

The Eversleep

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The road was a quiet one for Starfall. He had left the Lieutenant in charge of the fight, telling their forces to push forward while Stormbreaker was vulnerable. The only remnants of the battle at hand were the clouds that hung over the road and nearby Canterlot. Small drops of rain fell from the clouds onto his coat. Beside him, Dynasty was silent, looking over the rolling hills they walked through.

He missed his former student. From what he'd heard, Bastion was handling the Republic's affairs quite nicely. The entire process of reviving the crops was well underway, and with minor magical assistance, it was promising to be a bountiful year. Negotiations with neutral cities was bringing new territories into the Republic. That meant new soldiers and fresh supplies for their ailing war effort.

While he was proud of all his successes, it was curious that he hadn't already sent the fresh troops being trained in Canterlot meant for the push back to Manehattan. By all reports, they should have been finished training, equipped, and sent today. He didn't see a single soldier on the road.

Within an hour they reached the castle. The guards bowed in respect as they passed through the hallways towards the throne room - long since, their council chamber. The doors were already open when they reached the entrance. Two of the other council members were walking towards them from within.

"Good afternoon, Starfall, Dynasty. We've heard about your exploits in the war, and are pleased with your tactics. Has Guiding Light stayed at the front? There are some matters that she needs to attend to."

Starfall felt anger start to simmer beneath his thoughts. But he controlled it, and shook his head, "No. She has been captured, and is probably dead." The two unicorns stared open mouthed. Starfall eyed them sternly. Were these foals really going to waste his time? "Whatever you need, Dynasty can fulfill that role." Starfall nodded to Dynasty.

She smiled at the two unicorns.

"Yes, Starfall. Thank you." Dynasty accompanied the two unicorns back down the hallway they entered from, with their quiet conversation fading quickly from his hearing. Starfall entered the room signaling to the guards to close the doors behind him. They slid back into their places, closing with a quiet click.

He's going to kill you, came the whisper. Starfall shook his head, casting the thoughts aside.

Taking a quick glance around the room, he noticed that there were a few changes made to it. Their symbol hung from tapestries along the far wall and were also newly worked into the stone of the chamber. The table was replaced by a row of thrones, set in the shape of a horseshoe at the end of the carpeted path from the door. Each of them were raised above the floor at the end, allowing any who came to speak the ability to see all of them at once. More importantly, all of the council could see their guest. Hanging from each raised tier was a tapestry with a replica of their cutie mark directly in the center. Below it was their name.

Bastion was the only one present in the chambers, as well as the only pony in the room. He sat in the chair beside Starfall's watching him as he approached.

"Bastion. My former student." Starfall spoke, coming to a stop in the center of the horseshoe, "It has been quite a while. I very much enjoy the changes that you have made."

Bastion rose from his seat and stood at the edge of his raised platform, "I'm pleased that it suits you. I enjoy what you've done to Stormbreaker's lands. He won't be using them for a while."

His words have bite.

He wouldn't dare, Starfall told the voice.

“We have much to discuss, especially on battle plans for the invasion of Manehatten while Stormbreaker is still stunned,” Starfall continued.

Bastion hopped down to the floor below, “Much to discuss indeed.”

Without a word, Bastion's magic covered his horn, and it lashed out into Starfall's body, sending him skidding off the rug and onto the marble floors. The light blue unicorn walked after his former teacher. He pulled on his magic once more, throwing lightning down on him. Starfall was prepared this time, however, and they reflected into the ceiling above. Stone and debris poured down onto the floor.

Starfall lifted himself from the ground. Pain throbbled all along his side where he was hit. He moved a hoof to check on it, and came up with blood.

“You have made a grave mistake, foal.” Starfall growled.

“I have? *I* have made a mistake?! You *massacred* an entire city, and then forced us to murder those who had willingly surrendered!” Bastion's yellow eyes widened with rage. He lashed out again with his magic, sending flames across the room. Starfall twisted the flames around his body and into the air behind him. “You set miles of homes, fields and cities ablaze just to make a point to Stormbreaker about how far you would go to control Equestria!”

“I did what was necessary to win!” Starfall shouted.

“We trusted you to be better than what *Luna* would have become! Instead you've committed unspeakable acts of murder on the grandest of scales!” He lowered his voice to normal levels, “You're not the teacher I once knew. What madness has taken hold of you?”

Starfall raised his horn, and the magic flowed around it. “Equestria needs a ruler who is willing to do anything for her people. By any means necessary. Luna was weak, and Nightmare Moon was dangerous. With our power we keep her at bay. With my power I keep the council under control. I rule this land because I am smart enough to control it without deviating from Celestia's wishes.

“Don't you see? Every decision I make leads all ponies to the perfect future. A future where I will rule it!” Starfall laughed. “You're just too weak to understand. Guiding Light was the same way. Perhaps I should burn you down with a city like I did to her.”

Bastion charged forward, screaming and firing magic at his teacher. Starfall did his best to move around the shots, while delivering his own magic back at his student. It was no use.

Bastion slammed into Starfall's shoulder with his horn, impaling him. His magic reinforced his neck muscles and he flung the helpless unicorn through the chairs in the horseshoe.

Did I not warn you? Are you so apprehensive to trust me? The voice was becoming more concerned, and saddened.

I only want what is mine. Starfall tried to rise, from the ground but the pain was unbearable. He was losing a lot of blood.

Then let me deliver it to you.

I... I... His will wavered.

Perhaps a demonstration? I will humor you.

“What's wrong, *Master*? Have you lost the will to fight for an insane cause?” Bastion jumped onto the tier above Starfall. A wave of confusion began to wash over him.

Starfall stood up. His normally violet coat darkened considerably to a deep purple color. His mane became less tangible, turning a deep black that seemed to suck the light away from the room. When his eyes

opened, they were a lighter red, glowing faintly regardless of the lighting. More importantly, they were the eyes of a dragon.

“My cause is far from insane, my dear little colt.” Starfall’s mane lashed out and gripped Bastion’s head. His screaming was immediate and unbearable for anypony to listen too. Except for his teacher, who’s voice was low, and most peculiarly, that of a mare. **“Insanity to you ponies is a relative term. If you ever wake from your situation, then you will know what I mean.”**

Starfall walked around Bastion’s writhing body. He seemed to be taking in the room as if it was his first time in the chamber. **“I’m so happy that you mastered a spell to negate sound in a room this size at such a young age. No wonder the guards outside never heard a thing. Wait... no, they still can’t hear you. How...”** he licked his lips, savoring the screams, **“...delicious.”**

Dark magic emanated from his horn, creating a glass coffin, not unlike Celestia’s. It swept underneath the writhing pony and dumped him into the box. It sealed shut, locking out the screams.

Starfall pouted, **“I was enjoying our time together. But don’t worry. The agony will stop when your body dies of old age. Then you’ll be free of your punishment.”** The casket disappeared.

Magic once again reached out and repaired the room, sealing the roof, clearing debris, and even wiping away the blood from existence. Starfall levitated up to his seat and sat down in it. The magic subsided, finishing the repairs on the raised chairs that had been destroyed.

“I can’t wait to discuss the proposition I mentioned with you. But that will come later. You have guests coming.” Starfall laughed quietly to himself as his mane settled to normal, and his new dark coat dulled in color.

The doors opened once more, and Dynasty entered the chamber. She walked into the hall standing in the center of the horseshoe. “Where’s Bastion?”

Starfall looked down at her, “He stepped out. I believe he mentioned that he needed to rest and gather his thoughts on some of the issues in the Republic.” He pointed at the chair on his side, “Please, come sit. This chair was designed for you. Besides, we will be having an open chamber soon.”

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A whole month. It had been a whole month since Celestia had disappeared, and Twilight and Luna were finally finished with the spell. What a spell it had been, with more than its fair share of complications. They found that they couldn’t tie any time sleeping from any animal but a pony, and on top of that, they couldn’t take more than a few seconds from each pony every day to tie to the spell.

While it wasn’t noticeable, it was straining Luna to the point of serious harm. Twilight was forced to help contribute magic almost every night as time progressed. After she started keeping up with the news on the war, they had to leave the soldiers alone, just in case. Luna wouldn’t have it any other way, regardless of how insignificant a few seconds seemed. That being the case, it was relieving for Twilight to see Luna excited, albeit exhausted when they finished that afternoon.

The pot bubbled merrily over the fire they’d been using over the last few weeks, using the city as a refuge from possible discovery. Rainbow Dash had stayed with them since she had arrived. Her wing was almost back to normal, but Twilight had convinced her that she would have trouble explaining the injuries she received from the fight over Cloudsdale. It was a one way ticket to being arrested.

Rainbow never complained about having to stay behind. During the day, while Luna slept, she and Twilight fixed up one of the buildings near the entrance. There was nothing inside, so they simply build a roof

onto it and brought the sleeping bag and tent inside. Other than the sleeping materials, there was an enormous amount of books and old tomes that Twilight took from the library. Stories and history even some lost tales from the times when the city was vibrant with life. She was more lucky, as Luna had explained to her, that the building still had its old magical wards that refreshed the books as they sat on the shelf. Magic that Celestia had shown her how to maintain in the castle library.

"Looks like it's ready!" Twilight chimed as she poured the thick soup into three bowls. Her saddlebags opened, and a loaf of bread hovered out, "I managed to get a hold of some bread too. Zecora was nice enough to pick one up for me yesterday."

"Yes! I've been dying for some bread," Rainbow cheered. While Twilight's cooking skills were excellent, weeks of rotating between soup and salads was getting boring.

"I also managed to get some apples too. But those are for desert." Twilight looked on with pride as Rainbow and Luna went through the soup, sighing in happiness as they munched on the bread. She managed to start eating her own, when Luna refilled her own bowl with seconds. Using magic does exhaust most ponies.

"Geez, Twilight. Pretty soon both of us are gonna gain too much weight to fly around. You need to stop making it taste so good," Rainbow teased.

"I'll let you cook then, if that's how you feel."

Luna swallowed what she was eating and stared at Twilight, "But that was beyond inedible! Rainbow even caught the stuff in the pot on fire," she pointed a hoof at Rainbow Dash.

"Hey, it was my first time cooking. Give me a break."

Silence passed over them. Most of it was exhaustion, but the pressure of implementing the spell was starting to creep in. Luna finished her second bowl and set it on the ground. She stood up, and used her magic to snuff out the fire.

"Before you need to leave, we should go over the plan one more time," Luna said. Her voice was a mix of concern and apprehension.

Twilight and Rainbow Dash nodded. They could see that Luna did not want to do what they had spent so much time planning. Twilight knew that it was more than that. Neither wanted Twilight to be the bait.

"Twilight. You will go into Ponyville. Once you arrive, you will knock out the Mayor, as planned, and kill Oath. He won't give you a second chance if you hesitate. That pony had training from the Royal Guard before he lost his wings.

"Once you do that, you will have to cast the illusion that you learned to get the guards to go after it. That will lighten up the guard, but then the hard part begins. I will begin to cast through you so it appears that you are casting the spell. Since we've shared magic in creating it, you can use whatever you have to keep the guards from hitting you. It will attract a lot of attention.

"My main concern is when Starfall shows himself. He won't sit around and let a huge spell he doesn't know about just happen. When that happens, I will stop casting through you. You need to leave as quickly as possible, so be ready to teleport away.

"Rainbow Dash. You need to be ready and waiting at the other end of her teleportation spell. Pick a spot to meet beforehand. If she's used up her magic, run. Drag her along with you if you must. If you're followed split up to try and throw them off. We'll meet back here. The spell will start when the moon is at the top of the sky."

The offices of the mayors were occupied that night. While the rest of the citizens of Ponyville slept, the former mayor and the appointed mayor, Oath, were deep within stacks of paperwork. While both of them had been toiling away since the afternoon, it appeared as though they would be there well into the night.

“I still don’t understand how these silly things are all so urgently needed.” Oath had been complaining sporadically on some of the items that crossed his desk. “I guess it can’t be helped. The post office in this town has been such a mess this past week. I’ve received mail that comes early, mail that comes late, even sometimes not at all. But almost nothing on time.”

Because I made it that way, the mayor sang in her mind. As part of the plan, she had deliberately ‘not received’ mail, received mail late, or downright hidden it away in plain sight. Luna had told her when they had met that it needed to be evening when the two mayors were together. What better way than a last minute pile of paperwork. She had the misfortune of being bogged down in a similar amount of work once or twice before, so she knew how to make it look natural.

“Maybe its the new wave of recruits?” She offered, “We are asking those who work the mail to help on the front lines.”

“I suppose that is possible.”

Oath was silent once more, scribbling away with his quill.

Get ready. Twilight’s voice chimed in her head.

“Do you want more coffee?” She asked.

Oath gave her his cup, “Please. Leave it black if you can. The bitter taste keeps me awake longer.”

The mayor nodded and walked to the other side of the room. She grabbed hold of the pot, and poured it into Oath’s cup.

Ready, the mayor thought.

There was a soft popping noise in the room, followed by a muffled scream. The mayor turned around to see Twilight with her horn through his shoulders. Oath was unconscious and loosing a lot of blood. She removed her hoof from his mouth and threw him to the floor.

“Go,” the Mayor said.

Twilight popped out of the room, leaving behind an illusion of herself. It shifted its coat to a deep red, followed by a yellow and gold mane. It’s eyes were a light purple. The illusion pushed her into the door, knocking it over and barrelling into the street.

“That pony just tried to murder Oath! Stop him!”

The guards outside of the door were already on their hooves, taking to the skies and chasing after it. Others in the town rallied and poured out from the town. Those that were left surrounded the Mayor, and accompanied her back inside the room.

“Secure the room, get the other guards and tell them to patrol this area. Somepony obviously wants both of us dead.”

One of the guards nodded and left the room.

Twilight moved as fast as her hooves would take her, barrelling down the road to the center of town. She flipped herself into the fountain, and ducked down inside of it. The sound of wings flew past her, as well as several voices.

“Half of you to the Mayor’s! There’s an assassin on the loose. The rest of you, patrol the outer city for signs of more assailants. Be thorough.” A soft fluttering of wings filled the air, and slowly faded away into

silence.

She stayed crouched for a minute, before popping her head up. The streets were barren and quiet. Above her, the skies were clear, not a single cloud obscuring the full moon which was almost at the top of the sky. She hopped out of the fountain and walked a few paces from it.

Magic began to glow at the tip of her horn, and she felt Luna's magic reach out to her. The magic connected, and huge amounts of energy began to engulf her, flowing through every part of her being. Moonlight surrounded her and shot straight up towards the moon. It stopped its motion in the sky above, tied to the pillar of light that glowed in the sky.

"Starfall! Look outside!" Dynasty barged into his private chambers. In his groggy state, the clear state of panic on Dynasty's face worked like cold water. Dynasty was never afraid of anything.

The pillar of light cast a huge light over the entire valley and the mountains that surrounded it. That included Canterlot. Starfall immediately got out of his bed sprinting to the open door. Dynasty let him pass, only to run behind him.

"What happened?" He yelled.

"We lost control over the moon, and then the pillar of light appeared! The moon doesn't seem to be moving anywhere, but it has only been a few minutes," she replied. "We can be on top of Ponyville shortly if we go by chariot."

"Prepare two, one for each of us. I believe that Luna has revealed herself, and I will not let another chance to destroy her pass me by."

The first wave of guards were stunned by the display of magic, that Twilight was able to perform. None of them moved to engage her, and in fact, a few tried to scurry away. But Twilight wasn't taking any chances. A shield formed around her, held steady by her own magic. The pony in charge drew his crossbow, firing one shot right at her. Her magic grabbed hold of the crossbow bolt, flinging it back the way it came. It landed in the guard's shoulder, and he yelled in pain.

The others around him drew their wings out, revealing the blades along the edges. They screamed and charged forward. Twilight twisted the shield to harden, blocking the blades as they tried to get closer. One of those spots she forced to explode, launching the pegasus back. More magic poured into the shield, replacing the gaping hole in the shield. Her mind molded it into new shapes, creating walls of swords and hand shields.

Just in time, too. A second wave of guards joined the first, charging forward to stop her magic. The weapons responded in kind, battling each pegasus as they crashed upon her defenses. Stray crossbow shots were deflected by her idle weapons. Blows reigned down on the guards, none of them particularly lethal in their own right, but enough to disable them. Their forms limped away, trying to recover, while their compatriots tried desperately to stop her.

She pushed the magic further, drawing on a little bit of Luna's extra magic, using it to fire magic arrows from the shields. Ponies were knocked back from the attack allowing her time to recover some of the unused energy. Lightning arced across the sky landing all around her, ripping up the ground and battering off of her weapons. One grazed her, sending shocks through her body. She managed to hold on to the spells, and the connection. She couldn't let this be the end of her fight.

Two unicorns dropped down at the end of the plaza in front of her. The mare, started accumulating magic, while the stallion, still fully coated in magic, launched another series of lightning bolts at her. Twilight molded her magic into the bubble once more, absorbing the lightning as it rammed into it. The other unicorn

followed with a pillar of flames. The bubble absorbed the fire, letting it coat the area around it, but Twilight was forced to put more of her magic into it.

“Good evening, Twilight Sparkle. I see that Celestia chose her student well,” the stallion said.

“Who are you?” She yelled back.

“My, my. Don’t you read? I’m Councilor Starfall, of course.”

The pillar of light cast an odd glow on him. A huge swath of space in front of him seemed to be killing the light where it touched, as was the shadow it should have cast. Something was seriously wrong with this pony, and Twilight didn’t want to find out what it was.

I’m almost finished. Get ready to run. Luna whispered in Twilight’s mind.

“I apologize. I don’t usually talk to ponies who try to kill their intended leaders.”

Starfall sighed, “Have you spoken to Luna? That’s a shame. Nightmare Moon always loves to twist the words that come from her counterpart’s mouth.”

“You murdered her bodyguard.”

“A pittance for saving Equestria, I feel.”

The pillar of light began to fade. Twilight twisted her magic into a new spell, finding the new location in her mind.

“Destroying Equestria is what you mean. I intend to save it.”

Her magic went off, the teleportation pulling her to her new destination. But she never left the square, instead feeling pain shoot through her body, as black lightning tied her to the ground.

“I am really tired of you ponies trying to leave while I’m in the middle of talking.” Starfall’s eye twitched. Twilight screamed from the pain. “That noise is also irritating.”

The lightning flared, coursing through her body. Twilight passed out from the pain. Starfall nodded to two of the guards, who hefted her body onto one of the chariots. The unicorn stallion smiled, delighting in his perfect catch.

“Luna will watch you die tomorrow, Miss Sparkle, as will all of Canterlot. They will learn that I do not suffer traitors, once and for all.” His face contorted into one of frustration. He turned to those guards carrying the chariot, “Place her in the dungeons.”

The chariot took off towards Canterlot. Starfall stared into the direction of the Everfree Forest, smelling the subtle scent of rain in the night air.

“What will you do now, little Luna?” The mare’s deep voice whispered into the wind through Starfall’s lips, **“I think its time for a reunion.”**

Dynasty put a hoof on Starfall’s shoulder, “Starfall?”

He looked at her and smiled, “Dynasty, would you be a dear and bring the Elements of Harmony to me? Take them by force when you have to. The show tomorrow is starring their best friend after all.”

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_____ It was only an hour before the morning sun would rise into the sky. Only an hour until Starfall made an example of that foalish mare. But he had something more important to discuss. He walked to the mirror and began to brush his hair.

“I am indeed pleased by your sheer magical power.”

“It is much stronger with you, than when I was forced into Luna’s body.” The mirror reflected back the image of an alicorn. A deep purple coat which seemed to glow in the darkened room covered her

body. Her eyes were the colors of the rainbow, but were darkened substantially, while giving off an otherworldly glow. Her mane was a fluid black, sucking the rest of the light out of the room save from her coat and eyes.

Starfall chuckled to himself, “Her selfish intentions made her dangerous. My desires to rule will make your power used for the good of Equestria.”

The alicorn smiled and nodded, **“Of course they will. I can bring you the throne, you know.”**

“Of course you can. I have spent a lot of time thinking about your offer, and I know it to be true.”

She raised an eyebrow, **“You have made a decision then?”**

He put the brush down on the table. “It has always been important that rulers have a counterpart to their actions. Celestia spent a millennium taking on different students, each to balance her decisions and actions. When Luna returned, her current student was sent away, so the two princesses ruled together.”

“In the time before, their parents ruled together as King and Queen,” the alicorn added. She was pleased to know where his logic was taking him.

“As you say. While the council is an excellent counterpart, it is merely a pawn in my hand. I intend to rule over it and all of Equestria. But doing so alone will let everything crumble. So...” He looked her in the eye, “It appears that I am in need of a Queen.”

“If it pleases you, I would be more than happy to fulfill that role.”

“It does.”

“Pledge your faithfulness to me, and I will give you the world.”

“And pledge I will. Just not now. It would be best to do so during the pleasantries so all can see.”

The alicorn looked giddy with delight, **“Until later then?”**

“Until the dawn rises, my queen.”

In his joy, he never heard the whisper fading into the back of his mind, ***When darkness will rise, and cover this land. Forever.***

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Deep within the castle, light began to cascade upon the stones within the burial chamber belonging to Princess Celestia. The sun filled the solemn place with warmth, glinting off of the coffin’s crystal casing. Unaffected by the warmth, the body of Princess Celestia lay in wait, glowing like the moon had the night before.

The sunlight inched over her body, causing the glow to fade from her form, showing the white coat new life in the light. Her mane shone in the new sunlight, letting all of the colors refresh Celestia’s millennial prison with color. But as the light shone on, the crystal melted away, revealing her to the fresh breeze of spring. The wind ruffled her feathers in her wings, and tossed her mane and tail to the side.

Celestia’s eyelids slowly slid open.