

## The Empty Room

### Chapter 6

By Wanderer D

It was a quiet and subdued group of ponies that sat around a circular table in one of Canterlot's many rooms.

Spitfire placed a comforting hoof on Rainbow Dash's shoulder as Luna softly informed all of them that, in the process of investigating a secret and delicate matter for Princess Celestia, Twilight Sparkle had been attacked by an unknown pony and had died at his or her hoofs in the explosion that had wrecked the walls of the castle.

Pinkie Pie's hair had deflated and her usually bright pink coat had somehow dulled as she looked miserably at the table.

Applejack had closed her eyes tightly and was shaking, her hoofs around her, fighting tears and the bitter words of anger and resentment that she did not want to shout.

Rarity had bowed down her head and tears were dropping unheeded onto the table. She made no attempt to compose herself.

Fluttershy was sniffing, resting her face on her hoofs as her body shook, unlike Applejack, though, it shook out of the strength of her sobs rather than anger. Her hair covered her face from everypony, but it did nothing to hide how devastated she felt.

Rainbow Dash... felt drained. Tired. She had already exploded in anger and had flown out as fast as she could, burning out most of her energy. Had Spitfire not stumbled into her flightpath after practice, she would be all the way to Fillydelphia by now.

The Wonderbolt kept her thoughts to herself, but it was clear from the pitying looks she was giving the others that she had been affected by the story too.

Luna sighed as she finished talking. She knew Dash felt guilty for missing her chance to capture the elusive cloaked pony, but she also felt guilty herself... she had been the one to suggest bringing Twilight Sparkle to the castle to help. She had been the one to find the damned room in the first place! If only she had been less curious!

“What are we going to do about this then?” Applejack asked after a few minutes of silence. Luna blinked. “What do you mean?”

“I mean what I just said!” the orange earth pony growled, smashing her hoof on the table. “I’m not just going to walk away and let whoever did that to Twilight go free! And Princess Celestia needs us too!”

“We... we can’t just *sit* here.” Fluttershy said, her timid voice gaining strength. “Twilight Sparkle wouldn’t want that.”

“We need to find out what is happening to Princess Celestia.” Rarity added. “And if we help solve that, we can find out who k- who did that to Twilight.”

Rainbow Dash slowly looked up. “We’ll find the pony who did this... and kill-”

“No, sugarcube.” Applejack interrupted. “As much as I want to do exactly that... it is not the way that any of us should or would act. I’m sure that Twilight wouldn’t want that either.”

Dash fumed and looked away. “We’ll see.”

Luna had closed her eyes and nodded. Extending her senses, she could still feel her sister's field coating the filly room. “My sister... is still indisposed.” she said worriedly. “I... I’ve never seen her like this.”

“Now wait an apple buckin’ minute.” Applejack said, shooting a glare at Luna. “You never told us what the problem was.”

Luna hesitated. These were Twilight Sparkle's closest friends, they were the Elements of Harmony, she owed them her life and her freedom. Although she didn't want anypony else to know about what was really happening... if she could trust anypony... it was them.

She looked at Spitfire for a second, but Rainbow Dash caught her look. "I trust her. If Spitfire wants to help us... she can." the pegasus said, looking over her shoulder at the Wonderbolt, who gave her a shaky smile and a nod, no doubt wondering what she was getting into.

Luna sighed. Celestia had always had good things to say about the Wonderbolts... still this was getting out of hoof. "Fine. But what I am about to say does not leave this room. No pony else will know of this, as much as I owe you five my life and my freedom, my sister's happiness is my priority. Our enemy is crafty, if they were able to defeat Twilight Sparkle... a feat that I assure you is not easy..."

The six ponies in the room nodded, and with a long sigh, Luna started her story.

o.0.o

Trixie looked askance at the pony trotting next to her. **YOU REALLY DON'T NEED TO TAG ALONG, BIG MACINTOSH** she wrote, her magic forming words with flaming powder.

The red-furred stallion nodded.

**THE GREAT AND POWERFUL TRIXIE DOESN'T NEED HELP FROM ANYPONY**

A shrug. "Well, I reckon that ponies shouldn't travel alone if they have someone willing to go with them."

Trixie smiled a bit. He had tactfully not pointed out that they were on their way for her to actually ask for help in the first place. She grimaced. Canterlot was just an hour away... and

then her journey would be over. She would be able to start her quest for revenge.

She sighed, looking at Big Mac silently trudging on besides her for no reason other than to help her. When she had been on her one-mare mission to reach Twilight Sparkle, she had been able to ignore feelings and thoughts that she had been trying to put down for a while now. But the slow and steady rhythm of Big Macintosh's walk gave her plenty of time to think.

She had never had true friends. Sure, at Canterlot University she had peers... Twilight Sparkle being one of them, in fact. Although she hadn't known about the purple unicorn's relationship with Celestia, she had always admired her dedication to magic... if nothing else. She had also fancied herself a lot more powerful than Twilight Sparkle, but... well, life had a way of shoving empty boasts down pony throats.

Ever since Twilight had shown her up that fateful night, Trixie had had a hard time getting back up to speed. Her confidence was shaken. Although she had known that her boasts were nothing more than bragging, she had never expected to find anypony who would be able to achieve what she could only *imagine* of doing. It had been humbling, but more importantly... she had lost her mojo that night.

She sighed and looked at her traveling companion. He *was* cute. That's for sure. Maybe, maybe if she hadn't been so blinded by her own light show she might have seen him in the crowd... maybe....

**YOU'RE A GOOD PONY, BIG MACINTOSH** She wrote morosely. **THANK YOU FOR HELPING A USELESS GHOST LIKE ME**

“Hey now.” Big Mac said, shaking his head. “Don't go saying that, Trixie. You are not useless. I don't think there are that many ponies out there that could manage half of what you have done just *today*.”

**YOU'RE TOO KIND**

The carried on in silence for a while, until Trixie felt something.

### **BIG MAC DON'T ASK WHY JUST JUMP INTO THE WAGON!**

The flames were dying just as the wagon's doors closed behind him. Quietly he looked out through a crack. A slithering shadow flashed past them, then stopped, doubling back to hover around the wagon for a moment. He gulped when he heard a hissing sound. Then... it was gone. He could see the stars again through the crack. After a few moments, the doors opened and he stepped out.

“What was that?” he asked, looking at the seat on the wagon, unknowingly looking straight at Trixie.

### **THE GUARDIAN Anger seeped back into her. HE ATE ME! AND HE RIPPED MY FACE OFF!**

Big Mac blinked and started to look green.

### **COME ON, HANDSOME! WE HAVE TO CATCH THAT OVERGROWN SNAKE!**

o.O.o

Spike stared at the empty room. A cold breeze made him shudder as he looked around. Had he paid attention earlier he would have noticed the saddle bags and the latest friendship report which Twilight was going to give to Princess Celestia in person.

If he had paid attention earlier he might have been able to be with Twilight and... and...

“Damn it!” he hollered punching the side of the door with his fist. It stung, but he felt good about that. He wanted it to hurt.

He looked up and turned around. There was no pony there.

Was that an echo?

He waited, but he didn't hear anything else.

"Must be my imagination..." he muttered, turning to leave. "I don't have time for this! I'm going to find who killed Twilight and I am going to rip their throats out!" his nostrils let out a whiff of smoke.

o.O.o

Celestia lay alone in the center of the room. Before her were the remains of Twilight Sparkle's horn and the dolls belonging to her daughter.

"In the search for my first child... I got my second daughter killed." she said, looking tenderly at the horn. "I never told you, Twilight, how much you meant to me... how much of myself, and especially Luna I saw in you. You were such a beautiful filly, in mind and body... so innocent and brave!"

She sighed. "And now you are gone... and I have to accept that... I will find the ponies behind this... and they will pay. But that will not bring you back. At least I know death is kind... even if he is a bit odd." she chuckled. "But how can I go on right now, my faithful student, when you will not be at my side again? When your reports will not come to me and break the monotony of the court? When the actual joy of you being alive and part of my life... is gone?"

Celestia lowered her head to her hoofs. "And yet, I must. For if not I, who? I only have this night to mourn you, and then, when the time for the sun to rise comes, I will have no choice but to return to my duty and raise it from its slumber. I

cannot show this to anyone; I cannot be open, or honest or fragile... even dear Luna needs to see me to be strong for her... I fear I have become spoiled my student... for within the last two decades not only did I get my dear sister back... I had you."

*"And you can have her again..."* a voice whispered almost in her ear, making it twitch.

"Who are you?!" Celestia asked, she stood and glared around.

*"Don't you mean... how?"* the voice whispered back.

Celestia clenched her mouth shut as she looked carefully around again. There was no way anypony could have crossed her field... so who...

*"Not 'who'"* the voice whispered again. *"How. How can I get her back? How can I get my daughter back too?"*

"Show yourself." Celestia growled.

*"Turn around... yes... you can see me there, at the edge of your field."* the voice directed as she looked at one of the walls. There seemed to be somepony there... she approached carefully until she stood, staring.

"That's not you."

*"Yes... it is."* the voice said again. And she saw the pony in front of her mouth the words, just as she had mouthed the words she had said earlier.

"You are not me." Celestia insisted, staring hard at the mirror.

*"You are drifting from what really matters but if you must know..."* Mirror-Celestia replied. *"I am your inner voice, I am the power within yourself able to bring Twilight Sparkle back to life."*

"That can't be done." Celestia replied angrily. "If you were me you would know!"

*"I am... and that's how I know it to be possible."*

The Princess shook her head... the voice was seductive... if there was a chance...

*"There is!"* The voice insisted, her thoughts betraying her. *"You know it... as well as you know how much you love that filly... it is not right for her life to be cut so short... not when trying to help you! Had it been under other circumstances... perhaps... but we know, don't we... that it was unfair... that it was uncalled for."* the broken horn, not even half the size of Celestia's own floated in front of the mirror now, spinning lazily.

"Y-yes..." Celestia admitted. "She was so young..." she felt tears and was about to fight them but...

*"There is no need to hide your tears from yourself."* her mirror image said, Celestia's voice heavy with kindness. *"Who is there to impress? Who is there to see you be a tiny bit sad... fragile? You are alone... not even our dear daughter is here to see help us... our sister has to hold the fort for now until we bring Twilight Sparkle back... she is strong, she can handle it..."*

"But..."

*"Twilight Sparkle needs us... she needs us to do what needs to be done... she needs us to use our magic and power to bring her back... for her... we should do it for her..."*



"But how?" Celestia finally asked. "How can I bring her back?"

*"Find me."*

"What?"

*"I am within you... I am... a spark... within you... you have never needed me before, because you have not loved so much before."*

"Within me?" Celestia closed her eyes and turned her attention into herself. She searched deep. Going deeper than she had ever gone before. Everything was light, like being under direct sunlight. "I can't find you!"

*"I am here! You know me! Look beyond!"*

Celestia looked. And she looked. And she searched... until she got to the edge of the light, where the shadows of her absolute subconscious were. She stopped. She should be careful, it was easy to forget she was not-

"Princess!" a voice she easily recognized called from within.

"Twilight?!"

"Princess! I'm scared! I can't see anything! There's... something pulling me away!"

"Don't worry, Twilight! I'll..."

"Princess..." Twilight's voice seemed to fade into the distance.

"TWILIGHT!" Celestia shouted, plunging into the darkness. "Where are you?!"

"*She's almost gone!*" her mirror-voice shouted. "*Release your inner power!*"

And Celestia felt it... a shell of some sort, floating in the darkness. Her horn started to glow as she charged towards it. "Twilight! I'm coming!"

Her horn struck the shell.

o.o.o

"These are Twilight Sparkle's notes on what happened in that room roughly twenty years ago." Luna said, spreading the pages on the table with her magic.

Her tale had deeply affected the others, but to their credit, they had soldiered on despite everything. It gave her some hope that things might still turn out... okay.

The other ponies leaned in to look.

"Oh..." Fluttershy said.

"Does this come with illustrations?" Rainbow Dash asked.

"My... Twilight was really thorough..." Rarity said. "I barely understand a fifth of what this says."

Applejack stared at the pages. "I know the words mean something... but I have no idea what '...temporal dilatation of eldritch energies' means and what it has to do with... 'PK variations'?"

"Silly, it's just a theory developed to calculate the dispersion of magical energies through time in direct relation to their original intent and purpose. Easy-peachy!"

Luna spoke into the silence, looking curiously at the gathered ponies as they stared at Pinkie Pie. What was their deal? "Ahem." she coughed into her hoof, drawing their attention. "Pinkie Pie is right. But there's not much to learn from this first page. It just describes the methodology of her approach."

"She wrote fifteen pages based on that?" Applejack chuckled sadly. "That's our Twilight."

"Hm... but it just jumps here... that's weird..." Luna said, then turned the page around. "Oh, silly me. She wrote on *both* sides."

Fluttershy sniffed miserably. That was their Twilight indeed.

They waited in tense silence as Luna read through the papers, but as soon as she finished, they could tell it was not what she had hoped for.

"What is it?" Rainbow Dash asked.

Luna sighed. "Well, it has a lot of information, but the bottom line is that Twilight found out that on that night there were 5 spells cast... the shield, illusion and disorientation spells were cast to hide the room, all three were completely broken by me and Celestia earlier today. Then... there was the memory spell... Twilight's notes indicate that it was massive... it affected several ponies, not just my sister... she found energy traces for a fifth spell though, although she could not identify it..."

"Aaand that leaves us exactly where we were before." Applejack sighed. "No offense, but Celestia's filly could be anypony! In this room, other than you Princess, there are six ponies that fall into the age category *alone*... and I know more than thirty others that live in or around Ponyville."

"Could Princess Celestia's daughter be a unicorn?" Spitfire asked.

"No." Luna shook her head. "The magic in the pony would be too much for a unicorn... the filly would obviously be an alicorn."

"Unless that unknown spell turned her into another type of pony?" Rarity ventured. "Perhaps a Unicorn to explain the magic?"

"Or a pegasus to keep the wings?" Fluttershy asked.

"Or even an earth pony to throw whoever force her into giving the filly away off her track?" Applejack added.

Luna looked troubled. "Well... I... there are some spells like that, to be sure, but..."

"Look everypony, this is getting us no-where." Dash snapped. "Sure, it's interesting that there were five spells, and sure we have to find Princess Celestia's filly... but, that can wait. Somepony is taking advantage of this for some reason and not only almost killed Captain Lance, but really killed Twilight! To find the filly we need to stop them first!"

Luna sighed. "This is true. As much as I want to find the filly... sorting this out takes precedence." she groaned. "I haven't been so frustrated in a thousand years!"

She stopped.

The gathered ponies saw her face go into shocked realization and then horror. "In a thousand years..." she murmured and turned to look at the others, the fear in

her eyes making them very nervous.

"Lu-luna..." Applejack stammered, her nervousness making her completely skip the usual honorific. "But... a thousand years ago you..."

"Oh... my." Rarity whispered in horror. "You don't mean..."

Luna nodded. "A thousand years ago... through several incidents that chipped away at my willpower and fed my fears... I released Nightmare Moon into this world."

"But... that was a thousand years ago!" Dash complained. "I can see you're stressed but no-where as much as..." her eyes went almost comically wide as the whole castle started to shake.

"Celestia." Spitfire whispered, her voice echoing in the now quiet room.

o.0.o End Chapter 6 o.0.o

---

Liked the story? Why not add to its Tropes page? <http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/FanFic/TheEmptyRoom>