

Twilight Sparkle stirred in her sleep. Dark visions of burning buildings and boiling flesh fettered her mind, gnawing away at her peaceful slumber like an untreated cancer. She inhaled sharply, her horn suddenly sparking to life. It glowed an almost translucent, whiteish hue before erupting into a brilliant maroon cone of pure arcane energy. Her eyes sprang open, oval-shaped orbs in her skull expelling a blinding white light.

She cried out, stirring from her un-restful slumber. The light purple unicorn sat up in her bed, sensing a powerful tingling sensation at the top of her head. She blinked, her eyes adjusting to the light of the room - the only illumination offered was courtesy of the waxing moon and glittering stars. Twilight knew immediately that something was wrong. The air around Ponyville, usually devoid of a background magical charge, was literally teeming with raw magical energy. She clumsily rose to her hooves and trotted over to the picture window, offering a clear panoramic view of the night's sky.

What she saw made her breath hitch in her chest.

As if encased in half of a gigantic bubble, Ponyville appeared to be enveloped by a translucent light blue orb. Twilight immediately recognized the spell, though she was in a state of disbelief as to how the spell could have actually been cast.

"The...the Barrier of Arcane Guard..." she managed to say, her tongue clicking dryly against her lips. "But...how..." Before Twilight was able to finish her sentence, another electrifying bolt shot through her horn, this time coursing throughout her entire body, as if raw magical essence was holding a pony race across every single individual nerve ending. Her pupils dilated, the will of the magic in the air encompassing her consciousness. She could hear a voice in her head - soothing, reassuring. Gentle yet firm.

"This is a message to all magic-using ponies throughout Equestria. This is Princess Luna, goddess of the Moon. A terrible virus has begun to break out all across our fair kingdom. As far as we can tell, tens of thousands have thus far been affected - and that number grows by the thousands with each passing hour.

"The blue bubble that you can now undoubtedly detect encompassing your settlement, town or city is an ancient spell of Arcane proportions. It restricts access of even the smallest facet of an atom to the other side. This spell will essentially...quarantine your community from the rest of Equestria.

"Celestia and I deeply apologize for this coarse, unannounced action. It was done with only the best interests of all of ponydom in mind, and rest assured that it is only temporary. Canterlot's

top scientists, mages and physicists are already working hard to discover a cure for this virus. May all of the cosmos guide them in their efforts.

“And, finally, I must warn those who are receiving this message of the nature of the virus itself. This virus, put simply, does two things - it causes uncontrollable, murderous rage in male colts over the age of 17, and it...somehow...re-animates dead tissue.”

Twilight Sparkle swooned for a moment, the gravity of the situation beginning to take effect on her mental well-being.

“To all who have received this message: wake your loved ones, alert the pegasi and gather the earth ponies. You will all congregate in the mane area of your respective establishments and await further instructions. You will not - I repeat - will *not* attempt to make any contact with anypony who shows signs of infection, nor will you attempt to come in contact with anypony who has been so unfortunate as to perish as a result of this infection.”

“Go forth, and may mine and Celestia’s blessings be upon you.”

[Chapter Two =====>](#)