

# Through The Eyes Of Another Pony

## Chapter Nine: Magneto

THE AUTHOR'S PAGE IS A GO!

So yeah, it's been a hellish week trying to get this out. I've been stressed out of my mind for unrelated reasons and I can't bring myself to write while stressed because it runs down the page and isn't as fun. So instead I've been writing when feeling good.

Why? Why, you ask?

Because this week we get the largest chapter to date with the most amount of fan art in one setting! I know, there's more fan art out there than just this, but this is what I got last week. There are some really talented artists out there that want nothing but something to create and the fact that I can supply that something makes me feel all squishy and warm inside.

Now, because this has been a huge question, I'm dedicating it's own paragraph to just it, especially since it keeps popping up.

Is this going to end anytime soon?

Yes. This does have an ending planned out, and while we are nearing the end of the first part, we are not nearing the end of the entire written work itself. :3 Basically, I plan to have two parts of about fifteen chapters a piece and an interlude full of short stories and some exposition. The short stories will focus on other major events in the story when Firewall wasn't there and such. Maybe even on what happened a thousand years ago. I hope to keep it interesting and pleasing regardless of whatever I choose.

Also, we're almost to 4.9, guys! :D Hope to see a six-star to really help this take off, and such!

Other than that, no news really... Other than I might have picked smoking back up. :( I know, it's a terrible habit and while I shouldn't do it, I can promise you, it's helped the fic move along since I get to burn my stress away like a cigarette. It's probably just a placebo effect and I just need to suck it up, but at the same time, I'd like to take as much of the edge back off as I like.

Anyway, I'm being presumptuous and assuming you want to hear about my problems! >:) Why don't I just spam you with five fan art pieces and let you send the comments and posts to the proper place in Equestria Daily! :D

Adieu, mes chers lecteurs! <3



[Avisby411](#) did this little number here. :D He wanted an awesome background for an awesome pony and decided that if you wanted something done, you'd have to do it yourself! >:3 I don't think he knows I found it, but props to him either way!



[Wrek](#) did this one of our mysterious Ice Knight that guards Azure Floran. :3 The most uncuddly pony ever! ALL HAIL TEH ICE PONEH! >:3



So [Ice Storm](#) did this one as a scene for last chapter. And he whined and he whined and he whined that he could not replicate Twilight's color with color pencils. It was Rarity amounts of whining. Eventually, I just kinda went [My Face When](#) at him. Also, highlight the picture for better color as it is a night scene. :3



Icekatze did this little wonder and I've gotta say, he did an excellent job with it. :3 My favorite part is that this ruins MyCutieMarkIsAGun's gripe that evil = black is such a stereotype. NYAH!

:D



And [Sircinnamon](#) did this vector of Firewall, probably getting as close to what he would look like in the show as one could possibly get. :D IT PREASES MEH!

I opened my eyes, somewhat surprised that I had experienced an entirely dreamless night for once. Maybe I was getting used to all this insanity? God, I hope not, I thought to myself, I'd hate to see what the prolonged effects of that would be. What wasn't surprising was that we were still travelling on the Sky Carriage, hauling flank towards Appleloosa. I yawned as I stretched all over, reaching a hoof up to rub away the eye crud that had accumulated in my time of sweet and blessed rest (Some like to call it 'sleep'. That makes no sense, just so you know.). I got a pat on the head from behind.

"Good morning sleepyhead." I heard Luna's voice from behind me. I looked around to see that it was still in the dead of night. "Sleep well?"

"I think I slipped into a coma, actually. It was the best coma ever. I need more comas like that in my life," I replied, nodding lazily as I rolled to my hooves but didn't stand up just yet, "How long was I out?"

"Oh, about half a day." Twilight was just to the side of me on the carriage, lounging as I was. "I went to sleep and woke up before you."

"Wow. Why is it still night?" I blinked, looking back at Luna in confusion.

"Because I haven't put the moon down, of course." she gave a smirk before nodding at the distance, pointing out the moon still above the horizon.

"So... What? Does that just keep the sun from rising?" I tilted my head, not quite understanding.

"Of course it does, Firewall," Twilight said with a laugh, "The sun and moon are like matching ends of a magnet. They push each other away."

I looked at them as though they were crazy (Which still doesn't appease me in any fashion, I might add.). There was no reason that should even remotely work that way.

"What? That's nonsense!" I chuckled as I pulled out a cigarette, "Luna, you know how such things work now, right?"

"I know how they work where you come from... But there is no denying that the sun and moon push each other away. In fact, if they weren't bound to Equestria, there would be nothing stopping them from flying away," she said with a nod, smirking at me, "Why do you think Celestia had to send Nightmare Moon away when she wouldn't lower it? Because, she had to raise the sun, and she couldn't do that with her interfering."

“Huh.” I blinked, entirely caught off guard. “That’s... Y’know, I think I need to stop assuming that things work here the way they do on Earth.”

“What, did you think she sent me there for a thousand years just because I was misbehaving?” Luna gave a laugh, “Despite all the Trollestia content out there, nothing could be further from the truth. My dear sister did what she had to do.”

“Yeah. Celestia’s pretty cool,” I gave a nod before looking at Twilight before giving her a hoof-poke, “RIGHT, TWI?!”

“Yes, yes. The princess is certainly amazing,” Twilight chuckled as she shook her head, “You’re pretty wired, I noticed. That nap really did help, I take it?”

“Well, I was always a morning person. Seriously though, I feel like a million bits!” I called out eagerly before hopping up and lighting my cigarette, moving to the side of the carriage to prevent smoking on anypony, “So, how far are we out?”

Twilight summoned an astrolabe, sextant, and a few star charts. After a bit of compass work and using the stars as a locational reference, she nodded and unsummoned all of it, “About six hours.”

“Road trips. Cool, I can handle it,” I nodded before doing a quick count and looking about frantically, “Hey! Where’s Starlight?!”

“She’s left to meet up with the train from Ponyville,” Twilight gave a nod, “Trixie led the Shadow Ponies in an attack on Ponyville as we began evacuating everypony. Luckily, Storm Wing made short work of the Shadow Ponies and Trixie was forced to run away. She let slip that soon Canterlot would also be under attack, and that Luna would be their prisoner within the hour. She didn’t know that I could teleport, I guess. A good thing, too. I got there just in time.”

“I was totally baffled how you just showed up out of nowhere,” I laughed with a nod, “Good thing you did, too. If you had shown up any later, we might not have been so lucky.”

“Like Hot Shot,” Luna pointed out with a bit of a timid grimace.

We all stood in silence for a moment. None of us knew Hot Shot especially well, but that didn’t mean we didn’t care. He had saved our plots, sacrificing himself in the process, and I had every intention of doing whatever it took to help get him back to flying on the good side. I can promise you, Twilight and Luna felt likewise.

“Still,” I concurred but was staying on the silver lining nonetheless, “Your timing was appreciated, Twilight.”



“Even if it was a little terrible,” I heard Luna mutter under her breath with a sigh. Twilight did not seem to have heard, and I was pretending to have missed it as well. Blargh. I was still unsure how to approach this, much less make a decision.

“Actually, I arrived there several minutes before. I was simply helping the Sky Archons organize an efficient evacuation plan before finding you two,” she modestly looked away and shrugged happily, “Luckily, they were after you two, so the evacuation went off without a hitch. I just checked up on them a little while ago. The evacuees are all on a different train to Appleloosa as well.”

“Does Appleloosa know we’re about to triple its population?” I asked with a nervous chuckle, “Is there going to be plenty of space for everypony?”

“Please. There will be enough of a workforce to help make plenty of room,” Luna said with a roll of her pretty blue eyes, “I know this will blow your silly human mind, but we create buildings in hours and towns in days. I can’t believe it takes you all several years for a town to properly begin flourishing.”

“Woah,” I blinked again, “And here I thought Japan was awesome for having built a single skyscraper in six days. Ponies are amazing.”

“Yes, but you already knew that,” Twilight gave me a knowing wink.

I gave her an odd look before looking to Luna in confusion. She blushed a bit before smiling sheepishly, “We’ve been talking. I might have mentioned a few things. Such as irrigation.”

“Okay,” I gave a fearful nod, “But that’s not all, is it.” (Note: That wasn’t a question. I was not asking. I was making a statement. Because I knew the answer.)

“And maybe a few things about human history. Nothing bad, though!” she promised me, her smile becoming more and more sheepish and more and more nervous.

“For some reason, I am not feeling a sense of relief,” my eyes were widening already. In fact, it was a sense of DOOM that was setting in.

Then she mumbled something under her breath that I didn’t catch.

“Speak up, princess!” I ordered, my eyes only getting bigger.

“May have... mentioned TV,” she tried to make it sound nonchalant. Guess what? SHE FAILED MISERABLY!

“You didn’t...” it was like getting hit with a bucket full of cold water. Then getting that bucket dumped on me as I writhed in agony.

“And MLP:FIM,” she blurted out, blushing brightly.

“Luna!” My mind began to blue screen. Errors popping up! IT DOESN’T COMPUTE!

“And maybe a few shipfics!” she cried out, taking advantage of my blown mind to get the entire confession out.

“WHAT IS WRONG WITH YOU!?” Emergency switches were going off. The pressure was critical. If my skull had escape pods, my brain might have abandoned ship. As it were, it was forced to deal with it. Much to my displeasure.

“And the human fascination with nudity. And the imaginative ways to portray it,” she went for the Coup de grâce.

“Thhhbbbbbbt~!” I blew a raspberry (Obviously I’m reverting to childhood responses.) because my mind was already overloaded. It was in the middle of a reset, and the ability to arrange vocabulary into audible sentences fashioned in a grammatically correct pattern was still quite out of order.

“Don’t worry, Firewall. I now know why you weren’t so quick to divulge everything to me, and I understand. You were just being cautious on my account, and I’m touched by your concern,” Twilight replied in earnest, trying to make the entire situation feel nonchalant, “It’s a human cultural activity. Strange as it is to me, I do not judge you for your ways. It was how you were raised, after all. May I ask a question, though?”

“That sounds like a terrible idea,” I was shaking my head, “In fact, I’m sure I’m going to regret this. Go on.”

“Do humans not have multiple genders?” Twilight looked very serious. In fact, if she had not looked so serious about it, I’d have thought she was making a poorly executed joke.

“I cannot fathom how you came to wonder such a thing, but yes. Males and females. Just like ponies,” I was still shaking my head, not wanting to think about where this was going.

“I’m just... confused. Usually, ponies... um... ‘pair up,’ I suppose, with their opposing gender,” Twilight said with a contemplative stare.

“As do humans. Not that there’s anything wrong with the alternative,” I said, starting to become confused, “Why do you ask?”

“Oh. Well, it just seemed... A lot of... speculative fiction was,” Twilight was starting to blush a bit,

“Revolving around... A lot of female-only pairings.”

“I noticed that as well,” Luna looked at me with an amused smirk, “Why is that, Firewall?”

“Oh shut up, Luna,” I groaned, causing her to burst into a fit of laughter.

“But I’m curious~!” she faux-whined in between her snickering.

I facehoofed, “I bet you are. Look, Twilight... Best to describe it like this: Humans think of everything. And I mean everything. The human imagination runs wild. If you can think of something, there’s likely a human who’s taken it four steps further and put his ideas into some form of media that you can find on Youtube.”

“What’s Yout-...” she started to ask me before I cut her off.

“Skip it,” I shook my head, “That’s going to be an extremely long line of questions on an entirely different subject. The simplest way that I can put it is that you’re a popular medium in modern human culture, which means there is nearly endless amounts of ways to speculate on every unanswered question about you. Including your romantic preference on genders.”

Twilight blinked, utterly stunned by that last part, “Y... You mean...?”

“Ummm... I didn’t mention anything about her ships, smart guy,” Luna held a hoof in front of her mouth as she began to laugh yet again.

“W... What?!” I began to panic, “Twilight, ignore what I said!”

“H-How can I!?” she shook her head, “What... That’s just... I don’t have time for a... relationship! I’m too busy... with studies and... Oh... Humans are so... weird! I thought Pinkie Pie was strange!”

“Okay! Let’s just drop this subject!” I cried, still panicking. Hell, I even broke out into a sweat, “Humans are strange! That works! Let’s just go with that!”

I looked at Luna. She was still sputtering mirthfully. I gave her an annoyed stare, which only made her erupt into an uncontrolled guffaw. Reflecting back on this, I think it’s fair to say all she needed was trollface.jpg printed out on paper and taped to her face to complete the effect. It took her nearly an entire minute to calm down, but that didn’t stop her from staring back with a huge shit-eating grin on her face. Apparently she forgot, there was only enough room in Equestria for one smart ass.

“Okay. We’ll drop it,” Luna said, still smiling as brightly as the sun on the other side of Equestria.

No pony said a word for the next several minutes. We just busied ourselves with doing unnecessary activities until the tension finally deflated. Just as I turned to say something, not patient enough to fly in silence for so long, Twilight actually slipped the first word in.

“So... Who am I often paired with?” she asked, trying to look halfway uninterested (Unsurprisingly enough, Twilight makes a terrible liar.).

“BWAHAHA!” the damn indigo alicorn actually lost control of the stupid (I didn't really mean it was stupid. I love the A.S.C.A.) carriage as she doubled over in laughter. We began to plummet, causing me to panic for an entirely new reason as I clung to the side of the carriage. Twilight snatched control of it in shock as I pressed my face into the side of the coach and just whimpered.

“Kill me. Just kill me now,” I murmured, my words drowned out by Luna's rambunctious laughing.

And it was like that for SIX. MORE. HOURS. I will tell you all, Twilight doesn't have many flaws. In fact, she's just got only three that I can name offhand. The first is that she's obsessive compulsive to a fault on certain matters. The second I will tell you later. The third? She is insatiably curious and has no inhibition when it comes to learning anything about anything. I'll just skip the details and let you know that it was a difficult six hours. I'd never been so happy to see Appleloosa in my life. Which made sense since I had never seen it in person (in pony?) before.

Now just to set the scene, (I really wasn't interested in taking it in at the time, I was just ready to get away from those two) we all know what Appleloosa looks like by day. Multiply its population, though, and it's a mess with a rainbow of ponies running everywhere. There were dozens of ponies swinging hammers at buildings and workbenches, all to accommodate their new guests and more to come. I'm sure I would have reflected on just how... perfectly communist it all was if I wasn't so preoccupied with my upcoming getaway. (George Orwell would have loved Equestria. If you don't know who that is, look for the book Animal Farm and you'll see why. HOORJ LITERATURE!)

“LAND!” I jumped off the A.S.C.A. and what was quite possibly my least enjoyable sky ride ever, “SWEET FREEDOM!”

With that, I ran away from Twilight and her incessant queries. I know I'm not a perfect pony to be around, but man, you get Twi started, and she can not stop. I mean, she tried. She really did. But Luna was there every time to toss in a subtle comment to get her started on something entirely new. It was the greatest trolling ever. She was a master troller. A pony has no business being such a master troll. The only thing she didn't do was look at me and go U MAD, BRONY?!

“I'm sorry!” I could hear Twilight calling out to me apologetically, though it was difficult to make

out between Luna's gasps for air.

In my mad dash to escape, I was tackled (Anyone else sensing a theme here? Is that how ponies say hello or something?) by a pink organism with pink hair and a pair of pink... NO! Blue eyes! Yes, it was Pinkie Pie, hugging me happily with an excited squeal. My reaction was to try and get the number of that bus that ran me over. The local department of transportation would hear about this if it was the last thing I did!

"NO-NAME!" Her thrilled shriek pierced the air, causing everypony in Appleloosa within a two block radius to stop what they were doing and smile, "Now we get to NAME YOU!"

Now, mentlegen, I'll have you know, I didn't panic. I calmly waited out the throttling hug (I started to black out for a second, surprisingly enough.) and smiled as Pinkie disengaged.

"Pinkie. Princess Luna named me already," I broke the news to her as plainly as I could, not beating around the bush.

Now, I thought she might be a little sad, maybe have a Pinkamina moment, or just explode in a pink jealousy rage. The last thing I expected was for her to gasp before hugging my neck with the strength of Hercules yet again.

"That means you're hers now!" she squealed, bouncing as she dislocated my vertebrae in her titanic embrace, "I'm so HAPPY FOR YOU~! She can afford the really expensive scratching posts and \*GAAAAASP~!\* All the CUPCAKES YOU COULD WANT~!"

"Pinkie," I squeaked as my vision began to lose focus, "I'm happy, too. Let me go."

"Okay!" she laughed as she released me before honking my nose, "Honk~! What did she name you?"

"Firewall," I coughed out my answer as sat back.

"That's great! Is it a wall made from fire?" she stuck her tongue out at me sarcastically, "What does it mean?"

"It mea-..." I started to say.

"Wait until I tell the girls!" she interrupted me before turning around and running down the street.

"Ummm... Okay," I scratched my head as I watched her fade into the distance. I continued on down main street and turned into what looked like the local watering hole. I was surprised when I looked at the bar to see Storm Wing and Rainbow Dash standing at the bar (the way ponies normally stand, for there were no bar stools) and having a drink. I got all excited and scampered my way over to

them.

“Salutations, Firewall,” Storm Wing murmured as I approached, able to see me without even looking my way. He gave a half-hearted wave, causing his armor to ring a tad when he set his hoof back down.

“Hmmm?” Rainbow Dash looked over her shoulder, smiling as she caught sight of me, “Hey! Starlight said you should be arriving today! Congrats on your name, tough guy!”

“Thanks!” I gave her a large goofy grin, holding up my hoof, which Dash laughed at before brohoofing me epically.

“You just get in?” she asked as she looked back at the barkeep, “One juice for my friend here.”

“Yeah. Pinkie caught me and tried to name me. I had to break the news that she missed out and that Luna gave me a name, although that only seemed to excite her even more,” I explained as I took hold of the cup of juice Dash was serving me. I noticed that Storm Wing was being awfully quiet, “Thanks, Dash!”

I knocked the glass back with a smile and felt a rush of nostalgia. I’d not had apple juice since I was a pre-teen.

“Huh? But Pinkie was there when Twilight told us.” Dash looked a tad confused, furrowing her brow in response.

“You’re assuming Pinkie was paying attention,” I pointed out, not surprised by this in the least.

“Hah! Yeah, I guess that ain’t a safe bet!” she snickered with a wing shrug, “Oh, Pinkie Pie.”

“You are so random,” I finished for her, causing her to start laughing with concurring nod. I looked again at Storm Wing, chuckling along with her before glancing at Rainbow Dash.

She caught my glance and looked back at him before nudging him with a wing, “C’mon, Sparky, it’s okay to relax during serious times. Laugh a little or you’ll end up crying instead!”

I resisted the urge to laugh at Rainbow Dash's choice of relevant monikers. It wasn't hard to resist, however, after seeing that he wasn't being his usual stiff self. He just wasn't doing anything at all. I leaned about to look at him from the side to see that his expression was a sad one. Dash gave me a wing shrug before deciding to give us some dude time. If you ask me though, Dash is cool enough to be in any bro circle. Hell, Dash probably has her own bro circle. LIKE A BAWSS!

“I’ll catch you guys later. I’m going to go see if Starlight is up for a race or something,” she

excused herself before smiling at me as she left, "Good to see you again, big guy."

"You too, champ!" I smiled in response before turning to Storm Wing and poking him with my hoof. "Hey."

"Hey," He said quite plainly, "glad you're okay."

"You alright?" I asked, ignoring his attempt at smalltalk.

"Yeah." he shut his eyes and sighed.

"We'll get her back, mate," I reassured him, shaking my head at the barkeep pony (I wish I had asked his name. It was probably something cool like Wet Whistle or Sasparilla) when he gave us an asking glance.

"The last time The Nightmare took an alicorn, it lasted for a thousand years," he murmured as his ears drooped.

"Well, Nightmare Sol won't even make it to her first birthday, I promise." I set a hoof on his shoulder.

He faced my general direction before inhaling deeply. "Right. You're right."

"You don't sound convinced." he really didn't. I was then struck with a thought that I blurted without thinking, "Storm Wing, have you ever even failed in a task?"

"What?" He opened his eyes, confusion now splayed on his visage.

"Have you ever been defeated? Or failed to carry out a mission?" I asked, curiosity getting the better of me.

"Not... Not really," I was surprised to hear him say.

"Never?" it seemed a little too far fetched for me to swallow, "One thousand years and you never met a dragon you couldn't bring down? Or had to retreat?"

"Well, retreating isn't failure. Just a delay until victory," he said earnestly, "and no, dragons aren't very fast fliers, and when you fly faster than the fire they breath, they're quite a joke. Phoenixes are the worst, really."

I couldn't help but feel he was exaggerating, at least a little. "Whatever. Repeat what you just said?"

"Phoe-..."

“Seriously, man? You think there’s something significant about phoenixes in what we’re talking about?” I rolled my eyes, knowing he couldn’t see it. “You know what I’m talking about.”

He blinked before letting a grin spread across his muzzle. Finally, he gave a chuckle and nodded, “You’re right. We’ve just retreated. It isn’t over.”

“You’re buckin’ right it isn’t,” I chuckled before hearing the bell at the door ring loudly. Curiosity provoked me to give it a glance before groaning, “Damn it all to hell.”

“What?” his eyes narrowed as he focused, trying to sense what I was seeing.

Luna was at the door with Applejack, walking towards the bar. Fortunately, her demeanor had changed from TROLL TEH FIREWALL to rather serious and determined. As they approached, I caught a bit of their conversation.

“An’ Braeburn says we should be able t’house everypony fer today, but we’re needin’ to chop down some’ah the orchard to take care’ah the ponies from Canterlot. Ah think they’ll fuss about the uh... rough livin’, though,” Applejack explained as she smiled over at me, acknowledging me with a nod as she continued to speak to Princess Luna. “Ah gotta say though, between you’n Twilight managin’ matters, things’ll be goin’ swimmin’ly, Ah reckon.”

“I plan on it,” Luna stared through me, pensively murmuring her reply, “Go ahead and take whatever you need from the orchard and clear as much land as you need. Tell your cousin he’ll be compensated as soon as order is reestablished. And if any of Canterlot’s citizens give you any grief, you send them straight to me. I’ll straighten out any pony that thinks he or she is more deserving than anypony else.”

“Your highness,” Storm Wing turned to her with a bow, “I’m glad your safe.”

“Likewise, Captain. Just Luna will do.” She huffed before looking to Applejack once more, “Any other questions?”

“No, yer highness,” she replied instantly, not thinking about what Luna had just said.

“By the light of... You call me anything but Luna again and I’ll have Storm Wing give you combat training for a week.” She facehoofed as she shook her head. “And trust me, I’ve seen what the Sky Archons go through. There’s a reason there have only been fifty Sky Archons in a thousand years.”

“Everypony cries on their first day,” Storm Wing pointed out with a smirk, supporting Luna’s argument.



“S-Sorry, Ma’am... Um... Princess Luna! Ah... Luna!” Applejack looked rather intimidated, her face turning red. I was rather surprised. The only time I’d ever seen her sweat was when Pinkie Pie gave her that god-awful stare.

“That scare you, Applejack?” I asked with a laugh.

“Well... Shoot yeah! Ah saw’m fight off that big-headed showpony, Trixie!” she nodded vigorously. “It was none too kind, neither!”

“She’s just a stupid unicorn with a load of chaotic magic. She doesn’t even know how to use it properly,” he scoffed, a bit of his pride showing through, “Honestly, you probably could have taken her on your own, Applejack, strong as you are.”

“Well, uh... Ah’m not much fer fightin’,” Applejack blushed a bit more as she stammered. Her modesty was quite endearing. “Anyway... Ah’ll see everypony later. Ah need t’help get everythin’ ready for the ponies on their way. Good t’see ya again, Firewall. Be grateful an’ such. Not everypony gits named by the princess, after all. Ya’ll stay safe, now.”

“Trust me, she’s made up for it with other shenanigans,” I waved at her as she turned to leave, “Peace AJ!”

We all watched her leave for a moment before Luna spoke up, looking back my way with a smirk, “Still bitter?”

“I am so bitter that I’m too dark for chocolate,” I huffed irritably.

“Awww, but you seem so sweet~!” she teased before laughing, glancing at Storm Wing, “Did everypony make it?”

“Yes, your highness,” he responded with an affirming nod.

“Storm Wing,” she cut her eyes his way, “What did I just tell Applejack?”

“As long as I am your Captain, you will be my Princess,” his voice sounded as though he was willing to get in a fight over the matter.

“I’ve no problems promoting Starlight, you know. At least she can drop formality when I order her to,” I couldn’t tell if she was joking or not, but I could tell that Storm Wing didn’t find it funny either way. It made sense that they had conflicting personalities. After all, Luna isn’t formal in the least and Storm Wing was nothing but strict order and discipline.

“Woah, woah, woah,” I stepped in between them, as Storm Wing set his jaw, ready to hash it out on the spot, “Really you two are being stubborn on a stupid matter. Let it go. Storm Wing, learn

to relax when ponies are trying to be relaxed. Luna, don't escalate something so pointless just because somepony feels strongly about an idea that opposes yours."

"Butt out," Storm Wing growled as Luna stepped around me.

"This doesn't concern you, Firewall," she snapped at me before looking at Storm Wing, her eyes narrowing in determination. Her voice had suddenly shifted to a higher volume and a stronger tone, "Are you questioning my orders, Captain Storm Wing?"

It suddenly came to me that she sounded almost exactly like Celestia. Like her sister, she was showing that she could leave no room to argument and Storm Wing had picked up on it as I had.

He glared for a moment before lowering his eyes and bowing yet again, "No, your majesty."

"Then you use my name when I tell you to. You're an example. If my own Captain doesn't follow my orders, then why should anypony else," she clarified, her voice still firm and above reproach, "Is that clear?"

I blinked in shock. Luna really knew how to step up to the plate whenever she needed to.

"Yes, your majesty," he replied, remaining bowed.

"Marvelous. Now, how are you today, Storm Wing?" she asked, raising her head and staring down her nose at him.

"I am well... .. Luna," he answered forcibly, looking as though he was going to be sick.

"Good," she cantered over to raise him to up. Without warning, she suddenly pulled him into a hug, catching everypony off guard and for several seconds, nopony said anything. Even all the other bar patrons were staring at the two of them in shock. Their nosiness shook me from my stunned gaping, causing me to glare at them all. I don't like nosy people or nosy ponies!

"Take a picture, jackponies!" I shouted at them, causing all of them to quickly go about their business.

"Thanks, Firewall," Luna murmured before breaking the hug and looking down. She began whispering softly, "Look, Storm... We know I'm not used to leading. I'm going to need your help. I don't know if you can tell or not, but I'm actually scared out of my horseshoes. I just... You took care of my sister while I was gone... And now I need you to take care of me as I do my best to fill in for her."

Storm Wing's stunned expression faded into regret before steeling itself in determination. He

nodded with a dire look on his face, "I'm sorry about the attitude, your... Luna. I promise you, you've nothing if not my support."

"Thank you," she said with a deep breath, sighing it out and giving a yawn, "I need a rest. I've placed a spell to hold the Moon in place. If it starts to move, come wake me up."

"Sleep well, Luna," Storm Wing offered politely.

She smiled at him then looked to me expectantly.

"Still bitter," I reminded her after a moment of awkward silence, "Go to bed. That's all you get."

"But," she pouted, sticking out her bottom lip expectantly. I had to look away. Even if she was a primary source of annoyance, she had mastered the art of cute and undeniable pout through thousands of years of having used it on Celestia, "Pleeeaaase?"

"Now why does he get the magic word and I get the royal talk down?" Storm Wing huffed irritably.

"Shush," she ordered before looking at me one last time, "You're going to hurt my feelings~!"

"Perish the thought," I held my hoof to my forehead as if I were succumbing to a fit of the vapors, "Whatever shall we do~?"

"Hey!" I heard a small voice come from beneath me. We all looked down to see a tiny yellow pony with red hair and a large pink ribbon in the back. Luna and I both gasped, recognizing her right away, "Ya'll kin give th'princess due respect! She's just askin' fer a 'good night' after all!"

"Applebloom!" I gasped, going parallel with the floor to look her straight in the eye, "You are ADORABLE. Where are the other crusaders!?"

"Wh... What? How'd y'all know mah name?" she stepped back, entirely unprepared for such familiarity, "Are... Are ya'll... a wizard?"

I was barely able to restrain myself from squeeing at her. Luna proved she still had no self control in that department and had to cover her mouth with a hoof as she cackled. Storm Wing looked down at the little filly and promptly turned back around to the bar. Somepony doesn't like kids. Me? I love kids that are right around that six-year old stage, especially when their parents actually had the balls to keep them straightened out and such.

"Long story, trust me, you don't wanna hear it. But I'll be nice enough to share my name so we're even. I'm Firewall!" I did chuckle a bit before smiling at her, "So you think I need to be nice to mean ol' Luna, eh?"

“Ya’ll can’t call the princess mean!” she protested, glaring at me ADORABLY. I almost picked her up and ran around the room with her just out of impulse. I was able to refrain from such a display, but it was harder than I thought it would have been.

“I just did. Whatcha gonna do about it, tiny?” I taunted with a big smile.

“Cutie Mark Crusader Princess Defenders!” I heard two small voices cry out from behind me and before I could look, it was on. I had Sweetie Belle and Scootaloo on my back, jumping up and down on me as Applebloom grabbed my face in an attempt to wrestle it to the ground and hold me there. Fortunately, they were doing absolutely no damage with their endearing efforts, but I let them think they were. Kids are cool. With a false cry of strain, I rolled to my side and let myself be ‘pinned’ to the ground.

“Well done, Crusaders!” Luna cried out after a minute or so of laughing at my expense (I am still not allowed to win, I see), “Let’s see if he’s willing to cooperate now.”

“You’re such a pushover, Firewall,” I heard Storm Wing comment as I was released from the tiny assault.

I got back up, feigning injury before sighing and looking at Luna, “Well, Luna... It seems I’ve been defeated. Curse you and your protectors.”

“Watch it!” Scootaloo growled warningly.

“You cannot talk to the princess that way!” Sweetie Belle declared, cutting a glare my way.

“Right! Now ya’ll apologize an’ wish her a good night! Or we’ll give ya’ll more’a the same!” Applebloom threatened, waving a clenched hoof at me. How she managed that, I’ll never know.

“Well, Firewall?” she smirked arrogantly behind her damned wall of cute and cuddly defenders, “Let’s hear it.”

I took a deep breath, closing my eyes and steeling myself for what was to come. After a moment of consideration, I simply shook my head, “Nah! You’ll have to beat it out of me!”

“Oh, pick me, Luna,” Storm Wing offered as the Cutie Mark Crusaders charged me again.

I leaped over them, smiling at Luna as I ran past her. I did whisper as I passed by, though, “Good night.”

“You cannot run from us!” Sweetie Belle cried out as I made for the door.

For the next few hours or so, I exhausted myself running from the Crusaders. We entertained a lot of ponies with our nonsense, running around like a bunch of idiots. Being nearly five times their height, there was no way they could keep up on hoof, so they started getting creative. This involved splitting up and heading me off. I answered by ambushing loners and putting them in buckets that they were too small to get out of or putting them up on high surfaces that they couldn't easily get down from. Then they tried using the scooter and wagon, to which I used the wheel's greatest enemy: The stair. Eventually, though, I ran out of will and simply flopped over in the middle of a grassy patch just on the edge of the apple orchard after another foot race. Much to my fortune, they were equally beat and merely proceeded to poke at me lazily as they made their demands.

"Ya'll... thought ya'll... could git away.... eh?" Applebloom panted through her words.

"Now, yer... gonna get it," Scootaloo swore to me, lazily flopping across my shoulder, "I'll... hold him down."

"Good job... Scoots..." Sweetie Belle likewise lounged upon my neck, giggling a tad, "Do you... surrender?"

"Well, okay," I said with a tired laugh, "But I'm... not getting up for... a few minutes."

"F... Fine," Applebloom agreed to that, sitting back against me, her breath still coming in gasps, "Ya'll... kin take a br... break."

"But don't... don't expect us to go easy on you," Scootaloo mumbled lazily.

"Of course not," I snorted softly, staring at the closest apple tree for no particular reason, "I've learned my lesson."

"Did we... get our cutie marks?" Sweetie Belle asked, too tired to look herself.

I chuckled again, inhaling the scent of the sweet apple orchard and smiling. With the moon in the sky, it was actually rather easy to see everything. The beautiful stars twinkled down at me and the troubles of Nightmare Sol and Azure Flora seemed so far away. This is what Equestria is supposed to feel like, I told myself. A soft breeze floated our way, carrying a bit of a chill and the Crusaders all shifted away from it a bit. It wasn't long before I heard Scootaloo snoring, and I realized I had become a bed.

"Great," I murmured lowly, craning my neck to look at them. Surely enough, they were all passed out. I smiled and gently lifted them all up with a bit of unicorn magic before placing them on my back after standing. With the utmost of care, I began to walk back into town, thoughtfully keeping the air around me warm on their behalf. As I made my way back in, I quickly remembered I had no idea where to go. I wandered about for a bit, looking for a familiar face.

Thankfully, I found a pair of said faces, but was a little hesitant. It was both Miss Rarity and Fluttershy sitting under a table umbrella (What, were they trying to beat the heat or something? Avoid a moon burn?) with a candle illuminating them as they sipped at their beverages. They were sipping at what I could only assume was tea. I steered my approach to come up behind Fluttershy. Rarity spotted me and gave me an odd look, but I held up a hoof and shooshed quietly. She was confused, but amicable enough to agree. I slipped up behind the yellow pegasus and leaned over to whisper right into her ear.

“Boo,” I said suddenly, causing her to jump and squeak a bit in shock. I laughed quietly as she turned around, panting a bit in fear, “You’re going to wake them up, Fluttershy. You’re such a loudmouth.”

“Oh... It’s you!” her exclamation, while excited, carried the decibel strength of a mouse’s heartbeat. She smiled at me and nodded, turning to Rarity with a quiet giggle, “Rarity, this is the one Twilight was talking about.”

“Firewall, she said?” she smiled after I nodded my confirmation, “It is quite a pleasure to meet you. How do you do, my good gentlecolt?”

“Splendid, milady,” I answered with a polite nod, speaking softly, “You wouldn’t happen to know where I can... drop off this cargo, would you?”

“Awww~!” Fluttershy was quietly examining the crusaders, gently brushing Scootaloo’s hair and causing her to happily moan in response, “They’re such angels~!”

“I’ve just the place in mind,” Rarity said with a pleasant smile, “I should thank you for occupying them. I was afraid they would get in trouble or disrupt some pony’s hard work.”

“They’re so cute~!” Fluttershy cooed to no one in particular as she continued to feed her inner Squee.

“Nah, they just need some attention,” I gave a nod before looking myself over, grimacing at how sweaty and dirty I was (YES, I’D BEEN BATHING FOR THOSE WHO ARE WONDERING!), “And I need a bath. Badly.”

“Well, I certainly wasn’t going to be rude and make assumptions,” she said with a strained smile, “I suppose you have no place to stay.”

“I figured Luna would...” I started to say before I was cut off.

“Princess Luna,” she reminded me, “And I’ll take that as a no. Come with me, then. I’ll see you shortly Fluttershy.”

“Awww,” Fluttershy was saddened at the prospect of leaving the crusaders, but she nodded and smiled nonetheless, “Just as well. I need to get back to finding the animals their homes while they’re here.”

“Trust me, Miss, she hates the formality. She’s... more practical than that,” I explained, trying to think of a way to tell Rarity that Princess Luna did not behave like a princess at all.

“You sound as though you’ve spoken with her,” she smiled, looking back at me as she led me through the streets to one of the recently constructed homes. The difference between this house and the ones directly beside it was that the wood had been polished, sanded, painted, and decorated from top to bottom in ribbons, etchings, and greenery.

“Oh, Twilight didn’t explain everything, I see,” I gave a chuckle as we entered.

Rarity looked back at me as she began to scan about her home for something, “I beg your pardon?”

“I’m the human that appeared the same time the crater did,” really, it was the quickest explanation that I could have come up with

“Oh, that dreadful thing,” she gave a haughty laugh, “What an eyesore, don’t you think?”

“Days upon days of lost sleep, milady,” I laughed as I rolled my eyes. She smiled at my humor, taking it all in good stride.

“Where were you at that time, anyway?” I couldn’t help but be curious.

“Oh, I was actually in Canterlot, fashioning a few new dresses with Hoity Toity,” she replied nonchalantly as she sighed in frustration, still searching for whatever it was that eluded her, “The gentlecolt has an eye for spotting fashion and an even better one towards marketing such beautiful work, but I must say, he’s not much of a designer himself.”

“This really isn’t fazing you in the least, is it?” I was smirking amazed at just how interested she seemed without being enthusiastic about the situation. Then it hit me that she was doing so intentionally, to which she confirmed with her response.

“A lady must keep her composure, my good sir. It’s all fascinating, I assure you, but I’ve learned that one must keep her wits about her if she’s to make any progress,”

“You know... You’re the toughest pretty-girl, ever. Props to you, Miss Rarity,” I said in all honesty, “You’re actually something of a popular culture icon where I come from and are admired for keeping such poise and grace, even under pressure.”

“Why thank you, Mister Firewall, your homeland already sounds wonderful,” she feigned modesty with a hoof covering her cheek just as she finally found what she was looking for, “Celestia’s tears, that’s where it was!”

She yanked a furniture sheet out from under her couch, tossed it into the air, and let it billow out with her magic before settling it back over the couch.

“Please, just Firewall. So, you’ve been here all of what... a few hours? It looks as though you’ve spent days decorating *just* the walls,” I proclaimed as I looked about. Not a drop of paint was out of place, not a bit of sawdust adorned her floors. Her colors of warm pink carpeting and stark white walls blended well and I could tell that she had gone out of her way to acquire a special thinner for her paint. I could smell that very particular resin that my uncles had sworn by, proclaiming anything not made with this certain plant or tree or whatever (Yeah, I kinda tuned them out when they got to talk about the exciting world of PAINT. *HOLD ME THE HELL BACK!*).

“Well, it *is* my gift after all. Here we are,” she beckoned me over to the couch and one by one, we transferred the somewhat dirty crusaders from my back to the couch. They were so small that they weren’t even slightly crowding each other’s space, but after a moment, they inched their way to one another, piling up like tired puppies.

“Heavens, I must confess that they’re absolutely darling when they’re not conscious,” she admitted with a smile, running a hoof over Sweetie Belle’s mane, “They must have been such a trouble.”

“Nah, don’t worry about it. Kids are fun,” I told her with a confident smile, “Nothing to it, really. You just have to remember how to be a kid.”

“That doesn’t sound very... mature, if you don’t mind my saying,” she teased with a soft titter before moving to the closet and bringing me a towel. I dread to think of how much of her boutique made it into that train.

“Well, a wise man once said, that the desire to be an adult is a child’s way. A healthy and maturing child’s way, mind you, but a child’s way nonetheless,” I began to roughly quote C.S. Lewis, “As you grow to become an adult, though, you set away childish things, including the urgent desire to be an adult.”

“Why... I never thought of it that way,” she looked somewhat surprised, mulling over the profound words, “What else did this gentlecolt say?”

“He also said that one never truly possesses anything until they can give it away,” I gave a chuckle, wondering if she would get the philosophical implications.

“I see... That... actually makes perfect sense. If one is unwilling to part with their possessions



then, in a way, it is more as though that one belongs to their possessions,” she mused aloud. It was my turn to be stunned, this time at how quickly she had thought it through. I’ve met hundreds of people that still think all C.S. Lewis meant was to just start giving everything away because he was a drug addicted philosopher. Before I could comment on how much she had impressed me, Rarity rushed me along, “And speaking of possessions, you will find my washroom behind you. It’s very clean and you may use whatever you like, but I simply ask that you put everything back where you found it.”

“Thank you, Miss Rarity. You truly are the element of generosity,” I gave her a sweeping bow, simply because I was aware that she would appreciate the somewhat dramatic effort.

“Not at all, my dear. After all, you saved one of my best friends,” she shushed me with a prize winning smile, “It’s the least I can do.”

“I did?” I gave her a puzzled glance, stopping just as the bathroom door.

“Oh, do you not remember? Rainbow Dash was saved thanks to your efforts, Firewall,” she reminded me with a nod, “It must be quite a heroic life you lead if you so quickly forget about the ponies you save.”

“Hah! Not so much. Wow, that seems so long ago, actually. It’s only been a week, hasn’t it?” I smirked, somewhat surprised at how the time was flying, yet it wasn’t moving so quickly after all.

“Indeed. Now run along, we can chat later,” she gave me a dismissing wave of her hoof, “I will look after the girls.”

“Yeah, now that the hard part is over with,” I gave a laugh as I entered the bathroom.

“Why, I simply do not know whatever it is you’re talking about,” her voice feigned sorrow. It actually reminded me of Luna’s sarcastic nature, only more... ladylike.

As I settled into the bathroom and drew the bathwater (I’ve not taken an actual bath-bath in years. Just showers. That alone was pretty cool.), I began to marvel once again how good and trusting the ponies were. Rarity’s generosity truly did touch me, and while she wasn’t my favorite of the Mane 6, she was definitely the one I could grant the most respect to. I’ve always been able to look up to the truly independent and consistent for being able to take the heat and still keep everything in their life together. Parasprite attacks excluded, I’d never seen Rarity panic for a very long time. I didn’t get the impression that she was just naive and didn’t understand the situation, but that she knew to keep on keeping on.

Finally, I let myself sink into the steaming hot water and sighed, submersing as much of me as I possibly could. I shut my eyes and relaxed, suddenly aware of all the aches and bruises for the first time in a long time.

"Feels good, pony," I murmured to myself before getting an unexpected interruption.

*~Having a good time?~*

*~Oh good. You're here.~*

*~You're happy to hear from me?~*

*~Not at all. But I do think it's time that you and I had a heart to heart.~*

*~I've been thinking that very same thing.~*

*~Okay, I'd have written down a list, but then I'd have to hold the pencil in my mouth and I can't see what I'm doing, so let's see what I can recall from memory.~*

*~You don't sound very confident. Also, you can write with your unicorn magic~*

*~Shut up, I was making a reference. And no, I'm not confident. My memory is about as reliable as a perforated condom. But it's all we got right now. So first thing on the plate. Azure Flora.~*

*~What about her?~*

*~Everything you know, duh.~*

*~Ah. Well, she was a gardener in the original capitol. She was quite good, actually. She was also in love with the Captain of the Equestrian Guard, and he felt very much the same for her. Then the first human appeared and began spreading the blight of non magical substances. She refused to abandon the city when nearly everyone else had. Eventually, no one but Celestia, Luna, The Equestrian Guard, and the very most loyal ponies lived there. Soon, the esoteric material began to break about the castle, which could not support itself without the help of magic.~*

*~All because of the anti-magic stuff.~*

*~Yes. Inmanipulon, your purple friend named it, I believe.~*

*~Yeah, I'm not using that name. What is it really, and how did it affect her?~*

*~Which question should I answer first?~*

*~What is it?~*

*~Your friend believes the material radiates a negative magic energy that cancels out magic. So does Azure*

**Flora. That is incorrect. It is actually a complete lack of magic. Magic supports itself, so when it enters into an area lacking it, it fades. Eventually enough magic can seep in and... 'remagic' the substance back to normality, but it takes a long time. Centuries, even.~**

**~So how did it make her immortal?~**

**~Purely random effect of prolonged exposure. With enough time away from magic, one's body can have strange reactions when refamiliarizing one's self with it. The truly interesting development, though, is her ability to manipulate the 'inmanipulable' material with her mind.~**

**~How can she do that? There's no magic to work with, right?~**

**~Who knows? Perhaps she is psychic. Or perhaps the lack of magic allows her to exert a different kind of magic. Magic has shown the tendency to contradict its own... 'rules' before. Whatever the case, she has a unique gift that allows her to corral and use the power that is anti-magic.~**

**~So why didn't that happen to me?~**

**~Because you are in a body that isn't yours.~**

**~Woah. Woah Woah Woah. These questions are just leading into bigger questions.~**

**~I know. It's simply delightful, don't you think?~**

**~Not at all! What do you mean this isn't my body?~**

**~All I know is that it existed before you arrived. It's probably the reason you're not creating the material wherever you go and haven't stumbled across it by now.~**

**~You haven't got a clue?~**

**~Well, I know it was created magically. Unicorn or not, no pony can 'breathe' anything besides air.~**

**~That explains a lot, I suppose. What about the cigarette box?~**

**~What about it?~**

**~Why does it never run out of cigarettes?~**

**~Same reason apple crates never run out of apples if you take them one by one. This land is magical. Every last thing from the dust in the air to the parasprites. It's easiest to assume that if it works a specific way on Earth, it likely doesn't work that way here.~**

*~It just feels so... surreal, at times. It rarely makes any sense.~*

*~It's not supposed to. It's magic. It is beyond the rules of reality.~*

*~So... Equestria is built off magic. Down to the brass tacks.~*

*~Indeed. Every living thing depends and supports magic in an entirely metaphysical ecological system not unlike that of Earth's and its inhabitants. These are two entirely separate realities that you have come to familiarize yourself with, and the... mixing of the two just in the slightest certainly does have a chaotic, though not necessarily detrimental, effect on Equestria. Such as the Inmanipulon.~*

*~So humans really do create that stuff.~*

*~Oh yes. Flora has the right of it, to be sure. She's no fool. She believes that you are a very real, very dangerous threat to this world and in some ways, you are. She's seen what can happen firsthand, and she will stop at nothing to remove you from her beloved Equestria.~*

*~I see.~*

*~It's a sobering thought, is it not?~*

*~Extremely sobering. But why am I not... shedding this crap wherever I go?~*

*~Well, it's because humans do not simply cause the material to simply appear, at least not in vast quantities. It has to be done willingly for a significant amount to be created. ~*

*~Wait, what? How does it work?~*

*~I do not think you can perform the act in that form. It's something about a human's... field, if you must.~*

*~You mean how all living things on earth emit a small amount of electromagnetism?~*

*~Yes. Humans can actually control this field. If one does this on Earth, nothing discernible happens. This is because the entire planet is emitting an electromagnetic field of its own and that field overpowers the human's field. Here, however, it is not unlike a pegasus focusing electromagic to make lightning. The difference is when a human exerts this force, rather than manipulate the magic, it focuses it instead, pulling it out of the surroundings of the focal point.~*

*~So... it condenses magic by taking an area of magic and pulling it into a single spot.~*

*~A perfect explanation.~*

*~Magnets. How do they @\$+\*%^ work? And how do you know any of this at all?~*

*~Oh. Well, that is a rather personal question, you see. Why do you want to know?~*

*~Because I need answers on just what happened a thousand years ago. Were you there?~*

*~I was.~*

*~It wasn't just a simple story of Celestia and her team versus The Nightmare, was it?~*

*~No.~*

*~Then tell me what happened.~*

*~Are you sure yo-... ~*

*~TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED!~*

*~You are very determined, I see. Very well. Keep in mind, this may not be something you want to hear.~*

*~I'm a big boy. I can take it.~*

*~We shall see.*

*A human came to Equestria a thousand years ago. Like you, he knew of the existence of the Equestrians and was extremely fond of them and their ways of life. He wanted to be a part of such a utopia, but never expected he would obtain the chance to experience it himself.*

*Then the impossible happened. He was brought here by a powerful being that simply wanted to... 'do him a favor' or so it said. The human, being a trusting fool, took the being at its word and threw himself into the society of Equestria. Though his appearance did make matters difficult at first, it was not long before he was lovingly accepted as part of the whole. He brought such new ideas and ways of thinking, helping to advance the entire kingdom through simple suggestion.*

*It was not long, however that the human noticed that occasionally, the Equestrians found themselves at the unforgiving mercy of predators, assailants, and those that would take advantage of the innocent creatures. The human, enraged by such events, sought out Celestia and Luna. He proposed the idea of militaristic protectors. Celestia was appalled by the idea and refused. Luna, however, saw the potential of Equestrians that could defend themselves and others.~*

*~Wait, Luna met the human? Why hasn't she said anything.~*

*~Oh, that will become clear, eventually.~*

*~Where does the anti-magic come in?~*

*~Shall I tell the story or just answer your questions?~*

*~Fine, fine, point taken.~*

*~Good. Now, keep in mind, this all took place within the first few days. Not even a week had passed during this time. He did eventually learn how to focus magic by accident and quickly discovered that the results had consequences and minimized the use of this dreadful power.*

*As I was saying before, Celestia was against the entire idea, but when Luna showed her support, she reluctantly agreed. A group of Pegasi, Unicorns, and Earth stallions immediately jumped at the idea of being able to protect loved ones. Who wouldn't want to be a hero, after all?~*

*~How did that work out?~*

*~Swimmingly, at first. However, the Equestrian Guard was not enough against greater threats. Celestia and Luna often had to resort to the ancient magics of the Elements of Harmony, but they could not be everywhere at once and the Elements of Harmony were not meant for such frequent use. So then the human decided stronger, more powerful warriors were needed. After considering his options, he chose pegasi as being the most exemplary subjects for testing as they would be able to respond to any threat from towering hydras to malevolent dragons.~*

*~Sky Archons.~*

*~You're starting to put it together. Yes, a single pegasus volunteered. The rest were too afraid when they learned that the process might alter them beyond what was normal. But this one was willing to dedicate his entire life to being the Shield of Equestria. Sound familiar?~*

*~Sounds like Storm Wing's got a lot of his daddy in him. I take it this was Winter Sky?~*

*~You are doing so well now. Yes, Winter Sky was the first Sky Archon. However, it was the process that created him that caused the first wave of the dreaded material. Fortunately, the human had made preparations, thus the situation was well managed. Being that this would be his first attempt on focusing magic into a being, he had taken every precaution that he could think of, but fortunately, it was unnecessary. It worked wonderfully. Winter Sky was a powerful pegasus that defended Equestria for the next several years with stunning success. Even Celestia reconsidered her thoughts on the matter after watching the selfless pony in action. She showed her approval by making Winter Sky the Captain of the Equestrian Guard and every single pony looked up to him in awe.~*

*~The Captain of the G... Wait... Winter Sky was Azure Flora's beau?~*

*~You're getting good at this, Firewall, I'm impressed. Yes, Azure Flora and Winter Sky were very much in*

*love. Having known him before his change, she treated him as she always had and he took solace in that. Equestrians as a race only craved simple happy lives. Even now, that mostly remains the same with a few exceptions. In any case, the point was that being around Azure Flora was when he felt life was simple and happy. Therefore, he proposed after a short, customary courtship. There was quite the celebration when their wedding was announced, followed by the news of an oncoming child.~*

*~HOLY BIT, SHE'S STORM WING'S MOTHER!!~*

*~It's like a set of dominoes, is it not? One answer leads to another and to another and to another.~*

*~So wait, why didn't she recognize her son when we met up with her?~*

*~Because she did not raise Storm Wing. Celestia did.~*

*~Aroo?~*

*~Shall I continue the story?~*

*~I'm trying to think of a witty way to say yes, but it's not coming to me. Carry on.~*

*~As you wish. Winter Sky protected the lands as best he could, but he had much land to cover and many threats to respond to. Equestria today is quite the peaceful place, you see, because of the Sky Archons that strike fear into the hearts of those that would bring harm to the innocent. It was not always this way. This, in turn, caused the human to ask for more volunteers to help defend Equestria. Shockingly, he found none.~*

*~Really? I mean, ponies aren't known for being especially violent, I guess but...~*

*~No, that wasn't the case at all. The Equestrian guard had a fair number to them, but none of the Equestrians were brave enough to sacrifice their livelihood to become something more for the sake of all. See, everypony knew that Winter Storm had very little time to himself because he was something of a celebrity to them. Perhaps such bravery was Winter Sky's special talent? Regardless, the human had no one to turn to. That's when he decided to try and make his own protector out of pure magic.~*

*~Then came The Nightmare.~*

*~Ah, so you figured it out.~*

*~I said it and I still can't believe it.~*

*~Oh, but yes. The human approached the princesses about his idea, and since his judgment had been so trustworthy in the past, they approved and even assisted him. During the middle of the night, on a full moon, h-...~*

*~Was the full moon significant? I mean, really?~*

*~You are quite possibly the most difficult audience I've ever had to deal with.~*

*~Then stop trying to distract me and sell it to me straight.~*

*~Fine. He created a being of shadow and power to fight those that would hurt Equestrians far and wide. And he failed. Not because he executed it poorly, but because he had drained the entire capitol of its magic in doing so. When The Nightmare took form, it knew nothing but pain and lashed out in response. It was a creature of magic in a place that had no magic to give. Only the Elements of Harmony and Winter Sky resisted the magical extraction.~*

*~Princess Luna and Celestia?~*

*~They were not harmed, but they could not use magic. Winter Sky, however, was likely resistant due to the fact that his power was given to him by the very same human. Or perhaps he was stronger than the princesses. One can only speculate.~*

*~I doubt he was stronger than Celestia.~*

*~You say that, but the princesses are leaders, not warriors. It is true, they are powerful alicorns, but they are not omnipotent, nor are they beings of a divine nature.~*

*~Whatever. Irrelevant. Continue.~*

*~Very well. The Nightmare lashed out, its young mind already scarred by immeasurable pain. Winter Sky moved to defend the human and the princesses, but he soon learned that this foe was beyond him. The princesses, void of magic, were unable to spark the Elements of Harmony.~*

*~So how did it end?~*

*~Have you not guessed?~*

*~I've an idea. Go on.~*

*~As I told you before during our last talk, Winter Sky made the ultimate sacrifice. The human distracted The Nightmare by draining away some of its magic, doing his best to help. Now somewhat unravelled, The Nightmare lost what little sanity it had left and struck out at its creator. The human, wounded, was forced to retreat as Winter Sky begged the princesses to take his magic to use the Elements of Harmony. At first they refused, knowing that it would bring about his premature end. Free of distraction, The Nightmare dove into Luna. Celestia tried to save her sister, but was unable to with no magic at her disposal. I think that was the day that Celestia finally understood that being a leader meant that sometimes one had to do things she did not like in order to serve the greater needs of others. Winter Sky begged her to do what she had to do before*



*all was lost, and with a heavy heart, she relented, using his magic to spark the Elements of Harmony.*

*It was too late, however. The Elements of Harmony are meant to be used by ponies working in harmony, not one alicorn trying to carry the burden of two. The folly of the human, the folly of Celestia, and the folly of Winter Sky resulted in both Luna and The Nightmare, then known as Nightmare Moon, being banished to the moon rather than cleansed of her curse. The Elements became dormant and powerless, suffering from such improper use, where they would be reborn a thousand years later. I'd tell you what happened then, but I think you've already seen that.~*

*~Woah, now we're rewriting history.~*

*~Or rather, replacing the rewritten history with the truth.~*

*~C'mon, man. How do you expect me to swallow all of this?~*

*~I expect you to make up your own mind, Firewall. You've no reason to believe me more than you've any reason to believe anyone else. However, you bring me questions, and I bring you answers. Take them at your discretion.~*

*~Okay, what happened to the human?~*

*~He begged Celestia to send him home. He wanted to get away from the Equestrians before his influence could harm them again. Celestia did not have that power, so instead she promised him he could never harm them again and placed him in a deep sleep before hiding him away.~*

*~And why does nopony mention this?~*

*~Celestia took great measures to make certain the human was forgotten. She constructed a powerful spell that wiped the minds of the Equestrians of his existence and rewrote it with the old mare's tale in its place. Such was her effort that she had to take time to ward herself against the spell due to the fact that she had never cast something so powerful before. Not even Nightmare Moon was beyond its scope. Beyond myself, Azure Flora, and Celestia, no other being on Equestria remembers the strange visitor.~*

*~Why would she go to such trouble?~*

*~Because the human was the cause of it all. If he had not been there, they would have continued on leading their simple happy lives, disasters notwithstanding. So, she removed him from the equation before bothering to pick up the pieces of her broken kingdom.~*

*~But the ponies are better off now, right? I mean, I've not heard of any of these great disasters. From what I understand, the Sky Archons do a very good job of protecting the land from whatever the Equestrian Guard can't handle.~*

*~Which is likely why she didn't banish you from Equestria the moment you arrived.~*

*~Point taken... At least she acknowledges the silver lining. So, if this is all true, why are there so many Sky Archons today if Winter Sky died back then?~*

*~That was her one tribute to Winter Sky. Well, she also intended to do more for him by taking care of his wife and their child. She had planned to make his line a noble one that would be in her care for as long as she lived.~*

*~You say that like she didn't.~*

*~Azure Flora, having been beyond the touch of magic, did not forget the human nor the effects his esoteric touch had on Equestria. It did not take her long to discover that no other pony in Equestria had any recollection of the human. Celestia sought her out, wanting to take the wife and child of Winter Sky into her care. She felt guilty, you see.~*

*~Sounds like Celestia.~*

*~Yes, well, when she sent for them to be retrieved, only the child was found in the care of a nearby friend.~*

*~What happened to Flora?~*

*~I am not sure. Perhaps you should ask her yourself the next time you speak to her.~*

*~Yeah, right. She hates my guts.~*

*~On the contrary. Azure Flora is not a cruel pony and doesn't have a hateful bone in her little body. She was heartbroken, homeless, widowed, and suddenly unable to take solace in her gardening. You've seen what happens to the Equestrians when they cannot pursue that special talent that brings them inner joy, no doubt.~*

*~Cutie Mark Failure Insanity Syndrome?~*

*~That... That is the most... sickeningly detached name I've ever heard for such an awful condition.~*

*~Woah. Sorry. Just picked it up through the fandom. Didn't mean to step on toes. So Azure Flora's just really beat down by everything that happened. I mean, I can definitely understand why she has such a beef with my presence. I wouldn't wish such things to happen to my worst enemy.~*

*~She is simply... saddened. And has been for a very long time. She ran away from everything she knew, unable to withstand the heartache of such turmoil. She gave the blind foal to a friend in the next town, begging her to give him the life that she could not. But he got one better when Celestia took the child into her own care. He was raised as the Blind Prince of Equestria who later lived up to his father's legacy. He*

*became the second Sky Archon and began to scour the lands for like-minded ponies who would take up such a selfless cause. Celestia further supported the Sky Archons by blessing them with everlasting life and granting Storm Wing a place at her council.~*

*~That explains why Storm Wing's so freakin' ancient and why he's so... dedicated to her. She's his adoptive mother.~*

*~Indeed. So, perhaps the story does not end so badly. The folly of Winter Sky, Celestia, and the Human may have been a tragedy to start, but in the end... Equestria thrives like never before.~*

*~Until Nightmare Sol.~*

*~Ah yes. Quite a problem, that. Perhaps you should do something about it.~*

*~I've every intention.~*

*~Of course you do. Just remember something, my friend.~*

*~Oh, we're friends now. That makes me feel so warm and fuzzy inside I think I might burst into flames. So, this thing I'm supposed to remember is...?~*

*~The road to hell is paved with good intentions.~*

*~Hello, Preacher. Call me "The Choir."~*

He cut contact, unsurprisingly. I opened my eyes, stuck in a pensive state as I gently went about washing myself (Not going into detail. Don't want to get anypony all worked up all for nothing!). After I felt I was decently cleansed, I jumped out of the tub and began to reach for a towel before stopping and getting an idea. With but a thought, I began to heat up all over and within seconds, I was steaming all over. I stepped out of the bathroom and laughed as I pretty much made a sauna of Rarity's living room. I quickly piped down, remembering the crusaders were still in their vegetative states. I walked over and resisted the urge to squee down at them, settling for just a happy smile.

I decided to go outside and see what I could do to help all the hard working ponies outside. It was pretty easy, actually. All I had to do was locate Twilight who instantly decided my talents would be to take her new magic torches that lasted for several days at a time and go put them all over the town to help illuminate the area. This may come as a shock, but Appleloosa isn't exactly small. So it actually took me a good hour or two to take care of that, and shortly after my stomach began to grumble. I was craving some fried chicken. This made me sad because I couldn't exactly go slaughter a chicken and clean it in front of everypony before throwing it in a vat of boiling oil. I'd horrify the shit out of them, no doubt. So instead I hunted down Applejack and got directed to the food line that had once been the saloon I was in earlier. Nothing really

out of the ordinary going on, unless you count Soarin stuffing his face full of some apple pie. I wanted to go say something to him, but really, I was having a good time just chilling out. I scanned the crowd of ponies for any faces I recognized and was surprised at just how many names I knew.

Octavia was standing at a table quietly enjoying a cup of what I presumed was tea along with North Star, Lyra, and Bon Bon. I spotted Pokey Pierce nursing his teeth with a toothpick next to Big Mac, the two of them looking completely bored out of their skulls. I spotted Diamond Tiara timidly sticking next to Cheerilee, obviously intimidated by her unfamiliar surroundings. Almost everypony I'd ever seen was here and plenty more that I had never seen before. Overall, they all seemed a bit put out that everything had changed so dramatically but they all seemed to generally be at ease at least.

Except one. Everypony was off in a group or with at least one other pony but this one pony. I didn't like the bastard, but I remembered what it was like being the guy that was on his own in a crowd and there was nothing enviable about it. After groaning at what I was about to do, I grabbed a pair of pies and made my way to him. He was sitting at a table in the corner, looking... not downtrodden, but certainly unhappy. He didn't catch sight of me until I sat down and set his pie down in front of him.

"Hey," I smirked at Prince Blueblood, "Sorry about the kick earlier."

"Oh. You," he wasn't exactly excited to see me, and who could blame him?

"Good to see you too, champ," I said with a chuckle, using my magic to tear a chunk out of my pie and directing it into my mouth, "Why you sitting alone?"

"Because I choose to!" he huffed arrogantly, looking away.

"Only you didn't choose that at all," I smirked at him, causing him to toss an irritable glance my way, "So, may I ask you something, big guy?"

"My name is Prince Blueblood and you can refer to me as such!" he snapped angrily, refusing to face me.

"Whatever. Luna ordered me to call her by her name, and I'm fairly certain you don't outrank her so if it's good enough for her, it's good enough for you," I pointed out, snagging another bite of my pie, "Eat, you stuck up, jerk. I brought you that pie because I give a damn, in case you couldn't tell!"

"You... You what?" he seemed taken back by my words.

"I said I care, now eat your pie and let's have some small talk," I said between bites.

It took him a minute to register what I was saying. He eventually looked down at the pie and cringed a bit, "But it's a... peasant dish."

"And you're above eating that?" I gave him a bored look to let him know that I wasn't impressed.

"Yes!" he proclaimed happily, as if I had suddenly seen everything the way it was.

"Yesterday I made biscuits and gravy. More plain and cheap than that apple pie in front of you. Guess what. Luna ate them and was quite happy to do so. So if Luna knows enough humility to be able to eat biscuits and gravy, then you can learn enough to choke down some lovingly made apple pie," I rebuked his entire idea before clearing my throat and continuing, "Unless you're trying to say you're better than the current ruler of Equestria."

I don't know how his pale coat got any paler, but it did. He downright blanched at the idea of such news going around. With that, he magically cut himself a small square and floated it into his mouth. I could have sworn I was asking him to drink poison, he grimaced so badly. After a few seconds, he began to chew more quickly and seemed less distraught, but he still frowned.

"Not bad, eh?" I said with a smirk.

"I suppose it is... adequate... for a peasant's dish," he murmured, helping himself to a larger bite.

For a while we didn't say anything. Deep down, I really did feel sorry for him, despite his horseassery in the past. He probably had been raised that way likely out of a backwater upbringing that his parents forced upon him, simply because of their status. Whatever the case, kicking him in the face may have been in order once, but everyone deserves a chance after they get their comeuppance, and since he definitely got his, he was good to go in my book.. I was there to give it to him at high velocity!

He finally broke the silence with a cough, "So, Captain Storm Wing speaks highly of you."

"Okay, now I know you're full of it," I chuckled through a bite of pie.

"I'm quite serious," he crossed his legs indignantly and hmf'd at me.

"No kidding?" I smirked, tilting my head in slight surprise, "He's a jerk, but... He's a pretty solid pony to have at your back."

"Which is why he wouldn't arrest you when I saw you earlier today, refusing my order," he seemed more surprised than upset.

"Well, no offense, Blue, but that's a bunk order to start with. I've done nothing wrong and I've

done everything I can to help,” I tried to defend myself a bit, looking down somewhat, “Even though it wasn’t enough.”

“I saw you playing around out here with children. Rolling about in the dirt and causing a great embarrassing scene,” he continued, now looking at me in a bit of confusion, “And rather than think of you as just some silly unicorn that never outgrew his childhood, everypony found you endearing and kind to spend time with the little ones.”

“Oh... Um. Kids are cool,” I chuckled a tad, grimacing at how dumb I probably did look.

“And shortly after you kicked me in the face, you left and returned with dear Luna safe and sound, if a bit shaken,” he narrowed his eyes at me finally, “And here you sit before me, acting as though you were not the one to kick me in face just a few days ago.”

“Well, you did deserve it. Unless you deserve another one, I don’t see any reason to kick you again,” I made my comment boring and nonchalant.

“And I’ve also heard that Luna is somewhat taken with you?” he pushed leaning over the table between us a tad, “Even though the event that changed her would have never happened if you had not come here.”

“Where’d you hear that? Is this a public knowledge thing now?” I was pretty certain that that (grammatically correct double that!) had only happened a few days ago, “And where are you even going with this?”

“A pony named Grapevine is good at what she does,” he explained with a flip of his hoof, “And what I’m getting at is that you’ve caused problems, acted ridiculously, disregarded the natural order of authority, and yet you seem to blend with everypony seamlessly as though you were royalty.”

“What does royalty have to do with anything?” I asked, tilting my head in confusion, “Luna disregards formality and is quite silly as well.”

“I’m starting to realize that, too!” he started to droll in frustration, “It’s as though she cares nothing for her station and acting with propriety.”

“Blue, here, let me lay it out for you,” I said with a sigh, “Watch Luna and what she does. Watch how she interacts with everypony, watch how she approaches a situation, and definitely take note of how she will likely put the common pony above herself. Do you know why she would do that?”

“Not the slightest, I must admit. As a royal member, she must dignify herself according to her role as a princess, don’t you think?” he asked, crossing his hooves again.

I made a motion and sound as though I were pressing a buzzer, "Wrong! Let me drop a hint. The best governments are the ones that serve the people. A king that works to make the lives of his people better is the best king you could possibly have. And I think Luna knows that. And the sooner you figure out how to do that, the sooner you won't have to worry about... oh... getting kicked in the face by a complete stranger?"

Blueblood stared at me as though I had stomped all over his precious little vision on the standard operating procedure of life. His jaw was somewhat hanging and his eyes were staring right through me.

"Look," I said with a chuckle, "I'll put it this way. Royalty is only as valuable to the people as he makes himself. In the eyes of everypony, Rarity is more valuable to the people for helping to save Equestria from Nightmare Moon. Maybe if you tried helping some ponies, you would actually be the prince you were meant to be."

"You expec-..." he started to say, but I cut him off with a shake of my head.

"Just think about it, brony. I'm going to go see about getting a drink and I'll probably get distracted on the way. Maybe I'll go roll in the dirt or something. You should give it a try sometime," I said with a chuckle before finishing the last bite of my pie, "Take care, Prince Blueblood."

"I... .. Umm... Farewell... Fireball, was it?" he nodded, too preoccupied with his thoughts to even wave at me.

"Close enough," I said with a laugh before heading back up to the food line. Applejack was behind the counter with a few family members from the apple family. She called me over as soon as she saw me in line, but I declined, waiting for my turn. Being stubborn and impatient, she hopped over the counter with a large mug of apple juice in her maw. She nearly knocked a couple of ponies over as she made her way over, but she looked tired, probably having been working all day long. I blinked as she approached but she held it out to me, silently asking me to take it. I magick'd it out of her grasp and looked at it with curiosity.

"Thanks, AJ, but you didn't have to bring it out to me," I said with a modest chuckle, "I'm not opposed to waiting my turn."

"That's from th'princess, ya durned goof!" she explained with a grin, taking her hat off and batting me with it playfully with an overenthusiastic giggle, "She said you would like it. A taste of home, she called it!"

"Oh god, she put roofies in it, didn't she," I stared at it in horror.

“Ya’ll drink that! She made it jus’fer you!” Applejack ordered brazenly, a slight blush adoring her cute freckles. It took me a moment to get it, but surely enough, when Applejack gave a slight hiccup, my eyes became as big as saucers.

“What? Applejack... How many hooves am I holding up?” I held up one hoof.

“What!? Well if’n ya stop movin’ m I could tell ya!” she proclaimed before grabbing my one hoof to presumably hold it still, “Oh! One!”

“Judas on a ho, you are drunk,” my mind was blown. Super blown. I didn’t have any mind left to blow away anymore. I looked into the glass and gave it a taste, confirming my horrific suspicions. Hard Apple Cider.

“What? No, Ah’m Applejack!” she laughed before giving me a playful push, “Ya’ll need to learn how to remember a name, No-Name... Err... Firewall.”

“You’re Appledrunk is what you are. Take me to Luna,” I demanded softly before having to give her a push of my head to get her moving.

“Wo-ho there, loverboy. Ah’m more of a lady than that, y’see,” she sputtered out a giggle before moving along on her own.

“So am I,” I said with a grin, “Now take me to the Princess already.”

“Alright, alright,” she replied with a grin, “To the princess we’re a’goin’.”

As I drank, Applejack haphazardly led me through the crowd and out the back to the Town Square (This must be where they square dance. BADA FREAKIN DUM PSHHH~!) where Luna and Cookie were stacking up large barrels. By the time I made my way to her, I had drained my mug and sighed in exasperation (Well, it wasn’t like I was going to let it go to waste!). They had been working around a large fire and while Luna mostly focused upon casting spells and moving the barrels, Cookie was hard at work pouring and serving mugs to everypony that approached the table he was at.

“Firewall!” she exclaimed happily, spotting me just in time, “Did you like your present?”

“Luna, what is this?” I pointed at Applejack.

“Ah’m Applejack,” Applejack looked confused, giving me a suspicious stare, “Ya’ll uh... .. Ya’ll ain’t very good with them names.... are ya?”

“Correct, you are Applejack,” she smiled brightly at AJ before looking at me, “That’s Applejack, Firewall. I’m glad you two have met~!”



“No, this is Appledrunk,” I refuted them both.

“Appledrunk!” Luna gave a laugh, “I like it! Lemme try one... Oh! Rainbow Smashed!”

Despite myself, I busted out into laughter. Then came another Laffer vs. Stoic moment. Stoic was pretty damn sure that getting ponies drunk during such dire times was a bad idea. A very bad idea. Laffer, on the other hand, liked him some drinking and silly phonetic play.

“Raritipsy?” I said before shaking it off and putting my serious face on, “This can’t be a good time for this, you know.”

“Why not?” she asked with a happy smile on her face.

“What if Nightmare Sol attacks?” I asked with a suspicious look, “Duh?”

“With the moon up? Hah! She’s not so stupid. Trust me, I’m not going to be drinking, so I’ll be able to watch over the town,” she insisted with a nod, “So have fun. Here!”

She took my mug and filled it back up from a nearby tapped barrel.

“If I had any reason to doubt, I wouldn’t do this, Firewall,” she handed it back to me with a smile, “Trust me.”

“Fair enough,” I said with a nod before letting my mind wander to ponies that could use a drink. I instantly thought of Starlight and began to wonder where I could find her before getting distracted by Luna’s poke.

“What’s on your mind?” she asked. Apparently, my face was reflecting my thoughts.

“Nothing, really. You know, I wouldn’t think alcoholic beverages existed in Equestria,” I said with a hesitant laugh, taking my mug and taking a swig, “Not that I’m complaining.”

“They don’t,” she said with a proud smirk, “I just searched the chemical composition of Hard Apple Cider and figured we could all use something to take the edge off.”

“So they do exist. And you are now more OP than Twilight,” I said with a laugh, smiling as the relaxing sensation of alcohol set down into my shoulders and began to spread.

“They do now, I suppose,” she gave a wing shrug, still smirking, “And thanks, I guess?”

Our conversation was interrupted by a crash. Specifically Storm Wing’s crash. He had landed right in front of us and I looked up to see Rainbow Dash pointing down at him, laughing

hysterically. Storm Wing got back up and I was shocked to see a telltale blush upon his face.

“This apple juice tastes funny,” he murmured before reaching out to grab my mug, which I held away from him. He grabbed at the same spot a few times before blinking in confusion, “Wait... I can’t sense anything anymore! I’m blind!”

“Holy crap, Storm, how many have you had!?” I laughed as I handed him a new mug, which shut him the hell up. So instead I directed a question to Luna, “And how many did you make?!”

“Well, there are a lot of ponies here and I didn’t want anypony to feel left out,” she motioned to the entire stack of barrels behind us.

That... was a lot of hooch.

“What part of ‘let us get the entire town smashed’ sounded like a good idea to you!?” I exclaimed, half laughing, half serious.

“The part where Captain Storm Wing finally lets his hair down?” she pointed to the Archon as he got back up and shook his head a bit.

“Granted, that does sound like a good idea, but still,” I gave a chuckle, holding out a hoof to steady the poor idiot as he nearly fell back down, “You play a dangerous game, Luna. A very, very dangerous game.”

“You like it,” she winked at me slyly, causing me to blush a bit, I’m sure.

“Maybe a little,” I countered with a smile, winking back.

“Firewall,” Storm Wing murmured, leaning on me a bit.

“If you say, ‘I love you, man’ I’m going to drop you and leave you here,” I warned him with a poke.

“No... What? What? No, nothing like that. I... I need help getting... out of this armor,” he said with an enthusiastic nod, “Please?”

“Yeah sure,” I looked up at the still cackling Rainbow Dash, “Hey! Dashy!”

“Hey Firewall!” she called back, doing a lazily slow loop.

“Rainbow Ponies are the best ponies!” I called out to her.

“I know, right!” she laughed as she descended, “So what’s up?”

“Can you find Starlight for me? She needs to have one of these,” I pointed to the mugs on the table that Cookie was working at, “Maybe a couple, even. Could you get her some? She’s probably feeling a little down. Very down, actually. Promise me, okay? She just lost somepony close to her.”

“Oh... Well, yeah! That, I can do!” Dash’s enthusiasm was only outdistanced by her seriousness on the matter. She gave a salute and blazed away, leaving her signature rainbow trail behind her as she flew. (HOW DO YOU DO THAT WITH NO SUNLIGHT?! EQUESTRIA Y U NO LIKE PHYSICS?)

“Thanks, champ. C’mon, Storm. Go stand over there by that fire and I’ll get us a few more drinks,” I gave him a shove and he nearly fell on his face before complying. As he planted himself on the log, I turned to Luna, “I need lots of water and normal appl-...”

She floated a pair of kegs over near the fire and nodded, “Done.”

“You’re awesome,” I gave her a hug and trotted over to Storm Wing.

Luckily, getting armor off and on isn’t really that difficult and mixing watered down apple juice did fool Storm Wing into thinking he was still getting drunk. As the time passed, we didn’t really talk much. He just sat there, quiet with the exception of the occasional pointer. He gave a nod as I finally got off the helmet (that was actually rather complicated) and murmured his gratitude.

“No problem,” I took a swig of real cider and handed him another fake one, sitting myself on the log beside him, “So... You’re pretty quiet all of a sudden.”

“I know... I’m just... s... a little scared is all,” he murmured through his drunken haze.

“The Mighty Storm Wing? Scared?” I gave a laugh, pointing at him as he knocked back his virgin drink, “No way, you’re the greatest Sky Archon ever!”

“Couldn’t protect her,” he shook his head emphatically.

“Whatever, Storm. It wasn’t our fault. We got outplayed so we’re going to have to step up our game and give it right back,” I shook my head and sighed, “Just let it go.”

“Yeah... Yeah, you’re right. Hate it when you’re right,” he chuckled softly.

“You’re a big boy, you can handle it,” I countered before staring up at the beautiful night sky, “Stars are lovely today.”

“I wouldn’t know,” he laid down next to the fire and sighed, “Never seen’m.”

I grimaced a tad before shaking my head with a snicker, "Sorry, mate. Small price to pay for being as awesome as you are."

"I'll trade you," he uttered softly, catching me off guard. I looked over at his helmet and felt a pang deep inside my chest, understanding somewhat. No amount of power or authority was ever going to make up for being unable to see. I watched Luna stack the last of the barrels up, having changed them all over finally and began to wonder if it bothered her that her beautiful sky couldn't be appreciated by a certain pony.

"Sorry, mate," I offered, my buzz a little killed.

"Don't be," he sighed softly as Luna started to head our way, "The princess is coming."

"I see her," I answered.

"She likes you," he decided to point out just in case I was a complete idiot.

"I know," I replied softly as she neared.

"You don't sound happy about that," he lifted his head to look my way.

"I'm torn on the subject," I explained, my voice even lower as she arrived. I raised my volume considerably as she got within reasonable distance, "Hey Luna."

"Good. That means you're not stupid," he sighed as he looked back at her (yes, I know he wasn't technically 'looking' per say. Shush.), "Hello P... Luna."

"Hello gentlecolts, what'cha talking about?" she smiled happily at us.

"Storm Wing can't see stars," I said the first thing that came to mind, "I was mocking him for his disability."

"That's quite mean, Firewall," she said with a disapproving glare before looking down at Firewall, "Storm Wing, would you like to see the stars?"

He blinked, somewhat caught off guard, "What?"

"Answer the question. Would you like to see the stars?" she said simply, "I'll try to fashion you a spell to allow you to see somehow if you like. I didn't think you cared."

Storm Wing blinked a few times before setting his head down, shaking it softly, "No, thank you. I appreciate the offer, I really do. But I would rather not. It's hard to explain, but I think it's best that I not be given something that I would only miss later."

Luna was a bit shocked at his response, but nodded with a sad sigh, "Very well, Storm Wing. If you ever change your mind."

"You'll know. I'll probably come running to you like a little school filly," he said with a chuckle. Most of his slurring had dissipated by this point, the alcohol having been a bit diluted by the water and juice.

"That'll be the day. Be sure to keep a camera on you," I suggested.

[Chapter 8](#)

[Chapter 10](#)

Parting Notes: Almost 16k words, bronies. X.x I'm taking a break for the next few days to let the creative juices build back up. Don't worry, there will be more to come. :3 It'll just be a bit later than usual. No sneak peak this time! >:3 You got an extra long chapter, so be happy! <3