

Maledictum Insania 2: The BloodClaw Cult

By Nero Darkard (aka. NeroTheDarklord)

Chapter 6: Insight

It was another beautiful evening in Canterlot. The sun slowly set over the city, tinting all buildings in gold as two famous unicorns slowly walked through the streets: The much-loved high society celebrity Fancy Pants and his sidekick, the top model Fleur De Lis.

It was the usual time of the day where these two could be together without being surrounded by fans and friends. But while Fancy Pants had his head high and admired the evening beauty of Equestria's capital, Fleur kept looking at the ground. Finally, they both arrived at Fancy Pants' apartment.

"And I say! It wasn't before the incident with Miss Rarity's scars and nose that I found out she is actually a keeper of harmony! Can you imagine?" Fancy asked while he used his magic to open the door and stepped inside.

"Sounds unbelievable," Fleur replied, stepping in moments later.

"I instantly knew there was something special about these lovely friends of her's. Yet, it is hard to imagine such important ponies are barely recognized and were forgotten so fast! I took the liberty to do a little research on them and they actually saved Equestria multiple times from complete disaster!" the stallion celebrity spoke in fascination.

"That also sounds unbelievable," the top model kept commenting.

"Still, despite it all, they keep living normal lives! Such humble mares. I say, it is absolutely admirable!" Fancy stated while eyeing up his art collection and rearranging it with magic.

Fleur De Lis just stood nearby, not saying a word. Her eyes fell on a collection of professional photos featuring her and Fancy Pants. As he finished rearranging the drawings, he kept scrutinizing them for a moment, rubbing his chin with his right front hoof.

"She really is something extraordinary, is she not?" he suddenly commented.

"Who?" Fleur asked.

"Why, Rarity of course!" Fancy replied.

"Oh, yes. She is talented... generous... charming..." the unicorn model spoke, her voice getting

lower and lower after each word.

"I say. Fleur, my dear. Are you okay? You have been worryingly quiet this evening," the unicorn stallion wondered.

"No, No. Don't you worry. I am quite alright," Fleur replied and threw a pose on the sofa.

"Well if you say so. But remember: If there is something bothering you, you can always come to me," Fancy Pants offered.

A minute of silence passed while he went to the kitchen and picked a bottle of high quality grape juice, pouring it into two crystal glass cups. This usually brought the smile back to his friend's face.

"You know, it has been years since I last spoke to her. Perhaps I should invite her over for a while. I would be very much interested in finding out more about this wonderful mare at a candlelight dinner," he kept speaking.

Suddenly, Fleur's eyes went wide open and moved over to Fancy Pants. Though she quickly had to put herself back together as he returned with two floating glass cups, handing one over to her.

"To good friends!" he spoke and took a sip.

"To good friends..." Fleur replied with a faked smile and started drinking herself.

The rest of the evening, Fancy Pants kept on speaking about his latest charity auction and the several hundred thousand bits he made with it, going to the Appleloosa expansion program. Though Fleur barely paid any attention.

As it started getting dark, Fleur De Lis left Fancy Pants' apartment and started walking home to her own. Her eyes constantly were stuck to the ground, sunken in thoughts with a sad expression on her face. But while she went through the darker streets of the capital city, she suddenly found a pony blocking her way. As Fleur rose her head, she could see a long red robe with three black claw marks on it.

"Dear Princess Celestia,

We have been interrogating the abductor for five days now without any progress. He completely refuses to cooperate and all we could get out of him so far were insults. I am starting to lose my patience with him. Sadly, that is all I can say about our progress. The reapers just can't find any

traces. We will try getting information from him for one more day. After that, I would appreciate it if you could ready a convoy to take him into custody.

Your faithful student, Twilight Sparkle.”

As soon as she finished the letter, the purple mare dissolved it into magical smoke and sent it on its way. All of her friends were standing nearby and looking at her as she sighed in frustration and hung her head.

“Okay, girls. One more try. I’m really sick of this guy by now,” Twilight spoke in a demotivated tone.

“You are not the only one, darling. I still can not believe he dared to call me filth,” Rarity commented angrily.

“Yet we barely have any other option than to deal with him. If he is a member of the organization we are tracking down, he might be our only chance to find out more. We need to crack him open somehow,” Crystal analyzed.

“I don’t want to step down to his level, Crystal. But you are right. We really need to get him to speak. I already asked the princess for a convoy to get him out of here,” Twilight replied.

“Well what are y’all waitin’ for then? Let’s get to it!” Applejack spoke and opened the door to their improvised interrogation room.

Since they had no better place to put this stallion, the group rented another room. Luckily, there were barely any tourists in Trottingham at this time of the year, so they could claim the room which was connected to theirs.

In order to ensure the stallion would not get any chance to escape, the keepers of harmony had moved all furniture to the walls, placing only a single chair in the middle of the room for the abductor to sit on. Furthermore, Twilight used her magic to enchant the chair, the rope which kept him tied and the walls of the room. No matter how much he struggled, he would not be able to move the chair or break the rope. No matter how loud he would get, no one would hear him.

But he never even attempted any of that. For days now, he just kept sitting there, hanging his head and waiting for the mares to return for yet another round of interrogation. Each time they entered, he just gave them a despise-filled glance without even lifting his head.

“Ok. Listen closely. This is your last chance to speak. You better use it,” Twilight started.

“Hehe. You call this interrogating? Tying me on a comfortable chair in the middle of a hotel, giving me food and water and letting me use the bathroom? No torture at all? You keepers are

pathetic,” he spoke mockingly.

“We are not like you! Be lucky you are being treated nicely!” Rarity spoke angrily.

“Right. You are not like me. If I would hold you hostage, the least thing I would do is make you look like that country cripple over there,” he spoke, glancing over to Applejack.

“Why, you dirty little-” the orange mare started, approaching their hostage in order to beat him.

“No, AJ!” Twilight spoke and reached out her left front leg to stop her. “I already said I don’t want to go down to his level! Look. We know what you have done. I am very close about to contact the royal guards. That would mean spending the rest of your life in a dungeon. Your only way out of this now is to finally answer our questions. Why did you attack the reapers? Where did you bring the ponies you kidnapped? Do you belong to an organization?”

“As if I would be afraid of the dungeons in Equestria! There is barely any difference between them and this hotel room! Just do me a favor and kill yourself, okay?” the abductor kept mocking.

The keepers of harmony sighed in frustration and hung their heads. It was useless. He just wouldn’t speak, no matter what. They were about to give up on him when Fluttershy suddenly stepped forth.

“I really hoped I wouldn’t have to go that far... But I guess I have no option...” she spoke while walking right in front of the pegasus stallion.

“Haha! Finally you are stepping up the game? What are you going to do with me? Kill me maybe? Or do you... Oh gosh... What is with your eyes? Oh my gosh! No! No! Stop it! Stop it!” he suddenly started yelling.

The group became puzzled. Fluttershy was just standing there, not doing a thing to him. Yet, he kept shifting around in his chair in complete panic. Then suddenly, it became clear to all of them what was happening right now.

“I won’t stop unless you answer our questions,” the yellow mare threatened.

“Okay! Okay! I will speak! Just please! Stop staring at me like this!” the stallion pleaded.

As Fluttershy broke the Stare and stepped aside, he instantly hung his head, panting and shaking in stress.

“Why didn’t you do that sooner?” Twilight wanted to know.

"It is cruel, Twilight... I hate being cruel... By now, my Stare is very powerful. I can traumatize ponies if I overdo it..." she answered, turning her head away in shame.

"There are times where we cannot afford to be kind, apprentice," Crystal started, unfolding a bat wing over her. "But you certainly are going the right path. Cruelty can only bring more chaos, madness and suffering."

The group now refocused the still shaking stallion, staring at them in fear.

"So you are willing to speak now?" Twilight wondered.

"Yes... Yes, I will... I don't care if they kill me for that. I'd rather die than go through that a second time..." he spoke lowly.

"They?" the purple mare asked.

"They... You are right... I am a member of an organization..." the stallion spoke.

"What organization is that?" Applejack wanted to know.

"We... call ourselves the BloodClaw Cult..." he replied.

"The BloodClaw Cult?" Fluttershy asked.

"Yes..." the abductor answered.

"And what do you do?" Twilight wondered.

"We worship the true gods of Equestria... The demons and their queen, Nightmare Moon..." the pegasus stallion replied.

"You *what*?! Are you completely out of your minds?!" Rarity shouted in shock.

Now, the stallion seemed to be offended. He rose his head again and gave Rarity a glance of absolute hatred.

"The demon queen and her godly children are a million times more honest and true than your oh so beloved tyrant princess will ever be, you damn heretics!" he growled.

"How can you say such a thing? How can you be so blind? The demons are evil. All they want is to destroy the world," Fluttershy commented.

"No. You know who is truly blinded? You! You are all blinded by the light of this forsaken alicorn!

I don't expect any of you to understand, but your foolishness is what will kill all of you," the stallion spoke loudly.

"Okay. Enough of that," Twilight spoke. "Let's get back on track here. Why did you attack the reapers?"

"We need their blood..." he replied shortly.

"What for?" the purple mare wanted to know.

Now, the pegasus stallion became silent. Apparently, they were hitting an a lot bigger secret now, so he just hung his head.

"Do we need Fluttershy to give you the Stare again?" Twilight threatened.

"No! Anything but that!" he instantly shouted.

"Then answer my question: Why do you need reaper blood?" she asked anew.

"For... incarnation rituals..." the stallion replied, hesitating a lot.

"And what in tarnation does that mean?" Applejack wanted to know.

Again, the stallion remained silent.

"I think I have an idea... oh gosh I hope I'm wrong..." Twilight replied in worry.

All eyes focused on her while she stared at the stallion. Her mouth opened and two words escaped which she should not be able to form in front of him.

"Maledictum Insania," she spoke.

It took the group a moment to realize, but then they all became wide eyed and stared at the stallion in disbelief. He, though, just kept hanging his head.

All keepers of harmony had been cursed with the curse of secrets when they learned about this greatest of all secrets. This meant that, unless the pony they talk to already knew the secret, it would be impossible for them to put it in words. The fact that Twilight could speak it out could only mean one thing.

"Ya know about the curse of madness?!" Applejack shouted in shock.

"What you call a curse, we call a blessing. The ability to see the truth and gain unimaginable

power through it," the stallion replied.

"How much do you know about it?" Crystal wanted to know.

"Everything. Absolutely everything. We know it is Nightmare Moon's gift to Equestria. We know it gives us enormous power. We know it saves ponies from death and we know that it is this blessing that allows worthy ponies to ascent into the godly ranks of demons. This is why we need reaper blood. It contains high concentrations of the blessing," he spoke calmly.

"It just blows my mind how wrong you are about everything!" Twilight commented while holding her head with both front legs. "It is not a blessing and there is certainly nothing good about it! It is this curse which causes all of Equestria to suffer!"

"And exactly that foolishness is what will kill all of you. Heretics... they never understand," the stallion replied.

"But... You... This..." the purple mare tried to speak.

Now, Crystal Blossom went over to Twilight and placed a front hoof on her shoulder to calm her down. As soon as she had herself under control again, the reaper mare's eyes turned to their hostage.

"Where do you meet?" she asked.

"I... I can't tell you..." he spoke.

"I guess you need another Stare then," Fluttershy commented.

"Ugh! Okay! Our church here in Trottingham is a newly built house downtown! But even if you can find it, there is no chance for you to get in!" the stallion answered.

"Why?" Crystal wanted to know.

"We guard our churches with our lives! No heretic is allowed on our holy grounds! If you try to get in, they will kill you. Even if you sent a whole army, you will not be able to find it! We can move our churches faster than Celestia can put together her troops!" he replied.

"We already witnessed that. But still, there must be a gap in your security. A way to enter without getting seen. You better answer this question, or I will tell Fluttershy to stare at you for the next hour!" Twilight spoke, already starting to get very angry at the cult.

"Oh gosh... I'm so dead... F-fine... The house is three stories tall, but we only use and guard the first floor and the basement... There is a manual dinner lift... barely wide and tall enough for a

pony to fit in... It is meant to transport food and clothing, but we do not use it..." the stallion explained.

"Does it go to the top floor and reach all the way down to the basement?" Crystal wanted to know.

"Y... Yes..." he replied.

"Good. Now give us the address of this church," Twilight insisted.

"Puddinghead Ave 27... A dark blue house with hedge fencing around it... Forgive me, Nightmare Moon..." he answered.

"Finally," the purple mare commented and started casting a sleep spell. Moments later, their hostage was knocked out.

"I can't believe it... This is so awful... They know everything. Just how could this happen?" Fluttershy wondered.

"I don't know, but this is a catastrophe. A demon worshipping cult... I can't believe such a thing exists..." Twilight replied.

"I completely agree. It is beyond me how they can know this greatest of all state secrets. If this knowledge becomes public, it will lead to mass hysteria. Furthermore, if the BloodClaw Cult keeps growing, we have to seriously worry about the security of the entire land. We must act instantly, or the results could be devastating," Crystal added.

"But how are we going to stop this cult? What are we going to do?" Rarity wondered.

"Even though we finally got some answers, we are still just scratching on the surface. We need to investigate deeper into the BloodClaw Cult. The only way I can see how we would be able to do that would be by sneaking into this church and spying on them," Twilight suggested.

"That sounds mighty dangerous, Sugarcube," Applejack worried.

"I know, but there is no other way. We know who we are dealing with now, but we don't know anything about the way they organize. This cultist has provided us with a chance to proceed now and we should use it. If we don't we will just keep chasing after shadows," the purple mare replied.

"Sadly, I have to agree. The best way to find out more about the cult would be by infiltrating it. But as your personal guard, I have to warn you. Since the cult seems to have a strong hatred towards reapers, Fluttershy and I will not be able to follow inside. If they see us next to you, it

would bring all of you into danger. As paradoxical as it may sound, it would be safer if the three of you go without us. Yet, that also means we will not be able to help if something goes wrong,” Crystal explained.

“I guess that is a risk we have to take. You heard him. If Celestia tries to take down the church, they will just move away before the royal guards and reapers even arrive. Even if they succeed, we would only cut off a tiny leaf of a giant tree,” Twilight answered.

“Well... I agreed to join your investigation and I am not backing out now that you need me, Twilight. I may be completely out of my mind, but I will come with you,” Rarity agreed.

“Ah guess y’all need me too then... Let’s just hope we get back out alive...” Applejack spoke.

“Don’t worry. If we can survive Tartarus, we can survive this as well. Sorry for pulling you into this, girls... I’m so, so glad I can count on you. I suppose we should do this as soon as possible, before they start suspecting something and vanish again. I would say we do this tonight,” Twilight explained.

“So it is tonight then... Ah better get rested up and prepare...” the orange mare stated and turned around.

The others followed her soon. Only Twilight remained in the room next to the stallion, letting an ink pot, quill and scroll fly through the open door. She needed to tell Celestia about their discoveries and that the royal guards should come for the cultist this afternoon already.