Chapter Thirty-Two—I'm a shitty guard

Of course, good things never last. Celestia called me to the palace the day after Winter Wrap Up. Her summons was the usual 'Are you free?' that I've come to expect. I sighed, grabbed my journal entries, and sent a reply via Spike. He and Taya watched me disappear, with very different reactions.

I rematerialized in the dungeon of the palace, wreathed momentarily in a fake fire that still almost caused me to flinch. *That's odd.*

I took a second to study my surroundings. "Celestia. Blueblood," I said, nodding at them.

"That's *Prince* Blueblood, you… thing!" the annoying fellow said indignantly. I suppose I might as well describe him, since I haven't in the past. He has been described as the 'most eligible bachelor in Equestria.' He is incredibly handsome. His coat was white and mane and tail were dirty blond. His eyes were light blue. His cutie mark was a gold star against a dark blue star. He was a unicorn. And he was a complete and total dick.

"I don't suppose you know what happened to the last pony that took that tone of voice with me. He's rotting in a desert," I answered.

He snorted, stamped a hoof, and his horn started glowing weakly. Before he could do anything, I had a knife out of my sleeve and ready to throw.

Celestia stopped us both with magic to block whatever he was trying to do and magic to stay my hand. "I'll not have you fighting each other," she told us. I nodded once, and she released my hand. I slid the knife back in its hidden pocket. She had to glare at Blueblood for him to nod. "That's better. Blueblood, Navarone gets some slack when it comes to titles."

His eyes opened to a width I found rather satisfying. "You let him get away with such disrespect?" he finally managed to ask.

"I get allowed some things because I'm useful," I told him. I then turned my gaze to Celestia. "I suppose there's a reason you brought me here?" *With him* was the unspoken question I made sure my eyes vocalized well enough. She caught my meaning, I think.

"Blueblood needs an escort—" she began, but I cut her off.

"And you want me to find him one, right? Are we talking military escort or female escort here?" I caught another glare from Blueblood on that one.

"Nav," Celestia rebuked, "I'm being serious here. There's a massive social function happening in Maris—" That's Paris, I assumed "—and I can't make it this year. Neither can Luna. So we're sending Blueblood. Both Luna and I would really like you to be there with him, just in case."

I ran my hand through my hair—turned green overnight, with the sudden change of seasons. "Look, I don't want to say no, but at the same time I really don't like parties. And I don't want to be gone for three or four months just to go through Europe, get to Paris, and get out. Especially when I won't be needed. This is Europe. You have that place in the bag. No one will attack any of your representatives there."

"It wouldn't take months. This time, if you go, we'll teleport you there directly. It's just the two of you, and you're both already attuned to us anyway. We can get you there, you can spend the week at the event, and then you can get back instantly." *Well, I* was *getting kind of bored.*

"Two conditions." She nodded, and waited for them. "I don't have to dress up in any special outfit." She frowned, but waited for the second. "And I don't have to take any orders."

"Now look here—" Blueblood started, but Celestia cut him off.

"The second condition is agreeable. But the first…"

"Those are the conditions. I'm tired of dressing up in ways that are designed to get me killed, especially when no one would know the difference anyway. I'm the only human on the planet. I think my appearance alone is odd enough that I don't have to worry about disappointing anyone."

"Do you know why I summoned you here?" Celestia asked.

I assumed she meant the dungeon. "As a threat, probably. Another one of your 'this or bust' jobs." She smiled, but before she could answer, I said, "Feel free to lock me up, then. You know I'm neither a guard nor a servant. I do as you ask out of the goodness of my heart and out of fear. The only rewards I've gotten so far were entirely accidental on your part, and you can only threaten so much before I say, 'no more.'" Blueblood looked like he was about to have a stroke.

She nodded, slowly. "I was wondering when I would get you to that point. I accept your conditions."

"Cool. So, what are we going to again?"

A very, very, very big fucking party, with representatives from every intelligent and sapient race represented on Europe. Dragons, griffons, ponies—and all the other herbivorous races—cats, dogs, naga, and a single human. I don't know where the cats came from, as I thought they were concentrated solely in Africa. Maybe a few moved into Turkey from the Exodus I helped lead. The whole thing was called the Magical Maris Masquerade. Not the catchiest title, but it isn't like I could do any better.

It had been a week since I was asked to do the job, Celestia finally deciding that giving me a bit of advance notice might be nice. Of course, it didn't really matter in a case like this, when I would be gone for a week as long as everything went well. Rarity was actually jealous that I got to go to this party thing, until she found out I was going with Blueblood.

When the week was up, I gathered all my gear and a rucksack of clothes and Twilight, Taya, and I all took another train to Canterlot. Twilight was going to help Celestia and Luna with the spell to teleport us, since it was hell to cast over such a distance. Normally they wouldn't have bothered to recruit Twilight, since it would be like pouring a glass of water into an ocean, but they figured it would be a good learning experience for Taya.

When we got to Canterlot, we were in for a bit of a surprise: The entire place was

covered in a massive pink bubble. I didn't really care so I didn't listen to the explanation given for it.

When we all got situated, Celestia said, "Remember the matter we discussed, Nav."

I answered with a predatory grin, nodding. Blueblood gave me a furtive glance. He didn't know what we were talking about, of course. Neither did Twilight. And neither will my journal.

A second later, Blueblood and I found ourselves standing on top of the Eiffel Tower. "So," he was saying as we searched for a way down, "what was that last thing Celestia mentioned?"

"Telling you that would defeat the purpose of not telling you in the first place. Do you really think she would waste all that energy to send me here to babysit you? I'm not a guard and you're in no danger here."

He gave me a hard glare before remembering who Celestia would be most likely to side with. Instead of a sharp rebuttal, he instead gave a harrumph, and answered, "I don't think anything short of a dragon would dare attack me anyway. I've won top duelist in Equestria for the last seven years." After a pause, he continued, "I see your look, human. No, the other duelists didn't go easy on me because of who I am. I entered the first five incognito." That still didn't discount the possibility, of course, but I didn't feel like discussing that. "If it really came to a fight between us, I think I'd give you a good run for your money."

"I'm an assassin, not a fighter. If it came down to a fight, I'd disappear and strike you from afar."

"That's about what I'd expect from looking at you. You just look shifty, like you're constantly ready to jump for cover. If the princess wasn't putting so much trust in you, I would think I could knock you down with a hard stare." A week without sleep does that to a guy, even if I was still getting energy from some manner of photosynthesis or something. I couldn't imagine how I'll feel after a few months. And then years. And then centuries.

"Looks can be deceiving," is all I said.

"I certainly hope so," he muttered.

I just rolled my eyes. "Let's get to this party thing."

I heard him muttering something mean about 'auntie Celestia' as we continued down the tower. "Why did they even send us to the top of this cursed spire anyway?" he finally asked, as we were nearing the bottom. "Surely she could have put us somewhere closer."

"My name isn't Shirley. And yes, she could have put us closer, but then we might end up inside someone. Now let's go, we have a long walk before we get to Notre Dame."

"*Walk*?" he forced out.

"I don't see a welcoming wagon, do you? And you don't have wings, so we can't fly. The sooner we get started, the sooner the journey will end." He sighed.

Of course, it wasn't as easy as that. I had never been to Paris before, and Blueblood was still apparently incredibly attractive, so we both got a lot of attention. It didn't help that I was carrying a load of weapons. It also didn't help that Blueblood was preening heavily under the

attention.

And it really didn't help that the ponies here were living up to the bad stereotypes of the Parisians back in my world.

"I knew there was a reason I never wanted to go to France," I muttered, after the fourth time we got stopped.

"What are you talking about, human? The ponies here love me!" Blueblood answered, smiling. I figured he would be getting plenty of tail here.

"You, yes. Me, they're treating like the Hunchback." *Or an American.* I was sure that Blueblood, at least, thought that was fair. Ah well. At least I was contented in the knowledge that he was a dick.

We finally got to the cathedral after an inordinately long time full of Blueblood's flirtatious remarks to some demure looking French mares. Poor girls didn't know what they were trying to get into. Of course, some of them seemed as arrogant as this guy was, which was kind of amusing.

I gave our letter of introduction to the guards manning the door of Notre Dame. Their eyes opened incredibly wide upon reading it, and ushered us inside with appropriate pomp. The servant standing just inside the door announced us, "Prince Blueblood, standing in for Princess Celestia, and guard." Every eye in the cathedral turned toward us, first to Blueblood and then to me, since most of them had never seen anything like me in the past.

I looked out over the group before us and made a few observations. First, none of the races seemed to be mingling that much. The naga were spread out the most, as they are mercenaries and can be found everywhere. I could see pegasi in the griffon group and unicorns in the dragon group. Dogs and cats had a bit of intermingling between them. Other than that, there were pretty much demilitarized zones cutting each group into parts.

I saw a few familiar faces in the small cat group. Jocasta and Miguel were both there, watching me. *Interesting.*

I caught Blueblood eyeing some of the mares, and hissed in his ear, "Your royal duties come first, *prince.*"

"Relax, human," he whispered back. "I'm just taking a second to admire the view." He then delved into his speech, explaining the absence of Celestia and officially starting the week-long event. I learned that this place isn't called France, it's called Prance. Because that makes sense. As soon as his speech ended, almost everybody in the crowd put on a mask of some sort. None of the guards did, while all of the servants put on a copy of the same mask. That made sense to me, and it meant I didn't have to put on a mask.

Everyone started intermingling, then. Despite being able to tell what someone was by looking at their body, all the walls broke down. It was pretty neat.

I followed Blueblood around for a few hours, doing nothing of note. I occasionally said a few words to people asking what the hell I was, and my naga knife got me plenty of appreciable

glances from the naga.

I met my first griffon, too. Quite an arrogant race, for the most part, but they also have a reason for it. They are very fearsome fighters and very strong fliers. The group of them that pulled me away from the prince and his fawning admirers all had very large claws and beaks that looked like they could crack my head like a nut. Their masks did little to cover… well, anything, really. It was the thought that counted, I suppose.

"I have heard, human, that you were responsible for what recently happened in Egypt," the lead griffon spoke. "Is there truth to these rumors?"

"I've been to Egypt twice in the past little while. The first time I went, I was helping lead a flock of slaves through the desert. That exodus ended with a rather interesting scene between Celestia and the general of the cat army."

"That is what I meant, yes. So you really were there. Tell me, what kind of fighters are the cats?"

"Dirty fighters. Quick footed, agile, fast. A lot of them would be as quick to sneak up and slit your throat as they would be to fight you head on. And if they want to sneak up on you, you'll never hear them coming."

"I've heard similar things about you," a nearby naga broke in. "I've heard talk that the only real fighting you did was murdering a few guards while they fought the real threats."

"There is a place for everyone on the battlefield," the griffon said. "And this human more than made up for what kind of fighter he is by overpowering two assassins in his more recent trip there. Or am I mistaken?" he asked, turning to me.

"I caught them by surprise, but yes. I killed one and captured the other."

"And you are a mercenary for hire?" the griffon asked, a bit of hope to be heard in his voice.

"I have been hired by the Equestrian Crown for the duration," I answered.

The naga scoffed and the griffon just shook his head and said, "The princess always does get the good ones first… I don't suppose you have any stories you can tell us of your campaigns? These pony parties are always so dull. With the minotaurs banned for a few years because of that noodle incident, there are many less interesting beings to talk with." The naga came in closer for that, and the rest of the griffon's entourage closed up around me.

"Yes, human," the naga said, "Tell us how you won that dagger of yours."

"I don't think you'll be too happy with that story, naga, but I can tell you. Princess Celestia hired me a few years ago to help a family of ponies that had been kidnapped by naga. When I got on the scene with two local guides, I learned the truth of the matter: The naga group that was living in the caverns under the pony's house took the ponies for their own protection." I told the rest of the tale as it actually happened. There were murmurs at my talk of murdering the naga in their sleep, and looks of interest at my crossbow when I described what it had done.

"An appreciable body count," the griffon said. "Not how any of us would have done it, of course, but then we're more built for fighting than you are." He gently tapped the tile floor with

his claws. “Do you have any more tales, aside from your actions in Africa?”

“I could tell you of the first time I was hired to fight a pony. Or rather, a unicorn. It didn’t end perfectly, but it is an interesting tale.”

“That treads on dangerous territory, Nav,” Jocasta said, joining the small group around me. “I don’t imagine your princess would like tales of renegade unicorns getting out.”

“The damage is already done. They know, now. Nothing wrong with telling the story.”

“I’ve heard a few stories of fighting against unicorns,” the naga said, “but never a firsthand account. How would you go about combating one?”

“With another unicorn, of course,” I said. I told them that story as well, though left out the part of it being a friendly competition.

“Are you going to tell them of Kat next, Nav?” Jocasta asked. I assumed she was hiding a smile behind her mask, but I couldn’t tell.

“No one has asked of my love life. I can’t imagine who would want to know any of those tales.”

“I know I don’t want to know of your private life,” the griffon said.

“How many of the species represented here *have* you laid with, though?” the naga asked.

“Four, if you count humans. More, if you count unicorns and pegasi as a difference race.” And even more if you add alicorns.

“My, my, you do get around,” Jocasta said.

“I go where Celestia bids,” I said. “If I happen to have a bit of fun when I get there, well, there’s hardly anything wrong with that.”

“You’ve got a week here, guarding that supercilious pony,” the naga said. “Who knows, maybe you’ll increase that number a bit.”

“I’d be afraid to have sex with a dragon or a griffon, no offense. Way too many sharp areas for my liking.”

A few of the female griffons around me giggled at that, and the leader smiled. “I understand your wariness. The only thing that keeps them from ripping *us* to shreds is the knowledge that we can do the same. And finding a dragon that would concede to something like that with a mortal race would be hard, though your novelty might persuade a few of them to try.”

I waved that away. “Enough of me. Surely I’m not the only old campaigner here. Naga often pull work as mercenaries, and they fight amongst themselves occasionally. What stories do you have, friend?” I asked the naga. He told us a few tales. The griffons then took their turns. By the end of the night, we had a pretty sizeable crowd around us, with more and more tales being told.

Apparently there was a hell of a lot more violence here than I thought. There were tales of infighting from dogs, cats, and naga. There were tales of duels of honor from the naga, the dragons, and the griffons. We had a few tales of witch hunts from unicorns, who specialized in fighting other unicorns that grow drunk off their power. We had one story of a pony-style border war, with pies as weapons. The teller of *that* story realized what he was saying and who he was

saying it to and ended up really embarrassed. Jocasta and Miguel told a few stories from the liberation march, and gave me plenty of credit when I played parts.

Blueblood apparently joined the crowd at some point, but didn't say much. He glanced at me often when Jocasta and Miguel were talking, though. The rest of the first night passed in a flash. I was eventually left wandering the streets of Paris all night, trying to keep myself amused. I probably could have found some… company… but I really wasn't interested. I was propositioned a few times by ponies with disreputable cutie marks, but I refused their services.

The next day was rather different. It started slow, of course; most good parties don't start picking up until late in the night. There was music this time, though. I recognized the band from the Gala playing.

Still, after the discussion the night before, there were plenty of people willing to have dealings with me. I didn't even bother following Blueblood around, this time. I kept him in sight at all times, to make it look like I was doing my job. Really, though, I was spending more time talking and discussing tactics and whatnot than paying any attention to the fellow. I didn't care if he got killed anyway, truth be told.

Eventually, enough people got to the cathedral for the fun to begin in earnest. Dances were had, alliances of sorts were forged, love was kindled, and peace reigned.

"If I may have this dance, ma'am?" I quietly asked who I was hoping was Jocasta.

She neatly bowed her head, confirming my guess. "I suppose I can give you that honor, human," she answered.

I led her to the dance floor, and we began to glide across the floor. I don't know when she learned to dance like that, but I was rather impressed. We kept up a small conversation while we danced. Eventually, I let my hand drift a bit downwards, smiling as I did so. She didn't stop me, but looked out a window and said, "The sun's setting."

"It always comes back up," I finished, slipping something into a pocket in the back of her dress. And did a little more besides.

She finally slapped me, and hissed, "I am not Kat!"

I lifted my hand back to its proper place and said with self-defacing smile, "No, but I have you to blame for her. Wouldn't you like to know what you were missing out on?"

"Not particularly," she answered, more calmly. "I thought you were more of a gentletom."

"I murder people for a living," I answered. We finished the dance and split off to find different partners. I ended up dancing with some of everything, with even some of the dragons acceding to dance with a unique species.

The night passed quickly enough, by all accounts. A young female dragon and I were the last two on the dance floor, my plant-like energy and her youthful exuberance keeping us standing. The orchestra had long since stopped playing, and most of the partygoers had already left.

“I’m surprised to see one of the mortal races still standing,” she murmured into my hair, with her head leaning on me. She was nearly asleep in my arms herself, I think, and tall enough that she could use my head as a rest without too much effort. “Hmm, smells like fresh grass…” she whispered.

“I’m hardly a mortal, myself. A magical fluke has given me all manner of gifts. One fluke gave me wings. Another gave me the life forces of a few trees. I don’t sleep in spring or summer, and can’t get tired. I have all manner of stamina, and I don’t feel pain as much.”

She perked up a bit at those. “Plenty of stamina, huh?” I thought I could feel her licking her lips on my head. “What would you say to continuing this dance somewhere more private?”

I really need to thank Pinkie Pie for forcing me to learn dances.

(Sex is coming. Ctrl+f Sex is over to skip)

She pulled me away from the dance floor and into the halls. “It would not be a good idea for any of the dragons to learn we’re doing this,” she whispered as we skulked through the halls. “Where is your room?”

“Right there, actually,” I said, pointing to a door we were just about to pass. “I haven’t been in it yet, though.”

She looked at it for a moment before turning back to me with a confused look. “What are the chances?” I shrugged. She just shook her head before trying the knob. It was unlocked. She pushed the door open and dragged me in, ducking under the threshold. She spent all of a second looking around. “It’ll do.” She turned back to me. “Strip. Now.”

Why do I always get the dominant ones? I kicked my shoes off and began removing weapons. A few minutes later I was left with just my pants.

She looked me up and down. “An interesting look. I was expecting more hair.” Her eyes settled on my pants. “If you don’t remove those, they’ll soon be in shreds.”

I sighed as I loosened the belt. “I don’t suppose there’s any chance of me getting the lead here, is there?”

She grinned as the pants fell. “If you can take it, by all means. But…” she whispered as she took a step closer, “I don’t think you’ll be strong enough.” She drew a claw down my chest gently, gripping my member. “I think you’ll still have plenty of fun, though.” She began gently stroking me with one claw and pulling me back to the bed with the other.

“Sadly, I’ve gotten use—ooh…—used to not having control. Some people just have—aaah—no self-control.”

She smirked a bit at that. “I can hardly imagine why. You’ll be a fun little toy, no doubt, but I wouldn’t want to force you into anything. There’s just a scent about you that I quite like.”

With that, she gripped my arms, casually lifted me up, and *threw* me onto the bed. Her grin widened as I bounced a bit, blinking stars out of my eyes. “Yes, you’ll be a fun little toy indeed.”

She joined me on the bed and pulled my head in close to hers. She had her snake-like tongue down my throat in seconds, exploring the inside of my neck. My eyes widened as I felt her moving around. She pulled out to say, “Not even going to try to fight back? Shame.” With that, she was right back down my throat. This time I had the presence of mind to wrestle her thin tongue with my thick one, and was able to wrestle it into submission. *Guess it being smaller means it doesn’t have as much muscle.*

She moaned into my mouth as she snuck her tongue out. She pulled her head back again. “Good, so you do have some fight in you. That’ll make this much more fun.” She scooched her body up further on mine, pushing me down onto the bed and onto my wings. *I’m glad this bed is so soft.* She stopped when she was straddling my chest. I felt her moist opening on my chest, its low warmth pulsing against me. “I’m sure you know how to pleasure me, yes?”

I looked down at where she was sitting on me. After a moment I looked back up to her face. “I can think of a few ways, yes. But you better be returning the favor.”

“Oh, the *big, strong* human is making demands?” Her grin turned into a smirk. “And what makes you think you get to have any fun?”

“You interested in a deal? First one that cums gets to be the other’s bitch.”

She considered for a moment. “Hm… Nah. We dragons get a bit sensitive this time of year. Your heartbeat alone is making me wet. I think I’ll just… *take*… what I want. But to be fair, I suppose I can pleasure you while you help me.” I tried shifting a bit to find that I was pretty much trapped.

“I suppose that is… acceptable.”

“You say that like I care what you think. Now, shall we get started?” She didn’t give me a chance to answer, just shifted even further up my body so that she was sitting on my face. “I know that tongue of yours is strong. I hope it knows what it’s doing down there.” Her warm slit was positioned right over my face. I had enough time to glance at it before she pushed down, grinding on my face. “We may have all night, but I’d like to get started.”

I flicked my tongue out, licking up at her inviting folds. She shuddered on top of me and I flinched back from her opening; I just hit the surface, but it felt like a furnace in there!

“Feeling hesitant? I know some races have problems having sex with dragons. I think I know a way to take your… mind… off it.” She lifted herself off my face, giving me some air. I managed to look up just in time to get a face full of dragon-vagina lowering back down. Her tail flopped over my head awkwardly. I felt her claws grip my legs and pull them open. Then I felt a warmth enclose my dick. Then… her tongue began. *Holy fuck.* My entire body tightened at the sensations she sent through me. I slowly relaxed as she continued, essentially jerking me off with her serpentine tongue.

And then she pulled herself off. “I’m waiting.” I shook myself from the pleasure-reverie I found myself in. I looked at what I was presented with and sighed inwardly. *Nothing’s ever easy.*

I reached my tongue out to her clit and gave it a nice lick. She shuddered again and bent back down to her task. I felt her begin again as I took her clit into my mouth and began lightly sucking the bead. It wasn't nearly as hot as her insides, making the task less torturous.

But good things last only so long… She pulled off me again and said, "You better get that tongue inside, or I'm going to start exploring places with my claws." I didn't like the sound of that, not one bit. I released her clit and took one last look at her little slit. *Sorry, tongue. I can get you healed later.* With that, I thrust myself inside her. She hissed, arching her back like a cat. *It's like the naga in reverse!*

God my tongue was sweltering. I gave her insides a long, slow lick before getting to work in earnest. She finally turned back to me, giving me more service. Even with the tree resistances, what she was doing put me in heaven. Of course, what *I* was doing put me in hell, so I guess it balanced out or something.

…No it didn't.

I kept going anyway, because I figured stopping might involve more pain, and possibly losing virginity in a place I never planned on getting touched.

With no warning at all, she came, forcing scalding juices around my tongue and all over my face. I ripped my head back, trying to shake the pain off and doing pretty much nothing since she was so close down on my face. The most I did was rub my nose across her clit several times, making her finally pull off my shaft and let off some incredibly sexy moans. *Little belated there, don't you think?*

After a moment of riding the bliss, she eased herself off me... just long enough to flip again and fall back on me, face to face. I saw the smile she was wearing and quailed a bit in horror. She began to lick my face clean, her soft tongue a pleasant relief from the chafing scales present on most of her body. She finished her cleaning job by forcing her tongue into my mouth again, hitting my burned tongue. Everywhere she touched seemed to feel better almost instantly. After she had her fun toying with my throat, she pulled her face away from mine.

"Now, was that really so bad?"

"Burned the hell out of my tongue and I didn't even get to cum. Don't tell me we're finished." Though my tongue was feeling a lot better. Maybe dragons have some kind of latent healing magic in their spit or something. I've seen stranger things in this world.

"Well… I've had my fun. I mean, I guess we *could* go for the main course…" Her grin turned wicked. "I wouldn't mind riding you until the sun comes up. Hm… It's pretty shameful for a dragon to have sex with something outside the race… but there are many that would argue that what we did was enough. Still, I think I could get away with calling you a toy as long as you don't have any release." She paused for just long enough to worry me and make my dick feel unwanted before continuing, "Of course, I really don't care about any of that!" With that, she jumped my bones—or rather, she jumped my bone.

She impaled herself on me with no warning and no time to brace myself. My hands shot out to grab the sides of the bed and squeezed as tightly as possible before I realized that it

honestly didn't hurt all that badly. Oh, it was warm, of that there was no doubt. But the burning I expected from what my tongue found was not there. *Maybe my resistances only exist for parts of my body that are outside everything else.* Learn something new every day.

She took a moment to adjust, just long enough for me to realize I wasn't in blinding pain, before she started to slowly pump up and down. She sat up on me, biting her lower lip as she slowly drew herself up and down on my length. After a minute, she settled down, leaving herself impaled. She let out a small sigh. "And here I was thinking you wouldn't be big enough," she whispered as she began to grind. "You're no dragon, but you're just the right size to—ah!—to hit the right spots." She started pumping again. "And I don't have to worry about protection."

With that somewhat ominous statement, she began to pick up speed, riding me as I felt the pleasure slowly build up. Her insides were still sensitive from her previous orgasm, and I felt her occasionally quivering as my dick touched certain places. Her tail slowly began to wrap around my leg.

I grinned as a plan began to form in my head. When she was at the peak of one of her pumps, I commented, "Remember what you said before we began?" She opened her eyes, a confused look on her face. "If I want the lead, I have to *take it.*" My hands shot up and grabbed her arms. She had time to look surprised before I pulled her off me and dropped her on the bed. I rolled over on top of her and pushed myself to my knees. I pulled her tail towards me, yanking her to her hands and knees. Tail in one hand and upper thigh in the other, I positioned my cock at the entrance of her hole.

Without pausing a second, I thrust into her. I grinned as her tail spasmed against me. I started pounding her, using my grips to make sure I kept control. She wasn't even trying to fight back, thankfully. I had a feeling she could tear me to pieces without a worry in the world if she wanted to.

"M-m-my tail," she moaned. "R-rub the base!" I let go of her thigh and moved that hand to the base of her tail. I pushed in a bit and felt her squeeze down on my dick. I grinned and began to rub her as she asked, continuing to pound away at her.

Not a minute later, she came yet again, releasing more hot liquids on me. It just felt warm to me, confirming my suspicions. I continued what I was doing, starting to get close to release. The vibrations and pulsing of her pussy as I continued working her through her orgasm drew me ever closer. She was really moaning now, probably keeping our neighbors awake with her noises of ecstasy.

After a few more minutes of bliss for me and her, I finally reached my peak. I thrust in one last time and let my load loose inside her, filling her with my seed that probably was sterilized as soon as it hit her hot insides.

When I felt myself empty, I finally pulled myself from her with a gentle popping noise. I eased her tail down, realizing as I did that I had it in a vice-grip. There was actually a small indentation on the scales.

"Now, was that really so bad?" I mocked, letting myself lay down next to her.

She giggled. “Not quite. I don’t suppose you’d mind if I stayed here for the night? I don’t really want to walk back to the dragon quarters like this.”

“Feel free. I suppose someone should get to use this bed. I’ll take a shower and leave you to sleep.”

“How kind of you,” she answered in a deadpan voice.

“I know, I’m a saint,” I replied with a similar tone. She just smiled and snuggled into the bed.

(Sex is over)

One pleasantly long night later, I found myself back in the Notre Dame cathedral for day three of the week-long Masquerade. The decorations set out for this one surprised me a bit: It looked like a massive rave was about to go down.

And as soon as the sun set, that is exactly what happened. A white unicorn with massive sunglasses stepped onto the platform where all the sound equipment was. “DJ Pon3, in the house!” a voice announced over speakers that had been surreptitiously set up around the cathedral. *Oh God, if the pope could see this now, he would be freaking out!*

I’ll be the first to admit, I don’t much care for dancing to that kind of music. I love it, yeah, and this is the first time I’ve heard any kind of real dubstep since I got here, but I just have no rhythm for that kind of stuff.

But that DJ Pon3 lass was pretty kickin’. I’ve heard some of Tiesto’s stuff before, but that had nothing on this. Maybe it’s just because I was there in person. I don’t know, but I couldn’t help myself. I started moving with the beat. I think Pinkie would have been pissed that I was dancing here and not at *her* party, but whatever.

I found myself dancing with a mare. I couldn’t tell without seeing her face or hearing her voice, but I thought for sure it was someone from the orchestra band. I figured it couldn’t be, what with her being a member of a massive classical orchestra.

But sure enough, when a lull in the music came, she introduced herself. “I’ve heard a lot about you, human, but I didn’t know you danced to music like this. I’m Octavia.”

“Howdy. My name’s Navarone. Didn’t I see you with the orchestra last night? And at a few of the Galas? I’m surprised to see you dancing to music like this, myself.”

“I like music of all kinds,” she answered. “Just because it’s newer and made with electronics doesn’t mean it has no value. It’s still just as hard to make, and takes plenty of practice to get good at. And this dubhoof electrifies me, and just makes me need to move! I’ve been to many of Scratch’s concerts, and they always surprise me with how well done they are…”

"This is the first real concert of this kind I've been to, and I gotta say, I agree. I haven't felt my chest vibrate like this since I was on Earth." Pinkie's party was nice, but it had nothing on this. And I didn't actually feel… compelled… to dance to it, as I did here.

There were representatives of all races there, that night. It was mostly the young, of course. We all took refuge in the music, letting it shelter us against the rigors of the night and hide us from the exhaustion of the day. The music was like a living thing, guiding our movements and holding us together. It was a beautiful night, and not for the first time I was grateful for the unrelenting energy I seemed to have. A lot of us young ravers kept the party going until the sun was peeking through the clouds again.

At some point after Octavia bled off from the crowd, citing exhaustion, the young dragon from the night before joined me. She slithered in the music, scales catching the light from the strobes and scattering it through the air. It was mesmerizing, in a way.

When I finally pointed out that the sun was rising, she answered, "Then when the sun sets, the party will begin again… Though of course, we can always continue this party somewhere else." I smiled.

When I got back to the Notre Dame, Blueblood called me over. "You really aren't doing a very good job, human," he accused. "With you going off who knows where every night, there's no telling what might happen to me!"

"I figured your night activities weren't something you wanted me involved in. If you'd prefer, I can watch you closer. I didn't think you would need someone to hold your hand, though."

"Well, you don't have to watch me *all* night, but the feeling of being protected would be nice."

I shrugged. "I'm a bit of a night owl anyway, as are most of the people I prefer to deal with. You tend to leave early enough."

The next few hours were excruciating, though. I had to listen to Blueblood talk about himself to some random mare. I wanted to strangle the fucker.

I was saved the effort, however. Near the start of the next phase of the party, he took a sip of his drink and started seizing. I immediately rushed to his side, pushed the mare away, and ordered that the doors be barred.

"Naga," I shouted above the clamoring voices, "I need some naga fighters! And get me a healer!" Everyone in the room knew that no naga would ever poison someone, even a hated enemy. There was a rush to get to me, each warrior clutching a specially made weapon.

I pointed warriors to certain doors, to make sure no one got in and no one got out. "Keep those doors shut, dammit! If the assassin is still here, don't let him escape! I need a unicorn here! If you know how to heal at all, get over here!" A few unicorns rushed forward and did some manner of magic over the prince's weakly jerking body. "Save him if you can. If you can't, find out what you can about what killed him."

I stood up to address the crowd. “Did anyone see anything? He seized up as soon as he started drinking. I saw him take the glass, but I didn’t see anyone putting anything in it when he had it. That means it got to him poisoned.” I saw a few people dumping out cups. “If anyone knows the servant that delivered it, or saw someone put something in it before it was delivered, tell me.”

There was a bit of a commotion in the crowd as a familiar naga dragged a dog forward. “I saw this hound pour something in a few of the drinks,” the naga said, ripping the mask off the dog.

I looked at the dog. “How do you answer this accusation?” I asked him.

“Death to the lackeys of the pony queen!” he screamed, drawing a knife and trying to hurl it at me, before it was ripped out of his hands by the naga.

“Bind him,” I ordered. “He will be questioned. And dump out all the drinks; I don’t want to risk anyone else.” Everyone did as I said, and I turned back to the unicorns hovering over Blueblood. “Will he live?”

“He is barely holding on,” the largest unicorn I have ever seen told me. I saw that she had massive scars on her back. “It’s good that he is young and strong. Still, he’s lucky I was here, human. He should recover, but we need to get him out of here anyway.”

I nodded. “I need paper and a pencil. Celestia can pull him back to Equestria while I sort this mess here out.” A runner rushed off to get me what I needed, and I sought out the face of my young dragon friend. I motioned her forward. “A dragon I know in Equestria can send paper messages via fire. Can you do the same?”

“That’s child’s play. I can send messages *made* of fire. What do you need?”

“No offense, but right now I’d prefer a bit of secrecy. We have a pretty fucked up situation here, and I still don’t know who all is involved.”

“I understand. You barely even know me…” she said, as the paper and an inked quill were brought to me.

I outlined the situation on the paper, and answered her, “I don’t even know your name. You never told me.” I gave her the note and said, “Can you send that to Celestia?” She did.

“Kumani,” she said. “My name is Kumani.”

Not a minute later, Blueblood disappeared, and a response came from Kumani. She passed the scroll to me without looking at it. ‘Get airborne.’ *Great, I don’t have to deal with this mess myself.*

I jumped into the air and hovered over the wide-eyed crowd. I didn’t have to wait long for Celestia to teleport in. And God, was she in a fury. The glare she gave the bound and gagged prisoner was enough to set him shaking. We landed in a rapidly cleared hole in the crowd.

“Bring the prisoner to me,” she demanded. The naga moved to obey, but she stopped him with a look. “*Navarone*, bring the prisoner to me.” I did as she commanded. The dog didn’t even try to struggle, but since I had a knife poking his back he probably didn’t see much reason in it. I forced him to his knees in front of her. “Ungag him.” I did. “Why did you try to kill Prince

Blueblood?" she quietly asked, looking down on the prisoner.

He didn't even try to meet her gaze. He mumbled something at the floor. "She didn't hear you, dog," I said, shaking him slightly.

He said, much louder, "For the queen."

Celestia nodded. "Gag him." I did. She looked at the crowd. "Everypony, the party is still on. I will bring a new representative shortly. I would love to stay, but there are many more preparations to be made, and Canterlot must be protected." She looked back down to me. "Navarone, come with me. Bring the prisoner."

I dragged the prisoner behind me as we walked away from the room, into a side door, down a long hallway, and into a small bedroom. I deposited the prisoner into a chair and just stared at him.

Celestia looked down at the dog. "Your kind doesn't have a queen," she said.

He didn't say anything.

"I can make him talk, Princess," I said, not taking my eyes away from him.

Her horn glowed for a minute as she seemed to muse. She finally said, "No, Navarone. He doesn't know anything. He's just a disposable agent, a would-be assassin. He probably doesn't even know why he's here." She sighed. "For your crimes against Equestria, I sentence you to Tartarus." Her horn glowed brightly and the dog disappeared. He had the chance to look terrified before he was gone.

I put a hand to my forehead, feeling dizzy all of a sudden.

"Are you okay, Nav?" Celestia asked, concern in her voice.

"Just… dizzy. And a headache."

I felt her warmth as she jumped to my side, her horn glowing as it touched me. She gasped. "You've been poisoned!"

"Well that sucks…" I muttered. Her horn glowed considerably brighter as I felt the pain lesson and then disappear. "Magic is even better than kidneys," I sighed. She didn't get that since ponies don't know much about anatomy.

"Your… transformation is even more potent than we thought," she said. "Blueblood got less of that poison than you did, I believe, and he almost died!"

"It's probably just because he sucks," I answered drily.

She shook her head. "No, this is definitely the magic in you. If you start feeling any more changes, tell me immediately." She looked around the room for a moment and sighed. "Now… who can replace Blueblood?" It was a rhetorical question, I hope.

She looked at me for a moment and then shook her head. "Can't be Luna… Can't be…" She sighed again. "No, it'll have to be her." She turned back to me. "Navarone, you are to protect this mare with your life. I do not care what you have to do to make sure she gets back here in one piece." I opened my mouth to respond but she cut me off. "I say this because I know you are not going to like her and because she isn't going to be happy about being here in the first place. But… she is going to be very important soon and I absolutely need her in one piece."

"If you know I'm not going to like her, why do you want me to guard her?"

"Because I trust you, Navarone. Do not let me down."

"So… who am I going to be protecting?"

"Princess Cadance. She's another alicorn, a very rare breed."

How the fuck have I never heard of her if she's an ali—you know what, I don't care. I gave up on understanding this world a long time ago. "So why won't I like her?"

Celestia smiled. "Her special talent—and special magic—is creating love."

My eyes widened. "You keep that bitch away from me!" I don't know if I was joking.

Celestia giggled. "I figured you would say that. Just give her a chance, Nav. She was one of the few friends Twilight had back in Canterlot. And Cadance will need somepony to talk to, since she's going to be forced to abandon some of her wedding preparations to be here." I grimaced lightly. I hate weddings, you see.

She looked to a table in the small room and found some paper and a quill. She used magic to write a short note and sent it on its way. She turned back to me. "I trust you to handle this, Navarone. Do not let me down."

"Look, Celestia, can you honestly say that you're disappointed this happened to Blueblood?"

She gave me one of *those* looks and was about to respond before a letter appeared in front of her. She opened it, read it, and sighed. "Don't move," she told me. A second later she was gone.

I sighed and pulled my crossbow from its sling. I fit a bolt into it and cocked it back, smiling grimly at the feel of its weight in my hands. That done, I started doing a check of all the weapons in place around my body.

Six knives on my belt. Dagger and bolts around the waist. Two knives up each sleeve. Two bandoleers around my chest, each with five knives. Falchion strapped on my back.

I've captured a pirate ship, defeated two assassins, escaped from the clutches of insane dragons, survived the exodus, survived an oven, survived a poison that nearly killed a pony, killed several naga, and beat a unicorn in a magic competition. How hard could protecting one chick be?

There was a blinding light as someone teleported in. I flinched, instinctively tightening my grip on the crossbow. "Princess Cadance, I presume?" I asked before the light was fully gone.

She nodded. "Cadance will be fine, Navarone. I've heard a lot about you." She was pink. Not as pink as Pinkie, but still pink. Her hair was blonde, pink, and purple. A more girly pony, I don't think I had ever seen. I caught a sight of her cutie mark and had to repress a gag; it was a blue heart. "Before we go to the party, would you mind catching me up? I haven't been paying much attention to… current events. I've been a bit busy."

"I just discovered I am immune to poison, and because of that, I allowed something dangerous to get to Blueblood. This is the… fourth day of this party, I think. The days are

molding together since I haven't gotten any sleep."

She looked concerned. "No sleep? If you need rest, you can take it, Nav!" My eyes narrowed slightly when she called me Nav, but I didn't say anything. "I don't think I will be harmed here."

"No, Princess. I do not sleep come the spring and summer. I am just getting used to it again."

"Please Nav, call me Cadance. I grow so weary of the stuffiness of the Canterlot court, and Celestia spoke so highly of you…"

"Very well. Keep your magic to yourself and I will call you Cadance."

She gave an empty-headed giggle at that. "Celestia told me about your… aversion… to love. Given your situation with Luna—"

"That's your cue to stop talking," I interrupted, gripping the crossbow tighter, gently stroking the trigger.

"I don't think you would hurt me."

I pointed the crossbow dead at her. "Try me." Her smile dropped. *Not so sure now, are you?*

Her eyes went from the crossbow to me. "We can talk later. I have a party to attend. Take me there."

I lowered the crossbow and led her back to the main party. "This building rivals the palace!" she exclaimed in wonder as I led her down the halls.

"Yeah, the Notre Dame is beautiful. It was always considered a wonderful achievement in my world. I suppose the same is true here."

"Beautiful, eh? Kind of like Luna?"

"If you open your mouth again, I swear I'm gonna break it." She giggled. I shook my head in disgust as I threw open the door to the main room of the party. Most of the people there were just milling around idly. "Oh yes, you need a mask. It can wait, I suppose."

Her horn glowed for a second and a pair of heart-shaped glasses, tinted with a rose shade, appeared on her face. I really, *really* wish I could explain the symbolism of that to her, but I didn't feel like doing it in front of everyone in the party.

I turned to face them all to find they were staring at Cadance. "Ladies and gentlemen and Jocasta," I said rather loudly, "This is Princess Cadance. She is the new representative for Princess Celestia. If anyone dares attack her, I will not kill you. I will do everything to you *but* kill you. Your screams will be heard across the fucking planet. The dog that poisoned Blueblood was sentenced to Tartarus. What you will get will make you wish you were him." I turned to Cadance, who was staring at me in mute horror. "Do you have anything to add, Princess?" I sweetly asked.

She blinked. "My guard is overly zealous," she said in a tone that was a mix between horror and calmness. "Please, let the party continue. And just call me Cadance, by the way." The party-goers looked around awkwardly before the music continued. It was some kind of Latin

American stuff. Cadance turned to me. “Can I… Can I talk to you in private?”

“Later, Cadance. You have a party to mediate.” I waved my arm to the large group of people around the area.

She gave me a look of concern and bit her lip lightly. After a moment, she sighed and made her way to a large mass of party-goers. I followed, doing my best to watch every angle at once. I couldn’t stay perfectly vigilant, but if she was going to get attacked, it wasn’t going to be in front of me.

We survived the first party, thank God. Sadly, she retired early. I followed her out, given that I wasn’t going to be letting her out of my sight for very long. We got back to a side hallway. “So… where’s my room?” she asked.

...Fuck. “I have no idea,” I answered with a shrug.

“Well, where did Blueblood sleep?”

“Fuck all if I know. He told me not to follow him at night, thank God. Given that he found a different mare every day, I really can’t complain.” Though I’m hardly innocent of *that* crime.

“Fine. Then where is *your* room? You said you don’t sleep, so I can just take your bed.”

Double fuck. She was correct in that I don’t sleep. She wasn’t quite correct that the bed hadn’t already been… used. I was hoping that this place had some manner of maid service or something that cleaned while we were away.

I led the way to my room, watching everyone with an evil eye as we passed them. Thankfully, my bed had been cleaned and fixed up. The room wasn’t aired out, but I honestly didn’t care if she could smell the sex as long as she wasn’t sleeping in all that funk.

When we were both inside, I finally slung the crossbow over my shoulder.

“About that threat you made,” she started.

“I meant it,” I said before she could continue. She gaped. “Celestia needs me, yes. But I need her more. If someone ruins my reputation with her by attacking you, they will be in several worlds of pain all at once. I’m going to live for quite a long time, and if I have to live that length of time in prison because someone fucks this up for me, then that someone is going to pay.”

“Celestia is not cruel, Nav,” she told me. “She wouldn’t do that to you.”

“I’m not going to take chances.”

She gave a sweet smile. “Then I know you wouldn’t hurt me for talking to you about Luna!”

I clapped my hands and pointed them over my shoulders at the door. “I’m out. Good night, Cadance.” I turned to find the door blocked by a light blue aura. I unslung my crossbow and fiddled with it. Without turning, I said, “I told you to keep your magic to yourself.”

“I just want to talk!”

I whirled around and shot my crossbow dead at her. She flinched, dropping her magic. I swung back around and ripped the door open before she realized I just dry-fired at her. “I said good night!” I called as I pulled the door shut behind me.

"You win this round!" she said from behind the door.

I sighed. "It's going to be a long night…"

A long night later, Cadance opened my door with a grin on her face. "I may be interrupting wedding planning for this, but at least I'm having a bit of fun!"

I blearily stared at her. I had been watching the wall for the past five hours. Just… staring. Not moving at all. I don't remember the last time I blinked.

"Nav, are you okay?"

I opened my mouth and croaked something. I coughed and I swear some dust came out. "Fine," I rasped. *I'm going to start carrying a canteen again.* I don't even remember when I got out of that habit. I popped my neck and she flinched at the sound. I moved to my fingers and she flinched at each one of those, too.

"What are you doing, Nav?" she finally asked as I moved to my legs.

"Limbering up. I haven't moved in a few hours."

"Celestia told me you weren't like a guardspony."

"I'm usually not. Now, where to?"

"Where can we get some breakfast?"

I smiled darkly. I was about to give her another reason to hate me. I led her to the buffet room, where there were meals laid out for every race in attendance.

There were griffins in attendance.

Griffins eat meat.

She was rather visibly disturbed when I joined her at the table with a plate full of bacon. Look, I fucking love bacon, and this was the first place in this world that ever had any.

"You eat *meat*?" she asked, quite surprised.

"I can eat meat, some vegetables, most fruits, and fish. I don't eat often anymore, with this damnable magic sustaining me, but I am still an omnivore." I smiled darkly and showed her my canines. She flinched upon seeing them.

After a moment, she said, "You don't have to pretend to be evil around me, Nav. I know you aren't like that."

I picked up a piece of bacon and bit into it. God, it was sex in my mouth. When I swallowed, I said, "I know. But it's fun watching you squirm." It really was funny. I know I'm a bad person for thinking that, but I'm okay with being a bad person.

She shook her head with a smile. "And now that I know you're just doing it for my reaction, what makes you think I'll be giving you one?"

"Oh, I'm just getting started." Well actually, I was pretty much done, but I was hoping the anticipation would keep her wound up.

And that's when Kumani sauntered up to our table and sat across from me. "Hello, Navarone," she said to me in a breathy voice. She nodded at Cadance. "Cadance." She turned back to me. "I heard you're taking princesses into your bed now. Too good for us simple folk?"

Cadance was taking a sip of some kind of juice when Kumani mentioned her being in my bed. That juice was shortly all over the table and the chair across from her.

I grinned. “I’ll admit that some princesses catch my eye. This one isn’t one of them. She slept in my bed last night, and I stood guard at the door. I do hope you don’t mind your place being usurped; if it would make you feel any better, we can find somewhere to continue our… activities.”

Cadance was now staring at me in horror.

Kumani gave me a lusty grin. “You were standing guard at the door, you said. How about we meet there instead?” Her tongue flicked out, tasting the air. I felt her tail reach me under the table as she whispered, “I like the thrill of possibly being *caught*!”

I matched her grin. “I can do my job and have fun at the same time. I see no downsides here.”

Kumani reached up between my legs and onto the table with her tail. She grabbed a piece of bacon before pulling her tail back. Cadance stared at it, her pupils shrunken to pinpricks. Kumani brought the bacon up to her mouth with her tail and wrapped her tongue around it, drawing it in and swallowing without chewing. “It’s a date,” she said, standing. “I’ll see you soon, Nav,” she winked. She looked back to Cadance and nodded. “It’s been a pleasure.” She walked off, humming lightly.

Now, I did say I was done fucking with Cadance, but that was just too good of an opportunity to pass up. I happily continued munching on my bacon while Cadance just looked ahead with a thousand yard stare.

When I finally finished the plate, she blinked a few times and turned to me. “You seduced a dragon,” she said, her mind still trying to make sense of this.

“Well, it was kind of mutual. She wanted to see what kind of exotic love-making skills I could bring to the table, and I’ve just always kind of wanted to fuck a dragon.” Well, ever since I got over the whole interspecies thing. I’m just glad she was close to my size.

“I thought you couldn’t love!”

“I can’t. I can, however, make love.” She looked at me, confused. “We have sex, Cadance. Nothing more.” The look of confusion turned to another look of horror. I grinned. “I gotta say, the things she can do with that tongue are quite fun.”

“You don’t understand, Nav! Dragons mate for life!”

I raised an eyebrow. She had a really good poker face. “No they don’t, Cadance. I did a shitload of research on dragons a year ago for a friend, and that included following the dragons during their great migration. They definitely don’t mate for life.”

She clopped a hoof on the table with a smile. “I thought I had you!”

I sighed. “And here I was, thinking you were horrified about me banging a dragon.”

“Oh, I definitely am. I just saw a good chance there and I took it. Seriously, Nav, a *dragon*? What’s *wrong* with you? And what do you think Luna will think when she finds out?”

I held up a hand with three fingers. “Yes, a dragon.” I ticked my ring finger off. “If I

made you the list of things wrong with me, we'd be here all day." I ticked my pointer finger off, leaving my middle finger standing. "And if Luna brings it up, this is what I'll tell her," I said, raising my hand a bit more and flipping Cadance off.

"I… I don't get it."

"Can't say that I'm surprised. Hurry up and finish eating."

"Nav, you're going to hurt Luna if you keep acting like this."

"She almost killed me twice and gave me love poison. She can take a little damn pain. Given that she knows I don't love her anyway, I fail to see the issue here. Besides, humans don't even feel the same way about sex as some ponies do. It's just physical, not emotional." Now that was definitely a lie; most humans are more conservative than ponies. That is how *I* feel, though.

She gave me a very heartbroken look. "Are all humans like you?" she whispered.

"No. I came into this world with a few traits of a sociopath, and everything I've done and seen since haven't helped any. I am irreparably broken, and that is more liberating than you can possibly know."

"It sounds horrifying. How can you be happy about that?"

"Because it means I don't care that you are horrified of me. I don't care if you hate me or if you love me. I don't care if I hurt your feelings. I was getting better for a little while, but… Well, never mind about that. Eat, so we can get back to the festivities."

She looked more like she was about to puke. "You need help. A lot of it. You aren't leaving my side until you feel again." I saw her horn glow. I jumped back from the table, the chair toppling behind me. I had my dagger out before I realized she was just picking up a spoon. "I'm not going to use magic against you, Navarone. That spell just reminds two ponies already in love that they feel that way. You… You seem empty. That spell would do nothing to you."

I gave a sigh of relief as I picked the chair up and settled back down. She continued, "Besides, it only works if the two ponies are in close proximity. It's just me here, and I'm getting married in a few days."

I snorted softly. "My condolences, then."

"I know! I should be with my Shining Armor right now, not here at this… party." Not exactly what I meant, but meh.

"Wait, Shining Armor? Like, Twilight's brother?"

"You know Twilight?"

"Yeah, she's the one that accidentally summoned me here. I've been living in her tree house ever since."

"Oh, you're the monster that's been living with Twilight!"

"Well, I'm one of them; she also has a dragon for a pet."

"Spike's not a pet!"

"Yeah, slave is more accurate. But we digress; who called me a monster this time?"

"Oh, no pony…" She was lying.

"Right, and I'm having an affair on the side with Celestia. Who was it?"

She grimaced slightly. “You really get around, don’t you?”

“I don’t sleep at night. I have to find *something* to do in my spare time. But that was a joke.” Not a lie, though. “Who was it?”

“Shining Armor, a few years ago. I haven’t heard him mention it in a while, though.”

I shrugged. “I’ve been called worse by better. Now let’s get to this party.” I think she took offense to that, but she didn’t put up a complaint as I led her to the main room.

Nothing happened all that day either, thankfully. If anyone cares, the party was tribal themed.

When we got back to my room, I foolishly led her inside again. The door locked shut and was bound by magic yet again. Before she could say anything, I said in a conversational tone, “I destroyed the horn of a unicorn once.” Not quite true, but close enough. “I never did find out what happened to the mare, but I don’t think she was able to survive long after that. It wasn’t even that hard to do; just shoot it at the right spot and it crumbles like dust…” I finished, hefting my crossbow with a smile.

She was just smiling. *Damn, she learned.* “So how do you really feel about Luna?”

My smile dropped. “I’m not talking about this. Open the door.”

“You can either tell me about her or you can spend the night in here, away from your dragon friend.”

“Have you ever pissed off a dragon? I have, and it was terrifying.” Actually, I pissed off an entire dragon migration of them.

“I think she’ll understand. This is a matter of the heart, after all, not of the… *loins.*”

“My ‘heart’ is nothing more than an engine forged from the remnants of a dead star, Cadance.” She blinked. I loved that quote. “I neither need nor want help in what I’m planning for Luna. And I really don’t feel like talking anymore, so open the door.”

“Not until I fix you!”

It is times like these I’m glad I always leave my window open. I sprinted across the room and jumped right out it, spreading my wings and catching the currents to keep me above the ground. I followed the building around to the entrance and made my way inside and back to my post to begin the long night.

At least this time, I would have company…

A long—and fun—night later, Cadance cracked the door open and saw me standing in the same position as last time, but with a small smile on my face. She looked at me with bloodshot eyes. “Get a room next time, Nav,” she said hoarsely.

I couldn’t help but laugh.

“That’s it. You’re guarding me until my wedding. If you’re going to make me suffer, I can make you suffer!”

“Oh come now, Cadance! I have a daughter back home; you shouldn’t keep me away from her for so long.”

She snorted. “You? A daughter? Why do I find that hard to believe?”

“I find it hard to believe as well. Especially when I remember that she was actually given the choice to stay with me versus staying at the palace.”

She waved a hoof. “She can come to Canterlot until the wedding, then; I *do* still need some flower fillies, after all.”

“Yeah, she won’t be interested in that. You can ask her, but I don’t think she will.”

“It’s a royal wedding! What kind of little filly wouldn’t want to be involved?”

“The kind that was abandoned in Egypt and surrounded by violent people that did who knows what to her.” She looked rather shocked at that. “Now come on. Let’s get you breakfast so we can go back to the party. Just two more days and we can go back home.”

She sighed wistfully, her eyes going faraway. “Soon, my Shining Armor,” she whispered. She blinked and shook her head. “Lead the way, Nav. We can talk later.”

Fat chance of that. I led the way to the buffet area. From the looks of things, today’s party was Greco-Roman. Shame Pinkie couldn’t be there; this entire event would be an awesome experience for her. *I’ll bring her to the next one if I get pulled into it.*

The day went well. The only thing it was missing was a massive orgy at the end, and for all I know, there might have been one; we left too early to find out.

I didn’t follow her into the room, that time. I’m slow sometimes, but I do learn my lesson eventually.

On the seventh day, the party was Valhalla-themed.

As I followed Cadance through the halls on the way to breakfast, I couldn’t help but notice all the naga and griffins about, preparing weapons and talking in little groups. That in itself made me nervous, and I kind of wish I had been given a schedule of the events so I’d know if they were acting like that for a reason.

When we got to the breakfast hall, I saw how it was laid out. Basically, think of a typical Viking hall. If that doesn’t help, think Beowulf. If that doesn’t help, fuck you. I was grinning like a madman at that point. Cadance got her breakfast and went to a side table.

“No, Cadance. You’re the representative of Celestia. You sit at the center of the main table,” I told her.

She looked around, and then back to me. “Must I?”

“Yes. It is proper form, to indicate that you are the head of the clan.” She rolled her eyes, but went up to the front and sat at the center chair. I stood at her right side, watching everyone else.

Eventually, one of the naga came up to us. He looked to me. “Human, will you be representing your species in the games today?”

“What?” I asked.

The naga smiled darkly. “The free-for-all planned for the evening. Are you going to be in it representing the humans?”

Oh hell no. I’m not stupid. “I… I would love to,” I responded. His smile deepened. “But I

have to protect the princess, so I will be unable to."

Cadance looked at me with an evil smile. "I'll be fine, Navarone. You have your fun." She knew what I was trying to do, that evil bitch.

I was committed to it now, though. I looked to the naga. "I'll need the rules. I wouldn't want to get disqualified offhand."

"If you use weapons, get them blunted with magic. We want to have fun, not to cause bloodshed. If you get knocked out or take a killing blow—you'll know if you do—you are out and will be teleported from the field. It's every race for itself, and each team can field three representatives. The only races that usually contend are the ponies, the dragons, the naga, the griffins, and the dogs. The cats will have a presence this year, as will the humans, apparently. The cats are fielding just two representatives, and you're alone on the human team. If you want to see the score—to find out who is still alive and who has the biggest kill-count—just look to the sky."

"What kinds of weapons can we use?"

"Anything you have. The only restrictions are on area-of-effect weapons, like dragon fire. I look forward to seeing you in action, Navarone." With that, he nodded and left.

Cadance giggled. "This is going to be fun…"

"You just want to watch me get my ass kicked, you little sadist." One hit from most of the races on the field would probably 'kill' me.

"I think you'll do just fine, Nav. It's a shame Blueblood had to miss this; I know how much he loves going to these games. Still, his loss is my gain; I've heard tales about this tournament ever since Shining Armor went one year."

Well, if I fuck up, at least I won't die. I don't do well in open fights like this, but I should be fine.

The rest of the day up until the challenge pretty much went by in a blur. I made plan after plan and had to discard them all; each year the tournament area was changed to a new theme and no one ever knew what it was until an hour before the competition. Last year, it was actually a gladiator-style roman arena.

This year… This year it was an urban environment. That was good news for me; it meant I actually had a chance to not die first. All of the competitors were gathered in one area and each group was given a map of the arena. A group of unicorns stood to one side, enchanting weapons to make them safe. I had all of my gear done in private, making sure no one saw my collection of weapons. I wanted to give myself some kind of advantage, and private consultations were allowed.

Jocasta and Miguel found me not long after I had my weapons done. "Navarone," Jocasta said, "would you be interested in… working together, perhaps?" Miguel was giving his psychotic smile.

"Is that allowed?" I asked.

"There will be one race as a winner," she answered. "But anything goes in the actual

competition."

I thought it over for all of a second. I knew they were going to betray me, but I didn't know when. *Don't let them behind my back.* I nodded. "I'm in." They came closer. "As I can see it, this is the ranking in terms of what needs to die first: Dragons, ponies, naga, griffins, dogs."

"Ponies are weak," Miguel said. "No weapons."

"But they have magic, and magic is allowed," Jocasta answered. "Navarone is correct. Cats don't do well in open fights, so we wait and watch for a while. Griffins and naga have an ancient feud in this competition, so they'll be fighting each other first. Dogs don't like ponies, so the dogs will likely find them first. Dragons…" She eyed my crossbow. "Navarone, you keep your eyes on the sky. If you see a good chance to bring one of them down, take it."

I pulled out my map. "We each get teleported in at different areas," I said. I pointed to where I suspected the dragons would be entering. "This is where I go in." If they were going to betray me before the round started, I wanted them to pay for it quickly. "Where will we meet?"

She pointed at the opposite side of the map. "This is where we enter."

"So we meet in the middle," Miguel said. "And we kill everything on the way."

"No, that's fucktarded," I answered. "Alone, we are weak. Together, we're still pretty weak, but at least we'll be better off." I traced a line down to the corner opposite of where I actually spawned. "This is where we meet." They both nodded and broke off.

A few minutes later I was joined by the naga. "Human," their leader said, "you fight alone this day. Would you care to join us as we vanquish our enemies? Your wings would do us well in the coming battle."

I smiled and pulled out my map. "I'm in. We can meet here," I said, pointing to where I said I would meet Jocasta and Miguel.

"Good! That is close to where we enter the arena. It will be interesting to see you on the field, Navarone. Good luck to you."

Well well. This just got interesting.

The next to join me were the dragons, with Kumani at their head. "What did the cats and naga want with you, Nav?" she asked me.

"They wanted to wish me good luck in the coming fight, since I am going it alone," I answered.

"You know, you don't have to fight alone. There's nothing in the rules against team-ups, though only one race can actually win the main prize."

"You don't say."

She smiled. "Would you happen to be interested?"

I scratched at the beginnings of a beard that was coming in. "How do I know you won't betray me the minute my back is turned?"

"Because to be quite honest, you're no threat to us." All three of them were larger than I was, and if I didn't have weapons on me, each one would be more than a match for me. "But just because you're not a threat to us doesn't mean you can't be useful."

I grimaced slightly but couldn't help a shrug. "Second place is better than last," I finally said, pulling out my map. "How about we meet here?" I said, pointing to the same spot.

She looked at it. "This spot is good; it will allow us to regroup and see how the main battle is going before too much happens. We will meet you there, Navarone." Her dragon friends smiled grimly, flicking tongues out.

This day couldn't get any better.

The next to visit were the griffins, with the grizzled leader I met the first day here at their head. "Navarone, how would you like to help the best fighters in the realm win today?"

"Griffins are honorable," I said. "You wouldn't stab me in the back until the other races are finished off." I wouldn't have the same compunctions. "Pull out your map, I think I know of a good meeting spot."

He did so and I pointed it out to him. He nodded. "Yes, this is where we enter the arena. It will be easy for us to hunker down there and wait while a single soul sneaks across the battlefield."

Well, that took care of most of the dangerous enemies.

The ponies came by next. "Human," their leader—a unicorn—said, nodding.

"Pony," I answered with a nod.

"You know we are not a very… violent race," the unicorn said. "But you are. We usually do pretty well in these competitions, but we would like to win this year. We think with your help, we might be able to. Since you are unlikely to make much of a difference by yourself, would you be interested in helping us? When the last enemy falls, we can have a fair fight between ourselves to sort the winner out."

"I *was* planning on taking my chances and showing everyone just what humanity is made of, but…" I shrugged. "Here, this is where we can meet," I said, pointing out the very popular location.

He nodded. "We teleport in at this corner," he said, pointing to where the cats told me they were entering. "It shouldn't be hard for us to get there."

"Good luck, ponies. I look forward to finding out just what kind of fighters you are." They bowed lightly and left.

The dogs approached me with five minutes left before the round started. "You're planning something devious," their leader told me. "We want in."

"I'll tell you my plans one minute before the round starts," I told him. "I don't want to risk it falling through."

"We will wait here, then," he told me.

One minute before the round started, I told him the truth. "I just made an alliance with every race on the map except you guys. They're all meeting in one location to meet up with me. Only I won't be there. But… There will be some survivors of the massive tangle that's going to happen. If you are interested, I could use the help mopping up."

The leader looked incredulous. "And you won't just betray *us* as well? I don't think so,

human. We'll do this solo, as we always have. But we also won't betray you; I will enjoy seeing your plan in action."

With that, we all disappeared.

I had been given a 2d map of the fighting field, but that didn't do it justice. It looked like a near copy of Agrabah, from *Aladdin*, without the massive palace. I later learned that it was actually a copy of the sheep capital of Agrabaah. I wish I was joking. I was really hoping to have been able to watch the massive fight go down, but this was probably a lot safer.

I immediately kicked a door in and pushed my way into the small abode. *Hunker down here for half an hour, then fly above the city to pick the survivors off.*

There were going to be a lot of people that were very angry at me soon.

I settled down on the comfortable couch, waiting.

When I deemed enough time had passed—and I heard quite enough roars and squawks while waiting—I pushed myself up and peered out the door, looking both ways down the street and up into the air. *No fliers.* I cautiously stepped out, a dagger in one hand and the crossbow in the other.

Seeing nothing and not being attacked, I looked into the sky at the scoreboard. It was me on the human team, Miguel on the cat team, all three of the dogs, and a naga. The dogs and I were the only team with no kills. I jumped into the air and soared over to the battleground.

It was just completely *wrecked.* I saw scorch marks on a few of the walls, probably where the unicorn was trying to fight. I nodded to myself, smiling. I saw one of the doors push open and I darted to a roof to watch.

The dogs rushed out in a very military-like fashion. "That human does good work," the leader said with approval as he looked into the sky. "We spend the whole time hiding and he takes down most of the enemies for us. Watch out for that freak, boys; he has wings. We'll take this nice and slow. I know I heard the naga roaring in pain, so he's probably injured."

"You got it, boss," the other two said. They didn't sound that smart.

I lined a shot up on one of them and considered taking it. *I could do it. Easily.*

A weight hit the roof next to me. "Ready when you are, Navarone," Miguel whispered.

I flinched. I didn't even hear him behind me. "We'll wait until their backs are turned," I answered. "You jump down, screaming a war cry. I'll shoot the leader while you have him distracted. The other two should be easy meat after that." And then it'll just be me and the naga, after I betray Miguel…

The dogs whispered something to themselves and started off at a slow speed, turning their backs to us. Dogs have really good ears. I figured they heard everything we said.

"Now!" I whispered, pushing myself as far away from Miguel as I could get.

It was a good thing I did; he pulled the dagger back that he tried to stab me with and jumped to his feet. I threw myself off the building and flew to the one on the other side of the street. The dogs all jumped and stared at us. Before anyone could react further, I shot Miguel,

sending him off the battlefield.

I looked down at the dogs. The two stupid ones looked to their leader as I reloaded. “SCATTER!” he screamed. One of the dogs jumped to one side of the street and the leader jumped to the other side, each kicking in doors. The other stood in the street, not getting the message. My bolt taught him his lesson. I reloaded again.

I heard a scream from the door the leader jumped into, and he fell out of the building, vanishing before he hit the dirt. The naga slithered out just in time to catch a bolt to the chest. I flew to the side of the street opposite of the building the last dog went into.

“If you come out, I promise to fight fair,” I called.

“Really?” I heard his stupid voice answer.

“Of course!” I called back. I muttered, “As fair as any of my fights are.”

He stuck his head out and caught a bolt in his forehead.

“Stupid fucking dog,” I laughed as I disappeared.

“YOU CHEATED!” I heard as soon as I got where I was going. I was surrounded by everyone that was in the fight.

I held up my arms in a placating gesture. “What rule did I break?” I asked, smiling.

The naga that accused me jerked his mouth closed with an audible click. I heard grinding teeth from several sources.

“Well alright then,” I said. “What do I win?”

I saw Cadance pushing her way into the circle from the pony side. “Navarone, just what did you do? All the spectators were watching, but we don’t know what happened! None of them,” she said, waving head to both sides, “could or would tell us.”

“Every race approached me and every race asked me to work with them to fight the others. I agreed and told them where to meet me. I gave them the same spot each time. The only race I didn’t agree to help was the dogs, but they did know about the plan.”

The griffin leader seemed to growl. “That was dishonorable, Navarone!”

“And yet who is the victor?” I asked. “What is your honor worth when it causes you to lose?”

“As least I lose knowing I did so fairly!” the griffin shouted. I heard an agreement from the naga.

“Navarone’s victory was fair,” Kumani said. “As soon as you all met him, he told you what kind of fighter he was. We were all stupid for having trusted him.”

“The dragon is right,” Jocasta said, her voice hoarse. “He won using his mind, rather than his skills as a fighter. It is still a victory, like it or not.”

The dogs actually snarled at me. “We can get our revenge next year, featherbrains,” their leader said darkly, still glaring at me. “You’re alright, human. But don’t think that means I won’t gut you next year.”

I wasn’t planning on competing the next year. Fuck that, they’d all tear me to pieces.

The ponies looked to Cadance. “What you did was wrong, Navarone,” she said. “But you didn’t break any rules. I deem you winner of the tournament. Next year, if you enter the competition, there will probably be rules to prevent what you just did. But I think the others would be hard-pressed to make deals with you, after that. The official awards ceremony begins soon. You all need to be there, as there will be awards in a few areas.” She finished that with a bit of distaste. With her special talent being love, she probably wasn’t looking forward to having to give out awards for being violent.

The group dispersed. I followed Cadance, reloading my crossbow. The blunting spell wore off as soon as I was teleported off the field. She led me back to the dining hall and sat at the front again. I took my place at her side, as was proper.

“That was wrong, Navarone,” she said without turning to face me.

“I know,” I answered.

“Then why did you do it?”

“Because fighting isn’t about right or wrong. It’s about winning. Winning is what matters, and winning with the least amount of effort and personal danger involved is the best option there is.”

“And what if you have to hurt an innocent to do it?” she demanded angrily, finally turning to me.

I shrugged. “Sucks for them,” I answered.

“And if you hurt a loved one?”

“Then winning doesn’t matter anymore.” That stopped her. “If you can’t win without hurting those you care about, you shouldn’t try to win. Preserving those you care about is the only real reason to fight, and if you have to go against that, then there is no reason to even bother.” Her mouth dropped. “So when is this awards ceremony?”

“What did you say?” she whispered.

“I asked when the awards ceremony was.”

“Before that.”

I blinked. “Sucks for them?”

“After that.”

“I’m sorry, Cadance; I don’t speak English.”

“Well, neither do I! Now what did you say?”

“Nothing.”

She smiled. “Foal steps, Nav. Foal steps. It’s in an hour; the fight usually takes a lot longer, but with all the contestants converging in one area it went a lot quicker.”

“And after the ceremony we can go home?”

“Yep! We can’t actually teleport into Canterlot, though; we have to go to Manehattan and take a train in, because of a spell blocking all teleports in and out of the area, aside from what Celestia or Luna does.”

“And they can’t just pull us in?”

"They need to conserve their strength; there was a threat made against Canterlot recently."

I shrugged. "Whatever. At least I can finally get away from all of this," I said, waving my arm around to everyone, many of whom were now glaring at me.

She just smiled. "Don't forget that you're still going to be guarding me!" I just grimaced. I was planning on talking to Celestia about that. And if she didn't help me, I was planning on talking to Luna about that.

The next hour passed quickly. I got a few congratulations from every race but the naga. The griffins offered me a place as a high-ranking officer or advisor in their army, which I sadly had to decline. I was rather tempted by it, though.

The awards ceremony was nice. There were three awards: Winner, most kills, and best team. I got the 'winner' award, one of the dragons got the killer award, and the griffins got the best team award. My award was a pretty swanky medal and fifteen hundred bits to go along with it.

Oh, and the disapproval of pretty much everyone. But I was okay with that.

With the awards ceremony done, the party was over. And since Cadance was in such a big hurry to get back to her wedding preparations, I didn't get to say bye to any of the people I knew. The good thing is that she teleported all of my cash to 'somewhere safe,' so I didn't have to carry that much money around.

I followed her into the train that was waiting on us, ducking slightly to fit inside. "At least all the danger is over," I said, sighing lightly as I unloaded my crossbow.

"Yep! Now we just need to get back to Canterlot for my wedding! We'll have to get a letter out as soon as we get there so your daughter can attend."

"Look, Cadance, I hate weddings. Do I really have to go?"

"As punishment, yes. You shall go and you shall be my loyal guard."

I sighed. "This is what I get for being a human in a pony's world. You're all just trying to keep me down!"

She rolled her eyes. "No, this is what you get for turning everypony against each other at the tournament. And this is what you get for keeping me awake that night with your… activities. I think it's fair. And this way, I can talk to you more about love!"

I groaned as the train started back up. She giggled as she led the way to a private car. She opened the door and gestured me inside. "Ladies first, Cadance," I said with a mocking bow.

She raised an eyebrow. "I don't think you'll follow me in if I enter first," she answered, not moving.

"Oh come now, when have I ever let you down?"

"Technically never, but that might be because I've never given you a chance."

"See there? I have a perfect track record. Surely you can trust me."

She snorted lightly and stepped into the car. I slid the door shut behind her, locking it in

place. I don't know why there was a lock on the outside, but I wasn't complaining.

"I'll get you yet, Navarone!" she called from her side.

"Keep on dreaming, Cadance," I answered, leaning against the door.

An hour later, we pulled into Canterlot. I turned to open the door, but saw it covered in a green aura. *Green?* I unlocked it and pulled it open, looking inside. Cadance's horn was glowing green.

I looked at her in shock. Her look mirrored mine.

"You aren't Cadance," I bluntly said. In retrospect, I could have handled that better.

"YOU'RE NOTHING!" she screamed at me, her eyes widening in surprise. My hand jerked to a dagger as her horn glowed green again. I lurched toward her, dagger drawn, when my entire body became enveloped in flame, leaving me in darkness.

Man, I'm a shitty guard.