

<Mercy> ***Session 169***

<Mercy> Upon returning from Aquaria, a harrowing adventure that seems almost a lifetime ago, the party were contacted by Apollo in his masked disguise. He gave the party a rare still-working keycard to section 66, an area that had previously been secret scientific research sector within the underground train station-turned city, and the group were far too curious not to take up this offer.

<Mercy> The group first had to reach Floor 6, which they did through a sealed off stairwell long forgotten by the ponies who lived in the city above. Yet when they reached their floor, the door wouldn't budge. A regular wall wasn't about to stop our adventurers, however, and they used Phase magic to pass through the thin barrier without issue...

<Mercy> ...Only to accidentally come out in the rather cramped home of Toffee, Banoffee, Biscuit and Cream. They were a friendly young family, who were very short on space but were trying to make the best of it.

<Mercy> This family planned to join the many others who'd been intrigued by the masked Apollo's video announcement the week before, and congregate in front of the city's main doors with the simple request to be allowed to look outside for themselves.

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<Mercy> Next, when heading to Sector 66, the party bumped into Sunshine, Gemstone, and Dazzler, a trio of military mares who the party had befriended during their initial trip through Sanctuary the 'week' before. The mares, as well as their unit, had been assigned to guard the very door that the party wanted to go through.

<Mercy> Apparently this guard assignment wasn't some special measure or anything, it was just a dull and incredibly boring duty that was often seen as a punishment detail. Dazzler believed that she and her friends, as well as many other guards and soldiers who upheld their duty to the citizens of the city rather than obeying the Council without question, had been given these kind of assignments to keep them out of the way.

<Mercy> With the aid of Dazzler and her friends, the party used the rumours that had been circling about them for the past week to bluff their way past the guards and enter Section 66. They actually had a key, after all. How could they have gotten one if it hadn't been given to them to conduct /another/ secret mission for the Council, hmm?

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<Mercy> Inside, the group discovered the sad fate of Magicka's mother and father, and learned for themselves just what kind of horrific steps that Twitmyer and his colleagues were willing and happy to take in the name of 'scientific progress'... and personal power.

<Mercy> Working together, the party of friends managed to free Celeste from Twitmyer's shadow, and in doing so learned things about his twisted control over Magicka that may help free her as well. Along with their new knowledge, the group also have a teddy bear filled with Celeste's love and hope for her daughter, along with her hatred and loathing towards Twitmyer.

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<Mercy> On their way out of section 66, the group once again encountered the Masked Stallion. This time 'in the flesh'. He confirmed what they already suspected; that he was Apollo, Magicka's father. He had been burned alive by Magicka at Twitmyer's order, and now he was now a ghoul.

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<Mercy> <Mercy> the masked stallion continues, almost to himself. "I believe I died down in the dark refuse tunnels beneath the city, from the fall or the flames that still lick beneath my skin... At some point I must have died, surely. Yet I did not stop moving."

<Mercy> <Mercy> Apollo's voice is odd, a little distant, like he was reciting a story he's wanted to tell for so long. "Over a year I was down there, my mind lost and scattered, being nothing better than being in pain... but then I heard a voice. It was... strange. Almost fatherly. It called me 'Precious child of mud and clay...' and when it spoke to me I found myself again... although I can't recall what else it said."

<Mercy> * Red_Mage looks over slowly at Milia. "That's...some of our group have heard that phrase before, correct?" he whispers.

<Mercy> * Milia was about to say something to Jasmine, but finds her train of thought obliterated by the hauntingly familiar phrase spoken by the ghoul. "Are you sure?!" she asks him frantically. "That you can't remember anything, I mean? Please! It's really /really/ important."

<Mercy> <Mercy> Apollo nods slowly to Milia. "I am quite sure. I have tried to recall it many times but... the purpose I found. The hatred and rage at what had been done to me, drowned out everything else."

<Mercy>

<Mercy> Apollo had many things to tell the group, firstly that there was now an ambush waiting for them behind the only door outside. Dazzler, her friends, and the other soldiers on duty had been hastily reassigned elsewhere so the small team of Twitmyer's elite loyal White-cloaks could work without witnesses.

<Mercy> But Apollo already had a solution to dealing with the ambush; which was to spread his powerful illusion magic over the small team of White-cloaks to prevent them from noticing the

door opening or the group leaving. They could simply walk away freely... or counter ambush their would-be murderers, if they wished.

<Mercy> The Masked Stallion also had news on Twitmyer and the Council. They would be holding a meeting during the height of the 'Civil Unrest' in the secure war-room which serves as the Council chambers.

<Mercy> This is of great importance because Twitmyer is not being allowed to bring Magicka along with him. The other Council members, already scheming, back-stabbing, and paranoid, rightly worry that Twitmyer might try to move against them during the chaos... while also planning to move against /him/ while he does not have Magicka to aid him.

<Mercy> Yet their faith in the chamber's 'impregnable magical wards' may prove to be their undoing, for although they believe Magicka to be a particularly gifted and dangerous unicorn, they have no comprehension of her actual power. Magicka is not simply a 'user' of magic. She is its Avatar.

<Mercy> Apollo has asked that you leave dealing with the Council to him. Only he can simply walk past the layers upon layers of heightened paranoid security without raising an alarm, using a guise of illusion to pass the barriers and the checkpoints and the small army of personal guards protecting the Council. Only he can make it to their chambers without alerting anyone inside. He wishes to enact his vengeance himself.

<Mercy> There was another task that Apollo requested of the group. Something only they could do that was of far greater importance.

<Mercy> *Session Begins*

* Jasmine_Mistplume smashes a balled up fist into an open talon. "We need to hurry before Twitmyer decides hes ready to poof Magicka inside the council room! We should get going now!"

* Milia nods her agreement to Jasmine's exclamation. "Can you take us past those guards? We'll get to Magicka as quickly as we can."

<Mercy> Apollo makes a sound like he was clearing his throat. "Do be clear that it is not because I doubt your ability that I wish to be allowed to deal with the Council myself. If such a task required direct conflict you would all be of far more use than I."

* Artifica nods to Apollo. "We understand."

* Berry doesn't understand. seems a bit absent

<Watch> "I'm fairly sure. You would be more useful than myself." Watch points out. "Most of my contribution is my shield spell when it comes to combat...oh and pre-combat spells to make

everyone their best." Watch smiles. He had initially intended it as pointing out his lack of use but realizing that his support mostly just didn't require his presence which is

<Watch> different from not existing

<Mercy> Apollo nods his head towards Jasmine and Milia. "Saving Magicka is of far greater importance. I must admit, over the years I have been watching from the shadows there have been many opportunities where I might have been able to kill Twitmyer. My desire for revenge almost drove me to do so... but it would simply be leaving Magicka to the wolves. Those in power would tear her apart trying to be the one to control her."

<Watch> "Maybe...we should try and take her away from this place..." Watch mumbles.

* Berry offers unwanted opinion "I'm oh-so-useful in combing! i has a brush!" shows exhibit A) A brush and applies it to randomom

<Berry> randomom turns out to be hornymom

* Jasmine_Mistplume had gotten really antsy, pacing back and forth, thinking about Magicka. She empathized deeply with her. She did not want to fail her, no matter what. "Yes, we all understand. C-can we please get moving?"

* Artifica smiles, closing her eyes halfway. "Thank you, Berrylove

* Berry "round and bound! hair conditioner!"

<Mercy> The Masked Stallion continues, "I could not even be in her presence, and I knew she would not be safe while she was in this city. But then you all came along. Dashing, kind-hearted adventurers from outside. Like heroes from the fairy tails that Magicka used to love having read to her."

* Watch smiles at that comparison however Jasmine was right. "I'm kind of with Jasmine here. If we're to be the shining heroes she needs...we should go soon." He still had some confusing feelings regarding Magicka...as a result of the masked dream...vision...masquerade thing but what he did know is he wanted her safe!

<Mercy> Apollo bows his head low, getting down on his front knees before the group. "I have no right to ask this of you, but please save her from this place. Please save... please save my daughter!"

<Mercy> Roundabout appears by Berry's side with a bottle of 'Head-and-shoulders-and-also-butt-shoulders' hair conditioner.

<Watch> "We've already promised that we would...but once again I swear that we will save her from this place!"

<Artifica> "You need not ask. We have already promised Celeste to do all we can. We would even without a promise."

* Berry sculpts hornymom's hair in a lot of different shapes, taking lots of pics for each one

* Milia smiles. "We'll take her far away. Someplace nice. With lots of green grass and tall trees, and plenty of ponies who will see her for the sweet young mare that she is. Not as a tool."

<Mercy> Apollo rises again. "Thank you. Hearing that has ignited a hope inside me I thought I was no longer capable of."

<Watch> "I...know a place..." Watch mumbles Miia's words again reminding him of the dream where half the time he saw that alluring mare as Magicka and the other half as Rarity.

* Jasmine_Mistplume salutes to Apollo. "You can count on us!" she bounces up and down restlessly.

* Berry Don't worry mr apony! we already fought the law! and the law won!

<Mercy> The Masked Stallion turns to Jasmine_Mistplume. "You have a few hours, at the very least. I have ensured that one or two of the Council Members would be delaying their arrival to the meeting. Even if Twitmyer plans to make his move before the citizens amass in front of the main gates, he would not do so before all the other Council Members are in his trap..."

<Mercy> "...So," Apollo continues, his voice which had been attempting to sound assured, mysterious, and a little aloofly-cool, sounds awkward instead. "You said that you had seen and spoken with Celeste? Can... can you tell me how she is?"

* Berry offers her two cents "She's dead!"

<Watch> "Well...she was...angry." Watch says slowly. "We...managed to calm her...and...well Milia did some...shaman'y stuff and we've got her feelings for Magicka in a stuffed animal"

<Jasmine_Mistplume> "She's.... well, she is nice and sweet and kind, but also angry. Like I said before, she didnt seem to even realize she herself was creating those... shivers?" She turns to Lavender

<Mercy> Apollo can't help but chuckle at Berry's forwardness. "Hah-haha, well, that makes two of us."

* Berry "mom can i be dead too? so i will never grow up!"

* Artifica frowns. "no Berry. You don't want to be dead."

* Milia glances to Watch Tower and then looks back to Apollo. "With the help of my spirit sister-" she elaborates, gesturing to Lavender Dream. "-I managed to stuff not only all of Celeste's love

for Magicka into Mommy Teddy, but all of her hatred for Twitmyer as well. It will be like a memory bomb as soon as Magicka makes contact with it."

<Watch> "A little secret Berry...you only grow up if you chose to. Stay young at heart and you're never old." Watch grins

<Milia> It is positively impossible for Milia to look even remotely confident as she adds, "We're... hoping it jars Magicka enough to make her receptive to the idea of resisting Twitmyer's conditioning."

* Milia notes, "...And I think it was good for Celeste. To get that stuff out. Er, in a sense, at least. Like a decade of therapy all shoved into about a half hour in the most intensely overwhelming manner possible."

* Berry "awww! but all the dead ponies look so happy!" sighs "okay, then i want to become a mommy too so i can scold my filly and tell her not to be dead!"

<Watch> "Well...that might take some time berry but I'm sure you'll make a good mommy."

* Berry "I will scold all the fillies and will tell them not to do this and that and make them eat spinach!"

<Mercy> Lavender nods at Jasmine. "The Shivers were a symptom of what she was going through. But Celeste is in a much better place now. We won't have to worry about those things appearing anymore."

* Berry offers "Big bad is also okay with the new plan!"

* Milia tut-tuts the donkeysus. "When you're older, sweetie," says the 15 year old mom.

<Mercy> "Yeah!" says the barely-one-month-in-the-physical-world-old spirit.

* Berry frowns again. being a filly can be frustrating. luckily she has a guitar and she can feel everypony bad with some blues! and blues it is!

<Berry> *can make everypony feel bad

* Berry ohnoe! berry epicfails at the blues and is playing country! country road take me home makes everypony homesick or at least sick if they don't like cheap country

<Mercy> Apollo nods his head as he hears the news about Celeste. When he speaks again, he sounds like he's smiling. "Thank you all, again. It is so good to hear. For Celeste to be free from her anguish is another wish I could not have hoped would come true."

* Milia remains quiet for a few moments. Eventually, she asks, "...Did you plan to go and see her? After this is all over, I mean."

* Berry "to the plaaaaace! i belooong!"

<Mercy> Apollo seems to freeze for several moments after Milia's question. "... I had not. I could not." He hangs his masked head. "Not like... like this."

<Watch> "Sir, that is a crock of shit." Watch says. "You're prepared to kill and then never see her again...but you can't face your daughter because of what you've become?" Watch is surprisingly heated on the matter

<Milia> "Nnnnnnnnope!" comes the abrupt interrupt from Milia. "Nuh-uh. Shoosh. Those mouthwords leaving your face right now? They're dumb." She starts to approach the stallion, but halts awkwardly when she remembers the whole personal space issues she had chided Berry for not minutes ago. "...Okay, you know what? Just pretend I've got my hoof firmly-yet-comfortingly on your shoulder in a

<Milia> 'time for a real-talk' moment."

* Red_Mage raises an eyebrow. "Are you quite alright, Watch?"

<Milia> ((that was to apollo, not watch))

<Watch> "I'm quite fine...but given how many orphans I grew up knowing. Each and every one of them would rather see their parent regardless of if the fact that they might be a ghoul...or I guess a ghost in your case."

<Watch> "Just because you can't bear to face them...doesn't mean that they don't want to see you desperately."

* Milia levels a serious gaze at the ghoul. "When all of this is done, Magicka's gonna be free, Twit's gonna be a pile of goo or ash or whatever, and you're going to have a goddess-damned family reunion with your wife and daughter. What does it say that Magicka can still recognize you? It means she still knows who you are. It means she still recognizes her father, who, might I add, she

* Milia /loved/. Celeste is going to be no different, no matter what you look like."

* Artifica nods firmly. "No child should be denied knowing their father for such a selfish reason."

* Milia harrumphs. "This can't possibly end any other way."

<Mercy> Apollo offers a half-hearted argument of, "But..." but the words of Watch, Artifica, and especially Milia have hit home. "Do you think I really could see Celeste... see them both, as I am now?"

<Artifica> "Absolutely!"

* Milia shakes her head. "I don't think you could. I think you /will/."

* Berry while milia is speaking berry changes music and gives a proper background, she sings under her voice, sad and far away "You make me happy, when skies are gray, you'll never know dear, how much i love you... so please dont' take..."

* Berry "my sunshine..."

* Berry "away"

* Artifica sighs. "If you really need the help, one or more of us could go with you. But I really think this is something you should do alone. It's not a moment we should intrude upon."

* Milia nods firmly at her wife's assertion. And also is maybe tearing up a little bit at her daughter's singing.

<Mercy> Apollo thinks for several moments, his confidence slowly building in no small part thanks to the backing music of a talented donkeysus. "You... you all may be right. I should go see them. I /will/ go see them. Whatever I am now, whatever time I have left, should go to them. Twitmyer has already taken too much from me."

* Milia nods, wiping her face with her foreleg for reasons completely unrelated to the fluids leaking from her tear-ducts. "Y-yeah!... You're all g-gonna hug each other!..." she weepywhimpers. "And cry!... A-and it's gonna be great!..."

<Mercy> Apollo taps the ground thoughtfully. "Something to look forward to... heh, I'd forgotten this feeling. I'll need to come up with a new plan for dealing with the Council. One that involves me leaving that chamber 'alive'... but that is for me to worry about. I promise you... and Celeste and Magicka, that I will find a way."

<Mercy> The Masked Stallion straightens up, hope now added to his voice. "I have delayed you long enough. Let's get moving. I'll take you to Twitmyer's private home on the VIP floor. Magicka will be under guard inside. I'll explain what details I have on the way."

* Berry puts away the guitar and goes curling on stripeymom, yawning and initiating nap sequence

* Milia drops her now flaming leg to the ground, only sniffing a little bit as Berry's song comes to an end at a suitably dramatic end. You can't prove she was crying if all the evidence was burned away! "Y-yeah... sounds good."

* Berry has quit (Quit: Leaving)

<Mercy> ***End of Short Session for Group 4***