

# **Bringing Up Blueblood**

*A "My Little Pony Friendship Is Magic" fanfiction*

*-AND-*

*A Wholly Unnecessary Spinoff of "My Little Alicorn"*

*By InsertAuthorHere*

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## **Chapter Four**

*"Why, yes. I am the most powerful pony anywhere I go. And now that I am High Overlord of the Canterlot Castle Royal Preschool, I demand that you peons..."*

Blueblood's dreams of domination came to a crashing end as a very loud hoof slammed against his door. The colt muttered a small curse before wrestling himself out from beneath his covers, pausing briefly only to look out his window. The sun was not even up yet.

He then turned his attention to the clock, his eyes widening with shock as he saw the time. *Four in the morning? What kind of sick, twisted monstrosity would wake a pony at this time of day.*

The pounding continued, echoing through the chamber like a sledgehammer pounding against solid stone, and Blueblood could ignore the noise no more. With a grumble and a groan, the foal threw himself off the bed and trotted down to the doorway, his hoof wrapping around the lowered handle before pulling it open. He eyed the hallway with tired eyes. "Yes, yes, what is it?"

His sleepiness washed away as he took in a good, long look at the pony standing before him. Even at this height, he could easily recognize the purple armor and blue mane of Shining Armor, Captain of the Royal Guard and the source of his dear cousin Cadance's ruin. From this vantage point, however, he might as well have been staring down a tree-swinging ogre, ready and willing to devour his little pony flesh and use his bones as a toothpick.

The sheer horror on Blueblood's face did not go unnoticed by Shining Armor, either. The Unicorn showed no outwardly signs of joy at his longtime nemesis' current state of hind legs-wetting terror, but his subconscious was in the middle of setting up the world's most impressive fiesta. "Princess Celestia has asked me to help you with some early morning training. Starting today, you're joining the rest of my guards in morning drills."

"M-Morning drills?" Blueblood's lips shook as long-repressed memories of his former life came flashing back. His brief stint of military training had given him a love for order, but also left him

hateful of the morning twilight, for that was when the morning practice would begin. Every day, he would be thrown out of bed, had a suit of armor slapped on his back, and then sent out to run in the rain or climb up a muddy hill, and all while the meanest pony in Equestria yelled insults that would make wallpaper burst into flames.

And now he was being asked to do it again, while a third of the age and under the tutelage of a pony he despised. All paths seemed to end in his tears.

The colt shook in his little horseshoes, searching desperately for any way out of this. "...I appreciate my dear Aunt Celestia's kind offer, Captain, but...as you can see, I am far too small for any uniform. I cannot be expected to train without some kind of protection, can I?"

Shining Armor allowed a very small smile to cross his lips before returning to this cold, business-like stare. "Exactly. That's why I brought this."

His horn lit up like a torch, followed by a small flash of light off to his side and out of Blueblood's field of vision. A few seconds later, a foal-sized suit of golden armor and matching helmet floated into the chamber. Blueblood tried to step away, but Shining's magic sent the uniform plunging onto the colt's body. The armor drapped over his back like a cloak before the magic tied it to the underside of his barrel, while the colt's head seemed to vanish in the enormous size and darkness of the helmet.

From within his metal confines, Blueblood blushed. "Wh-What is all this? How did you find one this small?" Then he realized something that was clearly off with all this. "This isn't real armor, it's a children's costume!"

"The 'My First Guard Duty Playset' costume, to be exact," Shining Armor said. "They were selling these things back when I was a colt, and they still make them. Just about everypony serving as a Royal Guard these days had one when they were a kid."

Blueblood muttered something un-noblelike under his breath, which only delighted Shining Armor even more. "Now come on! We have marching to do!"

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Luna's Night Court had long since completed its duties, and the Princess was now free to peruse the calm night air of Canterlot. Some nights, she would simply fly around the city, taking in the eerie calmness that her night provided with a sense of pride. Othertimes, she would dazzle the populace with spectacular meteor showers and auroras that would make even an artist cry with envy. And still other times, she just mulled about the castle and read some of the books she had missed out on during her banishment.

This night, however, she stopped on the balcony overlooking the grounds next to the barracks.

She had always taken a vested interest in the Royal Guard, if only to ensure that Equestria was safe from all future attacks. This night, however, she noticed something peculiar.

Nestled amongst the rank and file ponies was a white colt, in a children's costume, trying to do push-ups.

Luna grinned as she saw Shining Armor walk alongside the colt, shout something no doubt unflattering, and then trot off like nothing had happened. Shining Armor was living up to his part of the plan quite nicely. *And now, to do mine...*

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By the time the clock rang six times, Shining Armor's entire squad was already assembled and ready in the courtyard. Shining Armor himself beamed with pride as his eyes scanned the crowd of Unicorns, Pegasi and Earth ponies standing before him, all of them ready and willing to lay down their very lives for the safety of Equestria.

And then there was Blueblood, still wearing the children's costume and standing in attention along with the rest of the guards. Or rather, he was *trying* to stand at full attention, but a combination of his exhaustion from running in circles for over half an hour, doing dozens of pushups, and nearly shattering his entire central nervous system with the most evil calisthenics devised by ponykind had left the poor colt close to death-like exhaustion. A few of the surrounding guards, no doubt previous victims of his cruelty, snickered and laughed at the sight before them until Shining Armor stomped for attention.

The crowd of guards immediately responded with a stomp of their own. The force of a hundred hooves smashing the ground simultaneously was enough to send Blueblood hovering about six inches before crashing back to earth. If Shining Armor even noticed this, he appeared to pay it no heed. "Another good workout, ponies. Keep this up, and we'll be ready for anything."

The guardponies whinnied and reared up in response, giving the last bit of revelry they could afford before having to be stoic for the rest of the day. Blueblood just tried his best to dodge the swinging legs and crushing hooves. Once the crowd died down, Shining Armor puffed out his chest and continued. "Now, we have a few new ponies standing with us today. On behalf of the Princesses Celestia and Luna, we welcome the mares and stallions that now stand amongst the ranks of Equestria's bravest ponies."

Another chorus of cheers followed. Blueblood thought about squirming away, but decided against it; given the size of the crowd around him, he was more likely to end up a pony paste than get out of here in one piece. "I just want you to remember a few things before you begin your normal duties. Being a member of Canterlot's Royal Guard is not simply a matter of standing next to doors and looking important. Your job is to protect not only the Princesses and the ruling elite, but to provide support and security for Equestria at large. A guardspony is more

than a simple bodyguard. They are a representative of Canterlot Castle, and a symbol to ponies everywhere that they are being protected. It's a great responsibility, and it's not one you should take lightly."

Shining Armor clicked his hooves together and spun right face before starting to pace around the courtyard. From his vantage point, Blueblood tried to watch the Captain's movements, but at his height it was almost impossible to see through the guards around him. "I don't want to scare any of you, but this is dangerous work. The Royal Guard has faced everything from dragons to cockatrices to evil gods. There are a lot of things out there that wouldn't think twice before tearing into a pony. I can understand if you're afraid; I certainly was when I started. I had a family that cared about me, a sister who practically worshipped the ground I walked on, and a Princess I had sworn to protect. During one of my first posts protecting Celestia herself, some teenage dragons decided to attack our procession. I knew we were in trouble. There's no way anypony walks up to a dragon, stares it right in the face, and doesn't feel like crying like a schoolfoal."

Blueblood winced. *I just know he was talking about me. Stupid Captain and his stupid...stupid...Captain stuff.*

"But I stood my ground, and performed my duty," Shining Armor finished. He came to a full stop directly in front of the crowd. His armor seemed to glisten in the rising sun, and more than a few guards found their jaws dropping in awe. Blueblood, however, just shrugged. "As you can see, I'm still alive, as are the Princess and the others that helped me that day. The point is, I stood my ground and did everything that was expected of me. And I expect no less from any one of you."

He shrugged and shifted his breastplate. "Well, that's all for this morning. If you already know your post, report on the double. Anypony who doesn't have a scheduled posting today, please wait for me outside the barracks. I will be with you shortly."

The guards hopped to attention, flashed a salute, and then galloped away. Most of them charged into the castle itself, no doubt to take over for the night crew. A handful of others made their way in the opposite direction, towards the castle's cold, cramped barracks. Finally, the only ponies left in the courtyard were Shining Armor and a very frustrated Blueblood. "As for you, *Junior Cadet*, I'll be taking back your armor for today. Be ready to come right back here tomorrow."

Blueblood's tiny jaw came close to plunging right into the earth and drilling all the way to the molten core. He barely even acknowledged Blueblood's magic loosening his armor straps and removing the pieces. "To-Tomorrow? You mean I gotta keep *doing* this?!"

"Every day until Celestia says otherwise." Shining Armor grinned, the sides of his mouth matching up perfectly with the curves of his helmet. "It's part of a guardspony's routine. You

have to stay in top shape so you can buck a boulder out of the way of Celestia's carriage if need be."

"B-But..."

Shining Armor tapped his chin. "Of course, I could just tell her that you're not willing to put in the effort. And given how she controls your very future at the moment, I'm certain she'll love how you are disregarding just how much she wants to help you."

Blueblood opened his mouth to say something, but couldn't find the right thing to say. He couldn't quite argue with Shining Armor's point, either. He really couldn't afford to anger his all-powerful relative any more than he already had. With a moan, he bowed his head and slowly began to walk towards the kitchen for some breakfast.

He had just reached the side entrance when he heard the shout. "Blueblood!"

The colt sighed and turned around. Shining Armor was now standing just a few steps away from the pony, his smile now gone. He half-closed his eyes and took a deep breath before continuing. "For what it's worth, you did a pretty good job out there. I know I couldn't have handled all that when I was a colt. Just stay strong, and you can make it through this."

Blueblood said nothing in response; he simply pushed the door open and walked on through. Shining Armor, however, could swear he saw a small bit of spring back in his step.

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Blueblood's march to the breakfast table was more akin to a lurch than a triumphant entrance. His brief joy at actually eating outside his room for once was no match for the pain in his joints. Now that the horror from before was finally over, the colt climbed into his seat.

A bowl of plain oatmeal had already been placed out for him, along with a simple metal spoon. Across from him was a pony, their form completely blocked by a floating and unfolded copy of the *Manehatten Times*. Blueblood hemmed and hawed at the bowl, as if debating whether or not a pony of his pedigree should eat something so simple, but hunger soon won that battle and he began scarfing the oats down.

He was about halfway through the meal when his curiosity about the other pony became too great. Blueblood slowly looked up from his bowl, his lips dripping with liquefied oats. "Excuse me, but do you have the comics?"

"Of course, nephew."

Blueblood's blood chilled as he recognized the source of that voice. Even the little dribblets

around his mouth seemed to freeze into little oat-cicles. The demonic speaker, sensing her prey was ripe and ready for harvesting, slowly folded the newspaper to her side before folding it up neatly and setting it on the table.

Sitting before Blueblood, in all her royal glory, was Princess Luna.

“A-A-Aunt Luna!” Blueblood said, his voice quavering between heart-stopping terror and bladder-emptying fear. “I...I thought you would be asleep by now!”

“When I decide to rest is not your concern, Blueblood,” Luna said. Her voice was devoid of any emotion, save perhaps a twinge of disgust for the creature before her.

“Th-Then what are you doing here?”

“I wished to be the one to tell you the news.” Luna’s frown transformed into a tiny sneer. “Princess Celestia has cordially offered me a chance to assist in your search for redemption, and I have accepted. You may consider me to be your mother figure during your sentence.”

*M-Mother figure?* “What kind of...I mean...?”

“And like any good parent, I made sure you had a nutritious breakfast.” Luna floated the newspaper back in front of herself. “So eat up, grow up nice and strong, and perhaps you won’t make the same mistake twice.”

Blueblood’s tongue flummoxed itself trying to figure out just what he was supposed to say to something like this. Finally, he just gave up and turned back to his oatmeal, slurping it down as quickly as possible in order to get away from this scene. The longer he stayed, the more likely Luna would turn him into a toad or something...

Then he started to feel rather funny. In fact, his entire mouth felt like it was...on...

“FIRE!”

Blueblood jumped up and ran from the table, his entire face beet red and drenched in sweat. He kept gasping and wheezing for air, water, ANYTHING that could cool the internal temperature of his mouth. He finally disappeared through the kitchen doors, knocking over pans and pots and various chefs in his wake.

From her vantage point, Luna looked at the bowl of oatmeal and smiled. *It’s a good thing Celestia left behind that special hot sauce. Just a little manipulation was all it took to make the thing time-sensitive. I just wish I could see the look on his face when he sees his lunch...*

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"Are you sure you're all right?" asked Sky Bloom.

"I-I'm fine," Blueblood wheezed. The poor colt could barely stand by this point, given the sheer amount of things that had just happened to him in the last short while, and for once he was actually glad to be going to school. "I just...I need to..."

Before he could say anything else, his body tripped to the left slightly. His saddlebags, still unfastened, fell off and popped open, sending his lunch sprawling on the floor. The colt could only groan at another fine disaster this morning had brought. Sky Bloom grimaced slightly at the meal on the floor, but otherwise said nothing. "Come on, I'll get you another lunch. I don't think the five-second rule applies in this castle."

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Luna stared up at the three-tiered cake standing before her, its marvelous shapely curves and captivating pink frosting making her mouth water, if only just a little. Standing next to her was the castle's resident pastry chef, her coat and apron stained with all manners of dough, frosting, and the occasional rainbow sprinkle. Her eyes shifted back and forth between the cake and the almighty Princess watching over it. "I-Is this satisfactory?"

Luna nodded. "Yes, of course. I am certain my sister will just love it."

"Will love what?"

Both ponies yelped and spun around, and in the process came face-to-face with Princess Celestia herself. The Sun Princess' eyes, however, soon began to naturally drift towards the sugary succubus standing right behind the two. "A-And what is this cake for?"

"Oh...no reason," Luna stammered.

Celestia raised an eyebrow at this. "That is an awfully large cake to bake for no reason. I trust our chefs are not wasting their cut of the royal budget on treats that may not ever get eaten." *Once they turn their backs, you are mine...*

Luna rolled her eyes as Celestia licked her lips. "Forgive me, sister, but was there a reason you came?"

Celestia finally snapped back to Equestria at Luna's prodding. Even then, it took about a dozen or so shakes of the head to break the cake's hold on her. "I really did have something we needed to discuss, but I would prefer to do it in private." She turned to the still-cowering pastry chef. "And I don't know why you baked this cake, but I'm certain it was with good reason. Just keep it in storage until I get back, and make sure there's a sample waiting for me." Her eyes and

ears drooped. "I have to deal with the ERS again. Every last bit of sugar helps."

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"Wow, what happened to you?" asked Ribbon.

Blueblood didn't dare move his head from his desk, just in case the slightest movement was enough to snap his spine. Given the day he was having so far, something like that would be no surprise to him. "Oh...nothing. I just live with a bunch of crazy ponies."

All around them, fillies and colts were slowly pouring into the classroom, their love for academia not yet beaten out of them by the grueling passing of the years. Orange Peel flashed a quick glare in Blueblood's direction as he passed, but the deposed royal was far too exhausted to even worry about yet another shellacking at his newfound enemy's hooves. Miss Brightly herself was standing outside, ushering in her youthful pupils for yet another day of edutainment.

Once she was sure they weren't being watched, Ribbon leaned over into her saddlebags and pulled out a small card with her mouth. She then carefully laid it upon Blueblood's table, making sure not to accidentally come into contact with any colt diseases he might be carrying. One couldn't be too careful in this day and age, after all. "Lofty wanted me to give this to you. It's for this Saturday."

Blueblood slowly lifted his head, his eyes locking on the card. It was certainly a professional-looking thing, with little pictures of balloons and clowns and everything foal-friendly one could possibly think of stamped around every corner. Even one such as he could tell what this was. "Let me guess. Lofty's having a birthday party?"

Ribbon nodded. "She said it was for somepony you know, named 'Princess Sunlight.' I never heard of her, but there are a lot of princesses." She shrugged. "She didn't say you could come, though."

Blueblood sighed. "Perhaps it's just as well." *I'll be too busy getting tortured by the Royal Guard, anyway...*

The bell rang, and Miss Brightly finally entered the classroom. "Good morning, class! I know you're all excited to learn about bees, but we've had a last-minute addition to our plans for today! After your last break, we will all be making Royal Guard uniforms out of construction paper!"

Everypony cheered in glee, save for Blueblood. All he could do was slam his head right back on that desk and wish for the Pony of Death to take him away.

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With the grace of a thousand princesses, Celestia's hooves gently touched down on the hard marble balcony. The guards quickly fired a salute before returning to their stoic ways; it took a direct order from Celestia before they were willing to leave their post and have lunch a bit early. Her lonesomeness confirmed, the Princess turned her attention to the distant countryside, waiting patiently for her sister to arrive.

She smiled as the warm wind caressed her mane. With a small yawn, the Princess inevitably drifted off into that warm pit of memories that lay in her mind...

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*"Princess Celestia, we must protest. You're filling our son's head up with some really silly ideas!"*

*Princess Celestia's chambers had seen their fair share of angry nobles, diplomats, advisors, and other assorted ponies over the millennia. This time, however, was different. Standing before her were Velvet Cushion and Scarlet Letter, Blueblood's mother and father respectively. She had seen their kind before, and they were never fun to deal with. "Cushion, I did not mean to..."*

*Scarlet bowed slightly, even if Celestia could plainly tell the mocking meaning of the gesture. "Princess Celestia, I understand your position. We respect what you are trying to do for our son, and we love how close he is to you, but he is still our foal."*

*"All I did was tell him that all ponies should be treated equally, regardless of regal rank," Celestia said. She sat herself on the edge of her bed, as standing while facing these two made slapping her forehead in frustration a tad dangerous. "I fail to see how teaching a foal equality is a bad thing."*

*Velvet Cushion sighed and leaned against the wall. "Princess Celestia, my husband and I are well versed in the history of Canterlot. We know ancient traditions you have apparently forgotten, and we wish for our son to appreciate them like we do. If he is taught that anypony from any rank deserves the same rights as one of our upper bringing...it might cause him to consort with ponies of low repute."*

*"We cannot allow our son to become a delinquent!" Scarlet snapped. He quickly remembered who he was talking to, however, and soon backed off. "I...I apologize. It's just..."*

*"Um...excuse me, Aunt Celestia?"*

*Everypony turned around to see Prince Blueblood and Princess Mi Amore Cadenza, both of whom had puzzled looks on their faces. While it would be a miracle with Cadenza understood anything that was going on (given her still-developing grasp of the Equestrian Language), it was plain to see that Blueblood had heard everything. "What's going on? Have I done something*

*wrong?”*

*Nopony dared to answer that question...*

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“Sister?”

Celestia snapped back with a start, taking in big gulps of air in her confusion. With a definite shrug, she slowly pulled herself back onto her hooves and turned around. Sure enough, Luna was now standing with her, her translucent mane waving and shimmering through the wind. Even in the sunlight, it failed to lose much of its wondrous properties. Celestia could feel another flashback coming on, but quickly pushed away any memories of a filly Luna ritualistically following every single motion she made. “Thank you so much for coming. I’m sorry to say this, but we must discuss something. This morning, Sky Bloom was helping Blueblood get ready when his saddlebags fell off. His lunch bag opened, and she saw the sandwich you made.”

Luna shrugged. “What of it? I made a very nutritious lunch, totally free of the pudding cups and cookies you would so gladly give him. Our ‘son’ must eat properly if he is to grow up with a strong body and mind.” *Second time’s the charm.*

Celestia sighed. “Luna, you made it with banana bread. Blueblood hates bananas. In fact, I’m not even sure if that bread was still good. It’s been sitting out there for the last four or five days.”

Again, Luna shrugged the question off. “I was attempting to meet the qualifications for a good parent, and a significant part of that is ensuring that your foal matures into a fine young mare or stallion. Even if he does not care for a fruit, he should still at least make the effort to try and eat one.”

“Like how you tried to make me eat tomatoes and cucumbers?” Celestia growled. Even now, with her taste buds fully restored, she could still feel the bitter, acidic aftertaste of the fruit wash over the back of her throat. Luna shrank back slightly, her ears flattening and wings pulling in even tighter. “And let’s not forget that little incident this morning with the hot sauce and oatmeal?”

Luna put a fetlock to her mouth and giggled slightly, setting off Celestia’s nerves even more. “That was little more than a small joke, sister.” *Much like him.* “I was merely attempting to make sure he was wide awake and ready for school. We cannot allow our little colt to go to class half-asleep, now can we?”

A few small plumes of smoke began to pop up along the frills of Celestia’s mane, along with a return of the twitches in her eyes and ears. All color drained from Luna’s face as the rage in Celestia’s demeanor grew. And then, just as quickly as it had begun to flare, the Princess’

temper cooled. Before long, she looked less angry than disappointed. “Luna, I have tried everything to prove the value of this to you, but you keep pushing me away. I know Blueblood has done some awful things, but this is an opportunity to set things right. Not just for him, but for all the other ponies I’ve let down.”

The calming of Celestia had a similar affect on Luna. Her confidence reestablished itself as she took a cautious step towards her sister. “Celestia, you have nothing to apologize about. What happened to Blueblood is his responsibility, not yours. And I have agreed to aid you in this charade of a family you are trying to form. But I cannot forgive him for what he has done.”

“Yes, his crimes are many, and he will still face punishment when this is finished. But I want to give him the chance to get back on the right track.” Celestia brushed a hoof through her sister’s mane, causing Luna to shiver slightly. “I forgave you, didn’t I? Shouldn’t Blueblood deserve the same chance?”

Luna’s response was to smack her sister’s leg away. Celestia recoiled in shock, rubbing her stinging fetlock with her other forehoof. “You fail to understand anything, sister! This is not about Nightmare Moon and my own crimes! What Blueblood tried to do is unforgiveable! No pony should ever harm their family in such a way!”

“Wh-What do you mean?” Celestia asked.

“Blueblood tried to strike you, to foalnap you, and then do Mom-knows-what-else to you!” Luna’s eyes quivered with growing rage. “If he had his way, you would have just been a bargaining chip so he could force me to burn down Ponyville and slaughter everypony within! And you are forgiving him?”

Celestia shook her head and closed her eyes. “I am giving him the opportunity to *earn* forgiveness. As you have already shown, redemption is not just a matter of apologizing, but instead requires a pony to prove themselves day after day to deserve the chance. Thanks to you, nearly every noble in Equestria is cleaning up their ridiculous acts and are becoming productive members of society again. If Blueblood can...”

“I watched you bleed.”

*Everything* within Celestia stopped instantaneously. Only the very minimum level of breathing continued, if only to ensure that the Princess would still be alive by the end of all this. *Wait...this is about...that?*

Luna noticed her sister’s newly-acquired catatonia, and could feel pangs of it coming on herself. “I saw Discord almost kill you, remember? He tore out your wings, burned your flesh, skinned you, broke your legs, gouged out your eye. It was...I...I could never forget that. It’s been thousands of years since then, and I still cannot forget that moment.” She coughed back a few

dry sobs.

Coherent thought finally managed to break through the walls of Celestia's surprise and horror at having that...event mentioned. With great caution, she approached her younger sister and wrapped one wing around her. "Luna..."

Normally, wrapping her wing around a pony and saying their name had a tranquilizing effect. It certainly helped calm Twilight down when she was having one of her panic attacks. But this time, Luna failed to relax. "And what did I do after that? I allowed myself to be taken over by some primordial force and nearly killed you *myself*."

"But I understand why it happened," Celestia said. "You were jealous, and you made a terrible mistake. Sister, we aren't like normal ponies, but we aren't infallible either. We make mistakes, and we must learn from them like anypony else."

The inevitable finally came, as Luna angrily pushed her sister's wing off her back and stepped away. Celestia tried to move towards her, but froze as she saw the mad glint in her sister's eyes. "Yes, I learned from my mistakes. I learned that you are the single most important pony in the world to me, and it was my fault you were mutilated by Discord, my fault that you had to suffer alone for a thousand years, and my fault we are in this mess to begin with! And I will be damned before I let another pony harm you in any way!"

Luna's outburst sent Celestia reeling in shock. "...I didn't know..."

"I could forgive Blueblood's other crimes, but I can NEVER allow a pony that would try to harm you in such a way to roam free!" Luna's breathing became more erratic, her face more flushed, and her wings more rigid as her anger took hold. If Celestia didn't know any better, her sister looked more like Nightmare Moon than herself. "...I would rather see him hang than..."

**"ENOUGH!"**

The entire castle shook with the sound of Celestia's own Royal Canterlot Voice. Windows shattered, tiles crumbled, walls cracked, and ponies panicked at the deafening tone. Ponies from as far as Hoofington could swear they heard their ruler's shouts pierce the very heavens. As for Luna herself, she could feel every single piece of fur on her body stand on end like a cornered cat, and even her mane seemed to lose a few stars here and there. She stared at her sister while wearing the most dumbstruck expression possible.

It took Celestia a moment to calm herself down. "I-I apologize. I have not...reacted in such a way in a long time. But Luna, listen to yourself. Is this the way a princess is supposed to behave?"

Luna kicked at the ground sadly, hanging her head like a school filly being scolded by her mother. "No...No, it's not."

Celestia sighed and shook her head sadly. "Luna...I know Blueblood can be difficult. But he was not always this way, and I know he can be good again. Just please, trust me on this."

Luna said nothing at first. She couldn't quite find the right words to sum up the raging torrent of emotions working their way through her mind this very moment. Finally, she sighed and hung her head. "I...I will try."

Celestia let out a gasp of relief and smiled, patting her sister on the head before starting down the stairs. "That's all I wanted to hear. Now you must excuse me, but I have to calm the ERS down again. Seems giving those extensions to Twilight's friends proves I'm unfit to rule and must be brought down for the financial future of Equestria." She froze in mid-step and spun towards her sister, who shied away from her glare. "Tell me again who formed that lovely little branch of Equestria's government."

Luna gave a short, yet lively giggle. "Like you said, Celestia, we all make mistakes."

Celestia smiled and laughed all the way down the stairway, her voice gradually disappearing in the darkness. Luna watched and waited until she was well out of earshot, then took her place on the balcony. She could feel fatigue welling up inside her, but that didn't matter right now.

*You are correct, Celestia. I should not wish death upon Blueblood.*

Her lips curled into a cruel smile.

*But that does not mean I am going to let him go easily. Like you said, a pony has to earn forgiveness. And I am going to make him WORK for it...*

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Blueblood's hooves clumsily worked their way around the scissors, leading him to once again curse his lack of magic. Every cut felt like he was trying to cut through solid steel, and every time he tried to turn the contraption around a curve, he couldn't help but snag it on the desk or a tough knot in the paper. Whenever he glanced up to check on the rest of the class, he could see they were already miles ahead of where he was; a few even had their whole paper uniforms cut out and put on already. Granted, most were sloppily put together, with plenty of jagged angles, improper sizes, and other assorted gaffes marring their design, but they at least had them *done*.

Blueblood sighed as he looked down at his half-finished helmet. *I suppose Arts and Crafts isn't my strong suit, either. I have to find some way to make an impression on these...*

“Alright, class! Eyes up!” Miss Brightly infectious voice echoed through the classroom, immediately calling everypony’s attention back to the very front. Even Blueblood had to head the instructor’s cry, even as he was continuing to curse the pony that invented scissors. “Now, our day today is almost over. Can anypony tell us what day of the week it is?”

Orange Peel’s hoof shot straight up, prompting a quick acknowledgment from Miss Brightly. “It’s Thursday, right?!”

Miss Brightly smiled and nodded. “Why yes, it is, Orange Peel. And do you know what tomorrow is?”

Another hoof, this time from Cherry, shot up. “Friday!”

“And we all know what Friday is, right?”

The entire class (save Blueblood) broke out in a single loud shout. **“SHOW AND TELL DAY!”**

“That’s exactly right!” said Miss Brightly. “Remember, you can bring anything from home or school to show the class, as long as it isn’t dangerous or illegal. And please, do be respectful to your fellow students. We don’t want a repeat of what happened to Magnolia, now do we?”

All the ponies quickly shook their heads negatively, with Blueblood doing it just to keep up with the crowd. Besides, he couldn’t help but feel that whatever had happened to Magnolia just might happen to him, and he certainly didn’t need any more horrible things to occur. His fate was terrible enough as it was.

Finally, the bell mercifully rang, and the class was dismissed. Blueblood was the last to leave, if only to make sure the card was safely in his saddlebags. *I don’t get what Princess Celestia sees in that commoner, but I might as well stay on her good side. And besides, I could use a good party, even if it is only serving common carnival fare.*

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Blueblood reached the front pathway almost at the same time as Lofty. The Pegasus’ eyes locked onto the colt with ever-increasing suspicion as he approached. “So what do you want this time? Did Ribbon give you the Princess’ invitation?”

“Yes, she did,” Blueblood said, a few gasps spacing his words. His muscles were still sore from his workout that morning, and he could already feel dread over tomorrow’s inevitable punishments as he continued walking alongside the filly. “Do you really think Princess Celestia will be able to show? She is the ruler of Equestria, after all.”

Lofty shrugged, a small frown on her face. “I hope so. Those couple of days were some of the

funnest in my long, long life, even if it did end with you trying to slap me.” She growled at Blueblood, causing the colt’s ears and face to fall on reflex. “And I...guess you’re invited, too.”

Blueblood cocked an eyebrow. “You ‘guess?’”

“Well, it wasn’t my idea,” Lofty continued. “In fact, I didn’t want you there at all. But mom insisted that you come. She said you were probably a lonely little pony that needed friends.” She scoffed and turned away from Blueblood’s direction. “We all know the truth. And if you go there, I don’t want you to embarrass me, or my friends, or anypony else. ESPECIALLY if Princess Celestia comes.”

“Actually...it sounds like fun,” Blueblood chuckled. Lofty snapped her head back to him, half-expecting him to be joking. “Given everything else that’s been happening, I could use a little relaxation.”

Finally, the two reached the front gates. Sky Bloom was already standing at attention, while Lofty’s cart ride awaited her. The two said quick, non-friendly farewells, returned to their respective tickets home, and left the school grounds far behind.

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Celestia cocked an eye as Blueblood finished his executive summary of his day.  
“So...Show-And-Tell?”

Blueblood nodded. “Exactly. I have to find something outstanding to showcase to these foals tomorrow.”

“And by ‘these foals,’ I assume you mean your classmates?”

Blueblood felt a cold shudder run down the length of his spine as the venom in Celestia’s words hit home. Even he could tell he hadn’t quite phrased his words properly. “I mean...I just want them to see something outstanding.”

Celestia sighed and scratched her chin with one hoof. “Well...we can’t show anything that would be linked to the palace. I...do suppose we have some things in the castle basement, if you’re interested in digging through there.”

Blueblood vigorously nodded his head. “Yes, I’d love that.” His eyes then turned to his saddlebags. “By the way, Lofty wanted me to give you something.”

Celestia’s eyes widened with curiosity as Blueblood pulled out the small invitation. She gracefully levitated the card closer to her eyes, taking in the wonderful simplicity of its design like she was eyeing the most wonderful painting in existence. As she read the inside, she could

feel something in her heart giving out, threatening to return her to the same longing she felt when she had first changed back.

“So...this is this Saturday?” she asked Blueblood.

“Y-Yes,” the colt answered. He scratched the back of his head with growing nervousness. “She also said I was invited as well, and...I do want to go, so...”

“I’m not so certain about that,” Celestia sighed. “You are still technically under arrest, and I do have so much to do these next few days. I...I don’t know if we can...” Her ears suddenly perked up. “Actually, I think you’d better go find what you were looking for. I’ll talk with Luna tonight and see if we can get something figured out.”

Blueblood was more than a little stunned at this sudden turn, but gradually accepted her orders and trotted off. Once he was gone, Celestia turned her attention to the one great challenge laying before her:

How would she convince Luna to curse her again?

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The Canterlot Castle Storage Basement was not just a single room, but rather an elaborate tunnel network running deep inside Canterlot Mountain. Heavy stone and strong pillars held up the earthen walls, while the various passageways were lit only by torches and the occasional lanterns. The section Blueblood needed, however, was fortunately close to the entrance; otherwise, a colt like him could easily end up lost forever within the maze of passageways.

The small chamber was filled with metal and cardboard boxes, all safely protected from natural erosion by the magic Celestia wove through the very walls. Each was clearly labeled after a member of the royal family, many of them dead for centuries. To have personal objects entombed here, a pony needed to have had a close connection to Celestia, or had once been her favorite family member. Her students, on the other hoof, tended to have their own works and accomplishments stored in the study.

*Obviously, Celestia has her priorities,* Blueblood fumed.

His pouting session over, he trotted down to the far end of the chamber, where a simple cardboard box lay undisturbed on the floor. On it were the words, “Prince Blueblood,” written in simple black marker that had almost completely faded. With a mighty heave, Blueblood finally managed to pull the thing out far enough to pop it open. Fortunately, the tape had aged enough that it was easily removed, and soon enough the top was off and he was facing what lay inside.

Buried amongst his baby blanket, an old picture of himself with his parents, and a few other



miscellaneous objects was a snow globe. Inside was a miniature representation of Canterlot Castle as it stood almost twenty years ago, along with little floating cutouts of Celestia. On its base was engraved, "Happy Hearth's Warming Eve."

Needless to say, it was a simple thing. And yet, as he touched it, Blueblood couldn't help but remember the circumstances that surrounded how he got it.

It was the same year he had earned his Cutie Mark. The same year he had realized his destiny was to be a Prince.

It was also the last year he and Princess Celestia were truly close.

Pushing aside the bad memories, Blueblood resealed and returned the box, then tossed the snow globe into one of his saddlebags and started back towards his room. *If this doesn't amaze them tomorrow, nothing will.*

TO BE CONTINUED...

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