

My Little Alicorn

A "My Little Pony Friendship Is Magic" fanfiction
By InsertAuthorHere

Standard Legal Disclaimer: I do not own any of the characters contained in the following work. "My Little Pony" and all subsequent properties belong to Hasbro.

Chapter Four

By the time Luna had reached her room, she was halfway between "very tired" and "a medicated coma." She had already been up for nearly a full day by that point. Her plan required her to begin the night, hold her own little court, end the night, and then try to get some sleep before Celestia could fall for her little prank. And even then, she was so excited about the fun she would have at her sister's expense that she barely got any sleep at all.

She floated her small crown over to the nightstand, resting it neatly in an ornate, gem-encrusted wooden box. Celestia's own vestments had been laid out on the same stand, awaiting their owner's return to normalcy. The clothes chest still sat next to the bed; Luna hadn't the heart to throw the whole thing out, not after all the effort she took to find the costumes to begin with. Now, she wished she had tossed the thing out the window, preferably taking out a few aristocrats on the way down.

Luna flopped on her bed, exhaustion overtaking her in a manner of moments. Even in her sleep, however, her thoughts kept forcing their way to the forefront. *This is all my fault. I should have known better. I should have done all the research before I used that blasted spell. I...*

The echoes gradually dimmed as she fell asleep, her doubts replaced with her usual dreams...

Twilight slammed the Enchantments and You book shut and tossed it aside, a snarl on her lips. Her small piles of note pages were almost completely blank, save for a few scribbles on how the spell shouldn't even work under any known magical laws. In fact, the only thing she *had* written all day was a quick letter to Spike, and she still didn't have any idea how to send it. "Gah! This thing is impossible! Who wrote that spellbook anyway, a gibbering lunatic?!"

Then she remembered the book's materials. "Oh...I guess that makes sense."

In any case, her research was getting her nowhere. The same books that had served her so

well in the past were obviously no good here. This was ancient magic, the kind that ponies only spoke of in hushed whispers. The kind that tended to attract attention from unworlly, unwelcome creatures. Even now, while the book sat underneath Luna's bed, she could feel something cold creeping over her. It was a presence she had only felt twice before, when Nightmare Moon had challenged her and her friends in the Everfree Forest and when Discord had taunted her in the maze.

It's getting closer.

Twilight's fur stood on end, her tail and mane straightening into perfect right angles. She could hear, no, *feel* something approaching her from behind. She tried to turn, but her terror was so great that her legs refused to move.

Oh Celestia I don't want to die I don't want to die I don't want to die

“BOO!”

Twilight's jump was one of the most impressive jumps in the history of Equestria. She managed to clear a good twenty feet straight up before grabbing onto a ceiling beam and hanging on for dear life. Beneath her sat Celestia, giggling up a storm. “Oh Twilight, you are just so adorable!”

Twilight slowly released her grip, using her magic to slow her fall below break-leg speed. The sight of a laughing, happy Celestia filled Twilight with two conflicting emotions. On the one hoof, this was a bit closer to the princess she knew. Although she still lacked the sense of awe and wonder she possessed as a grown mare, there was something overwhelmingly joyful about her smile. It was the same loving expression she had given Twilight during her studies, from when she got her cutie mark to her graduation. Even coming from a pudgy foal that should be younger than Apple Bloom, it was practically infectious in its mirth.

On the other hoof, the same little snort had just startled her worse than a cave full of snakes.

Twilight took a moment to compose herself, something that was rather difficult since Celestia was still in the midst of the latest round of rolling laughter. “Your Majesty, don't you know better than to sneak up on ponies?”

If Celestia had heard her student, she wasn't showing it. “I'm sorry, Twilight Sparkle, but you were just standing there looking so serious I had to do it!” Before long, even Twilight couldn't resist laughing her flank off, and the two clung together in the happiest scene all day. Finally, several minutes later, the two had tired themselves out enough to subdue their glee to a few coughing giggles.

“Thank you, Your Highness,” said Twilight. “I needed a good laugh right about now.”

“So did I.” The two slowly regained their footing, returning to the same standing positions as earlier that day. “I just wanted to see how your progress is going. The sooner I can grow up again, the better.”

Twilight’s heart gave a quick yank. Her face was practically hidden behind a wall of sweat as she spoke. “W-Well, none of the books I’ve checked have anything we can use. Not yet, anyway. The spell Luna used was just so...complex. Every book I’ve read said something like this shouldn’t even be possible.”

Celestia’s face fell in an instant. Twilight’s trusty panic reflex, the same one that had led to Ponyville’s near-destruction by Parasprites and covering up Fluttershy’s birdnapping, kicked right back into gear. “I-I’ll have something soon, I promise! It’s just...magic like this hasn’t been used in so long, there’s almost nothing on how to reverse it.”

Celestia looked back up at Twilight, giving her as reassuring a smile as she could right now. “I’m not worried. I didn’t think you would have a counterspell ready in one day.”

Another awkward silence passed a few seconds longer. “So...are you feeling any better?”

Celestia sighed. “A little.”

“Oh?”

“Well...I guess it’s really not *that* bad.” Celestia rubbed her right foreleg over her left and tilted her head slightly. The next few sentences weren’t going to be easy. “I’m not quite ready to forgive Luna, but it could be worse. I haven’t felt this energetic in centuries, and going back like this has helped fix a few of my old joint pains. It’s just...being a foal again is so, well, demeaning.”

Twilight closed her eyes and raised a hoof. “Really? I think it might actually be a little fun.”

“You honestly believe that?.”

“I do, Your Highness.” Twilight smirked and rolled her head back, reflecting on that ever-lovely sack of lies called “nostalgia.” “I was a little filly once, too. I would just sit in my room all day, reading and studying every book my parents had about magic. Eating up every little bit of knowledge I could find, always testing out the new spells I learned, getting grounded after launching mom’s new vase into the stratosphere...Oh, those were the days. No bills to pay, no baby dragons to raise, and all the free time you could ask for.”

Celestia groaned at her student’s reminiscence. Obviously, Twilight had quite the privileged upbringing, being her personal student and all. *Her parents spent time with her, taught her*

everything they knew, sent her to the best magic school in Equestria. My parents just dumped their foals on a lifeless planet in the middle of nowhere – a planet without a working ecosystem or even a sun and moon – and told us to make something out of it.

“...Anyway,” said the Princess, “are you hungry? It’s almost time for dinner, and I’m sure the cooks have prepared something wonderful tonight.”

Twilight’s stomach rumbled at the thought of food. “Well, I guess I am a little hungry. I was *really* counting on that pie. So, where is the dining room anyway?”

The question made Celestia cringe. The closest dining room was closed for cleaning and renovation; in other words, to repair the damage from the last trade negotiation with the griffons. No pony dared speak of what happened, but the rumor was it involved a very peeved Celestia, an outspoken anti-pony ambassador, and a rusty tin can. The only other dining room was on the other side of the palace, and was more for formal parties and events than casual dining.

In any case, Celestia wasn’t in any mood to cross the entire palace just for some dinner. She was already incredibly self-conscious of her new situation, and had used up all her courage just making her way to the study. Scaring the daylights out of Twilight was the only thing she could find to relieve her apprehension, if only for a few minutes. *There is no way I’m going back out there. Not now, not ever...*

“Well...we could eat in here tonight,” she stammered. I think we could use a little privacy, in any case. The servants can fetch Luna once she’s finished with the moon.”

“Those roses are for me? I am your favorite princess of them all? Oh, how I love you, my little ponies! I-”

Luna’s dreams suddenly came to a crashing halt as her internal alarm clock jolted her awake. The moon princess jumped to the floor, stretched her legs, and walked over to the nearby window. The clear blue sky had given away to an orange haze as the sun, its momentum spent, locked itself onto the western horizon. To the east, Luna could feel moon, her most beloved possession as well as her former prison.

All right, let’s go over this again. I just have to lower the sun completely, then raise the moon right after. This should be the easiest job in Equestria. Celestia did it for a thousand years, I can certainly do it for a few days.

Luna threw on her crown and vestments and glided out of her room, slamming the door and scaring quite a few guards behind her. She zoomed through the palace until she reached the highest balcony in the tallest tower. From here, she could see nearly all of Equestria, and more

importantly, she was at a good enough position to both move the sun *and* revel in the glory therein.

The moon princess' wings unfurled and spread to their full width. She closed her eyes and lit her horn, her mind focusing on the giant ball in the distance. The wings began a steady beat, gradually generating enough force to lift Luna vertically. A feeling of intense warmth hit her as she finally connected with the sun, a far cry from the soothing coolness the moon offered. Gritting her teeth, she willed the sun downward.

It was a struggle almost immediately. The sun wasn't at all like the moon; instead of a simple rocky surface, it was a ball of gas held together by gravity alone. There was no real surface to grab, and her magic struggled to hold the thing together. Her face grimaced as the sun seemingly refused to move. Finally, and after several minutes of struggling, the yellow ball finally slid out of view, coating Equestria in an impenetrable blackness. The moon quickly slid into place, lighting the land with a soft glow.

Luna's wings gave out from the exhaustion, and cruel gravity quickly pulled her gut-first onto the balcony floor. The moon princess was shaking, sweaty, and tired, but otherwise quite happy with herself. "Did you see that, Celestia? Your little sister can do *anything* you can-"

Then she noticed something missing from the sky.

The stars.

Luna growled to herself before flying back up...

If the ponies at the palace could be credited for only one thing, it would be their swiftness. No sooner had the call been given than a half-dozen ponies rushed into the study, a small, low, rectangular table on their backs. They sat the table down without it so much as tipping and trotted to the side, allowing another pony to lay out three pillows just underneath the table's edges. A last pony ducked ahead of the others, laying out a tablecloth and setting the table in a flourish.

Celestia nodded in appreciation. "Thank you, good ponies. Please fetch Princess Luna and tell the kitchen staff dinner will be in the study tonight." The other ponies quickly bowed before filing out single-file, leaving virtually no trace of their ever being there.

Twilight was dumbstruck by the sheer efficiency of it all. "Wow...I never knew you had your staff this well-trained."

"I've had a couple thousand years of experience," said Celestia. "Luna and I practically invented

every management technique on Equestria.”

The two took their seats at the table; or rather, Twilight took a seat *at* the table while Celestia’s was almost *under* the table. Even with the lowest possible eating surface they could find, the table reached all the way up to the princess’ nose. All this earned was another grunt of dissatisfaction from the filly before moving on. “Twilight, about your research...”

Twilight’s panic button went off yet again. “O-Of course. I know I promised I would have a counterspell by dinner, but...you see...”

“Twilight...”

“A-A-And the books! Almost nothing they say is any good for us!”

“*Twilight...*”

“Don’t worry, I’m sure we’ll figure something out soon! I mean I hope we will because Equestria won’t-”

“TWILIGHT SPARKLE!”

Twilight immediately went quiet, slumping down as low as she possibly could. “Um...I’m sorry, your majesty. I just...I thought I would be farther along by now. These books are some of the most comprehensive theses on magic in existence, and not a single one even mentions something like the spell Luna cast. I think we’re at a dead end.”

Celestia *had* to let out a chuckle at that. “I told you, I didn’t expect a cure in one day. I was suggesting you see somepony tomorrow. You remember your old Advanced Magical Theory professor, Frosty Gaze?”

Unfortunately for Twilight, she did. “You mean ‘The Abominable Snowpony?’ The biggest, meanest, most incredibly cruel and merciless teacher Canterlot has ever seen? Why would you want me to see a monster like him?”

“First off, he’s not a monster, he’s just...very big for a stallion,” said Celestia. “Second, he’s one of the greatest scholars in Equestria on ancient magic. And third, just because he doesn’t grade on a curve doesn’t mean you have the right to call him names.” Her eyes then darted back to the small book pile. “Speaking of books, didn’t you take *three* out of my room?”

If Twilight was panicking before, she was just now preparing for cardiac arrest. She had forgotten all about that...book. “Well...you see...”

“And did you light a fire in here?”

“Um...Ugh...Your Majesty, I can...”

Celestia leaped from her seat and galloped to the fireplace. There, still sitting in a pile of ash and burnt wood, sat the charred remains of an orange book. The sun princess very, very slowly turned about to face Twilight, her smile replaced with a deep, dark frown. “Twilight Sparkle...did you just burn one of my books?”

Twilight started backing away from Celestia, trying to make herself as small as possible. She could only manage a small, pathetic whimper. “Y...Yes, Your Majesty. I was just...so shocked that I...well...”

The change in the princess’ mood was almost immediate. For the first time in her many years of knowing her, Twilight could feel her teacher’s genuine rage. It just made her shrink back farther. “I thought your parents and I taught you better than this,” Celestia scolded. “You don’t go around destroying other pony’s property. What were you thinking? For that matter, *were* you thinking?!”

“I...I didn’t mean to,” sobbed Twilight. “It was...I didn’t...I couldn’t think of you...reading something like that!”

“Something like that? What could possibly be so bad that you...” *Wait...does that mean that book was...* She sighed before addressing her cowering, prepared-for-a-trip-to-the-moon student. “Twilight Sparkle, I am very disappointed with you, and we will discuss your punishment after I have returned to normal.”

Twilight’s ears flattened as she barely resisted bawling like Celestia had a few hours prior. “Princess...please don’t...”

“And no, it will not involve dismissing you as my student, or sending you to a celestial body, or banishing you and then throwing you in a dungeon in the place that I banish you to. There will be no dungeons, or torture, or anything else of that nature, so just put it out of your mind for the time being and focus on the problem at hand.”

Twilight dared to raise her head, meeting her mentor eye-to-eye. “Do you mean that? Please, I promise I won’t do it again! I...It’s just...”

“I promise you, nothing is going to happen. You just have to learn not to overreact so much. I am, or rather was, a grown mare, and sometimes I just have...physical needs. Can you honestly tell me *you* haven’t looked at such material before?” Twilight blushed like a ripe tomato. “In any case, that wasn’t actually one of my books. One of the students at the school was found with it, and since I am technically the principal, it was my responsibility to keep such things away from the student body. She never tried to get it back, and when the school year ended I took it back to the palace by mistake.”

Twilight sat up and raised both front hooves. "I...think I understand. So...just out of curiosity, whose book was it?"

Celestia raised a hoof to her mouth, her eyes shifting about in thought. "I don't really remember. She wasn't the best student, but she did well enough. I heard she got married not too long after graduating and had a filly. If I recall, she had a white coat, with a striped purple-and-white mane."

As Celestia walked back to her pillow, Twilight squinted and tapped her chin. "A white coat and purple-and-white mane? That sounds an awful lot like...like..."

Twilight's brain quickly entered a self-preserving shut-down, leaving the Unicorn's body to tumble onto the floor. A quick glance was enough to establish she was still breathing. Celestia smiled at her student's exaggerated reaction. *Sorry Twilight, but you should have thought of that before you burned it. I'm sure your mother will understand...*

It was another thirty minutes before Luna arrive, her body still shaking from her exertion outside. Accompanying her was one of the palace chef's, a brownish-yellow Unicorn mare with a salad and spoon for a cutie mark. Behind *her* was a large dinner cart, with three covered plates on top and a small curtain covering the bottom. Twilight was already back in her seat, having filed her newfound information deep in the recesses of her mind. Celestia was still sitting there, both forelegs wrapped on the table in a look of absolute boredom. The combination of the day's events and her current, foal body was taking it out of her; she looked almost as tired as Luna felt.

Luna gave a quick, acknowledging nod to her sister and her sister's protégé before taking her seat. "I...apologize for my delay. It seems the...sun doesn't quite agree with me."

"That will happen," said Celestia. "I remember the first time I moved the moon....well, let's just say Nightmare Moon almost came back a thousand years ago, and a few million tons heavier at that. You'll get the hang of it."

Luna frowned. "I didn't vaporize anypony with a solar flare, if that's what you mean."

"Wait, you can *do* that?" gasped Twilight. "I mean, not that I'm saying you ever have, but--"

"A-HEM!"

The three quickly turned towards the chef. She looked stressed, frustrated, and in no mood to hear of the horrible fate that awaited anypony that displeased their princess. "Apologies, your

Majesties, and to you, Miss Sparkle, but your dinner is ready. Should I begin serving?" All three quickly nodded yes. "Very well. I fear tonight's dinner is nothing special. I fear the rest of my staff didn't take our princess' condition very well." She flashed Celestia as reassuring a smile as possible in this situation. "In any case, we've prepared a basic salad, along with a tomato-and-basil soup. And for dessert, we have carrot cake with vanilla icing."

The chef levitated the three dishes to their respective owners and floated the lids back to the cart. On each sat...a plate with a standard lettuce, tomato and cucumber salad, a bowl of tomato soup with a lot of green basil shavings floating on top, and a small dish with a chunk of cake on top. The whole thing looked more like something from a corner café than the food of the gods.

"Thank you, Leafy Greens," said Luna. "I'm sure it will be...magnificent."

Leafy Greens gave another bow, gripped the cart's handle in her teeth, and wheeled it out of the study. The three ponies were left to study their meals. "Well...it's not as grand as I thought it would be, but it still looks delicious," said Twilight. Luna was too tired to say much of anything, instead opting to immediately levitate her fork, impale some defenseless vegetable, and eat it. Celestia, meanwhile, was far too busy salivating over the cake.

It wasn't a byproduct of the spell, she did that even as an adult. She didn't actually drool over it, but the feelings were the same. She just loved cake.

The princess managed to peel her eyes away from her dessert long enough to see what the others were doing. Luna was still acting like a princess, using over a dozen utensils in the course of a single bite. Twilight was following suit, if only to keep face in front of royalty. *This shouldn't be a problem. Levitation is one of the easiest spells a Unicorn learns. I can't blast my sister out of the palace right now, but I can still use a little magic.*

She turned to her fork and mentally willed it to move. It didn't. She threw more effort into it, her horn lighting up like a sparkler. It still wouldn't move. Frustrated beyond measure, she just resorted to grabbing it with her hooves, but the thing was cumbersome and, surprisingly for a nation of ponies, completely incompatible with their particular style of feet.

Twilight set her fork down and looked at her struggling mentor. "Um...do you need any help?"

"No...I...don't!" grumbled Celestia. Despite her protests, however, the utensil refused to stay in her hooves long enough to grab anything. Finally, she just gave up, planted her hooves on the table, leaned over, and grabbed a slice of tomato with her teeth.

She spat the thing out almost immediately, coughing and gagging all the while. The other quickly set their things down and darted over to Celestia, Luna wrapping her in as much of a hug as she dared to give. "Celestia, what's wrong?"

"The (cough) food. S...Something's wrong with the food!"

The currently-bigger princess and Twilight looked the plate over. Nothing was obviously out of the ordinary. Luna bent over and grabbed another tomato slice, chewing it slowly before swallowing. "I don't taste anything. It's actually pretty good."

"Pretty *good*? It was so...slimy and, it tasted so...ugh!" The tiniest bit of Celestia's fillyhood seeped through before she could regain her composure. "Never mind, I will just eat around them."

Celestia leaned back to her plate and grabbed a lettuce leaf, ripping it with her teeth and swallowing. She immediately groaned with disgust. *So...bitter.* "Okay...I can settle for cucumbers."

Another bite, and another moan. *Even these taste horrible?*

It didn't take long for Twilight and Luna to realize what was going on. The former could feel her lungs starting to collapse from fear, while the latter quickly let her sister go and backed away. Celestia, meanwhile, could feel that panic welling up inside again, as her mind actively fought against the cold, inevitable truth. *No, no, no! This isn't happening! Luna's spell couldn't have done something like this! I'm supposed to stay the same, so why? Why is this happening?!*

Twilight quickly assumed a "calm the child down" position. "Princess, I don't think there's a problem with the food. It's...well, the same gag reflex we all had as fillies."

"B-But that's not possible!" screamed Celestia. "I really like all of these! I shouldn't be having a problem with them!"

Twilight moaned. This wasn't going to be easy to explain. "I read something about this. Apparently, very young ponies have extremely sensitive taste buds. Things like lettuce, tomatoes, cucumbers, rutabagas, daffodils, alfalfa, and others can actually taste worse for them."

"It still doesn't make sense," Celestia grumped. "Luna and I are not normal ponies. We never had this problem before."

"Oh, REALLY?"

Celestia and Twilight could *feel* the life drain from the room as Luna stomped back to the table, sat right back down, and stared her sister straight in the eyes. "Because I can remember a certain pony sitting her young, helpless sister down every night and **forcing** her to eat one disgusting meal after another. 'Hey Luna, I just created these red berries! Eat them, or I'll make

you sleep outside!”

Celestia slammed both hooves onto the table, shaking the entire surface and everything on it for several seconds. “I never said anything like that! Vegetables are good for you! As your big sister, it was my responsibility to make sure you grew up right!”

Luna’s sly smile, the same one she wore when she thought this was just going to be two hours of fun, returned. “You are absolutely right. It is the big sister’s responsibility to make sure their little sister is on the right track in life. And that includes a healthy diet.”

Her horn quickly lit up, while an aura of energy appeared around Celestia’s piece of cake. The filly immediately realized what was up and leaped towards the thing, only to get pushed right back down by Luna’s magic. The cake floated towards the blue Alicorn before setting itself next to her plate. “Do you know how many calories are in one bite of these things? A lot, I can assure you. *Far* too many for growing ponies.”

“THAT’S MY CAKE!” shouted Celestia. Luna was still keeping her pinned, and for all the filly’s struggles, she couldn’t even budge. “I WANT MY CAKE BACK NOW!”

“And you will have it back,” said Luna. “But first, you have to finish your dinner.”

“But it tastes terrible!”

“Then you’ll just have to go hungry.”

“Um...Princess Luna?” Twilight interjected. “Maybe we should just...ask them to make something else?”

“No!” said Luna. “I had to deal with this for who-knows-how-long. I’m certain Celestia can put up with it for a few days.”

Celestia’s little hooves shook. Her self control evaporated against the overwhelming frustration she felt towards her sister. Easier than before, she slipped right back into that same unwise, irrational filly mindset. “I am not going to eat this, and you can’t make me!”

“And who says I can’t?”

Before Celestia could mutter out another comeback, the room was filled with a blinding light. When it cleared, Twilight was now standing between the two, her face facing Luna. If there was any emotion besides rage, it wasn’t showing. “I do! If Celestia doesn’t want to eat this, she doesn’t have to!” She turned back to Celestia; the filly was cowering under the table, seemingly scarred for life from having a Unicorn’s...plot appear right in her face. “Your Highness, if you want my piece of cake, you can have it.”

Celestia poked her head out of hiding just as Twilight levitated over her own dessert. Her eyes practically bulged at the sight; were it not for her royal fiber rapidly rebuilding itself, she would have probably broken out into cartwheels right then and there. "Thank you, Twilight Sparkle. It's...lovely."

Luna quickly tapped Twilight on the shoulder. "Miss Sparkle, may I please speak with you in the hallway." It was most certainly not a request.

The minute the door closed behind Twilight, Luna was right on her. "What were you thinking back there?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, undermining my authority in front of Celestia!"

Twilight winced. "Your authority? You turned your sister into a foal as a joke! I think that disqualifies you from anything remotely resembling 'authority' over her."

Luna started to mouth a response, no doubt akin to the lavender pony learning her place before she found herself on the sun, but no words came out. She started shifting nervously, keeping her eyes away from Twilight's. "Twilight, I apologize. It's just...whenever Celestia starts talking like that, I can't help myself. Somehow, she's gotten it into her skull that my foalhood was nothing but games compared to hers."

Twilight's brain suddenly had a storm. "Princess Luna, what was Celestia like as a filly?"

Luna sighed. "I cannot tell you too much about when she was that young. Our memories don't degrade as much as a regular pony – no offense – but even I fail to remember everything from when I was a baby."

Twilight couldn't help but laugh a little. "*You?* A baby?"

"Yes, yes, we all started like that, but can we get back to the topic at hoof?" Twilight nodded. "In any case, Celestia...well, as far back as I can remember, she was my size right now or bigger. She taught me how to fly, use magic, and even taught me how to begin the night. And all this was while she was helping develop the first city-states in Equestria, long before anypony thought of a single ruler."

"But...what does that have to do with her foalhood?"

"During that time, I was pretty much free to do as I pleased. I spent my time visiting the villages and towns of Equestria, and being still technically a filly at the time, mostly just goofed off with some of the other fillies and colts. I got to enjoy parties and games, while Celestia kept herself working. And when she tried to join, the other ponies were scared to be around her. They were afraid that if they did something wrong, she would destroy their whole village out of spite."

"And what about before then?"

"Celestia never really talked about then, and I doubt she will now," Luna lied. Celestia *had* told her many times about her past, from the giant monsters trying to eat her to licking algae off walls to survive. By the time she had discovered magic, most of the world's inhabitants had more or less taken form, and she had to spend the rest of her days just keeping everypony in line long enough for civilization to take hold. It was safe to say she never really *had* a foalhood. "In any case, you can't keep treating Celestia like she's really a filly. If we do, it'll only reinforce her split personality, and quite frankly, I don't want a hyperactive filly Alicorn running through the palace."

"Sounds to me like you had it pretty well off," said Twilight.

The Night Mare's eyes locked onto the Unicorn almost instantly, chilling the lavender pony's blood. "That was only because nopony knew my role in Equestria's cosmic cycle. I was to bring out the night, and as far as ancient ponies were concerned, the night means predators, monsters, unforgiving cold, and nothing but darkness. By the time the Three Tribes had united, everypony had turned her into the ultimate caregiver, and me into some kind of reaper, just waiting for the chance to lop off a foal's head. They would praise me sometimes, but only to keep her happy. I was still young, so I did not understand until centuries after Discord's defeat why they turned against me."

Luna's voice cracked slightly, while a strand of her hair knocked away an errant tear. Twilight watched the whole scene with no small degree of sadness. "Princess..."

"Celestia never had to lose anything to rule the day. But before I could assume my duties, I had to sacrifice any...any..."

The princess slowly collected herself, returning to the same coldly stoic pony she was before. "In any case, you cannot keep treating Celestia like she's really a filly. If we do, it will only reinforce her split personality, and to be honest, I do not want a hyperactive Celestia running through the palace."

Twilight turned her head towards the door. She could imagine Celestia still sitting there, worried about what Luna would do to her student. "I know you're right, but I can't help it either. She's still a princess, no matter how she looks, and I just want to make sure she's all right."

Luna groaned. "Miss Sparkle, until about five hours ago, that filly was the single most powerful

pony in all of Equestria. She has thousands of years of experience and knowledge, invented nearly every form of magic known to ponykind, and by all accounts was almost a surrogate mother for you here at the school. The best way to help isn't to coddle her; it's to get her back to normal as quickly as possible."

It took Twilight a few moments to nod an agreement. "Very well, your Highness. I'm sure I can find a counterspell soon. In the meantime, may I ask a favor? I need to send a letter to Spike, and..."

Luna raised a hoof. "Say no more. I'll send it for you before I attend to the rest of my duties. In any case, we should go back in. Dessert looked so good."

Twilight smiled as she opened the door. "Really? Because last time I checked, you had to finish dinner before you got dessert."

For the first time in a while, Luna let out a genuine smile in return. "A wise pony once said, 'Do as I say, not as I do.' Besides, I'm sure Celestia would-"

Both ponies stopped and gasped at the sight before them. In the approximately ten minutes they had been outside, Celestia had managed to eat all three pieces of cake, knocked over her soup bowl after trying to support it with her bare hooves, and somehow embed her horn into the table itself. Her coat was stained with red and green, while her mouth was surrounded by a shaggy beard of crumbs and icing. Her eyes shot open as she heard the two enter. "Oh...Twilight Sparkle! Luna! I...wasn't expecting you back so quickly!"

Twilight was preparing to laugh out at the sight, until a piercing glare from Luna promptly shut her up. The moon princess quickly turned her attention back to Celestia, who was busy trying to pull herself out of the furniture. "Sister, I think it's time you turned in for the night."

Celestia finally pulled herself out of the table, a few small pieces of scrap wood and splinters following in her horn's wake. She slowly walked to her sister and student, her eyes dropping, her steps uneven, and her mouth barely stifling a yawn. "You're right, Luna. I...really need to get some sleep if we're going to find a counterspell tomorrow." She nuzzled up to her sister's chest, smearing some of the soup and basil off of her coat and other Luna's. "Good night, sister."

Luna did her best to smile, even as she agonized over how to explain her stained coat to her normal court. "Sweet dreams, little sister. I'll see you in the morning." She turned to Twilight. "Now, you said you had a letter to send?"

"Yes, it's right over there." A quick burst of magic, and a scroll floated from the desk and into Twilight's mouth. Luna's horn flared up, and the scroll instantly turned to smoke and flew out through a window towards Ponyville. The rapid succession left Twilight rather surprised, not to

mention the bitter aftertaste of magic in one's mouth. "So, that's how you two transport scrolls?"

"Anypony with enough magic ability can do something like that," said Luna. "One day, I'm sure you will as well. Now, do you mind escorting Celestia back to her room? I have my nightly duties to attend to. When you're ready, just ask one of the ponies to escort you to one of the guest rooms."

"It'll be no problem at all, your Highness," said Twilight. She lit up her horn, levitating a half-asleep Celestia off the ground and onto her back. The filly's weight caused Twilight to buckle a small bit at first, but before long the two were wandering towards Celestia's bedroom. Luna couldn't help but smile at the sight, before turning her mind back to other, more pressing matters...

Spike grumbled as he finally put the last book back into place. The library had survived yet another one of Twilight's impromptu studying marathons, and it had only taken eight hours for the baby dragon to put all the books back by himself. It was supposed to be a team effort between himself and Twilight, but no, *she* had to get the big summons to Canterlot while *he* stayed behind and did all the work. Even worse, she still hadn't returned.

Before the dragon could say anything, though, he felt that uncomfortable feeling in his gut. He let out a loud belch, accompanied by a large green flame. From the fire emerged a scroll, the kind only Princess Celestia used. He grabbed the tube with both claws and unfurled it...

Dear Spike,

As you can probably tell, I haven't been able to make it home just yet. Princess Luna's summons was far more imperative than I first thought.

Princess Celestia has decided to take an impromptu vacation, and is out of Equestria at the moment. Before you worry yourself, Princess Luna is taking over both sun and moon during this time, and will rule Equestria in her place. Because of my connection with Celestia, she has asked me to assist her with tasks around the castle.

I am asking you to run the library in my stead. I promise I won't be gone for more than a few days, but I trust you to keep things working. You are my number one assistant, no matter the distance between us, and I am certain you are up to the task. I have some bits stashed underneath my bed just in case, and if there's an emergency, don't be afraid to ask any of our friends for help. Just make sure I come back to a clean library, okay?

*With much love,
Twilight Sparkle*

As Spike finished reading the scroll, his very complexion turned deathly pale. "Twilight's helping Princess Luna? Princess Celestia has gone on vacation? But...the princess has never taken a vacation in her life! And Twilight should have asked me to come over and help, not stay here in a crummy old library. She must want me to stay *away* from Canterlot. That can mean only one thing: Princess Luna has turned evil again, banished Celestia, and turned Twilight into her slave! She must have made her write this to throw me off-track! *I've gotta get the others!*"

The purple dragon dropped the scroll on the ground and darted out the door. A few seconds later, he darted right back in, ran upstairs, grabbed the bag of bits, and rushed back outside. If he was going to Canterlot on a rescue mission, he was going to need a *lot* of gemstones...

"How dare she deny my request! Does our beloved princess no longer care for civility and order?"

Within his private estate, Prince Blueblood paced about, still fuming over his royal snubbing from earlier that day. His attendants tried to make themselves as scarce as possible, lest they attract the wrath of their vain, temperamental, self-centered employer. "How can she not see that an injustice has been committed? That mare dared to think she was on the same level as I. Making me eat common swill, ruining my perfect coat with that other commoner's cake, and willfully destroying the most important party in Equestria! The charges are as plain as the day, and yet Aunt Celestia still won't properly respond."

Only one pony dared to speak, although it was more like a whisper. "M-M-Maybe she was just tired today. You were the last pony she was able to see in court this afternoon."

Blueblood paused, his mind rapidly altering events to serve this new idea. "Perhaps. Aunt Luna has told me things have been difficult lately." A light bulb, highly oxidized but still functioning, turned on in his brain. "I shall see her first thing tomorrow morning, after the sunrise. I am certain she will be more receptive to my requests then."

To Be Continued...