

Author's note: Remember when this story was relevant? I don't either.

Memories of Days Long Past: Session Final

Written by: nukeiffum

Edited by: NinesTempest and Ekevoo

The seven ponies sat in the dining hall of the castle, answering the last of Ares's questions over a late lunch of apple-dandelion sandwiches. At first the ponies thought that dealing with Ares would be a pain, considering the way he openly disliked his newfound responsibility with the girls. But surprisingly enough, he was more than cordial enough with them, choosing to only address each pony whenever he had to in a direct and efficient manner.

Except for Skyline of course.

"Oh, are you gonna finish that sandwich of yours, *Miss Skyline*?" Ares asked as his string of Q&As expired. "I was afraid that such a large meal would be too much for a *delicate filly* such as yourself."

Skyline shot a venomous look at Ares before taking up the sandwich and polishing it off in a couple bites. "You kidding me?" she asked through a full mouth. "I'd need two more of these to even be *close* to full!"

"Sure you wouldn't rather have a side salad instead?" Ares retorted. "Or maybe a small cup of apple sauce? I heard that little fillies like you just *love* apple sauce!"

"I'd actually like some more salad if you please," Amethyst said, daintily waving her hoof around.

"And ah wouldn't mind some apple sauce," Cinnamon requested.

Ares shrugged and fetched over one of the servants, asking her to fetch what the two ponies wanted. "Oh, and bring a little doily and a cup of tea for the filly here," Ares added, gesturing towards Skyline. "I'm sure she'd appreciate these little garnishes."

"AGH!" Skyline flipped over her empty plate in frustration. "You are the biggest jerkwad of a stallion I've ever met! I can't believe I'm stuck with an asshole like you!!"

Ares slammed his hoof on the table and brought his face right next to Skyline's to intimidate her. "Well *I* can't believe I'm stuck with *you*! I've never met a mare who's always blurting out something stupid every other second!!"

Skyline butted her head against Ares's. "Oh yeah?!"

Ares pushed his head against Skyline's. "Yeah!!"

The servant nervously walked in and placed the salad and apple sauce next to Amethyst and Cinnamon, respectively. "Um..." the servant darted her eyes towards the two raging ponies. "Is everything alright...?"

"Everything's fine!!" Skyline and Ares said together. "Hey, what? Grr, shut up! Why you—!!"

The servant shrunk back and meekly exited the room. Pastel waved at the departed servant and continued to munch on her apple. "Is he normally like this, Midnight?" she whispered to the pony next to her. "It's funny now but if we're gonna be stuck with him for a while then..."

Midnight shrugged. "Well, I don't think I've seen Ares this energetic in a long time, so things might settle down after he gets used to his new responsibility." She cringed as she heard the two arguing ponies start shaking each other by the shoulder frantically. "But um... maybe we'll have to get used to this kind of thing every day."

Pastel swallowed the last of her apple and tossed the core into the nearby waste receptacle. "Mmm, if I know Skyline she'll just end up burning herself out. So it should be over soon." Another crashing sound was heard and the two ponies were now on the ground, trying to wrestle the other into submission. "Hopefully," Pastel added with a wince.

Lily took one last sip from her juice box and trotted over to the two fighting ponies. With a single swift movement, she latched onto Skyline's tail and pulled her away from Ares, causing the pegasus to flail confusedly. "Ah-hah-wha?!"

"That's enough now," Lily said sternly. "As your older sister I won't let you get into fights with other ponies."

"But he started it!" Skyline whined.

"No buts!" Lily replied, staring down the cyan pegasus. "Now apologize to Ares!"

"Yeah Skyline, *apologize*," Ares snickered.

"Grrr... fine, whatever," Skyline fumed. "I... *mumble*mumble*. There, I said it!!"

Ares grinned and took a swig from his chalice. "That's enough fun for now. Anyways," he looked over each of the other ponies, a serious expression settling on his face. "I'm going to be honest with you all. I personally have no real reason to really care about any of you, Lady Midnight excluded of course. The lives of five ponies from some small village don't stack up to the thousands of lives that'll be affected if I'm not around to protect the princesses." He paused. "However... this job might be a bit more interesting than I thought it would be. It wouldn't be too farfetched of me to say that you want out of this arrangement as much as I do. So does this

mean you're all going to go find Deneb?"

The ponies all looked to each other, finally settling their gazes on Midnight. "Um, err," Midnight coughed and cleared her throat. "We haven't really got any alone time to think about it but... I know that I want to find Deneb." She half-lidded her eyes and gazed down at the floor. "I have something I need to ask him..."

Ares nodded and decided not to press Midnight on the subject. "What about the rest of you? No time but the present to make such decisions after all."

"I'm sure we'd all like to coax the truth out of that pony," Amethyst answered for the group. "I personally don't think he's such a rabble-rouser, but if he is... then I'd like to hear it from his own mouth. Isn't that right girls?"

Each of the ponies nodded in turn. "Not to mention," Skyline said, "the sooner I can get away from you the be—"

"I have my own reasons for being interested in Deneb," Ares commented, completely ignoring Skyline's existence. "As the captain of the Royal Guard, I want to do everything I can to help His and Her Highnesses attain their goals. And capturing the traitorous third member of the Summer Triangle will be sure to help them reach those goals." His ears suddenly drooped and he slumped back in his seat. "But... I have to follow around you brats to do that. So much for being the Captain..."

"Hah!" Skyline pointed her hoof at the dejected stallion. "That's right, you have to follow *our* lead!"

Ares stuck a hoof in Skyline's mouth, shutting her up. "Remember who the pony is with the sword and the crossbow," he said menacingly. "I don't have anything against you ponies, but I will use these weapons if I have to."

"But... you won't, will you?" Lily asked, tilting her head and turning her eyes up at the captain. "Because... we're innocent..."

The menace escaped from Ares's eyes and he slumped back once again in his seat. "Whatever... so when are we heading out?"

"I was thinking tomorrow morning," Midnight said. "Is that alright with you girls?"

"Fine by me," Cinnamon shrugged. "Ah need to go find Sundae and apologize ta her fer disappearing first anyways... hope she wasn't scared too bad from bein' alone..."

"Don't worry about that," Midnight smiled, "Jeeves was taking good care of her. And she didn't

look scared at all when I saw her.”

Cinnamon frowned. “Wait, ya saw her? Ya shoulda told me sooner!” Midnight flinched from the orange pony’s sudden outburst, causing Cinnamon to elicit a sigh. “Eh... nevermind, with all this crazy business it prolly slipped yer mind.”

Amethyst comfortingly laid a hoof on Cinnamon’s. “No worries, let’s all go see her this very instant! I think I’m quite finished with my salad anyways.” She turned to Midnight. “Might you have any idea as to where she and Jeeves are at the moment?”

Midnight pondered for a moment. “If I recall correctly, it should be Jeeves’s turn to tend to the gardens today so... they’re probably in the courtyard right now!”

“Let’s go to the courtyard then!” Skyline said energetically. The other ponies smiled and agreed, getting out of their seats and beginning to make their way towards the courtyard.

“Hey, wait a minute! If anypony’s going to lead the way it’s going to be me!” Ares called out. He dashed off to catch up to the ponies, accidentally bumping into Lily to continue to verbally assault Skyline.

The yellow pegasus pony clumsily fell to the ground making a small squeak as her body met the floor. Sadly, she was too quiet to hear, and her friends continued to move forward without her. “H-hey... wait a moment...” She quickly got up to her hooves to close the short gap between them, but something suddenly reached out at her and pulled her aside.

“Eee—ulp!” A hoof was placed over her mouth to keep her from squealing.

“Shhh, it’d be a pain if Ares caught us,” her mysterious assailant said.

Lily was kept still for a few moments before she calmed down and recognized the pony who was pinning her to the wall. The pony took his hoof out of her mouth, returning to the pegasus the ability to speak. “L-Lycoris? What are you doing...?”

Lycoris shrugged. “Stuff. Come on, follow me, I want to show you something.” He turned his back to Lily and started trotting away without waiting for a response.

“S-show me...? H-hey, wait!” She quickly moved to catch up to the scarlet pony, going at a brisk trot to keep up with his pace. “Where are we going...?”

“Someplace private,” Lycoris answered, keeping his eyes facing forward.

Lily curiously tilted her head. “Someplace private...?”

Lycoris randomly stopped and threw open a door, trotting nonchalantly inside of it. "Yeah, like this room." He glanced around at the interior, it was one of the castle's many storage rooms, this one storing sheets and linens. "You coming?"

Lily hesitated for a moment before she trotted in after him. "U-um..."

Slam.

"Eek!!" The pegasus jumped at the sudden sound, turning back to see that the door had shut itself closed. "H-hey... w-what's going on...?"

"Obviously I shut the door," Lycoris stated simply, a few specks of magic flickering off his horn.

"H-how..."

"Oh, I guess you haven't seen me use magic," Lycoris frowned. "I'm not supposed to at all, but I think I let my guard down earlier around Midnight. But yeah, I shut that door with my magic, not really that big of a deal."

"N-no!" Lily shook her head. "How come you shut the door like that?"

"Didn't I already tell you?" Lycoris asked. "I needed someplace private. If that door was still open then that would make this a public place, which completely goes against what I was looking for in the first place."

Lily shrunk back a little. "W-well... I suppose... but—eek!" Lycoris suddenly shoved his flank in front of Lily's face, causing the yellow pegasus to fall over in confusion and embarrassment. "W-what are you doing?!"

"I want you to look at it," Lycoris stated.

A bright red blush rose to Lily's face as she tried to avert her gaze away from the scarlet stallion's flanks. "W-why are you asking me to do something like that?!"

"Because I need you to see it," Lycoris answered, shoving his flanks closer towards Lily's face, his tail swishing back and forth impatiently.

"W-we haven't known each other long enough for you to be doing something like this!" Lily cried. "A-and I don't think I like you that way!!"

Lycoris ruffled his brow in confusion. "What are you talking about? Just look at it already."

"Why do I need to look at your flanks?!" Lily squeaked, her voice raising several octaves.

"I don't want you to look at my flanks!" Lycoris retorted, a slight tone of exasperation finally entering his voice. "I want you to look at what's *on* them."

"W-what's on them...?" Lily asked confusedly.

"Yes. What's on them," the stallion repeated. "Namely, my Destiny Mark. If you stare long enough, it should become clearer to you."

Lily hesitated before focusing her eyes upon Lycoris's flanks. As she stared, a faint shape began to manifest itself. The seconds ticked by, the image becoming clearer and clearer. Because the shape itself was a deep scarlet color, it blended in with the hue of Lycoris's coat, it took some time before Lily could discern what it was.

She saw the petals at first. The thin red outlines gradually darkened against the slightly lighter shade of Lycoris's coat. The thin petals continued to appear, materializing in almost a viscous fashion, spreading up across his flanks almost like blood. Spidery stems extended out from those petals, curving upwards as if the flower were trying to grasp something beyond its reach. Soon enough, the red lines stopped flowing, Lycoris's Destiny Mark in full view for Lily to see.

"Do you know what it is?" Lycoris asked.

"A Destiny Mark, right...?" Lily answered hesitantly.

"No. Wait, yes. But no," Lycoris replied. "I'm not talking about exactly *what* it is, because I'm pretty sure you've had enough about what Destiny Marks are. I'm more asking about the form that it's taking. Like with how you have a lily for your Mark."

"It's a... um..." Lily scrunched her brow in thought, scouring her memory for what Lycoris's Mark was. "It's a Red Spider Lily, isn't it? A Lycoris Radiata?"

"A flower often used in funerals to signify the parting of those who will never meet again," Lycoris stated mechanically, almost as if he was reading it from a dictionary. "A beautiful flower if it wasn't for the stigma associated with it."

A faint sense of déjà vu settled upon Lily. It felt like the other pony said those exact same words to her some time ago. "I... see," Lily mumbled without actually seeing. "So um, what does this have to do with anything again?"

"Lycoris is a lycoris," the scarlet pony said, referring to himself in third person. "And Lily is a lily."

"I... still don't really get it," Lily admitted. "Can you be a bit clearer? Um, if you don't mind of course..."

Lycoris stared at Lily in thought for a few moments, causing the pegasus to awkwardly hunch down in embarrassment. "A Destiny Mark is much more than a manifestation of magical power, you know," he explained slowly. "Can you think of a reason why your Mark is a lily...?"

Lily tilted her head in thought. "Well... my name's Lily I suppose... and I do love nature too..."

"There you go then," Lycoris spoke. "There doesn't always have to be a deeper meaning to it, it's just a symbol of what defines you the most."

"So... you're a nature lover too then, Lycoris?" Lily asked confusedly, not really understanding what the other pony was getting at.

A sad smile crept up onto Lycoris's face. "*Always* means that there's always been an exception or two hidden within the masses." He quietly trotted towards Lily, moving past her like a soft breeze on a summer day. The words he spoke as he passed her carried with it a strange sort of weight to it, an emotion that Lycoris scarcely ever showed through his aloof exterior.

"Please, Lily... once you have the chance... take your friends and go back to your normal everyday lives."

"H-huh?" Lily moved to turn around, but a gentle glow suddenly enveloped itself around her body, keeping her from facing the scarlet pony.

"You don't need to be involved," Lycoris continued on softly. "Gnosis, Themis, Ambrosia, Ares... the Summer Triangle, Catalysts, the Day of Ascension... Midnight and I... it's best if you and your friends distance yourselves from all of this as soon as possible."

Lily strained her neck to face Lycoris, but she couldn't even manage an inch. "What... what're you talking about?"

"It's for your own good," he said quietly. "There's nothing to be gained but sadness if you intertwine yourself in this farce of a play."

"But... aren't we friends?" Lily asked, her voice barely above a whisper. "Why would anything be sad if I'm with my friends...?"

Lycoris stood in silence for a moment before responding. "Midnight and I are trapped in our roles," he answered cryptically. "There's no escape from our cruel fates, we know too much, we're too involved. But you... you and the others still have a chance. A chance to get away from all of this madness and go back to living happily in ignorant bliss. A chance that you'd be foolish not to take."

"I don't get it!!" Lily shouted, startling Lycoris. The pegasus almost never raised her voice, but the confusion and emotion welling up inside of her caused her to snap at the other pony. "Aren't all of us stuck in the same boat now that we have magic? Now that we know about the truth behind the Day of Ascension and that... that *excio animae* thing?"

"It'd be nice if the truth was just that simple..." Lycoris sighed. "None of you are anywhere close to being in the same boat as us."

Lily waited for Lycoris to continue, but no more words passed through his lips. The spell keeping her body in place faded away, and the yellow pegasus quietly trotted over towards Lycoris.

"Hey... um..."

"I should probably get you back to Ares now," Lycoris said curtly, signifying that the conversation between them was over. "He's probably on the rampage right now looking for you."

Lily hesitated for a moment as Lycoris magicked the door open before suddenly stomping her hoof on the floor. "No," she spoke in a soft yet firm voice.

Lycoris paused, his mind not processing Lily's assertiveness. "Did you say something, Lily?"

"I said no," Lily repeated. "You can't just say all those things without a proper explanation and expect me to nod my head and go along with you!" She took a few tentative steps towards the scarlet pony. "Aren't I your friend Lycoris...? Can't you tell your friend the truth of why you want her to leave you...?"

"Friend... haha..." A bitter laugh escaped the stallion's lips. "It hasn't even been that long since you've met me and you say we're friends?" He glared at Lily, an ice-cold glare that forced the pegasus to instinctively take a step back. "You'd do best not to put your trust in ponies you barely even know. Something like that might get you killed one day."

The two ponies' eyes were locked together for a moment, Lycoris's icy stare rooting Lily to the spot. She was transfixed by his gaze, a gaze filled with unfathomable emotion. A gaze shrouded by a frosty haze that masked his true emotion. Yet even through this blizzard, Lily could see something in the depths of his eyes. Something that kept the pegasus from breaking her line of sight.

It was a hint of sadness.

Lycoris broke the trancelike atmosphere the two settled into, shutting his eyes as he turned back towards the outside corridors. Lily hesitantly reached out towards him.

"Please, just leave if you have the chance. That's all I'm asking of you."

Lily gritted her teeth and prepared to fight back his request, when a loud voice bellowed through the air.

“WHERE HAS THAT PEGASUS GONE?!”

Loud hoofstomps reverberated throughout the halls, the driving force behind them containing the rage and fury of a thousand and a half suns.

“As I said,” Lycoris spoke, his voice resuming his usual nonchalant tone, “Ares is probably on the rampage looking for you.”

Lily grimaced and stepped timidly into the hallway. The first thing she noticed upon stepping back into the velvet corridors was an armored stallion running a storm through the area. The second thing she noticed were the five other ponies trailing behind him.

The pegasus took a step towards the group. “U-um... girls...?”

“Captain Ares, stand down!” Lycoris barked.

The rampaging earth pony’s ears perked at Lycoris’s order. He swung around to face the other stallion, an annoyed look in his eye. “Who the hell do you think you are, giving me orders like that?!”

“Your superior,” Lycoris responded briskly. “Now settle down already and stop being such a berserker. Lily’s right here.”

The captain noticed Lily for the first time, angrily cantering up to her. “Where the hell did you go?! Don’t you know that if you just randomly disappear like that I have to assume the worst? You better have a damn good reason as to why you vanished, because by the Goddess’s name if you don’t you’re getting thrown straight back into the—”

“Calm down already!” Lycoris ordered, a tinge of annoyance coloring his voice. “If you’d care to use the powers of perception that our oh so magnificent Goddess granted you, then you might notice that Lily’s in my company.”

“And I trust you as far as I can throw you!” Ares scoffed. “Wait a minute, scratch that. A clergypony like you has bound to be as light as a feather!”

Lycoris narrowed his eyes. “Are you questioning my abilities?” he asked with a hint of menace.

“I’m doing no such thing!” Ares said sarcastically. “I’m only voicing my doubts of having to depend on somepony I’ve never even heard of before to be watching my flank!”

Lycoris shrugged. “Fair enough. Just remember that I have just as much responsibility as you

do, *Captain*.” He glanced at the yellow pegasus pony. “And if I want to have a private chat with Miss Lily here, then I will do so without having to acquire the permission of a pony such as yourself.”

Ares gritted his teeth. “Listen here, hotshot. Even if the King told me to blindly trust in you, that doesn’t mean that I have to like you. And you’re really pushing my limit here, so if you want our little journey to go smoothly then you’d best shut your mouth before I shut it for you!”

“Oh? A journey you say?” Lycoris smirked, changing the subject. “What for?”

“Don’t pretend that you’re clueless,” Ares grumbled.

Midnight finally took a step forward between the two feuding stallions. “E-erm... well, we’re all going on a search for Deneb so we can clear the others’ names...”

Lycoris raised his brow. “Oh? How do you propose to find a pony who has evaded Canterlot’s forces for more than fifteen years?”

“We were thinkin’ that we’d head back to Ponyville and see if we can find any clues,” Cinnamon offered. “It was the last place anypony saw ‘em, according to Lily and Ame anyways.”

“Sounds reasonable enough.” Lycoris nonchalantly stretched out his forehooves. “Well... I’m assuming that we’re setting off tomorrow morning, so if you’ll all excuse me, I’ll be going off to bed. I suggest you all do the same if you want to be bright and chipper when the sun rises!”

Before anypony could say a word in response, the scarlet pony trotted off, leaving the group in a confused daze that none of them could shake off.

Ares struck his hoof down in frustration. “Ugh, I can’t believe I’m stuck with that clergypony...”

“And I can’t believe we’re stuck with you either,” Skyline muttered under her breath.

Ares raised a hoof to object before lowering it back down to the ground. “You know what, forget it. I’m too pissed off right now to play with you.”

“What?!” Skyline fumed, her wings flaring up in frustration. “Play? Play?! You think you’re playing with me?!” Ares ignored the pegasus and began trotting off towards the dormitories.

“We all get some sleep,” Ares ordered. “Goddess knows we need it if we’re going to be stuck together tomorrow.”

“Hey! Hey!!” Skyline shouted. “Pay attention when I’m talking to you!!”

The others began to follow suit, shadowing Ares as he travelled towards the dormitories. Lily looked towards the direction where Lycoris was trotting off in, before Amethyst grabbed her and pulled her back to the rest of the group.

“What on earth was that pony talking to you about anyways, darling?” Amethyst asked.

Lily mulled the question over for a moment, not exactly sure herself what the true meaning behind Lycoris’s words were. “He just wanted to talk about flowers,” she finally answered, obscuring the real conversation the two ponies had.

Amethyst looked at her best friend in disbelief. “Flowers? Are you being serious?”

Lily nodded. “It’s because both of our Destiny Marks are flowers, so he thought that we could talk about them.” Her lie was so obviously transparent, she was half-expecting for the unicorn to call her out on it. Lily wasn’t sure why, but for some reason she was afraid to impart the contents of that conversation she held with Lycoris.

Amethyst examined Lily’s face for a moment, scrutinizing the pegasus’s features. At any moment, Lily expected her friend to call her out on her lie. But to Lily’s surprise, Amethyst instead shrugged. “If you say so, dear,” the unicorn said nonchalantly.

For some reason, a twinge of pain reverberated in Lily’s heart. Something about the way Amethyst responded to her filled her with a strange sadness. “U-um... yes...” Lily replied half-heartedly. She wasn’t exactly sure what she was supposed to say now that she had lied.

“Phew, I’m tired!” Pastel suddenly cut in. “Let’s hurry up and get to bed so we can see Ponyville again tomorrow!”

Lily sighed. “Y-yeah... let’s go...”

--

The next morning, fourteen ponies stood at the front gates of Canterlot. They were split up into two groups, those who were staying, and those who were departing.

Themis, Ambrosia, Gnosis, Celestia, Luna, Sundae.

Midnight, Cinnamon, Skyline, Amethyst, Lily, Pastel, Ares, Lycoris.

Those who were staying were saying their goodbyes to those who were departing. Cinnamon and Sundae. Luna, Celestia, Midnight and her friends. Ares and the King and Queen.

And Lycoris and Gnosis.

Feelings were relayed to each other. Words of encouragement to bless the journey ahead. Tears falling from loved ones' eyes.

It was a typical heartwarming parting scene, a scene that's been played out so many times it was almost sickening.

This is boring. So boring. How could anyone want to see something like this?

"I love you big sister." How sickening. "Be safe everypony." Disgusting. "I'll miss you."

Aaaaah, it's so annoying, so so annoying.

All of these ponies are so fake. All these false pretenses of love and adoration don't do anything but piss me off.

It'd be so much more interesting if a confession was made. A public confession of sin that would paint their ridiculous friendships a bright red. But no, no, that doesn't happen just yet. It happens much later, much much later. It's so annoying, having to wait to see the good part. It's even more annoying, having to sit through the boring parts a second time.

At least there's one interesting thing in this sickening display. A perverse, twisted display of love. That kind of love is so much more interesting than that stupid flowery form of love, isn't it?

"Realize your purpose, my greatest creation."

If only a single line could save a failing play, then it wouldn't be so boring. But it's not enough, not yet anyways.

It's almost there. The beginning of tragedy. The wait will be worth it.

I won't have to be bored anymore.

So hurry off to Ponyville. Hurry off to all those neat little adventures of yours. Hurry it up and reach the truth of everything. Reach the truth that'll tear the lot of you apart.

Then I get to see something beautiful. Even if it doesn't live up to the first time, the second time through should still be beautiful.

I wonder if he can hear me.

I wonder if a mere projection can hear my voice.

Then I can tell him to speed things up.

The destruction of friendship.

I want to see it.

So hurry off, hurry off.

And then they will seek me out.

And then I'll be able to play again.

And then I won't be bored.

Because then I'll have you, Miss Twilight Sparkle.