

Tabluna Rasa - Chapter 6

--Dreams of Bonds: Twilight Sparkle--

In contrast to her previous hunts, Luna knew exactly where she was going this time. Ponyville's library, home to Twilight Sparkle, Celestia's protégé and bearer of the Element of Magic. But this time, Luna dawdled. She felt a certain apprehension about looking into Twilight's dreams. Yes, originally she had been left until last because she might counteract Luna's dreamwalking spell, but there was another reason as well. Magical feedback.

It was an well documented fact in the etheric sciences that if the magic of two different unicorns came into direct contact with each other, the results could range from anywhere to a minor headache to a magical explosion roughly the size of Stalliongrad. Of course the last one had only happened once, and that was right before Luna had been banished to the moon. It seemed that the more powerful the magicks that collided were, the greater the repercussions. And Luna's magic had grown since then, and scientists had estimated that if she were to go head to head with any other unicorn with her level of magic, or even just very close, the worst that could happen would be all life stopping instantaneously and every molecule in existence exploding at the speed of light. Personally Luna suspected that the team's intern had proposed that one, and everyone else had just gone along with it because it sounded cool. But the point still stood, the results could be very bad.

Luna looked at the tree looming before her. After a quick inspection of the sides, just to confirm a lack of embedded apple trees, she made her way inside, cautiously. Knowing that Twilight had a habit of keeping late hours, Luna first checking the writing desk on the second floor of the library. It was entirely possible that the unicorn had been making some late night notes when Luna's spell had been cast. Possible, but not the case. There was, however, an owl keeping watch over the room. Its head followed Luna as she floated through the room, owls possessing the ability to see things hidden to others.

Luna next checked the bedroom, but the bed too was empty. She finally found Twilight outside on the balcony, curled up beside a telescope, wrapped in a blanket. The find made Luna smile. If she was out here she must have been stargazing. It gave Luna a good feeling to discover any pony enjoying her night.

After a minute of watching the sleeping mare, the moon princess steeled herself. "Well, here's hoping no explosions occur then." With that, she began gazing into Twilight's dream.

§§§§

"Spike! Hurry up, we don't have much more time before the Princess arrives!" Twilight was in her usual pre-royalty worry mode. She was dusting the library for about the third time that day, and had already cleaned the kitchen twice. Spike meanwhile had the job of putting all the books that were scattered around the place away. Again.

"Just put the last one away," said Spike, coming down the stairs. "Although I don't know why you had me clean the upper study as well. It's not like she's going to go up there."

"You never know with princesses Spike, they like to surprise you." Twilight remembered her last trip home to Canterlot, where a bucket of icy water greeted her as she entered her old room in the palace.

"In more ways than one. Now, let's see what else we need to do." She levitated a clipboard and quill over and started going through the items. "Okay, make beds, check. Make checklist, check. Put away study material, check. Put away recreational reading, check. Dust the house-

"Three times no less."

"Hush Spike. Check." Twilight gave her list another quick scan, making sure she hadn't missed anything. "Oh no, I forgot to pick up the treats from Sugar Cube Corner! The princess could be here any minute! Spike could you-

"Already on it Twi. But I expect overtime pay for this."

"Don't worry, I'll make sure to get a nice emerald for my number one assistant." With Spike off to collect the snacks, Twilight ticked that item off her list. "Right, that's everything then."

"Oh? I think you missed out 'Welcome Princess Luna as she arrives.'"

Twilight gave her list a puzzled scan. "But that one isn't on my..." Realisation dawned. She turned around to find that Princess Luna had indeed already arrived. "Princess! How lovely to see you! Uh... have you been here long?"

"Long enough to confirm my sister's fears. You really do get engrossed in your work far too easily don't you?" Luna gave a light chuckle at the unicorn's expression. "Oh, don't worry. I'm the same way. Give me a good constellation and I can be up for hours trying to get the stars just so. But listen to me ramble, and I'm still only at the front door. May I come in?"

"Yes of course princess!" Twilight was already flustered by this visit, not a good sign. She tried to calm herself. "Can I get you a drink princess? Or maybe a snack. No, wait Spike's just gone out to get those, never mind that. So, A drink?"

"A coffee would be wonderful thank you. All these late mornings and early evenings are starting to get to me."

Twilight had to pause to figure out that last statement. *Right. Princess Luna is usually asleep in the day and awake during the night.* She headed into the kitchen to get Luna her coffee. She poured a cup for Luna, and made tea for herself. As she returned she tried to pick up the conversation again. "So, you've been having to keep a diurnal sleep pattern? Why?" Just seconds after asking Twilight realised that the question might be a bit personal. "Oh, I'm sorry princess, I hope you're not offended by my asking."

Luna gave a light laugh. "You really are just like my sister said. Relax Twilight Sparkle, I'm no more offended than my sister would be. If it helps put you at ease, just try to think of me as my sister. We're more than a little alike after all."

Twilight smiled. "Okay, I guess I can do that..."

"No. No, no, no, no. I've seen many things this night, many possibilities, but this is where I draw the line. I am NOT my sister."

Twilight looked around confused. That was definitely Princess Luna's voice, but she was looking just as confused as to the source of the voice. "Who's there? Is there someone spying on us? I warn you, I have magic and I'm not afraid to use it!"

"No, please no magic! It could lead to catastrophic... it would be very bad!" The voice seemed to echo, yet at the same time had a quietness to it, almost like a whisper.

Twilight was still looking around the room, trying to figure out where the voice was emanating from. "Well then show yourself, or I can't be responsible for what happens!"

A sigh. "And I was hoping to avoid this... very well. Just give me a second, I'm not sure I quite remember how I get this to work..." A ball of indigo light began to shimmer in the centre of the library. Twilight looked on with curiosity as the ball became bigger. Suddenly spears of light shot out from the sphere, piercing the the libraries walls. A bright flash momentarily blinded Twilight, and when she got her sight back, there in the centre of the library was...

"Princess Luna?" Twilight was astounded she was able to articulate, feeling like her jaw must have fallen on the floor. She looked behind her, and saw princess Luna sitting at her table, sipping coffee like nothing was wrong. And then she looked back and saw princess Luna standing in the middle of the floor, albeit a bit shakily. Twilight rubbed her eyes and looked at her drink. "Did I brew the cactus juice tea by accident again?"

The Princess Luna in the middle of the floor shook her head a few times. "Okay, right. Note to self, next time try and do that with a bit more finesse." She looked around the room. "Oops. Um, sorry about your wall. Don't worry, it should be back to normal soonish."

Twilight looked to see what she was talking about. Where the beams of light had touched the walls, they had indeed gone right through, leaving holes scattered through out the library. Almost as soon as she noticed this, some of the holes seemed to close up, as if there was never any hole in the first place. "But- how...? Okay, now I know I've brewed the wrong tea. First twin princesses, now self fixing walls?"

"I know it may be hard to realise from in here, but this isn't because of any ill-brewed tea. This is your dream Twilight Sparkle, and I'm trespassing."

"My dream? How is something like that even possible? And why would you come into my dreams in the first place."

"It's a long story, and I don't want to trouble you with the details. As to how, dreams are part of my domain as the Moon Princess, so I have the ability to view or enter other's dreams."

"So you've been spying on my dreams? Why would you do that?"

"It's not just you, I've been spying on lots of ponies..." Luna trailed off. "This isn't helping my case here is it?"

"Not really, no."

Luna sighed. "Well, I'm not asking you to forgive me, I had no right to view or enter your dreams. It's just that, well, when I saw that you thought of me like THAT," Luna gestured to the other Luna, still sitting at the table, seemingly oblivious to the goings on around her. "I am not like my sister. If I had been, maybe I wouldn't have become Nightmare Moon in the first place..." Luna gave a faint smile. "Ah, I'm rambling a bit. I apologise. I'll leave you alone now, and let you get back to your own dreams." She spread her wings and ignited her horn, ready to depart.

"No, wait, you don't have to leave." Twilight was still confused by the scenario, but she didn't think Luna had done anything wrong. "I'm not angry with you or anything. I'm just confused as to why you were doing this in the first place."

"I already said, I don't want to burden you with it."

"It wouldn't be a burden. This is the sort of things friends are for, right?"

Luna paused. "You... you think of me as a friend?" Twilight could hear the emotion barely contained in her voice. "But we've scarcely spoken two words to each other. And you know hardly anything about me!"

"Well..." Twilight started sheepishly. "That's not exactly true. In our correspondence, Princess Celestia has been telling me a bit about you, as I'm sure she's been mentioning me to you. I think she was planning on setting up a meeting of sorts between us."

"She's been...?" Luna could imagine her sister's face all too well, curved into that gentle smile she had whenever she was planning something. "That meddling..." Luna couldn't help smiling as she said this though, despite her frustration. "When will she learn I'm not a filly anymore? I can take care of myself."

"I think she knows that," Twilight said. "I'm sure she's just trying to help. And I'd like to be able to help you as well. So please, tell me why you're going into dreams?"

"Well..." Luna considered. "Okay, if you insist. But first, can we get rid of her?" She pointed a wing at Twilight's dream version of her. "She's beginning to creep me out..."

"Oh, right. Sorry." Twilight concentrated, and the doppelganger faded away. The real Luna took her spot at the table.

"Okay, well I guess I'll start at the beginning. Or, as far back as I can remember. Which admittedly, is only about as far back as last year's Summer Sun celebration. You know, the one where I..." Luna paused, unable to say it. "Anyway, I can remember that time, the time I spent as Nightmare Moon, but I can't remember anything before then. I can't remember the time before my banishment at all, not a thing. And so, I haven't been able to remember what I was like before then, I mean, the kind of pony I was. Was I kind, was I aloof, regal? Did I have the makings of a tyrant, a trickster, a hard worker? I just don't know.

"So I decided to see how other ponies saw me, and the easiest way was to find out how their subconscious viewed me. And of all ponies alive right now, you and your friends would have the best ideas about who I might be, seeing as you stopped me."

"But how did you know we'd be dreaming about you."

"Magic, specifically a spell to force you to dream about me. Once again, I apologise for the violation of privacy."

"Well I wouldn't have noticed if you didn't mention it, so I guess it's okay. Did any of my friends dreams' help?"

Luna considered this. "They haven't answered my question, but they've helped a bit I guess. Rainbow Dash saw me as a villain, biding my time to overthrow my sister. Fluttershy saw me as a..." Twilight could have sworn she saw Luna's cheeks flush slightly at this point. "She saw me as a shy, mostly well-mannered individual. Applejack saw me as eager, if slightly clumsy, and wanting to do right by the citizens of Equestria. Rarity saw me as an aloof and regal, but caring individual, and Pinkie Pie saw me as a fun loving prankster of sorts. But that might not be how she actually sees me, it was hard to tell by the end."

"And I was think of you as basically another version of your sister." Twilight smiled. "And I'm sorry if that offended you."

"If you can forgive me for my crimes, then how can I not forgive you of yours?"

"Right. So, none of those were helpful?"

"Well, I suppose I could have been like any of them, but at the same time, I just don't know if any of them are who I want to be, or who I will end up being!"

"Hmmm." Twilight mulled the problem over before responding. "Well princess, it seems to me that you shouldn't have to feel constrained to be like any of them. You should be able to be who you want to be, and I'm sure you will be. If anyone else has preconceived ideas about who you are, they're going to have to accept that they'll end up disappointed."

"So, you're saying that I should just be who I want to be?"

"Something like that, yes. None of us can actually pin down who you are, I mean, we just proved that I can't get you right, so what's to say others can? They might come close, some might even be spot on. But it's not because of them that you should be who you are."

Luna smiled. "That is probably the most helpful advice I've heard all night. Of course, I haven't exactly been asking for advice... still, thank you Twilight Sparkle."

"Oh, it was my pleasure to be of assistance princess. I mean, I would have been happy to help even before you decided to enter my dreams."

"And I still can't apologise enough for that. I'll leave you to your dreams now then." Luna spread her wings again, and began to channel her magic through her horn.

"Oh, just before you go, there's one more thing that might help you. It's a quote from a famous philosopher-where'd I put that book?" Twilight walked over to a shelf and pulled down a book. "Ah, here it

is. Didn't think I'd be able to find it the first try."

"Well, this is a dream. Your subconscious is reacting to your wishes."

"Oh right." Twilight flicked through the pages, talking as she looked. "It's a quote from one of the less well known philosophers, a pony named Sebastian, and he-"

"That's an odd name for a pony."

"Well, yes it is a bit. But he was an odd pony. His special talent was making noodles of all things, but he managed a bit of philosophy on the side it seems. Ah, here we go. He often remarked to those who had lost their way, or were looking for a purpose in life that 'The future is a clean slate, and you're the chalk.'" Twilight looked from the book. "Of course, this is a translation, and some think that it would be better translated as blank slate, but the point stands. Whatever the future may hold for you, it's your choice."

"Thank you for all you've done Twilight. I shall bear your words in mind. And..." Luna hesitated for a moment. "Do you think that we could meet up some time this week? In the real world that is, not in your dreams."

"Of course we can," Twilight giggled. "I'll be happy to see you. Just send word to me by way of Spike, I'll even see if I can't get Pinkie Pie to throw you a party."

"I doubt that'll be a challenge, she's already told me she expects me to come visit for a real party." Luna saw the look of confusion on Twilight's face and suppressed a laugh. "I'll explain some other time. Well then, goodbye." And for the third time, her horn began to glow, and this time after a shot while, she was enveloped in it's light, fading out from Twilight's dream, and into the real world.

§§§§

Twilight had given Luna a lot to think about, and she was beginning to feel the drain on her energy that maintaining the dreamwalk required, on top of what other magic she had performed that night. She began her flight back to Canterlot, where her body awaited her. The night was nearly over, so soon she would need to lower the moon shortly. Hopefully she had enough magic left in her to do that before she went to bed. If not she'd have to ask Celestia to help her with it, and Luna hated having to do that.

Luna arrived back at her balcony with about an hour before moonset. Her body was where she'd left it, always a good sign. She didn't remember having a blanket draped over her when she started though. Especially since her bed didn't have blankets. It wasn't hard to figure out where they'd come from though. As she settled back into her body, she could sense a presence behind her. She headed back into her room. As she suspected, Celestia was there, lying asleep on the bed. At some point she must have come to check on Luna, and finding her lying outside, pulled a blanket over her to keep her warm. Part of Luna found herself irritated at being treated like a little filly, unable to look after herself, but at the same time she appreciated her sister's act. She nuzzled Celestia awake.

"Wake up big sister. The night's almost over, and the servants will be expecting you to be in your chambers, not mine."

Celestia rolled over and yawned, blinking sleepily as her eyes adjusted to the dark. She smiled at

Luna. "Welcome back little sister. I trust you had a good evening of dream walking?"

"Yes, I did." Luna motioned to the blanket still draped over her. "You didn't have to do this for me. I survived a thousand years on the moon with less, I can survive one night back here much more easily."

"I know you could, but I worry about you Luna. You've been distant ever since you've returned, and you never tell me what's on your mind. I know adjusting to a thousand year's of changes is hard, and I just want to help you. But how can I if you don't talk to me? This is quite literally the least I can do for you."

A pang of guilt shot through Luna. It was true, she had been neglecting her sister. She had been so concerned with trying not to worry her that she hadn't considered that her sister might be concerned anyway. "Oh... I'm sorry Celly, I hadn't thought of that."

"It's okay. It would be nice if you could open up a bit more for me though? I feel like I scarcely know you anymore."

"You're not alone in that." A pause. "Celly? How do you think of me?"

The bluntness of the question caught Celestia off guard. "How do I think of you? Well, you're my little sister, my only and most beloved family member. There's nothing I wouldn't do for your happiness. Why do you ask?"

Luna gave her sister a hug. "Because I can't remember what I was like before Nightmare Moon." Luna proceeded to tell her sister about her trip, about how she was searching for herself.

"Oh Luna... I had no idea you were feeling this way. Why didn't you tell me?"

"I didn't want to worry you. I see now that it was a needless concern. You worry about me anyway."

Celestia smiled. "Always have and always will. Still, did you find an answer?"

"I think I did. It was your student who gave me the answer I was looking for. I may not know who or what I'm going to be like, but that isn't what matters. What matters is, the future is a blank slate. And I'm the chalk."

~~~

Fin

~~~

Author's comments:

Well, this is it. My first completed fanfic ever. Thank yous are in order!

First, you, the reader. Thank you so much everyone for reading it and sticking with me. This has been a lot of fun to write, if challenging in places. I totally need to write something else for this community, so hopefully I will get to that someday.

Second, Equestria Daily. Thank you for hosting (is that the right term?) my story on your site, and thank you for providing such an awesome site in general. Seriously, you guys rock.

Third, Ally Rose, my friend who pre-read this for me, mostly checking for any spelling mistakes that slipped through the spell check, but also as someone to just unleash my madness upon night after night as I wrote this.

Finally but probably most importantly, thank you to Lauren Faust, Hasbro and The Hub for creating MLP:FiM, without whom this wouldn't have existed. I don't know if any of you who work on the show read fanfics, but just in case, I wanted to say you're doing an awesome job. Keep it up, and here's to hoping series two is just as excellent as the first one. And let's hope that Luna, regardless of what she's like, will be awesome.