

Study of the Mind Delve
Chapter 1
Comprehension

Twilight threw her hooves up in frustration.

“WHY IS THIS SO COMPLICATED!?” Twilight groaned as she put the latest book she had been browsing through down. It too had yielded her no answers; she was squarely back where she had begun once again.

“You seem stressed Twilight, is this really that important?” Spike asked as he approached her quickly, placing a cup of her favorite tea down next to her.

“Thank you Spike.” Twilight sighed softly levitating the cup up to her lips and taking a sip, starting to settle down again, “And it is. This spell is baffling me now. There’s no indication in the book it comes from that suggests the spell is bad. Yet I have four separate testimonies that the spell shouldn’t EVER be used again.” Twilight rubbed her forehead carefully.

“Have you asked them why?” Spike asked curiously.

“Of course I have Spike. But...” She took another sip of the tea as she thought about her friends reasons carefully, “Pinkie found out about her sister through the spell but refused to explain how beyond that she had to go through some fog filled version of Ponyville, Fluttershy and Rainbow Dash also said they saw the same thing. And Lance refused to say a word about it. Of course they didn’t explain why or even how.” Twilight groaned softly.

“Poor Pinkie... It’s sad that she lost her sister when she was younger.” Spike frowned thinking about it.

“Yeah... I know how you feel Spike.” Twilight said calming down a little, that reminder sobering her emotions, “And chances are Fluttershy had something similar happen to her, but she hasn’t told anypony but Rainbow Dash... and from what I can tell it wouldn’t be a good idea to pressure her into telling us.” She sighed softly. “And honestly I don’t even want to know what Lance saw, I’m sure he saw a lot during his time as a doctor. But that’s also why I’ve been doing this research, to try and figure it out on my own.”

“Have you figured anything out yet?” Spike asked curiously, looking at Twilight’s notes.

“Nada. Nothing. Zilch. Zero!” Twilight groaned frustrated putting her head against the table, “I’ve gotten nowhere Spike. I’ve looked at every detail, every loophole, anything that would tell me exactly how this spell works or why it does what it does.” She lifted her head and levitated her copy of ‘Dreams: A Psychological Understanding’ over to her. The book once more

flipped open to the offending spell in question.

“What’s so difficult about that spell? I mean, your Twilight Sparkle, you can figure out any spell you put your mind to.” Spike said praising Twilight.

“Heh... Thanks Spike.” Twilight said lifting her head, “But the problem is just the lack of information.” She put her hoof against the page in the book, “This book has a description of the spell and how to cast it... and that’s it. Every other spell has details on it. Possible side effects, proper handling and use, just basic info every spell should have. And I didn’t notice any of this till I started studying it.” Twilight closed the book, not wanting to look at the page anymore.

“So I went searching for answers in the rest of the library but... I turned up nothing.” Twilight said turning to the massive amount of books and papers that were stacked around the library, a usual scene after her intense studying, “Every book on dreams, psychology, understanding the mind... ANYWHERE the Mind Delve or a similar spell might appear there was nothing. The mind delve spell appears in THIS book and this book alone.” Twilight gave ‘Dreams: A Psychological Understanding’ a soft glare.

“How is that possible?” Spike asked confused, “No spell appears in just one single book, it has to be somewhere.”

“Well, apparently this one doesn’t show up anywhere else in the library.” Twilight sighed again, taking a sip from her tea before her frustrations started to get to her nerves again, “I even tried to check other books by this author, but this is the only book I have of his. So I checked the creators of the original spells. Even in his book, every spell is referenced to having an original creator and I can find out more about them. But not this spell.” Twilight opened the book back up to the page, running her hoof across the page as she scowled at the spell. “This one. Specific. Spell. Has no extra information. It’s just there. Mocking me.”

“...Huh. Do you think the answer would be in the Canterlot archives?” Spike asked curiously.

“Most likely Spike, but I can’t just waltz over to the Canterlot archives whenever I want. I’ve still got things to do in Ponyville. I’ve got to help Applejack with the farm, then help Pinkie Pie try and figure out her new recipe, Rarity wants to spend time at the spa as well, and then Fluttershy and Rainbow Dash want to talk to me about some personal spell they need. My schedule is booked solid.” Twilight sighed.

“...Uh... Twilight, how’re you going to find time to go to Canterlot then?” Spike asked curiously.

“That’s exactly what I’m saying Spike, I can’t go to Canterlot right now. As much as I’d like to.” Twilight sighed again carefully sipping on her tea once more.

“No, I mean, you have to find time to go to Canterlot Twilight. Your evaluation is next week, don’t you remember?”

Twilight nearly gagged on her tea, it spewing out back into her cup and splashing onto her face.

“MY EVALUATION!” Twilight cried out in a panic, not even flinching about the tea, “I COMPLETELY FORGOT!” Her horn lit up as her books and notes quickly moved to the side and her list of things to do flew over. At the top of the list was in fact, underlined in red, the date of her evaluation, one week from now. “Spike, why didn’t you remind me sooner!?” She said jumping from her seat and rushing around quickly putting books back on the shelf haphazardly as she panicked.

“I’ve never had to remind you before Twilight. Besides, it’s not like you to forget something so important... How DID you forget about it?” Spike asked scratching his head a little confused.

“I... just... the last few days have been very stressful, alright Spike?” Twilight said shaking her head. She didn’t want to admit to Spike that the combination of Pinkie and Fluttershy’s dreams had been getting to her, as much as she’d like to forget them. She was grateful she couldn’t remember Lance’s, but that only furthered the conundrum. On top of all that she was still worried about the mental health of her friends; even though they said they were alright she worried. Pinkie lost her sister and Fluttershy likely suffered something similar, there was no way she could believe they were handling it as well as they showed it to others. Then on top of that she’d been researching the mind delve spell.

“That’s not like you Twilight. You’ve never forgotten about your evaluation before.” Spike said rather surprised, “Even when you’ve been busy you remember it... are you alright?” Spike seemed worried now.

“I’m fine Spike... I just...” Twilight thought about her words carefully, “I guess things have been bothering me alright? But... I have no choice now. I can’t fail the evaluation, so there’s nothing else I can do. I have to put all my other plans on hold and go to Canterlot.” Twilight said gathering the books scattered amongst the library more calmly now, placing them away gently.

“Your friends will understand Twilight, besides you could use a short break from all this, study up on your magic for the test and all. I’m sure you’ll be feeling better in no time.” Spike said moving to help Twilight pick up the mess of a library.

‘I hope you’re right Spike.’ Twilight thought, still feeling a bit of a grip on her heart. If her friends were troubled, then so was she.

“Again, I’m really sorry about all this.” Twilight turned to her friends, as she placed her small suitcase on the chariot.

“Don’t you worry two bits over it Twi’, nothin’ a little extra hard work can’t handle.” Applejack said adjusting her hat before crossing her legs, “Sides, this here’s like yer final exam of the year right? Well we wouldn’t want ya to fail that.”

“Undoubtedly. You can come with me to the spa anytime, and after your exam I most certainly must take you. You’ll need a good relaxation and grooming after that.” Rarity explained, her voice as elegant as ever.

“Don’t worry Twilight, when you get back I’ll have figured out my new super-duper amazing recipe! We’ll throw you a super-awesome Congratulations party with cakes and sodas and balloons and streamers and everypony in Ponyville will be there!” Pinkie spouted happily prancing in place, already excited for the party.

“It’s okay Twilight, really, this is very important for you. Don’t worry about our small problems if they’ll interrupt your big one.” Fluttershy offered up with a smile.

“Yeah, we can wait for you to get back. You have a good trip.” Rainbow nodded in agreement.

“Thanks. Still, I really feel like I should apologize for not remembering.” Twilight smiled softly, looking at Rainbow Dash and Fluttershy, “but, I suppose with all the craziness the last week or so what else was I supposed to do?” Fluttershy and Rainbow Dash each gave a soft laugh rubbing the back of their heads.

“We’re all set to go.” One of the royal guards pulling the chariot said turning to Twilight.

“Thank you sirs.” She nodded politely to them before turning back, “Alright, I guess I’ll be off then... uhhh, you WILL be okay taking care of the library by yourself, right Spike?” Twilight asked cautiously.

“For the millionth time, of course I will.” Spike said rolling his eyes having heard the question far more often than he’d like. “Owlowiscious will be there too if I need any help. You’ve got nothing to worry about Twilight, I promise.”

“Well... then I’m off everyone. I’ll see you all in a week.” Twilight said finally satisfied with her goodbyes. The royal guards gave a quick nodded and proceeded to take off into the sky.

Twilight waved to her friends who waved back as they soon disappeared into the distance of Ponyville.

Twilight let out a soft sigh as she settled into the chariot ride. She looked at her suitcase, opening it carefully with her magic and pulling out her copy of 'Dreams: A Psychological Understanding'. She scrutinized the cover once more, her eyes landing on the name of the author.

"Magus V. Darkarts." Twilight read out loud for what seemed like the hundredth time to her. "I will find out about your little 'Mind Delve' spell if it's the last thing I do."

"It's wonderful to see you again Twilight." Celestia said sipping her tea gracefully, "I do hope your trip here was pleasant."

"But of course Princess." Twilight smiled remembering her manners.

Since she would be staying in Canterlot for the week the Princess had taken the opportunity to have tea with her star pupil before she became a studying recluse.

"How have your studies in magic been going?" Celestia smiled interested.

"Oh, unbelievably!" Twilight said excitedly, "I've learned a lot while in Ponyville, not just about friendship but about new magic in general." Twilight said excitedly.

She quickly began a rant to the Princess, not even knowing where it was coming from, about all the new things she had learned in Ponyville. She explained about the new spells she taught herself during their crazy misadventures, such as growing facial hair, turning objects into clothes, making music from reeds, finally getting the hang of teleportation, levitating large objects and even how to turn simple mice into carriage pulling horses.

Celestia listened eagerly to her student's tales, laughing where appropriate and happy to hear her student was having fun with her friends while learning about magic. It did her heart good to know she was growing up so well. She was already an adult but she did have a lot left to learn. She was on the right track though and Celestia was thankful for it.

"Spike was sneezing for a few days after that. We had to keep him outside to keep from burning the place down." Twilight laughed, Celestia chuckling softly in return, "But we eventually got it settled and he was very grateful. The day after that I sent him out on a shopping trip to replace the things he'd accidentally scorched during his sneezing fit, though we were lucky he

didn't burn up any of the books." Twilight nodded taking a sip of the tea before her thinking about what happened next.

"And then after that Pinkie..." Twilight stopped as she realized where she was in her story. She stopped abruptly, lowering her tea cup to the table as she stared down at it with a melancholy look.

"What's the matter Twilight?" Celestia asked curious about this sudden shift in mood and behavior. Twilight softly contorted her face in thought, debating with herself about what she should tell the Princess next. A thought came to her mind first though.

"Princess, can I ask you a question?"

"Of course my faithful student, what is it?" Celestia asked genuinely smiling, not sure what to expect.

"Do you know of a spell called 'Mind Delve'?" Celestia pondered this question for a moment, not really having expected it.

"Well... what kind of a Mind Delve my student? There have been many spells that focus on the mind throughout the years, be it for a memory problem, a medical problem, finding out if somepony is telling the truth or not, and various psychological studies." Celestia answered with her normal regal tone, thinking over the types of spells she'd seen during her years.

"Well... this spell is simply called 'Mind Delve'." Twilight said looking to her side and seeing her suitcase. Her horn lit up as she reached inside of it and pulled out the book once more, flipping open to the page in question before showing it the Princess, "It appears in this book called 'Dreams: A Psychological Understanding', but there's no extra information about it. I was wondering if you knew anything about this spell."

Celestia looked over the spell curiously, reading the description and the intricate details of how to cast such a spell. A slight worry came across her face that sent a small bit of panic through her body, but the Princess simply closed her eyes in thought before moving the book down onto the table.

"I'm not sure what to make of the spell Twilight." Celestia finally spoke, Twilight letting out a breath she hadn't realized she was holding in. "It's a spell that lets one find out about problems that are hidden deep within the subconscious." Celestia tilted her head, looking up at the ceiling in thought, "However, that seems like an awfully dangerous idea..."

"...Princess?" Twilight asked, not sure what was going through the Princess's head.

"The mind is a delicate thing Twilight. Even with magic its very easy to harm it if you're

not careful. This spell says that it's supposed to draw out the problem its patient is suffering from to shorten the time they need to recover... however, its more than that." Celestia explained placing a hoof against the page, Twilight listening with earnest.

"This spell, the way it's written, described and displayed is in fact a cure for nightmares. However, even without casting it I can tell that it's more complex than that." Her hoof passed over the section explaining how to cast the spell, studying it intently, "This is a very complex dive into the mind. The potential for abuse is high for somepony that could figure out the details of this spell. With some modifications it can very easily be turned into something that attacks the mind instead of helping it."

"R-Really?" Twilight's eyes widened in shock, not having expected any of this from the princess. She was good at learning a spell and how to cast it, but she was still just a beginner in how to deconstruct a spell and learn it's inner workings. Celestia on the other hand had thousands of years of experience in this, deconstructing a spell would be almost second nature to her.

"I'm... almost amazed at this spell." Celestia said, turning the pages to check on a few of the other spells in the book before returning to the page with the Mind Delve. "This spell... I would say this spell is at least a Rank A."

"Huh!? But... but I've seen Rank A spells before and they were much harder to cast than that spell." Twilight said in shock.

Twilight knew that spells went in rank of difficulty casting and the ability that went along it. The lowest a spell could be was Rank D and was often associated with every day spells Unicorns needed, such as levitation of objects. The highest a spell could reach in Rank was S, and spells of that nature could move the very Sun and Moon itself. Not to mention the Elements of Harmony broke the scale itself, being a power beyond anything seen before.

"That's what worries me my student. While not just anypony could cast this spell, it's easy enough for unicorns studying magic to cast. Despite how complex it is, it's designed to be simple to cast." Celestia then mumbled softly, "It took a great genius to devise a spell this way..." Celestia closed the book and looked at the cover, her eyes falling to the author. "Where did you find this book my student?"

"It... it was in the library." Twilight explained, "I found it because my friends were having troubles with nightmares... and they were some serious nightmares. That spell was the only option we felt we had left and so I used it on them... they came out better and saying they were thankful for having found out what was causing their nightmares, but it concerned me."

"And what was the cause of them?" Celestia asked curiously.

“...W-Well... Pinkie came to me first with the Nightmares...” Twilight began. She quickly explained to Celestia about finding the spell and using it on Pinkie. How after the spell ended Pinkie had left for a while before returning to Ponyville and explaining to her that the spell had showed her the death of her sister Bellamina at the hooves of a serial killer.

“A... A serial killer?” Celestia stopped Twilight short.

“Y-Yea... is something wrong Princess?” Twilight looked up at the Princess curiously.

“Twilight... in the last 100 years of my reign there has only been one known and captured serial killer. He’s currently locked away in Foolsom Prison for Deranged Ponies.” Celestia spoke slowly and clearly, “I haven’t been informed on everything about the case with him, it’s been left up mostly to my security staff... I had no idea that one of the wielders of the Elements of Harmony had almost been a victim to him...” Celestia looked away from Twilight, as if gears were turning in her head as her eyes narrowed.

“W-Well... Princess, Pinkie may have been a victim to his evil but she’s alright now.” Celestia looked at her student curiously, “Well...I -I mean I assume she is... she keeps telling me she is and she certainly doesn’t seem to do anything to contradict that... so I think she took the lesson and used it to strengthen her resolve in life, rather than let it keep her down.”

“...I see.” Celestia said still in thought. “Well... go ahead and continue Twilight, you said Pinkie was the first?” Celestia seemed even more attentive now than she had been before.

“Y-Yes... about two months after Pinkie had suffered from her Nightmares, Fluttershy started having them too. So I ended up using the spell on her as well... she came out better for it as well, though she hasn’t told me what happened to her.” Twilight grew quiet as she finished explaining. Fluttershy wasn’t the last pony she had cast the spell on. She had also cast the spell on Fluttershy’s father Lance Strongshy...

But she remembered promising Fluttershy she wouldn’t speak of him having needed her help. And as much as she would like to tell the Princess, she hadn’t learned anything more from the experience. So she decided to keep to her promise for the time being.

“I see...” Celestia pondered quietly. “What did you experience during the spell?”

“That’s just it Princess... I don’t know.” Twilight said, looking away, “Both times I used the spell I found myself in a dark foggy void staring at a floating picture that morphed and changed. I couldn’t make sense of what I saw. It only lasted a short while too. The spell ended on its own both times, I had no control over when it ended. However it seemed to end just as my friends found resolution within the spell.”

“The spell ends on its own?” Celestia looked at the contents of the book once more. She

didn't see anywhere in the intricate castings of the spell of it ending on its own. "And that's all you know of the spell?"

"Yes... see, my friends... whatever it is they saw or went through... they refuse to tell me. In fact... they made me promise to never use the spell again." Twilight looked down at the book feeling defeated, even though part of the reason she had come to Canterlot was to find out more about the spell.

"Well, then I have a proposal for you Twilight." Celestia said turning to her student, Twilight looking up in surprise, "I'd like to see what this spell does for myself. Would you grant me permission to cast it upon you?"

Twilight perked up in curiosity. On one hoof that made sense, if she couldn't cast the spell again her teacher certainly could. On the other, she was suddenly afraid of what she might find inside of herself, this spell was enough to have Pinkie Pie, Fluttershy and Rainbow Dash all make her promise that she shouldn't use the spell again. She found herself second guessing this idea.

"Twilight?" Celestia's voice kicked Twilight back to her senses, "I asked if it was alright for me to cast the spell on you."

"...Of course Princess." Twilight put a smile on her face, "You're here with me, what could go wrong?" She really hoped she hadn't just tempted fate right then and there.

Celestia just gave a smile and her horn lit up as she cast the spell that was written down in the book before her. Twilight gave a silent gulp and tilted her head forward for the princess. With careful precision she tapped her horn against Twilight's forehead.

Twilight felt herself float up into space. She was confused at this new sensation, as she opened her eyes to try and figure out what was going on. She blinked, trying to confirm that she had opened her eyes.

Everything was pitch black around her. There wasn't anything to be seen anywhere. She raised a hoof up to her face. She could see it clearly. She looked at more of herself, able to see herself completely despite the lack of a visible light source. She looked down at where she thought she would see a ground, but only saw darkness. Her hooves weren't standing on anything discernable, she was just floating in a random black void.

Suddenly she felt as if somehow the world was moving around her quickly, a rush of wind moving past her body though she could see nothing. She squinted her eyes at the rush of wind, trying to gain control of the situation. Her hooves flailed as she tried to gain ground. The whirlwind was deafening though she couldn't explain how anything was there to be loud.

Then it all stopped. All at once Twilight blinked her eyes open and found herself in a completely new location. Her hooves set down on a dirt road with a small grass patch on either side that ended shortly before a black pit. The sky was still dark, but was randomly littered with floating trees and buildings she recognized from Canterlot. Not too far from her she could spot her home in Canterlot and looking behind her she could see the castle.

“I must say, this is very unique. I’ve never quite experienced anything like this.” A voice called out much to Twilight’s surprise. She quickly looked up, seeing the white form of Celestia slowly fly down and land before her.

“P-Princess! How did we get here!?” Twilight asked confused about her surroundings.

“It appears we’re inside a projection of your mind.” Celestia explained looking around.

“We... we are?” Twilight asked surprised.

“We are. I must say, I’m surprised to see a version of Canterlot here. I was expecting a representation of Ponyville if anything.” Celestia pondered looking around.

“Well... I spent most of my life in Canterlot... b-but that’s not the point.” Twilight shook her head, “How’re you here? Whenever I used the spell I didn’t interact with my friends. I saw nothing and this...” She looked around at the floating scenery, “This is strange but...i t’s not terrifying. My friends were terrified of what they saw here.”

“I see. Then the only solution is to look further into what is happening with this spell. Shall we?” Celestia smiled at her student.

“Of course Princess, I couldn’t pass up an opportunity like this to learn more about the spell.” Twilight smiled.

“I’m glad my faithful student.” Celestia said happily, the two of them walking down the dirt road to the house that looked like Twilight’s.

“Comprehension is but a small portion of ourselves. We take what we learn and say that is how things are. But there’s always more to it than that, isn’t there? We must look further, for within every answer will always be another question.” – Magus V. Darkarts.