

Past Sins

By Pen Stroke

Assisted By Batty Gloom

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Chapter 9

Revealing Truths

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Twilight walked back to the library with Nyx as the sun began to set near the western horizon. Rainbow Dash and a few others were staying to cleanup the Learn and Play Day. It was a moment the unicorn was thankful she hadn't volunteered to help, since staying around the school at that point was the last thing she wanted to do.

Nyx was happy as she could be, bouncing along with her first place ribbon from the tug-of-war competition, wearing her Cutie Mark Crusader cape and a kazoo in her mouth, her chosen prize from the prize box. The little filly was content to play the kazoo in a triumphant fan fare that only she knew the notes to, a sight that made Twilight smile a little.

Twilight was happy that Nyx had a good day, and that it had ended well. The silence from the crowd after the last round of tug-of-war had been deafening. Had it not been broken by Nyx's friends, Twilight could only imagine how bad the filly would have felt, wondering if she had done something wrong. But thankfully Apple Bloom, Sweetie Belle, and Scootaloo had ran up to her and cheered her on, making the black filly very happy.

Yet, it was only a small drop of happiness in a sea of a very bad situation. While Nyx was unaware of what had happened, Twilight had been in the crowd watching when she began to use her magic to try and win that last round of tug of war. She was using her magic, a lot of it... and that was when it began to happen.

Nyx's mane at first just seemed to start shimmering, something that may have just been contributed to a trick of the the light. But as the little filly began to use more and more magic her mane and tail began to change more, her hair reflecting the arcane energy that the filly was using.

Her hair began to get lighter, and then actually began to float and wave in the air, as if Nyx was floating deep underwater instead of standing on solid ground in a tug of war grudge match. The shimmering of the hair also began to get more noticeable, starting to focus into a few dots.

It was one of the worst things Twilight could imagine happening. Nyx's mane and tail had been changing into the night blue mane and tail that Nightmare Moon was known for, infamous for... and the change had started to happen right there with everypony at the Learn and Play Day

watching.

By some small miracle Nyx's hair didn't completely change. It reached a point very close to changing completely but it didn't finish the transition. If anything, it more closely resembled Celestia's mane, which was still made of hair even though the follicles were in a rainbow of pastel colors and moved constantly. Nightmare Moon's mane and tail, in contrast, were clouds of magical energy, which was why she was able to use and manipulate them like they were extra appendages.

And it all brought several unwanted thoughts back to the forefront of Twilight's mind. For the first time since that evening Nyx called her mom, Twilight was starting to doubt herself. Could Nyx really be Nightmare Moon? The unicorn had always argued that Nyx just looked like the infamous Mare in the Moon, but... with those memories coming back and Nyx's unbelievable level of magic... was it possible she really was Nightmare Moon?

Another part of Twilight's mind snapped at this, cracking a mental whip like some wild animal tamer trying to drive a beast back into its cage. No, Nyx was *not* Nightmare Moon! The filly was too sweet, too well behaved. She had friends and was happy. While Nightmare Moon laughed at times, it was because she believed she had won. A maddening laughter that was not born of true happiness.

But Twilight was starting to wonder if she'd have to deal with the fact that Nyx had the fallen princess' power. And... possibly even her immortality. That the filly she was taking care of, was raising... would possibly be alive for thousands of years after she had gone, with the power to do things like move the sun and moon. Was she really up to that kind of responsibility, to shape the life of a filly that could live for the rest of time?

"Twilight, are you okay?" Nyx asked, breaking the unicorn's train of thought. The little black filly had taken notice of how quiet Twilight had been and had ended her happy kazoo playing to look up at her unofficial mother.

"Yes, I'm fine." Twilight lied, putting on a smile as she and Nyx neared the library. "Just tired, that's all; we've had a busy day. Now, why don't you run in and show Spike your ribbon? I'm just going to stay outside for a little while longer."

Nyx nodded, replacing the kazoo in her mouth and blowing on it loudly as she ran inside, scaring one particular dragon quite well. Twilight smiled at this sight, a smile that faded quickly as the truth of the situation weighed down on her.

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"Dear, you really should drink your tea before it gets cold." Rarity lectured before taking a sip from her own cup. She looked across the table at her desk, though she might as well have been

having a conversation with a statue. Twilight hadn't hardly said a word since her arrival, choosing to instead just stare at her cup of tea like it held all the answers in the world.

"Twilight... Twilight!" Rarity snapped, bringing the purple unicorn out of her thoughts.

"What... oh, sorry Rarity. I... I was just thinking about something."

"That's all you've been doing since you got here, Twilight. All you've said to me is that you wanted to talk, but you haven't said a single word since then. What is wrong?"

Twilight sighed, lifting the cup of tea magically as she drank it all down in a single gulp, something that made Rarity squirm since it wasn't at all the manners of a proper mare.

"I'm sorry Rarity, I'm just worried about Nyx."

"What for Dear? Don't tell me she's gone missing again."

"No, she's at school."

"Then why are you worried?" Rarity asked as she refilled Twilight's cup of tea, silently hoping the purple unicorn would drink it properly this time.

"Rarity, every pony in Ponyville has heard what happened at the Learn and Play Day. They all know Nyx turned Fluttershy into a tree and how she won the tug of war tournament by herself with her magic. They all also saw her mane and tail start to turn magical... start to resemble what Nightmare Moon's mane and tail used to look like. I worried that I won't be able to keep her safe much longer. That every pony in town will realize how strongly she resembles Nightmare Moon, that Celestia will swoop down from the palace... that they'll take her away from me.

"I... I'm wondering if I shouldn't just lock Nyx up in the library and hide her away, at least until things calm down."

"Twilight..." Rarity began, speaking softly. "Locking Nyx up is the last thing you should do. That would be no better than Celestia banishing her to the moon. She'd be separated from her friends, from doing the things she loves like going to school, and it would break her heart having you go from the pony she loves to the pony that's keeping her unfairly imprisoned in the library."

"But Rarity... I'm just so worried-"

"And that's perfectly normal. Heavens knows I worry about Sweetie Belle every time she goes off with her friends to do her Crusading. Those three fillies have gotten into more danger than I ever did growing up... and I'm always afraid that somepony will come running into my shop telling me Sweetie Belle got hurt... or worse.

"But I can't let my concerns keep Sweetie Belle from enjoying her childhood. She should be out there with her friends, having fun and even getting into trouble... not too much trouble mind you, but some."

"Sweetie Belle is just a normal little unicorn, Rarity. Nyx is..."

"Nyx is just as normal." Rarity retorted. "Yes, she is an alicorn, and yes she has magical power that you and I could only dream off. But, she is still just a normal little filly. She goes to school, she has friends, she gets teased by bullies, and when she scared or when she is in trouble she has somepony that cares about her to come to her rescue... a certain purple unicorn who is quite the maven at magic herself."

Twilight smiled a little. "I... I guess you're right Rarity."

"Trust me Twilight; it's a good thing you are worried about her, never think otherwise. But don't ever let your worry make you do things that wouldn't be in Nyx's best interest. Yes, there is a risk of the truth being discovered when she is out and about Ponyville... but that's only a risk. You try to hide her away in the library, and I guarantee the only thing you'll really accomplish is making Nyx hate you."

"How do you know all this Rarity?"

"Learning from experience." Rarity offered softly, now staring into her own cup of tea. "After all, I've been taking care of Sweetie Belle all by myself for the past several years now. After... well... after what happened to our parents."

"You want to talk about it?"

"Maybe another time Twilight." The white unicorn replied. "I tend to get misty eyed when I think about it too much and I've got ponies coming into get fitted for some dresses in an hour so I need to look presentable. Still... another time for sure."

"Of course Rarity." Twilight offered with a smile.

"Now, in light of all this, I *do* hope you're going to let Nyx go to the Cutie Mark Crusader sleep over Apple Bloom is having at Sweet Apple Acres. I can only imagine that Nyx is just as excited about it as Sweetie Belle is.

"Probably *more* excited considering it's her first sleep over. And... yes, I think I will let her go."

"That's good. Not only will it make Nyx happy but seeing her going out with her friends will help dispel any thoughts ponies around town have that what happened at the Learn and Play Day

was out of the ordinary.”

“Yeah, and, if our friends are any indication, they all just think Nyx is really good at magic, like me. So... for the moment I can just say that strong magic runs in our family and most ponies seem to believe that. After all, I turned my parents into potted plants and made Spike grow to a full grown dragon when I was taking my entry exam for Celestia’s School for Gifted Unicorns, and I was still just a filly myself back then too.”

“You mean the day you got your Cutie Mark? Yes, I heard it was quite the impressive display, at least from what Sweetie Belle told of the story.”

“Yea, it was pretty crazy.”

“Mind sharing?”

Twilight shook her head, taking a sip of her tea before going into the story, though she’d try to keep herself from jumping around endlessly saying “Yes!” as she had done with the Crusaders.

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“Well, I don’t think our Cutie Marks have anything to do with bein’ rodeo ponies.” Apple Bloom offered dejectedly as she pushed open the door to her bedroom. Sweetie Belle, Scootaloo, and Nyx were all following close behind, their sleeping bags already rolled out on the floor in the yellow farm filly’s bedroom.

“Though, it was kind of fun seeing Big Macintosh tied up like that.” Scootaloo offered with a chuckle. “He didn’t even know what hit him.”

“Tell that to my sister.” Apple Bloom replied as she jumped onto her bed. “Because if she had found it funny we wouldn’t have been sent to bed already.”

“Still, I’m pretty tired.” Sweetie Belle admitted, lying down on her sleeping bag.

“Aw, don’t tell me you want to go to sleep already?” Scootaloo whined. “Sure, we had to go to bed but there is still a lot of fun things we could do.”

“Like what?”

“We could tell... ghost stories!” The orange pegasus replied, grabbing a flashlight and holding it under her face, using it to create a spooky face.

“No offense, Scootaloo, but your scary stories aren’t that scary.” Apple Bloom commented.

“Okay, then what do you think we should do?”

“We could play a board game?”

“No.” Sweetie Belle and Scootaloo said in unison.

“Well shoot... what are we goin’ to do then?”

“Well, Twilight did give me a book she said really helped with her first slumber party... which is kind of what this is.” Nyx offered, horn glowing as she levitated a book from her saddle bags, which were stacked with the rest by the bedroom door.

“Are slumber parties the same as sleep overs?” Sweetie Belle asked as Nyx cracked open the book.

“Well, you spend the night with friends. So, I guess they’re the same. Still, I don’t want to do any sort of makeup stuff.” Scootaloo said, scrunching up her nose at the thought.

“Well, we could have a pillow fight.” Nyx offered, looking up from the book.

“We only got four pillows and my bedroom is too small.” Apple Bloom countered.

“We could make s-mores.”

“We don’t have marshmallows... or chocolate... or gram-crackers... or even a fire to roast the marshmallows on.” Sweetie Belle pointed out.

“Well... Ghost Stories are in here too, but I think we’ve already decided not to do that... um, what about Truth or Dare?”

“That could be fun.” Scootaloo offered. “Let’s give it a try.”

“How do you play?”

Nyx held a hoof on the page in the book, quickly reading it over before speaking. “Okay, rules are simple. Somepony starts by asking if another pony wants to tell the truth or take a dare. If the pony chooses truth, they have to answer one question truthfully. If they take the dare, they have to do whatever dare the first pony gives them. Once the question is answered or the dare is complete. Then, the next pony in the circle takes their turn. Play continues for as long as desired.”

“That sounds kind of boring actually. I mean, the truth part sounds all right but the dares, what could we dare each other to do?”

“Oh, I know!” Apple Bloom perked up. “Let’s make Truth and Challenges. If you don’t want to answer a question then you have to complete a challenge. If you can’t, then you have to answer a question.”

“Oh, that sounds way better.” Sweetie Belle agreed. “Let’s do it.”

Nyx nodded, putting the sleep over guide book back into her bags. “So, who wants to go first?”

“Oh, me! Me!” Scootaloo offered, putting a hoof in the air. She then turned her attention on Apple Bloom. “Truth or Challenge?”

“Um... I’ll go with the Challenge.”

“I challenge you to stand on your head for ten seconds.”

“Ha, is that all?” Apple Bloom replied confidently. Within moments the yellow filly was balancing on her head, legs waving around as her friends counted down.

“10... 9... 8... 7... 6... 5... 4... 3... 2... 1... 0!”

Apple Bloom got back on her hooves, smiling but then wavering a little bit, having to shake her head. “Whoa, that makes my head all swimmy.”

“Really, let me try?” Sweetie Belle chirped, the unicorn quickly flipping onto her head. Soon, all four Cutie Mark Crusaders were on their heads, laughing and giggling as the blood rushed from their legs into their skulls.

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“Okay, Nyx... Truth or Challenge?” Apple Bloom offered about an hour later. The game had turned into a perfect way to spend the last bit of the sleep over. The four friends had done a lot of strange and silly challenges, from holding their breath to having hoof wrestling contests. Nothing that would be considered a proper dare but plenty of very fun challenges.

The black filly stuck out her tongue, turquoise eyes focusing on Apple Bloom as the black filly tried to decide which thing she would do.

“Truth.”

“Tell us something you’ve never told any other pony.”

“Like what?” Nyx asked, caught a little off guard by the very general nature of the question.

“Anything.”

“Yea, just make it something cool.” Scootaloo added.

“Well... I can’t really think of anything to tell you... but...” Nyx fell silent at this, glancing back at her vest. “There... there is something I can show you.”

“Really, what is it?” Sweetie Belle asked.

“I think it’s better if you just see it but... you got to promise not to tell any other pony. Twilight knows, but she told me I couldn’t show what I’m about to show you to anypony.”

“Oh man, this has to be good if Twilight told you to keep it a secret.” Scootaloo offered. “But yea, we promise not to tell nopony.”

Nyx turned to look at Apple Bloom and Sweetie Belle, the two other fillies also offering their promise. Still, Nyx wasn’t done.

“And... you have to promise we’ll still be friends after I show you.”

“Well, that’s a silly thing to promise.”

“Yea, we’re the Cutie Mark Crusaders. We’re going to be best friends for life.”

“No matter what.”

Nyx smiled, looking at her three friends. Decision made, the black filly got up from her sleeping bag and walked across the room into Apple Bloom’s closet. The black filly shut the door, and for a moment there was only the sound of rustling from behind the door. Apple Bloom, Scootaloo, and Sweetie Belle all craned their necks, watching anxiously until the door opened.

Nyx kept her eyes shut as she walked out, carrying her glasses and her vest in her teeth. Once she was a few steps out of the closet the black filly spread her wings out, stretching the feathered appendages for a few moments before finally opening her eyes, the dragon shaped pupils no longer disguised and hidden from the world.

Sweetie Belle, Scootaloo, and Apple Bloom all stared with their eyes wide and their jaws hanging open. Nyx could only offer a weak smile, taking a moment to set down her vest and glasses. The silence in the room was a bit unnerving, Nyx wanting her friends to say something, anything. She was just beginning to wonder if she had made a huge mistake about revealing the truth when her three friends zipped up beside her, inspecting her long hidden wings.

“Why didn’t you tell us sooner you had wings?” Apple Bloom asked.

“Well, Twilight said that if ponies knew I had both a horn and wings some would get jealous.”

“Oh yeah; you could so make Diamond Tiara and Silver Spoon jealous.” Sweetie Belle admitted, offering the thought like it would be something amazingly fun to do.

“But you girls aren’t jealous, are you?”

“Naw, why would we be jealous? It’s just part of who you are. It be as silly as me being jealous of how well Sweetie Belle sings.”

“Or me being jealous of how well Scootaloo rides her scooter.”

“Or me being jealous of how good Apple Bloom is at fixing up things like our clubhouse.”

“Yea, it’s like my big sister Applejack says: ‘There ain’t no point in bein’ jealous, because it doesn’t change how things are’.”

“Still, why do you have wings and a horn? The only ponies I know that have both are Princess Celestia and Princess Luna.” Sweetie Belle offered.

“Well, isn’t it obvious?” Apple Bloom asked, looking at her friends who only answered her with silent, blank stares. “Well... okay, maybe not so obvious.”

“Just spit it out Apple Bloom.”

“I bet that one of Nyx’s parents is a unicorn and the other is a pegasus.”

“Is it really that simple? I mean, doesn’t somepony in our class have a mom that’s a unicorn and a dad that’s a pegasus?”

“Maybe it doesn’t happen all the time. I mean, isn’t there also a pony in our class who has a pair of unicorns as parents but doesn’t have a horn of her own?”

“Yea, I think you’re right.” Apple Bloom agreed. “It must only happen some of the time. Still, it’s pretty cool.”

“Yea it is.” Scootaloo cheered. “Almost as cool as her eyes.”

“Whoa, I didn’t even notice her eyes. I was too busy looking at her wings.”

“Nyx, isn’t that what your eyes looked like during the Spring Festival play?”

The black filly could only nod. "Yes. You see, Twilight put a charm on my glasses so my eyes look like everypony else's eyes when I'm wearing them. I don't even really need them, I can see just fine."

"Twilight sure makes you do a lot of weird things, don't she?" Apple Bloom pointed out. "I mean, wearin' glasses you don't really need and wearin' a vest to hide your wings. Makes you wonder why, don't it?"

"I... I have wondered sometimes, but Twilight is nice... I don't think she'd make me do anything without a good reason."

"Yea, Twilight is pretty cool.... a bit nerdy, but cool." Scootaloo offered. "Still, it's your turn Nyx."

The black filly smiled, lying down on her sleeping bag and enjoying the feeling of not having to wear her vest or glasses.

"Okay, Sweetie Belle, Truth or Challenge?"

"Truth!" The little white unicorn answered without a moments hesitation.

"What's the funniest story you have of your big sister Rarity?"

Sweetie Belle snorted. "Oh, you guys are going to like this."

And the story began, Sweetie Belle getting into it and soon all four fillies breaking out in loud laughter. Laughter that was only ended when a pounding came at the bedroom door.

"Apple Bloom, you and yer friends get to sleep right this minute or I'm goin' come in there and hogtie all of you in your sleepin' bags!" Applejack threatened, having been kept up by the girls and their sleep over. "I got buckin' to do in the mornin' and I won't have you four keepin' me up all night."

The four fillies chimed back an apology and, with their game ended by Applejack, the Crusaders decided to call it a night. Nyx flipped the room's light switch with her magic, and soon the four fillies were lying in the darkened room.

"Whoa... Nyx, did you know your eyes glowed in the dark?" Apple Bloom whispered.

"They do? Nyx said, looking in the direction of Apple Bloom's voice. As her eyes adjusted to the weak light, Nyx began to make out her friends in fairly good detail, the filly having excellent vision in the dark.

“Yea, and by the way, it’s awesome.” Scootaloo offered before stifling a yawn.

“Thanks girls. And... thanks for still being my friends, even after I showed you my wings.”

“Of course.” Sweetie Belle offered as she laid down, on the verge of going to sleep. “We’re the Cutie Mark Crusaders; that’s like being friends for life with a cool theme song.”

*We are the Cutie Mark Crusaders.
On a quest to find out who we are.
And we will never stop the journey
Not until we have our cutie marks.*

While Sweetie Belle had been the one to start singing, the other three started singing as well. Not in the intense and arguably painful rock ballad that she had been performed at the talent show. Instead, the three sang it softly, softly enough that even Scootaloo’s voice was bearable.

And with that the four soon drifted off to sleep, none resting as well as Nyx who had been able to reveal a truth about herself to her friends, who accepted her all the same.

That and she found out her eyes glowed in the dark, which was really cool.

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Nexus stared up at the moon through his study window, glass of orange juice floating in his levitation magic nearby. He swirled the contents gently, a visual indication of the fact his mind was chewing over new information he had been presented. He had received the reports from the spy, and while some of the information was welcoming other bits were troubling.

His plan had gone off without a hitch; a few flyers sent out in the mail inspiring some local teacher in Ponyville to have the Learn and Play Day. It was the kind of public setting where Nyx wouldn’t be around Twilight Sparkle the whole time and thus could be observed and even spoken to. And the spy had done all that until the pink earth pony started chasing him. He had watched, he had observed, and even gone up and spoken with Nyx at her booth.

He had also witnessed and reported the two feats of magic the little filly performed. Turning a pony into a tree... winning a tug of war game by herself against four much larger and stronger opponents. It was the kind of magic that no filly, even one as naturally talented as Twilight Sparkle, should possess, let alone be able to control. It was the kind of magic held only by two others, the alicorns who sat upon the royal thrones.

But while the magical potential was there, the queen was not. The filly did not act like Nightmare Moon, did not speak condescendingly to the country bumpkins of Ponyville. The spy described her as pleasant and energetic, with friends and a good standing in the community. All words that

Nexus wouldn't have believed would be attributed to Equestria's true queen, at least when dealing with the common pony.

Could he have possibly done something wrong? Could the spell have gone wrong? Was the filly truly Nightmare Moon, or just a pony that had been gifted with the queen's power? These questions, in a variety of forms, rolled around in Nexus' head, clattering together like marbles as the unicorn tried to discern some truth from what he already knew.

A process interrupted when the door to his study opened.

"Sir?"

"Yes Proper Etiquette?"

"Princess Celestia is at the front door and wishes to have a word, but wants it to be known this is a request and not a demand. Shall I see her in?"

"Yes, please." Nexus replied, closing his eyes. Upon re-opening them the turquoise orbs, a blessing given to those who were of the order, disappeared and were replaced by Nexus's old, slate gray eyes. He then downed the rest of the orange juice in his glass, shivering a little as the perfectly chilled juice gave him a minor brain freeze before he moved over to a chair and picked up a book, wanting to look like he was enjoying a quiet evening at home when the princess stepped in.

And the timing was near perfect, Nexus just getting settled into one of his chairs with a book when the doors opened, Princess Celestia strolling in while her guards remained stationed at the door.

"Thank you for allowing me into your lovely home at such a late hour Nexus." Celestia offered as she strode across the room. "I do hope I wasn't interrupting anything."

"A good book and nothing more." Nexus lied expertly with a reassuring smile as he set the book he had taken up on a nearby end table. "Still, I find it surprising you are out and about at such an hour. You are usually in bed around this time."

"Yes, but I have received a bit of news late in the afternoon and I've been working to prepare for the morning."

"And just what happens in the morning?"

"In due time Nexus. First, I want to inform you of the situation at hand." And with that Celestia began, taking a seat on a cushion Nexus kept in the study just for the royal visitor. Celestia began telling Nexus about the spell in the forest, about the research his co-worker Bastion was

doing on the spell, and of many other things that Nexus knew already about. Still, he feigned interest, and the appropriate levels of shock and disbelief when told some new piece of information.

“To think, ponies trying to resurrect Nightmare Moon. It is hard to believe some would be so foolish.” Nexus offered several minutes later, pouring a fresh glass of orange juice for himself. He silently made an offer to pour a glass for Celestia, but she offered a smile and a gently shook of her head in reply.

“Yes, it is disconcerting that there are those in Equestria who would turn to Nightmare Moon for some grand revolution instead of speaking to me about what’s driving them to make such a horrible mistake.”

“But you stopped them; the spell was interrupted.”

“Yes... but I fear that while not returned to her original power, Nightmare Moon was still reborn.”

Nexus lifted a questioning eyebrow. “Really? What makes you say that?”

“You, of course, know my student Twilight Sparkle.”

“The most magically gifted unicorn I’ve ever seen, of course.”

“At the Spring Festival in Ponyville I discovered my student was taking care of a young black coated filly by the name of Nyx, a filly she said was her half-cousin. A filly that, if my sources are to be believed, started living with her the day after the cultists casted their spell in the forest. A filly who, in recent days, performed two very profound feats of magic at a school weekend event.”

“Well, I can only imagine magic runs in her family.” Nexus offered before sipping on his orange juice.

“Yes, I would believe that as well if Nyx was related to Twilight, but I have checked the family’s records. There is no listing of any relative of Twilight having a daughter named Nyx, and in fact there is no listing of a Nyx being born in Equestria in the past several decades.”

“Perhaps that is not her real name.”

“A consideration I have taken into account Nexus. While there have been a few black coated unicorn fillies born that would be at the right age, they were all born in very different parts of Equestria and they are all living happily with their families. It is like this filly appeared out of thin air.”

Nexus, who had been taking another sip from his orange juice glass, froze up for a single moment. Not long enough for Celestia to notice but a small sign that the true Nexus, who was hiding behind sweet words and feigned interest, was a bit concerned.

“You believe this filly was created by the spell?”

Celestia nodded. “Yes, a very clever deduction Nexus.”

“You give me far too much credit, Princess. After all, we were speaking of the spell and Nightmare Moon before you brought up this little filly, and since you believe she came out of thin air... well, I can only assume you believe she is a product of the spell. The question I do have, however, is whether or not you believe she is Nightmare Moon.”

“I am unsure.” Celestia admitted. “The reports of her magical ability are troubling, but at the same time she has been living in Ponyville for months now with no incident. From what information I have been able to gather, she acts like any normal filly. She goes to school, has friends, and is known to most of the town as a sweet, happy pony who gets into a little trouble once in a while with three of her friends, the four of them together calling themselves the Cutie Mark Crusaders.”

“Hmmm... such behavior does seem out of character from what stories I’ve heard about the Mare in the Moon. Tell me, what does Luna think? Surely she, who was once Nightmare Moon, would be able to offer the most honest analysis.”

“All Luna knows is that Nyx is a black filly that is staying with my student Twilight Sparkle. She knows nothing of the cult, the spell, or any of my concerns... and I would prefer if it stayed that way.”

“You are keeping Luna in the dark? Do you not trust her with this matter?”

“No... no, I trust my sister... I know my sister all too well and I know that I could trust her with the truth... but I choose to keep this a secret for her own sake.” Celestia admitted, “My sister has come a long way in the time since she was freed from her driving jealousy and hatred. She has come to terms with what she was, enough so that she was able to sit through and even enjoy a Spring Festival play about her mistake.

“She did not see that play as something mocking her and the evils he did, but telling the story of how my student and her friends helped my sister escape from what she had become. Gave her a chance for her and I to truly be loving sisters again.

“But...” Celestia continued, the gentleness in her voice over the memory of the spring play being quickly replaced with firm seriousness. “If I know Luna, she would bear of all this on her own shoulders. She was hold herself responsible, since it was she who became the original

Nightmare Moon.

"I... I choose to keep this as secret from her simply because I feel Luna has suffered enough for that mistake, and that she doesn't need be troubled by this. If I can fix this without her ever knowing... then I have done my duty as an older sister. I will not let Nightmare Moon take Luna away again, physically or metaphorically."

"What are you going to do then?"

"This is actually why I came to you Spell Nexus. Despite the filly's benign nature, the risk of her being Nightmare Moon is too great. The truth has to be ascertained."

"So," Celestia continued, "I've come to you, my trusted magical advisor and the pony I've placed in charge of my school. If I were to bring the filly to you, do you believe you could determine whether or not she is Nightmare Moon and whether or not she means Equestria harm?"

"I... believe so." Nexus offered, licking his lips as he had to choose his words carefully. "But to ascertain that kind of truth through questioning alone will not suffice. It would require a spell, one that would allow us to view the filly's true nature. I would need time to research and prepare such a spell."

"Take what time you need, Nexus. For the moment the filly poses no threat. Even if she is Nightmare Moon her powers are too weak to even attempt moving the moon or holding it in place in the sky. I fear for the safety of my student, but at the same time I know that if Nightmare Moon is just trying to bide her time then she will not risk hurting Twilight without reason."

"It will take some time, but I will tell you when I have the spell prepared." Nexus assured.

"Wonderful! I knew I could trust you Nexus. You were yourself, after all, once my faithful student."

Nexus laughed a little, getting up from his chair. "Yes, but this faithful student is now the headmaster of your school and your advisor, and I advise you to go back to the castle and get your rest. You do have a sun to raise in the morning."

Celestia chuckled a little, getting up from the cushion. "Of course. you always were one to remind me of my duties, Nexus."

"I do it out of concern and nothing more, Princess."

"I know, and thank you for assisting in this matter." Celestia offered as she and Nexus drew close to the door, the butler Proper Etiquette opening said doors for the princess as her guards snapped to attention, ready to move out.

"I will send word via letter when I have completed research on the spell you requested. I don't imagine it will take me very long, considering my special talent is creating new spells." Nexus offered. "Now, I wish you a pleasant evening Your Highness."

"And a good night to you too, Spell Nexus. Don't stay up too late, my faithful student." Celestia offered as a final farewell. Nexus returned it with a laugh and a wave of his hoof before slipping back into his study. He moved to the window, smiling gently as he watched the courtyard below. Celestia flew off with her guards a few minutes later.

It was only when Celestia was out of sight that Nexus closed his eyes, opening them a moment later to reveal the slate gray orbs had returned to the turquoise color that marked him as a member of the Children of Nightmare. His gentle grin turned menacing, and the dark blue unicorn had to fight the urge to laugh out loud.

Horn glowing, Nexus began pulling books off his study shelves. Yes, he would need time to prepare, but now he had all the time he would need. He had no fear of Celestia acting, for the princess was waiting for him to help her act. A second opportunity, a second chance to complete the spell, had been laid in his hooves by none other than the sun tyrant herself. It was like fate and destiny were on his side, that the world itself worked to help him bring back Equestria's true queen.

"Celestia, you have become a contributing architect in your demise." Nexus offered, the one bit of gloating he allowed himself before diving into the work that laid ahead of him.

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