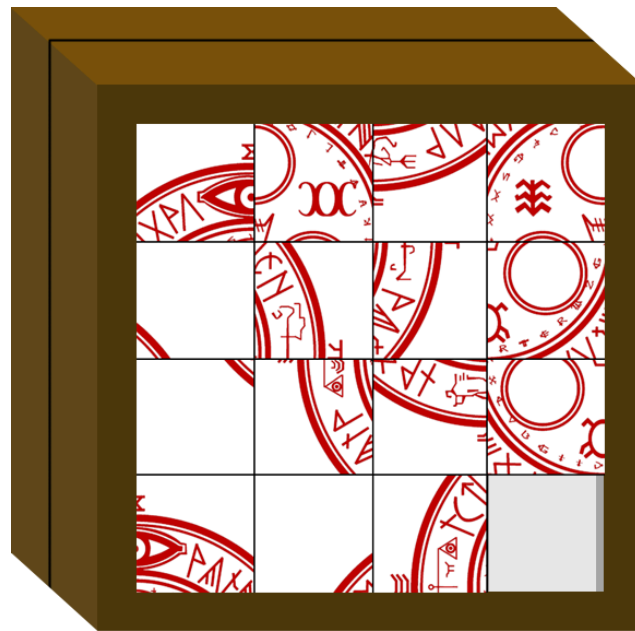
“Oh...” Spike said scratching his head a little confused, “Weird prank then.” He stretched from his little cot hopping out and heading for the door downstairs, “I guess I'll go ahead and get breakfast started then.”

“That's very thoughtful of you Spike.” Twilight smiled as she watched her assistant head off.

“What's a number one assistant for anyway?” Spike grinned as he made his way down the stairs. Twilight smiled happily at his energy after having just woken up and walked over to her bedroom mirror. She levitated the resting comb up and began to brush her hair. It certainly wasn't a disheveled mess, but it needed a good combing. She was quickly going over the events of yesterday in her mind, over how she worried about organizing the wedding and being glad everything came through, over how beautiful the ceremony itself had been, how Celestia had confided to her some strange secret.

“Oh... that’s right.” Twilight turned her head to look at the barricaded window, “I wonder if she was successful at what she wanted to do?” Twilight pondered this thought for a moment before simply smiling, “Oh of course she did. She’s the Princess, when she sets her mind to fixing a problem she always succeeds.” Relieved with her own revelation she gently levitated the brush back down onto the nightstand.

“...Huh, what’s this?” Twilight asked confused, looking at something that hadn’t been on her nightstand before. A small, thin brown box sat there, on top of it was a sliding puzzle consisting of fifteen pieces that formed a scrambled image, one she couldn’t decipher by simply looking at it.



Twilight levitated the strange box, so she could see it better. The box had a hinge on the side and seemed to open down the middle of it. Twilight shook the box gently, hearing something rattle inside of it. She tried to pry open the box to see what it contained, only to find it locked soundly. She stared puzzled at it for a moment, when a thought clicked through her head.

“Oh, I see, the picture must be the locking mechanism. If I solve it the box will open.” She smiled as she began to move the tiles on the box, each sliding motion giving a satisfying ‘click’ as she worked.

“TWILIGHT!” Spike suddenly shouted rushing back into the room interrupting Twilight’s puzzle solving.

“What is it Spike?” Twilight asked confused at the sudden urgency of the baby dragon, putting the box back down on the desk.

“It’s not just the bedroom window! It’s the whole house!” Spike pointed down the stairs with urgency.

“The whole house?” Twilight said dumbstruck by this. She quickly followed Spike out of her room and down into the lower floors of the library. Sure enough, as she looked around every single window she could spot was boarded up tight with the same plywood blocking any light from entering. Spike had already lit as many lanterns around the house as he could, illuminating the interior of the library for them.

“Okay, what the hay?” Twilight demanded walking to the front door. Her horn lit up and grabbed hold of the borders and pushed at it to open as she was going to get to the bottom of this elaborate prank.

Twilight ran face first straight into the door. She stepped back a few paces and shook her head, rubbing her snout. The door remained firmly locked before her. She glared at the door and lit it up with magic once more, pushing and pulling on it to force it open. The door refused to budge an inch however, no matter how much force Twilight applied.

“Why is this door locked? Why can’t I open it?” Twilight growled with frustration, “Okay, this prank has gone far enough. How am I supposed to see Rainbow Dash and Fluttershy off to their honeymoon if I can’t leave my house?” She groaned walking up to the door with a hoof and trying to use the handle. It was then that she noticed something new was on the door that hadn’t been there before. A new lock had been installed into the center of the door. It seemed that the lock was holding the door in place.

“...Spike, get me the book that has the lock picking spell in it.” Twilight spoke calmly.

“Right away!” Spike saluted before dashing across the library to grab the ladder. He wheeled it over to section 2, before climbing up to shelf G. He quickly pulled a brown book from the shelf and waved it, “Here it is, A Guide to Locks and Mechanisms!” Spike grinned happily as the book was suddenly engulfed in light, “Whoa!” Spike cried out as Twilight’s magic dragged him and the book over, causing him to smash into the floor.

“Oh, sorry Spike.” Twilight said quickly helping him up and dusting him off, “I’m just a little frustrated. I don’t want this to hinder us from our plans today.”

“Yeah, yeah, I understand.” Spike sighed softly, “While you figure this out I’m going to go ahead and make breakfast.” The young purple dragon quickly headed for the kitchen to start preparing them meals.

“Alright, lock picking, lock picking...” Twilight quickly flipped through the pages looking for just the right spell. “Aha!” She spoke aloud acquiring the knowledge she sought. With a quick

scan of the page she memorized the spell and closed the book, her horn igniting with more magic, "Let's get this lock out of the way." She pointed her horn at the door, a stream of magic firing forth and straight into the lock. She heard the tumblers moving and grinding inside of the lock before she heard a loud 'click' telling her the spell had worked.

"Finally, now let's go find out what's going on-" The door gave a jarring 'click' as Twilight tried to open it, telling her the lock was still firmly secured. "Hey!" Twilight glared at the door before igniting her magic and casting the spell once more. The lock whirred and grinded once more as the spell danced inside of the lock before finishing with another loud 'click'. Twilight pushed on the door once more, the door resisting with another click.

"ARGH!" Twilight growled in frustration and cast the spell once more. As the spell worked on the lock Twilight grabbed the handle with both hooves and frustratingly shook the door trying to pry it open. Even as the spell finished with its usual 'click' it refused to open. Twilight sat back on her haunches and rubbed her head frustrated. For some reason the lock-picking spell was working and yet it wasn't.

"Maybe there's an anti-magic enchantment on the lock." Spike said walking into living room, with him two plates containing their breakfasts. A daisy sandwich for Twilight and a small pile of common turquoise he'd been given after the reception.

"Well, if any other unicorn enchanted it, it would be Rarity, but she isn't the type to prank ponies. Especially not like this." Twilight grumbled walking over to the table Spike had placed her breakfast onto. She took a bite trying to figure this out in her head.

"Maybe Celestia enchanted it?" Spike asked curiously, stuffing a gem into his own mouth.

"Don't be silly Spike, the Princess wouldn't go so far with something like this, not when I have something as important as seeing my friends off planned out." Twilight rolled her eyes, "Though... perhaps we can use her to get us out of here." Twilight smiled. "Spike, quickly, grab a quill and parchment."

"Can do." Spike said stuffing a few more gems into his mouth before rushing off and returning shortly with the quill and paper.

"Alright. Dear Princess Celestia," Twilight began, Spike quickly writing away, "I'm writing to you because it appears that some prankster has boarded up my house and made it impossible for me to leave. The door has been sealed with a magic resistant lock and I can't seem to open it. Since I assume you're still in town, I was hoping you could stop by and help me out so I can continue with my day. Your Faithful Student, Twilight Sparkle."

"Done and done." Spike said punctuating the letter with finality before rolling the scroll

up. With a quick inhale he held the scroll up and exhaled the brilliant emerald flame upon the message.

The paper, alight from the green flame, quickly succumbed to the heat and fell as a pile of ashes onto the floor.

“...Spike! I told you to SEND the letter, not burn it!” Twilight sighed exasperated with her assistance’s work.

“But, but that’s how I always send the letters.” Spike said baffled. He quickly pulled out a spare sheet of scroll paper and quickly rewrote Twilight’s letter. He rolled it up once more and held it up, “Okay, this how I’ve sent every letter in the past.” He spoke quickly, remembering his lessons on how to send things properly with his green fire. He inhaled expertly before spewing out another emerald flame onto the paper.

Once more the message was burnt to ashes and joined the other pile on the floor.

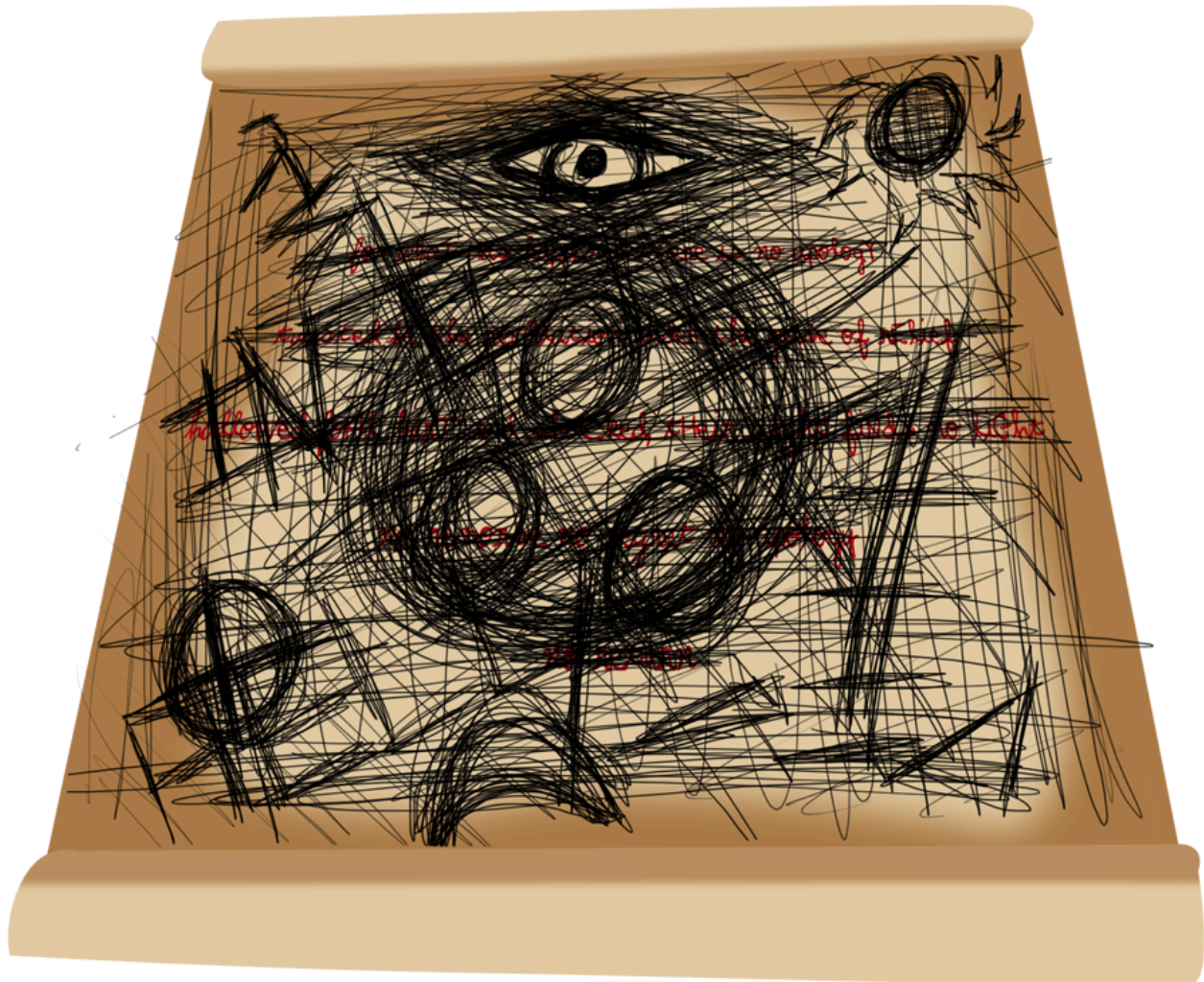
“Wait... so... we CAN’T send letters to the Princess either!?” Twilight asked, shocked at this revelation.

“...I guess so.” Spike said just as confused as Twilight.

“...I’m starting to think this isn’t just some prank then.” Twilight said turning to look back at the door, “This is too elaborate to be some joke. Who could have done this?”

“I don’t know. No pony in Ponyville is capable of preventing me from sending lette-“ Spike stopped mid sentences as suddenly his eyes bulged and he closed his mouth, his cheeks bulging as he put his hands over his stomach. Twilight quickly turned to look at her dragon assistance as suddenly he let out a loud belch, smoke and fire spewing out and circling above his head before forming in a burst of magic into a scroll.

“Huh? Maybe she got our letter anyway...” Twilight said confused quickly levitating the scroll over to her and opened it.



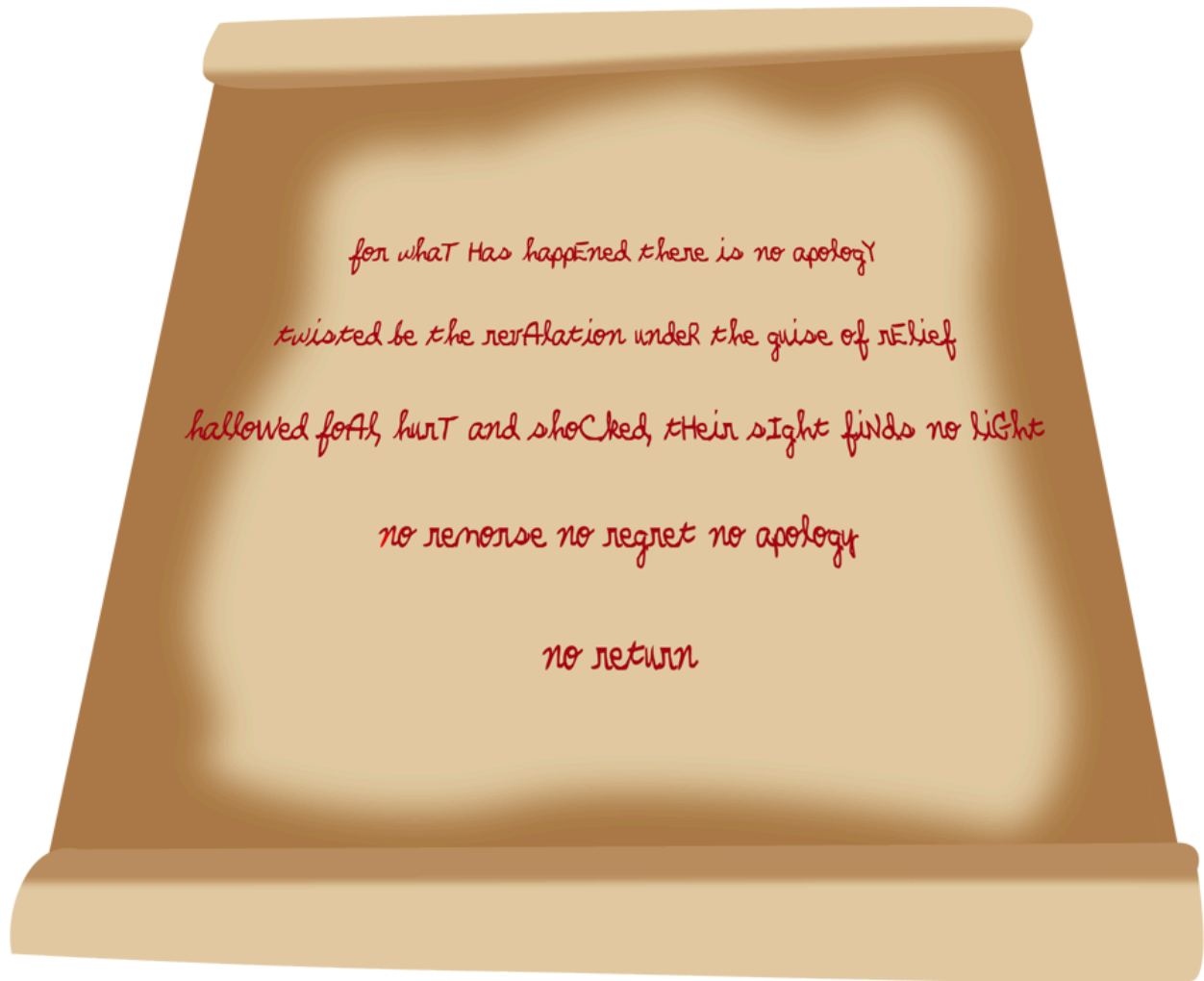
If this was a letter from Celestia it was the weirdest letter Twilight had ever received from the Princess. The scroll was marked with random designs and scribbled all over, done mostly in black but with some sections in red. She concentrated hard on the scroll and thought she could see something written underneath the scribbled madness. It seemed the sections in red contained the actual message that had been scribbled over by the sections in black.

“What’s it say?” Spike asked, unable to see the mess of a document.

“I’m not sure. I’m going to find out though.” Twilight said pushing her sandwich aside before laying the scroll down on the table flat. As she pushed the plate aside it bumped into something, knocking it off the table. This caught Spike’s attention and walked around the table to pick it up.

Twilight concentrated her magic and quickly scanned the scroll with it, before pulling the black ink straight off of the page. Another blank scroll was levitated over to her side and she cleanly placed the black ink onto that scroll, creating two separate documents. She glanced

upon the scroll that now contained the words written in the red ink and read carefully.



for whaT Has happEneD there is no apologY
twisted be the revAlation under the guise of rElief
halloWed foAl, hurT and shoCked, tHeir slght fiNDs no liGht
no remorse no regret no apology
no return

for whaT Has happEneD there is no apologY
twisted be the revAlation undeR the guise of rElief
halloWed foAl, hurT and shoCked, tHeir slght fiNDs no liGht
no remorse no regret no apology
no return

The letter was almost incomprehensible. If this had been intended for her to read, the message had been hidden underneath scratched up nonsense, then to top it all off the letter had strange capitalization, as if the writer had no concept of where words needed to be punctuated.

“Hey Twilight, have we always had this?” Spike asked confused, causing Twilight’s attention to rise from the note. In Spike’s hands look like some kind of small box made of what looked like mahogany.

“Let me see that.” Twilight asked, Spike handing it over as Twilight quickly inspected the box. The box had a seam near the top and small hinges indicating it was meant to be open. On the side she could see a small hole that lead into the device. When Twilight tried to open it she found that it was locked, obviously needing something in the hole to open it.

It was then that Twilight looked up at Spike, thoughts beginning to form into each other.

“Spike, there’s no way this is a prank any longer.” Twilight put the box down and stood up from her spot, “I need you to quickly search around this floor of the library for anything and everything that wasn’t here before we went to sleep. I’m going to go search upstairs for the same things.”

“I understand.” Spike said quickly returning to his plate to scarf down the rest of his gems before searching. Twilight quickly made her way back to the upper floor, swiftly returning to her bedroom. On the nightstand she could see the strange puzzle device that she had been inspecting earlier. She quickly gathered it with her magic and looked around her room carefully. There were the usual strewn books, Spike’s small cluttered mess he called a bed, various decorations and reminders of her stay in Ponyville for the last year. Not seeing anything out of the ordinary, she made her way to the bathroom.

Lighting up the bathroom with its lantern, it seemed the same at first glance. Towels where they should be, the bathtub empty, the mirror above the sink reflected her image as always. However, on the sink, alongside the usual sundries was a newer brown bottle. The label read ‘Health Drink’ on it. Twilight levitated the drink as well and quickly headed back downstairs certain she hadn’t missed anything else obvious.

She saw Spike was still searching quickly around the library, trying to not leave any space unturned. Twilight quickly walked over to the table and placed down her two items and quickly re-examined what they had already. It only took Spike another minute before he returned to the table carrying another note.

“This was the only other thing I could find.” Spike said looking the note over, “It says, ‘When all is lost, when the darkness is its strongest, when all is cold and bleak, you’ll find the light.’ What do you think it means?” Spike asked, placing it next to the rest of the strange items.

“I’m not sure Spike... I don’t even know what these things are doing here. But I plan to find out.” Twilight said quickly scanning through the various items on the table. There were three notes, two of which were part of the one she had split in half, two boxes, one with a sliding puzzle on top and the strange Health Drink bottle. “But I’m going to figure this out.”

Twilight quickly grabbed the quill Spike had used to write his letters and brought it over to the first letter she had read. Something about the way it was written was bothering her and she couldn’t just leave it as it was. She reread the note once more, before putting the quill to the

bottom of the note. She quickly wrote down each of the capitalized letters in order as they appeared.

“...They are watching?” Twilight looked up and around her house. There was no one there except for her and Spike. How would it be possible for anyone to be watching them?

“That was in the letter from the Princess?” Spike asked scratching his head, “This just doesn’t seem like a letter from Celestia.”

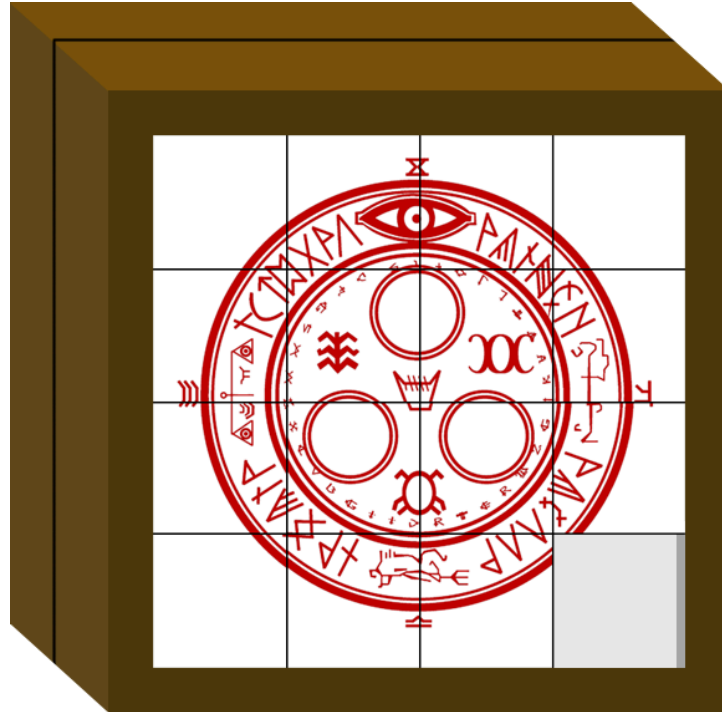
“That’s what worries me about all this.” Twilight said, the concern in her voice was apparent, “Hopefully opening these boxes will yield some answer. And since I don’t see a way to open this box yet,” Twilight said moving the mahogany box to the side, “I’ll try and open this one first.” She levitated the sliding puzzle box into her sight and began clicking away at the puzzle.

“What’s it a picture of?” Spike asked curiously, watching Twilight work away.

“I’m not sure. I’m trying to figure that out right now, so that I can solve this thing easier.” She concentrated on getting separate pieces to match up so that she could figure it out sooner. Spike watched carefully, adding in his input, much to Twilight’s discontent. It took several minutes before she started seeing a pattern forming in the image. As she clicked pieces together and started seeing the full image, she simply grew more confused.

“It’s some kind of circle pattern?” Spike asked confused.

“It’s not one I’ve ever seen.” Twilight said just as confused, still clicking the pieces away. She could make out the general shape of the picture now. She could see where each piece was able to go and was able to complete the puzzle much more efficiently. It took her just a moment to complete the picture.



The completed picture was a red symbol consisting of two large circle filled with strange, cryptic runic writing, while inside those two circles were three smaller circles also surrounded by the strange writing.

When Twilight completed the puzzle the box let out one final satisfying ‘click’, telling Twilight she had solved the puzzle correctly. Happy with her work she opened the box, its contents revealing nothing more than a music box key. Twilight carefully lifted it up, examining the piece. She then looked over at the second box on the table, noticing that the small hole in the side was the same size as the end of the music box key.

“Really?” Twilight groaned, “I opened up one box to get the key to another?” She sighed before lifting up the second box now and slipping the key into the hole. It fit snugly inside the small opening and seemed to stick. She slowly turned the key, hearing the gears grind inside of the device with each turn. Spike watched her carefully, grabbing hold of the table as Twilight cranked the key. With one final turn, the small box clicked.

Twilight reached to open the box, when the lid suddenly flipped open on its own accord.

Something suddenly burst out of the box, rising into the air. Twilight nearly dropped the box surprised by the action, as whatever it was hit her ceiling and exploded into a bright burst of light. Spike and Twilight shielded their eyes from the blast, waiting for the light to dim. Once it did, they blinked and looked up into the air, seeing a small shower of sparkling lights falling to the floor.

“What’s all this about?” Spike asked, unsettled by the strange display that had erupted from the box.

“Have you finished the preparations?” A familiar regal voice said from behind them. Twilight and Spike instantly snapped their heads around, seeing a translucent figure of Princess Celestia standing there. “This is an important night after all.”

Twilight opened her mouth to speak to the image of the Princess, only for her to be interrupted by a second, familiar regal voice.

“We have ensured the preparations for the festivities. Thou need not worry, thy subjects shall be safe with us.” The dumbfounded unicorn and dragon turned their heads back around, seeing a similar translucent image of the dark blue alicorn with a dark magical mane, Princess Luna, walking towards Celestia. “Now thou should go, so that thou is not late. Thou should not keep thy friends waiting.”

“Very well, thank you for everything Luna.” Celestia bowed her thanks before turning around and quickly heading out.

“Tis nothing dear sister, we shall always be willing to help thee.” Luna smiled.

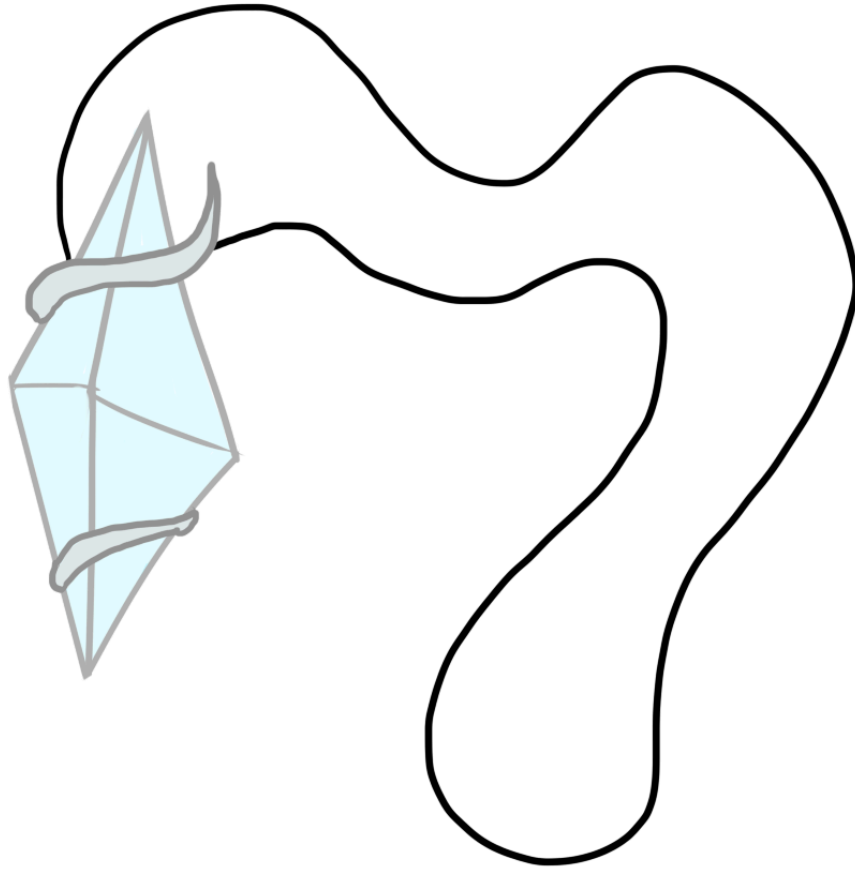
The falling sparks of light faded from the world leaving the two in a state of awestruck dismay. They could not find the will to believe that had just happened.

“What the hay was that all about?” Spike finally broke the silence, throwing his hands into the air, “Images of the Princesses? I’ve never seen magic like that before! What’s going on here Twilight?”

“Spike...” Twilight spoke softly, uneasily, “I don’t know. I really wish I did know. I’m getting a very bad feeling about all of this. Right now I need to find somepony, preferably Princess Celestia, but if I can find my friends they can help us out too. After all, we can do anything as long as we’re together.” Twilight smiled reassuringly before looking inside of the box she had just opened.

“Hey, what’s this doing in here?” Twilight levitated a thin stringed pendant with a point cut crystal with a decorative silver frame.

“Hey, isn’t that the pendant used to search for books in the Canterlot archives?” Spike asked curious about the device.



“It is Spike. But what is it doing in this box?” Twilight looked at it curiously, twirling it around with her magic. She then concentrated and poured some of her magic into the device, it lighting up brightly. “Well, it seems to be functioning alright.” She commented before gently wrapping the pendant around her neck for safe keeping, “I’ll hold on to it till we can return it to Celestia.” With that said Twilight checked inside the box once more to see if anything else was left inside.

“Hey, a key!” Twilight said surprised at her discovery. She pulled the thin skeleton key out of the box and examined it.

“Do you think it’s the key to the front door?” Spike asked looking over at the locked door.

“Only one way to find out.” Twilight said turning to the door and walking over to it. She guided the long key into the door and heard the tumblers click into place. With a quick turn of the key she heard the door let out another ‘click’ telling her it should be unlocked, though after having heard that sound several times she admittedly had her doubts. She raised a hoof to the door and pressed against it to see if her actions had worked.

The door swung noisily open, as if the hinges hadn’t be used in years and were rusted

over, a fact that seemed strange to Twilight. However, once she opened the door all thoughts of the creaky hinges left her mind.

A thick sheet of fog sat just outside her door frame, shrouding all of Ponyville within the confines of its embrace. Twilight couldn't even see the houses across the street. The fog only allowed a few feet of visibility.

"Holy guacamole, I've never SEEN weather like this in Ponyville before!" Spike said shocked, looking at the fog himself. He stepped outside the door frame and waved his hand through it quickly, some of the fog moving to his actions, but quickly being replaced by more fog.

Twilight continued to stare in disbelief at the sight before her. Rainbow Dash wouldn't have let fog like this cover Ponyville, never in any of the weather forecasts in Ponyville had it called for the town to be shrouded in fog. Were weather ponies trying to desperately clean it away? How was it even possible to have such a freak fog covering just suddenly appear over night? This much fog would take a while to build up, not to mention there would be warnings over it being placed over the town. Everything about this was unnatural.

"I wanted you to know so that if you see anything strange, you'll be prepared."

Celestia's words suddenly came back to Twilight, awaking her from her stupor like a splash of cold water to her face. Twilight quickly turned back around and ran back to the table.

"Twilight?" Spike asked, turning to see the strange actions of his unicorn mentor.

Twilight quickly levitated each of the remaining items on the table, accounting for the three notes and the health drink. She closed her eyes and concentrated, creating a pocket inside of her magic reservoir, the four items disappearing from the world and finding a home inside of the pocket. She then turned around, looking at Spike seriously.

"Twilight, why do you look so serious?" Spike said, unnerved more by the serious looking Twilight than anything else that had happened that morning.

"Spike, I'm heading out into Ponyville. I need you to stay here and make sure nothing hap-" Twilight stopped suddenly as her eyes widened, her mouth dropping and her pupils dilating.

Spike lay on the ground before her, his body dismembered and the separate pieces scattered around the floor. His hot blood was splattered everywhere, including on her coat. Scratched claw marks trailing blood were along the wall where the tiny dragon had tried to escape from its attacker. The blood burned against her coat, telling her it was all her fault.

She wanted to scream, to cry, but her voice caught in her throat and choked her.

“Twilight?” Spike called out, causing Twilight’s head to snap back, her eyes looking at her dragon assistant standing by the doorway. She quickly scanned the room, trying to find traces of the horrific scene she had just witnessed. “Twilight, you’re scaring me. What is it you want me to do?”

Twilight couldn’t speak for a moment. She felt completely shaken by the vision she had suddenly seen, one which she couldn’t understand. She only knew one thing that the vision told her.

If she left Spike in the library, something horrible was going to happen to him.

“Change of plans Spike...” Twilight spoke, swallowing the fear that had lodged itself into her throat, “You’re coming with me. We’re going out to find Princess Celestia.”

“Oh... well okay.” Spike said, before looking out the door at the fog then back to Twilight. “Hold on, let me get something.” Spike said before quickly heading over to one of the shelves. Twilight watched him with a bit of curiosity, before the dragon return carrying a large rolled up paper. “We should bring a map of Ponyville since we won’t be able to see clearly in the fog.” He grinned happily.

Twilight blinked oddly at the dragon, before smiling at him. The dragon’s sentiments seemed to affect her even more at that very moment.

“Good thinking Spike, this is why you’re my number one assistant.” Twilight gave her praise to the dragon, who took it with his usual ego. Twilight didn’t leave him much time to speak however, wrapping him gently with her magic before lifting him up and placing him on her back. “Let’s go figure out what’s wrong with the town.” Twilight said confidently turning to the door.

As long as Spike was with her, she knew she could handle anything this strange fog was going to throw at her.

The two of them wandered quickly into the strangely silent Ponyville.