

Maledictum Insania 2: The BloodClaw Cult

By Nero Darkard (aka. NeroTheDarklord)

Chapter 25: A New Era

Two days passed and more than twenty reapers responded to Twilight's secret request to meet her in a hideout below the overhang of Canterlot Castle. The small cave had become rather crowded by now, but due to the silent nature of the reapers retained its quietness.

Twilight sat on the floor, her front legs shaking and staring to the ground with an expression full of mixed emotions. Her friends were gathered around her, trying to calm her. Still, they as well hardly knew what to say or do. They were all just waiting for results. Finally, Crystal Blossom returned with the scroll.

"I hate to admit it, but this demon spoke the truth. The seal is real and the parchment and ink are from the same supplier that delivers to Canterlot Castle," she explained.

Suddenly, Twilight pressed her eyes shut, ground her teeth, got up on her four legs and kicked the wall behind her as hard as she could. Needless to say, she hurt herself in the process and had to sit down again immediately. But while Twilight at least was able to express herself, Rarity could just stand there with wide open eyes.

"Why..." Twilight started in a desperate tone. "Why does it have to be this way... Why does it have to be one of them... Of all ponies..."

"I have no idea, Twilight," Fluttershy responded. "But what I do know is that we need to do something. Do you really want to go for it now?"

Twilight needed a few seconds to calm down and rethink her plan. But finally, while she still stared at the ground, she slowly shook her head.

"It has to end, Fluttershy. There is no way around it. We have to do this," the purple mare explained.

"We are ready whenever you are. Just give us the order," Crystal stated.

One more time, Twilight hesitated. Her glance wandered over to Rarity, who stared right back at her. She, too, looked very insecure and uneasy, but gave her friend a much saying nod. Then, the purple mare refocused Crystal Blossom.

"We have been waiting for their next meeting... It is now or never... Get in position and wait for

my signal..." she ordered.

"As you command," Crystal responded.

All reapers except for Fluttershy started sneaking away. Everyone, pony and reaper alike, knew that Equestria's history would change forever tonight. They only had a few more hours to prepare and gather themselves. While Rarity tried to speak with Twilight and raise her spirits again, Fluttershy decided to meditate.

After about an hour, the yellow mare opened her eyes again and looked over to the entrance to the cave. The grey figure was standing there, staring at her from the distance as usual. Their glances met for only a few seconds before it disappeared again and Fluttershy returned to her meditation without saying a word.

Two horns began to glow. One white, the other blue. Sun and moon slowly exchanged their places and nighttime began in Equestria. After the act was completed, Celestia's and Luna's focus returned to Cadence. All three of them sat around a table with a map of Equestria, large piles of paper and several quills and ink pots on it. No royal guards were allowed to be in the room while they were discussing over Equestria's future. Instead, dozens were positioned all around the meeting room.

"So where were we?" Celestia wondered.

"We were talking about establishing a train connection to the Zebra Tribal Lands," Cadence reminded.

"Ah. Right. So our negotiations with the shamans are running into some difficulties. We have to ask every tribe individually and get them all to agree, since the rails would pass through all their territories. So far, we could only strike a deal with twelve tribes," Celestia continued.

"The biggest problem is that we require to know the individual cultural differences between each and every tribe. We must be careful where we place the rails to not disrupt the flow of energy in the land or disturb any spirits. We also must avoid to accidentally suggest the rails to be placed over sacred ground. While zebras are all in all very peaceful creatures, they would still feel insulted if we disregarded their traditions," Luna added.

"Hm, this is tricky. Do you think we can just ask every tribe for a map of their territory?" Cadence suggested.

"There are a few things they would not note down on the maps. They are rather secretive when it comes to the locations of spirit worshipping sites," Luna explained.

“Not to mention the trust issues with some of the tribes. You see, zebras are very religious. Equestria has no official form of religion, yet we are living demi-goddesses, ruling over this land. It confuses a few tribes and makes them unsure about our intentions,” Celestia added.

“Well in that case, we first have to work on gaining their trust,” Cadence suggested. “How about we hold a banquet and invite all shamans? Additionally, perhaps we should invite Lady Zecora and her family, too! I think if they hear how it is like in Equestria from another zebra, it might speed up the-”

Despite all the security and clear instructions to not let anypony disturb them, the door to the meeting room suddenly opened.

“Miss Sparkle, no! You can’t enter right now!” one of the guards called, running after the purple mare.

It was already too late. Twilight, Rarity, Fluttershy and Crystal Blossom just came walking in casually, aiming straight for the princesses.

“Ah! Twilight Sparkle, my star student! It is so good to see you. But I have to ask: What brings you here on a surprise visit?” Celestia greeted.

“Actually, you should know that we are having a meeting right now and that it should not be disturbed,” Luna added with a bit of an upset expression.

“Sorry we burst in like that, but I have something really important to tell you that can’t wait,” the purple mare explained, maintaining a serious look on her face.

“What is it?” Cadence wondered.

The group came to a halt with several steps in front of the table. The royal guards peeked in the meeting room, unsure how to react. Slowly, Twilight’s focus lowered to the ground.

“After months of investigation, we were finally able to locate the leader of the BloodClaw Cult,” she spoke.

Instantly, Celestia’s expression became serious as well. She got up from her seat and focused the group, ready to give an order.

“Where is the leader?” she asked.

By now, Twilight was staring at the floor. Celestia could not see her eyes anymore, which started to confuse her. She would have expected that Twilight would be very proud for solving this

mystery. Quickly, the princess of the sun came to realize that something was very wrong.

"In this very room..." Twilight replied, then raised her right front leg and began to shout. "Now!"

Instantly, dozens of reapers bursted in from all directions. They broke through the windows, tackled the royal guards and rushed through the door or just jumped down from the ceiling. Not even a second later, they all surrounded the three alicorns with their scythes drawn.

"Wha... Twilight! What are you doing?!" Cadence shouted in shock.

"I could ask you the same thing," the purple mare responded.

Twilight lifted her head again, showing an extremely furious expression on her face. She could hardly contain her anger and started walking from left to right to find some form of relief.

"I can't believe it! I trusted you! All of you! Equestria trusted you! Why are you doing this?" she started shouting.

"Twilight! Calm yourself! What is going on here? Why are my own reapers threatening me?" Celestia asked, trying hard to maintain calmness.

"Apologies, my mistress," Crystal started. "But the evidence we gained strongly suggests that we can currently not trust any of you."

"Evidence? What evidence? Are you saying one of *us* is the cult leader?!" Luna wondered, constantly looking around.

Finally, Twilight stopped and used her magic to present the scroll. After the three princesses read through it, they all became wide-eyed and stared at each other.

"Is that saying enough for you?" Twilight asked. "One of you three betrayed Equestria and created the BloodClaw Cult. It all makes sense now. The royal family does not get cursed with the curse of secrets, so you are the only ponies even capable of sharing the secret about Nightmare Moon with the public. That also explains why we were so unsuccessful in rooting out the cult so far. Because once we present new facts or plans to you, one of you is always directly giving out orders to counter our plans! I'm so... I can't even put it in words! This is the biggest betrayal Equestria has ever witnessed!"

The three princesses kept on looking around. At Twilight, Rarity, the reapers and among each other. Finally, they refocused the purple mare.

"Twilight, I don't think any of us would do such a thing. There has to be an explanation for that letter!" Cadence tried to reason.

“There is only one explanation! It *has* to be one of you three! I can’t tell who of you, but I won’t rest until I figure it out! I’m still just so blown away in how much one of you betrayed us! After all we have done for you three!” the purple mare responded in fury.

“Please, Twilight! Don’t do anything irrational! This is just what the cult and the demons want!” Luna requested.

“Oh, I’m very sure they are all laughing at us right now. It must be hilarious to see what I am forced to do. But no worries. I won’t do them the favor of sentencing the wrong princess to her death. I swear, none of you will get out of here until we finally resolved this last mystery,” Twilight spoke.

“You can’t be serious! You honestly would be willing to kill one of us?!” Celestia shouted, not believing what she just heard.

“If this is what needs to be done to save Equestria, then it has to be. I know you three are very powerful, but I will do whatever I can to end this. I trusted all of you equally, but there is absolutely no way of telling who of you is the cult leader. I can’t even be sure about you anymore, Princess Celestia,” the purple mare replied.

“This is crazy! Twilight, come back to your senses! Don’t you see what is going on here? We were fighting against the demons and the cult from the very beginning! Why would any of us suddenly turn against you? It makes no sense! We are innocent, Twilight! You have to believe me!” Cadence pleaded.

“Twilight... I’m starting to think they might be telling the truth. What if we are wrong?” Rarity wondered.

“Don’t let them confuse you,” Twilight started. “You saw the letter. You saw the patterns. The headquarter of the cult is here in Canterlot. Everything spread out from here. We are being watched on every step we take.”

“Twilight Sparkle... My loyal student... I don’t have an explanation for how this all fits together like this. But I can assure you, none of us has any direct connection to the cult!” Celestia tried to reason.

“Oh yeah? And what do you expect me to do now? Let you all go? I can’t risk that. The leader of the cult must be extremely good in manipulating others. That’s the only way it could have ever come this far. If its not one of you three, who else could it possibly be?” the purple mare asked.

For several seconds, it became silent in the meeting room. Slowly, doubt started to build up even among the three princesses, as they started staring at each other longer and longer.

“Well, how about somepony who is always overlooked? Somepony who clearly deserves more than he gets,” a male voice suddenly started speaking from behind Twilight.

“*You?!?*” Rarity shouted, as she was the first to turn around.

All eyes turned towards the open door. They saw Prince Blueblood, wearing royal garments in the style of the BloodClaw robes. Sanguine with three black claw marks. He stood there with an arrogant smile on his face, watching the scenery in delight.

“No way...” was all Twilight could say at that moment.

The reapers instantly aimed to turn around and disable the prince. But as they tried to move, they realized they were being held by the royal guards they had pinned down. They grinned at the reapers sinisterly, then suddenly turned into black, abstract monsters with glowing red eyes and encased them in black blades.

Twilight and Rarity as well were about to jump into battle. But before they could even move, they noticed curved blades being placed on their throats. Despair was standing just behind them, grinning maliciously in victory. Not even the alicorns could do anything, as they suddenly found themselves wrapped in countless long black arms. Slendermane had just appeared and disabled them as well.

Just like before, it took a mere second to turn the situation upside down. The only pony still able to move freely was the prince, who casually walked into the meeting room and aimed for the alicorns.

“I have to say, that worked out way better than I expected. Well done, Despair,” he spoke.

“Thank you, master,” the demoness replied.

“Master?!” Twilight and Rarity spoke out loudly in disbelief.

“What is going on, Blueblood?” Celestia asked in anger.

“Oh. Auntie. Really now. Did you really not see this coming?” Blueblood spoke in a cocky tone, tilting his head from left to right.

“So it is true? You are the one behind the cult?!” Luna wondered.

“Well, lets see: I wear the colors of the cult, demons follow my command, I got access to the royal seal. Yes, I am pretty sure that it is me,” the white stallion spoke, his tone getting even more cocky now.

"You traitor!" Cadence shouted. "You are one of us! A member of the royal family! How could you side with the demons?!"

"Oh, ho, ho! I'm not siding with these disgusting things. Yuck! No. I am just *commanding* them!" Blueblood spoke, grinning sinisterly.

"Commanding?! How? You can't command demons! No pony can!" Twilight shouted.

"Yes you can. With this thing here," Blueblood spoke and used his magic to open a button on his garments.

He revealed a golden necklace around his neck, displaying a large red gem in the shape of an eye. As soon as it was revealed, it started looking around. As it focused Twilight, she could feel a chill wandering down her spine, as if she was being watched by something very mighty and sinister. Another shiver followed as she came to realize that she knew what this object was. She had read about it in the nameless book.

"That is... That is Nightmare's Eye! How did you get that?!" the purple mare shouted.

"Take a wild guess," Despair commented with a big grin.

Twilight slowly turned her head around to the demoness, then refocused Blueblood. It was all coming together now. Despair knew that she read the nameless book. Perhaps she was even responsible that Twilight gained it in the first place. All the time, Despair made her go through all these things on purpose so she could become a witness and explain things. All solely for this very moment, to increase the pressure on the princesses.

"You should not have left me out, auntie," Blueblood started. "Did you really think I would not find out about Maledictum Insania, the demons and your secret war against them sooner or later? What did you expect me to react like when I discover you kept me small, powerless and unimportant the whole time on purpose? I struck a deal with the demons. A member of the royal family turning against Equestria. That has never happened before. I could provide them ways they never had before. With my help, they would get what they always wanted. As long as they would serve me, Equestria would become their land. So in return for helping them, I demanded their entourage. Since we both depend on each other for this to work and to make sure there is no room for betrayal from both sides, they gave me this necklace. As long as I wear it, I can't be harmed by any demon and they have to follow my every command."

"But why? Why did you do all this? Do you have any idea how many ponies have died because of you?!" Celestia wondered.

"That is only the start, auntie. Look outside the window. You as well, Twilight Sparkle.

Slendermane, Despair: Let go of them,” Blueblood commanded.

Both demons instantly obeyed. With a furious expression and a bit of hesitation, Twilight and Celestia went over to the window and looked down to Canterlot.

Twilight’s expression instantly turned into one of shock. There was a small radiantly green demon in the middle of the marketplace, just sitting there and playing by itself. Next to it was a red and black demoness, apparently singing to draw dozens of curious ponies around them.

“You know these demons, don’t you Twilight? Then explain to my auntie what this means,” Blueblood commanded

The purple mare gulped hard. Then she focused her mentor.

“Those are Toxica and Succubus. Toxica is the one responsible for Manehattan,” Twilight stated.

Celestia’s eyes went wide open. Her focus jumped back to Blueblood, who just kept grinning arrogantly the whole time.

“I just need to say a word and all ponies in Canterlot die within seconds. Another command and all cultists and demons stationed in the cities all across Equestria start the biggest pony holocaust in the entire history of this land. I’m very willing to do this, but it doesn’t have to be. I would prefer to rule over a big and well populated kingdom over an empty one,” the white stallion explained.

“So this is what all this is about. You want the throne,” Celestia analyzed with an angry expression.

“No. I want what I rightfully deserve!” Blueblood replied, now shouting. “I am a prince! *A prince!* I am at the same level as you, yet I am treated like some commoner! I am nothing more but a diplomat to you! I never had any saying in anything! You three keep me out of all your meetings and decisions! Do you have any idea how degrading that is? To be born with the title and rights of royalty, yet being treated like a subject? But worst of all, and this is nothing short of an insult, is that I am mortal! Look at me, auntie! A direct member of the royal family who is not an alicorn! What do you think I am? Scum like this Shining Armor guy who *married* into our family?”

“Don’t you *dare* to speak about my husband this way, Blueblood!” Cadence shouted in fury.

“Shut up, Cadence. I will get to you soon enough,” the corrupt prince responded.

“You never did anything to deserve such powers or rights, nephew! You also never showed any interest in your royal duties either! I can’t even put in words how disappointed I am that you come to me now with an entire army, blackmailing me instead of telling me this sooner! There is

nothing I can change about you being mortal anyway!" Celestia spoke angrily.

"Oh yes. Yes you can. All three of you actually. I know alicorns have a lot of power and possibilities. I also know you *earned* your abilities, so you can lose them again. I will stand through this indignity not another day longer! It will all be mine now! Everything belongs to me, as it is my birthright! Here is my offer: You three give me your powers, your immortality and the sole right to rule over Equestria. If you refuse... Well you already heard what I am capable of! The choice is yours. What is more important? Your oh so precious crowns, or the lives of millions?" Blueblood threatened.

"You can not possibly be serious! Do you even understand what you are asking for right now?!" Rarity wondered in complete shock.

"Yes, yes I am pretty sure I am aware of what I am doing. And I am not going to ask again. So. What will it be, you three? Keeping your powers and having a dead kingdom, or giving up immortality and saving everypony else?" Blueblood repeated.

Celestia, Luna and Cadence became silent. They looked at each other, all of them having the same kind of fearful expression. But with every second that passed, Blueblood's expression became more and more annoyed.

"I am not very patient today. If you can't decide, I guess I will just have to destroy Canterlot first to make you think faster," he stated and started lifting his right front leg.

"No! Stop!" Celestia shouted.

"Then what is it? Do we have a deal or not?" the white stallion asked.

Again, Celestia focused Luna and Cadence. They both just stared back, not knowing what to do. Slowly, Celestia let her head hanging and closed her eyes.

"Alright. I give up the throne. You can have my magic," she agreed.

"Princess Celestia, no!" Twilight shouted, but instantly got her mouth covered by Despair.

"That's a start, but not what I asked for," Blueblood spoke, then focused the other two princesses. "Cadence, Luna. Don't make me repeat myself."

Both looked at each other, then focused Celestia who still had her head hanging in guilt. There was nothing they could do. If they wouldn't agree as well, it would mean the end of everything they had been trying to protect.

"Fine. You shall have my dark powers. I hope they destroy you," Luna agreed unwillingly.

"I don't care if I lose my magical abilities as long as I keep my friends and family. But I swear, Blueblood. This won't end here," Cadence added.

"We will see about that. Now, let's finally get this over with. And don't forget: One suspicious move, and Canterlot dies," the white stallion spoke and got in position.

Slendermane loosened his grip on Cadence and Luna, allowing them to get up and stand next to Celestia. Twilight tried to shout and beg them to not agree to this. But Despair wouldn't allow her to scream. By now, she towered over the purple mare, pinning her to the ground and covering her mouth while grinning widely. Rarity as well found herself unable to react in any form. She just stood there with a blade against her throat, knowing that if she moved just a muscle or spoke a word, the demoness might kill her.

Celestia still had her head hanging. She glanced up to Cadence and Luna with an expression full of guilt.

"I'm sorry..." she spoke lowly.

"It's okay. We don't have a choice in this," Cadence replied.

"We have overcome everything so far, sister. We will find a way this time as well," Luna agreed.

"Enough with the chit-chat!" Blueblood shouted.

One last time, Celestia threw an angry glance at her nephew, still not believing he made her do this. Then she closed her eyes and her horn began to glow, followed by Luna and Cadence doing the same.

Arcane magic filled the room. The auras of these three mares kept growing increasingly stronger. Suddenly, all three turned into white outlines and three strong magic beams hit Prince Blueblood, who then was engulfed in light himself. All the unleashed arcane magic escaped out of the three princesses and gathered around Blueblood.

Their silhouettes started to change. Celestia, Luna and Cadence slowly began to shrink while Blueblood grew bigger and bigger. The sight made Twilight try to scream and beg them to stop, but she couldn't utter a word.

Finally, the three mares stopped glowing. Instead of large ponies, there now were three alicorns no bigger than regular ponies. The magic in their manes was gone had changed in length and color. Celestia's had turned into a soft pink, Luna's into a bright blue and Cadence's lost in shine.

Blueblood kept on growing, overflowing with magic. As the brightness faded, it revealed a stallion even a bit bigger than Celestia used to be just moments ago. He had a long flowing blonde mane and tail, large white wings and a very long white horn. He got his wish. Prince Blueblood had turned into an alicorn.

"Hmm. This feels good. I could get used to that," he stated arrogantly.

Celestia, Luna and Cadence focused him with furious expressions. He, however, just smiled back at them sinisterly.

"Well, now you have run out of usefulness to me. Time to test my new powers," he stated, letting his eyes turn white and aiming his horn at the three mares.

"Master! Hold on a moment!" Despair shouted suddenly, jumping up and running in front of the newly formed alicorn.

"What is it now, Despair?" he wondered while lifting his head again and letting his eyes turn back to light blue.

"I strongly suggest you to not kill them right now," the demoness spoke, then turned around to grin at the fallen alicorns sinisterly. "We still have plans for them, especially Celestia."

"Is that so?" Blueblood questioned and started grinning himself. "Well I don't want to spoil the fun for you."

Now not being held anymore, Twilight got back on her legs and ran over to her mentor. Rarity and Fluttershy immediately joined in as well.

"Princess... what have you done... What have I done... I'm... I'm so sorry... I didn't mean for-" the purple mare spoke in guilt.

"Shhh. It's alright Twilight. This is not your fault. He left us no option," Celestia replied.

"Enough of this. Now that I am the only one ruling over Equestria and I have more power than anypony ever had, I suppose the title of a prince is no longer good enough for me. From this day forth until the end of time, you shall call me King Blueblood!" the white alicorn stallion ordered.

"All I will call you is traitor!" Luna shouted.

"Hah. Normally, I would execute you for a statement like that. But I suppose I will be generous and just banish the three of you from Equestria, along with the keepers of harmony and all reapers," Blueblood declared.

"Nephew..." Celestia started, focusing the corrupted king in fury. "This... is... not... over."

Blueblood just grinned back, looking down on those puny creatures below him.

"We will see about that, won't we? Now get out of *my* kingdom before I change my mind," he stated.

Slowly, the three fallen alicorns went out of the meeting room, closely followed by Twilight, Rarity and the reapers. Suddenly, one of the skin-walkers reached out a claw and blocked the fashion diva in her path.

"Oh. One more thing, Miss Rarity," Blueblood suddenly announced.

Rarity's eyes went wide open in fear as she slowly turned around.

"You don't honestly expect me to let you get away with insulting me and covering me in cake as you did on the Grand Galloping Gala a few years ago, do you?" he stated with an arrogant smile.

After he finished speaking, his eyes jumped behind the fashion diva and he gave an ordering nod. As she turned around to look who was there, she was staring right at Toxica.

The demoness was hovering in front of her, just inches away from her face and grinning widely. Before Rarity could even react, she was given a short kiss on the lips.

Instantly, Rarity started gagging, coughing and spitting in disgust. Toxica, though, just covered her mouth with her right front leg, giggled and flew next to Despair and Slendermane.

"Ugh! What was that?! Disgusting! That tasted horrible!" Rarity complained while wiping her mouth clean.

"Just a little farewell gift. Now get out of my sight," Blueblood spoke.

"Oh, you are so going to get it for that!" Rarity announced, then ran after the rest of her friends.

While they all fled out of Canterlot Castle, loud cheering could be heard from the city. Cultists were everywhere on the streets and celebrating. It seemed like they already knew of their victory.

Simultaneously, red clouds started to rise all over the land. With Blueblood now being in control

of Equestria, the demons could open their strongholds and just march out wherever they wanted to. Nothing was left to hold them back anymore.

“Oh no... What should we do now? This is the worst thing that ever happened...” Rarity wondered while running.

“I failed... I couldn’t stop it... I’m so sorry... I’m so, so sorry... I should have never doubted any of you,” Twilight spoke, bordering to break out in tears while she focused the three former princesses of Equestria.

“You are not responsible, Twilight Sparkle,” Luna assured. “But we need to get out of here while we still have the chance. Where do we go?”

“The Crystal Empire. It is not part of Equestria, contains a powerful protective magic and all our friends and family members are there. Crystal ponies are immune to Maledictum Insania, so it should be fairly safe,” Cadence suggested.

“Sounds good,” Celestia agreed.

Twilight nodded in understanding as well, then focused her reaper friends.

“Fluttershy, Crystal: I need you to warn as many reapers as possible. We need to get Applejack and Derpy to the empire as quickly and silently as possible,” she requested.

“We are on it,” Crystal responded and started flying away.

So they all ran for their lives while countless demons slowly spread across the land. Seeing them around would soon become a normal thing for the terrified subjects and a lot was certain to change to the worse. A new era of horror and corruption just dawned and none of the keepers of harmony, reapers or former princesses had any idea what the future would hold.

In Canterlot Castle, King Blueblood just sat down on his throne and started getting comfortable with the feeling of being in charge for the entirety of Equestria. Already, he began to deeply relish his position. Never would he have imagined that things would go so smoothly. But this is how things turn out when you let demons do the job. They are very good servants, he thought by himself.

“The throne suits you, master!” Toxica commented while bouncing in place.

“I think so, too,” Blueblood responded with a smile. “So? What are you doing now?”

“Now...” Despair started, grinning widely.

She opened the mouth in her left front leg, exposing a long tongue holding a necklace. The Alicorn Amulet.

“Now, it is time to keep a promise.”