

Of Harmony & Chaos

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Chapter 3: Everything Is Better With Family

For the second time in the same day, Celestia received a bubbly volley to the face. “Luna! Would you *please* stay still...?” begged the white alicorn as she used her magic to levitate a towel to wipe the soap from her eyes with. “...and would *you* stop encouraging her?” she continued, flashing the pegasus pulling silly faces an annoyed glare. It had been difficult enough dragging a dirt-ridden Luna back through the old library and into a bath. The flailing filly had nearly ruined half of mother’s papers as she cried to be returned to the yard so she could continue her play, though the task at hand of *washing her* was proving to be no small feat either. Of course, now that she was *in* the warm, soapy water, the dark-blue foal was splashing about giggling, happy once more and the previous offense forgotten.

“WooooNAA!!” called Surprise through a scrunched up face, ignoring her more mature friend’s frustrated stares. As expected, the filly bounced up and down and threw her hooves in the air with excitement, sending yet more water flooding over the bathroom floor.

A loud knocking sound caused all three ponies to pause, ears pricking up to try and catch the sound again to confirm their suspicions. The snow-coated pegasus was the first to break the silence. “Hey! That’s probably your mom, you should go-”

“No, you do it.”

“Eh? But wh-AH!” yelled Surprise as the irritated alicorn flung her from the room telekinetically and slammed the door shut behind her before grasping the brush and resuming her careful grooming of her sister’s mane. Luna momentarily looked a little startled and confused at the funny pony’s abrupt departure but simply giggled and went back to swirling the water about and throwing bubbles where ever she deemed them lacking.

“Finally... now let’s get you cleaned up quickly before mother sees you...” Without the bouncy pegasus’ distractions and if she was quick, Celestia calculated that she *just* might get Luna into a presentable state for when her mother finally got settled and found them.

Celestia’s efforts were in vain however as an all too familiar voice echoed from the library. “Celestia! Luna! I’m back!” The foal sighed and put down the brushes and bar of soap she had been using as Luna’s whole form froze except for her tiny twitching ears. The pastel-maned pony made sure to move back quickly to avoid a total soaking as her sister exploded from the bathtub. The little filly leapt at the door and managed to turn the doorknob enough to unlock her path, then dashed as fast as her tiny legs could carry her into the library.

With another long and cheery sigh, Celestia slowly followed the damp trail left by Luna.

“OH!” exclaimed Aumean as she was forced from her hooves by a blue, speeding, dripping-wet torpedo that proceeded to bombard her with hugs and endless nuzzling.

“Mama!” squealed Luna as she wrestled her mother to the ground again, relentlessly showering her with affection.

“Sorry mother... I was giving her a bath...” apologized Celestia, trying to hold back the urge to pounce her mother in a similar fashion to her sister as she strode past the many book shelves and into the centre of the library. Her family lay rolling on the floor giggling and snorting with warm laughter.

“Oh, Celestia, stop being so formal and come here!” ordered Aumean as she managed to grab her youngest filly and restrain her in a cuddle with one leg while leaving the other open for her older daughter.

The pastel-maned mare rolled her eyes at the chortling pair but was nonetheless quick to trot over and receive a tight embrace followed by a fair share of kisses. “M-mother!...heehee...stop! Surprisena is-” protested Celestia, not wanting to offer the often mischievous pegasus any teasing material.

“Too late wittle Cewestia!” Surprise laughed with them. She wasn’t going to let the alicorn live the gushy moment down any time soon. It was no less a happy sight for the pegasus than it was for the reunited family, or even the other small figure waiting by the library’s large wooden doors.

There was surprising amount of bustle for the time of day, the inky blue earth pony noted. Having decided to close early and take a stroll through the village and its green outskirts, Penwell found himself feeling a tad miffed. As good a friend as she was, the earth pony could never quite understand Aumean’s fascination with what he could only describe as *everything that breathed or was green*. It had only been a handful of weeks since she had come to him spouting about the supposed discovery of a small insect that could consume several hundred times it’s own mass and reproduce at an unheard of rate. And now this ‘draconequus’? He found it hard to believe that the diminutive patchwork monster she had on her back could be one of those legendary beasts. Especially given how they were, after all, *legendary*. The few reports of somepony having met and talked to the elusive creatures often had no evidence to back them up and sightings were more likely just that of regular chimeras. The worst thing about it all, however, was that she had said it was going to *live with her*.

'Oh Aumean, whatever are you getting yourself into this ti-'

Bang!

Penwell was unable to finish his thoughts as he was thrown into a daze by the sudden impact that sent him sprawling hard onto his back.

"Oww... geez, mister, I told you to *look out!* You deaf or what!?" a voice rang sharply in the ageing stallion's ears. Pulling himself back to his hooves, the older pony's suspicions were confirmed as to the voice's owner: Ponyville's resident speedster, Firefly. The pink earth pony sat looking up at him with great impatience. "You know, you're lucky mister. If I had wings, I'd be going so fast I would have sent you flying as well!"

Penwell matched the filly's unimpressed glare, rubbing his bruised flank. "Again with this, Firefly!? I don't even know which number victim I am! By all means, race yourself, or whatever it is you do, but not through the village! Ponies will get, and *have* gotten, hurt!" disciplined Penwell, inspecting the area around his cutie mark—a black and gold fountain pen drawing a neatly curving line- for any serious damage.

The blue-maned filly simply hmpfed and crossed her forelegs defiantly. She knew it was dangerous to gallop through the village, but her parents didn't let her go outside the town by herself and even when she *could* gather a few friends to go with her, the *really* good tracks were further still, places absolutely off-limits without her parent's supervision. *'It's so stupid! Everypony knows the Everfree forest and all the other areas around Ponyville are totally safe!'* Firefly mentally complained. *'If I had wings, then I wouldn't need to go through the town! I could just go over!'*

"Please try not to cause too much trouble, Firefly. I would hate to have to ask Aumean to help patch somepony up again after she's only just returned..." sighed Penwell, satisfied that his hind quarters were in no need of medical attention.

"Meanie's back!?! You could have said earlier mister! I wanna hear all about her adventure!" exclaimed the pink earth pony, forgetting her attempts to show off her pride to the bookish stallion.

Penwell sighed once more as he cleaned and readjusted his glasses, thankful he had them on a chain and they had not been broken in the impact. "Yes, she is. It's been the talk of the town. Congratulations, it seems you can gallop faster than the speed of sound..." sarcastically commented Penwell as he returned his focus to the younger pony "...you might have heard if you would *slow down* for once."

Firefly simply stuck her tongue out at the remark before leaping back to her hooves and readying herself for another full speed gallop. "Deal with it, mister!" taunted the blue-maned

speedster, her launch leaving the inky-blue stallion coughing in a dusty cloud.

“Celestia, Luna. This, is Discord.”

The two sides stood like a pair of opposing statues. Neither moved, intensely scrutinising the other. The heavenly white, well groomed alicorn and the randomly assorted, dishevelled draconequus stared and gazed at one another in a fierce battle of examination, each weighing up the other and making silent judgments.

‘She’s beautiful...’

‘What...is he?’

“Di-Di-...Dis-cord!” the neutral silence was shattered by the midnight filly’s giggling. So absorbed by the teenage foal, Discord had not noticed the tiny alicorn’s approach. Unlike her sister, who employed mature understanding and logic, Luna scanned the new individual the way she knew best: she prodded, smelled, felt and even hugged the thin being before her, ultimately and hastily concluding that he should be her new friend and play partner, effective immediately. Trotting behind the bemused Discord, she began to forcefully push him in the direction of their mother with what little strength her legs could muster, careful to use the side of her head so as to avoid hurting her wiry companion with her horn, stubby as it may have been. The draconequus showed only the slightest hint of resistance as he was squashed against Aumean’s chest, the ivory-alicorn content with letting her youngest have her way. With a pair of soft hooves to the back of the neck, Discord was foalhandled into lying down by the elder alicorn, the two being quickly accompanied by Luna herself, who snuggled onto her mother’s side and eagerly began gesturing to her sister and the snowy-pegasus to come join them.

“Luna...? Oh, excuse me...” Celestia cleared her throat, taken aback by how quickly even her sister had warmed to the...unattractive, new arrival. “...as you can probably see, she’s only very young, apologies if she bothered you...Discord?” Even his name had a chaotic ring to it.

The draconequus nodded slowly, blushing faintly, presumably at his position, though he made no attempt to change it. “P-please, I don’t mind, it’s a pleasure to meet you...C-celestia?” spoke the chimera awkwardly, extending a talon for the white-pony to shake.

Celestia froze. She had seen just such a talon in a place she had most certainly wanted to *forget*. Quick to regain her manners however, Celestia suppressed any frowns before they could form and smiled politely, letting the draconequus take her hoof and shake it. She thought she caught a glimpse of a ‘look’ from her mother, but dismissed any notion of acknowledging it.

It wouldn't do to make an uncomfortable situation, especially given how much of a tantrum Luna would throw if her envisioned family moment did not come to pass because of it. "...Likewise," the alicorn forced herself to say.

Aumean smiled. She was glad with the results. Luna had taken to Discord very quickly and though it might take Celestia time to feel the same, the two would surely become friends. "I have something important to say," announced Aumean, drawing the attention of the room to her. "I realise it is sudden, but Discord here will be living with us for some time. Please, make him feel comfortable."

"Consider yourself super lucky then!" congratulated Surprise with a wink. If there was any other pony she had to live with, it would be Aumean '*...well, except maybe Redstone...*' she silently told herself.

Luna was not listening and the pegasus took the news with cheer, though it left her friend's mouth agape. '*Living with us!?*' Discord seemed nice enough, now that she knew he was actually intelligent, but even so, bringing a complete stranger into their home? Where there was a young foal? And of course there was also mother's secret. Was it not her duty to guard them? Celestia shook away her shock, reason returning to her. '*There must be something about him... plenty of times somepony or animal has stayed here for a few nights...but never lived with us! Mother must have a good reason...*'

"...Celestia? Celestia?" Aumean dragged her oldest back to reality, grinning as the pastel-maned alicorn blushed at realising she had slipped into such deep thought. "Celestia. I want to show Discord around, could you and Surprise perhaps start making lunch please?" asked the ivory mare.

"Sure thing Ms. Aumean! Come on Tia! Luna, you can help too!" the pegasus exclaimed as she swooped down and gently lifted a slightly startled Luna from her mother's side. The midnight-filly struggled a little, wanting to go back to the warmth, but was soon giggling as Surprise swerved and looped lazily around the large hall in the general direction of the kitchen. "Hurry up Tia!"

Celestia nodded to her friend as she disappeared over a bookcase before turning back to her mother with a slightly concerned expression. "Mother...you aren't going to show him...? Are you...? You don't know-" she spoke with a hushed voice but was abruptly stopping by a reassuring hoof.

"Don't worry Celestia. I'm glad you showed some concern, but I know what I'm doing," Aumean said with full confidence, her gaze matching her tone. Celestia retained her expression momentarily before realising that it was her mother she was questioning. If she was happy to show the small chimera artifacts as precious as those, then the teenage foal would go along with it. Everypony, even strangers, generally found themselves trusting the alicorn's judgment;

her daughters were no exception. With a smile and nod, Celestia followed her friend and sister and left the mare and draconequus alone together.

'...What are they talking about?' pondered the brown-coated creature as he watched the fair pony elegantly stride away. His curiosity had been sparked countless times in the past couple of days. Like nearly every other incident in that time, the draconequus looked to his new guardian with a raised eyebrow and as usual she exchanged it for a knowing smile.

"I know what you must be thinking, Discord." He merely continued to look at her blankly. "Come. They are, after all, perhaps the most interesting things I have here," calmly spoke the mare as she rose to her hooves and gestured for Discord to follow her along the length of the hall towards the back wall, a simple, smooth stone construct. "Oh, and don't worry about our things, they'll be fine in the entrance hall for the moment," she commented as the draconequus quickly shot a thoughtful glance over his shoulder. As they passed the bookshelves and approached the wall, Discord heard echoing voices and the occasional burst of laughter resounding from a corridor branching off to his left. This was clearly where Celestia, Luna and the pegasus had went, and must also be the direction of the kitchen. "I trust you Discord, but what I am about to show you are... a sort of secret. Please, do not talk about them to anypony you meet," requested Aumean, her normal relaxed voice carrying a slight edge of gravity to it.

Discord's mere and simple nod masked the buzzing of his mind, which was now aflame with intrigue. What could the alicorn possibly have which she did not want others outside her household to know of? Celestia had also seemed worried of letting knowledge of whatever it was Aumean owned leave the family. As the pair reached the wall, Discord noticed that it was not completely without detail. Within its centre lay a small hole surrounded by eleven coloured circles, the top most circle, decorated purple, being slightly larger than the other ten. Each circle was connected to the next with a golden line which linked them all and formed one greater ring.

"Hmm...I may have to change this lock..." Aumean stated with a minor frown as she lowered her head and smoothly inserted her horn into the hole, resulting in each circle and the line lighting up with a soft glow. The wall revealed itself to in fact be a well disguised doorway that proceeded to rumble open, its demands met, showing a stone corridor not unlike the one Discord had seen previously. The corridor was dimly lit with glass lamps filled with glow worms. Its only other noticeable feature was the large wooden doors, reinforced with dark iron, marking the end of the passage. They stood silently, guarding of whatever treasures lay beyond them. As the two made their way along the corridor the large pony's hooves kicked up wisps of dust that floated in the air and quickly wound up snagged in one of the many cobwebs stretched across the walls and ceiling. Aumean or any other pony evidently didn't come here often. The alicorn threw a smirk over her shoulder to Discord as she placed a hoof on the doors. "Ready?" The draconequus eagerly nodded in response. "These, Discord..." Aumean began as she shoved the creaking doors open, allowing a spectrum of soft rainbow light to flood into the passage, prompting the draconequus to scabble closer to try and satiate his burning intrigue. "...are the Elements."

The bearded pony stared out of his study's window glaring daggers to the many builder ponies shouting, banging and making all the noise generally involved in construction. The move to New Manesterdam had certainly been a trade-off. On the one hoof, the wise unicorn had close access to what was quickly becoming any academic's *dream*, the growing town's Central Public Library. He didn't know quite how the gleaming marble building had attracted so much attention and with it, enough books to last a century; that was a sociologist's field, he imagined. Regardless, the immense diversity and volume of research material had come with a terrible price: racket. Everyday from dawn till dusk, wood was sawed, mallets rang on metal, concrete churned in large vats, it was relentless! The ageing grey unicorn, powerful as he was, could only keep his sound-proofing spells up for so long! After one more pony received the fright of her life by letting their gaze wander accidentally to the old stallion's window and meet those bloodthirsty eyes, the robed sorcerer slammed the blinds closed and tried desperately to concentrate on his notes. Using his magic to carefully and neatly continue writing down his most recent thoughts on the dangers of magical manipulation of space/time, the elderly wizard neared a state of perfect focus.

BOOM!!!

The sound physically shook the house and left a large, thick line of ink splattered over the many paragraphs of top-class study. Grinding his teeth, the gray-unicorn narrowed his eyes over the offending line of spilt ink and applied to a light touch of magic to levitate it off the page before it dried and stained. Calmly, he righted his inkwell and let the black liquid drip back into its proper place. With a deep breath, the stallion walked over to the window, rolled up the blinds and pushed open the glass.

"WOULD YOU KEEP IT DOWN!? SOME OF US ARE TRYING TO *STUDY HERE!*" yelled the old pony as loud as his frail lungs could muster. Each one of the silent construction ponies received a terrifying death stare before wincing in unison as the unicorn's window was slammed shut with enough force to leave a small crack at its base. With the blinds shut once more, the white-maned pony collapsed onto a cushion. He *really* shouldn't have bought a house so close to the town outskirts where all the heavy expansion work was taking place, even if it did mean he had saved a small fortune in bits.

"Uncle Star Swirl! Uncle Star Swirl, are you alright?" cried a worried voice, its owner bursting into the room a moment later. The blue filly was panting and a little sweaty, having rushed up the tall spiral staircase to check on her elderly uncle as soon as he heard his infuriated screams.

"Victory Dawn... Dear, I'm fine, just those noisy construction workers tugging at my

beard is all.” Star Swirl’s voice relaxed the moment the blond-maned earth foal had flown through the door. It always calmed his heart to know that even at such a tender age his niece never failed to look out for the senior pony. Despite not being a unicorn, Dawn had always had a keen interest in magic and loved to help her uncle in his studies, even if it was just to take some weight off the stallion’s aching bones.

“Uncle~~!” complained the filly, looking at him with an annoyed but terribly adorable glare. It took a moment for the wise unicorn to realise the cause of her protest, he had used her full name. Even though Star Swirl himself, his brother, and sister-in-law had all approved of the name, the filly hated ‘Victory’ and preferred to just be called Dawn.

“You must be the only one who doesn’t like it girl! Even Aumean thinks it a good, strong name!” countered Star Swirl, beckoning for his niece to come and sit with him.

“I know... Hey Uncle, when’s Ms. Aumean coming to visit again? You make a really good team!” beamed Dawn, fondly recalling the amazing experiments which the alicorn and her uncle had performed.

“Oh, I don’t think dear Equidae will be able to come ‘till at least next year,” he told her, wincing a little at the memory of his and Aumean’s library outing. ‘*She did buy some of the library’s most prized books after all...*’ remembered the gray-unicorn with a frown. He had never known the library staff to get so flustered. It had been an embarrassing situation indeed, watching the alicorn literally begging the clerics to sell her part of their one-of-a-kind collection; she even began *throwing* bits at them at one point. “...Now, Dawn dearest, why don’t we go have some tea? I suddenly feel the urge to hide myself in a cup...”

The wonder overflowed from Discord’s eyes. He stood, head near the floor, not having moved from the awkward position he had assumed so as to catch a glimpse of the chamber’s contents as the doors had been opened. There, above a simple pedestal floated eleven gems under what must have been their own power. They were arranged into two rings, each ring composed of five gems orbiting an eleventh, slightly larger purple gem. With an amused grin plastered over her muzzle, Aumean nudged the draconequus into the round chamber and walked in herself, shutting the wooden doors behind with magic as she did so.

“These, Discord, are the Elements. The most powerful objects known to ponykind and perhaps even the world,” stated the alicorn, approaching the pedestal casually. “The Elements have been guarded by us alicorns for millennium. Who or what made them, how they work, why they are here, there is a great deal still unknown about them. A great deal we will likely never learn and perhaps shouldn’t,” she continued, rounding the pedestal until she arrived back in front of Discord. “Please, ask anything you want to though.”

The draconequus could actually *feel* the intense magic power of the Elements radiating onto every inch of his varied skin. “What... what exactly do they do...?” Whatever it was, the Elements did it on a massive scale.

“Good start. The Elements are infinitely powerful artifacts that can, in theory, grant the wish of anypony who can wield them,” explained Aumean, her tone confident. This was an area she knew about. “For many though, that is the problem right there. Each Element embodies a particular personal trait and those who don’t also embody that trait well cannot effectively wield them. Only if somepony was a living representation of that trait could they unlock an Element’s true potential.”

“But...doesn’t that mean there are barely any who can use them? And what traits are they?”

“No, not exactly. There are very few ponies who can use an Element at it’s best, but most would be able to wield them to some extent if they had the chance. As to the Element’s traits, they are: Honesty, Kindness, Will, Generosity and Loyalty, these are grouped together as the ‘Elements of Harmony’. Then there are the ‘Elements of Chaos’ which are: Innovation, Pride, Laughter, Ambition and Curiosity,” recited Aumean proudly, before taking a breath and continuing. “Finally, to tie them all together, Magic.” at which she gestured to the larger gem in the centre of the other ten.

“...Harmony? Chaos? So... some are good and some are bad?” inquired Discord, confused at why something as simple as ‘Laughter’ had been labelled as chaotic.

Aumean laughed awkwardly. “...No...you see, my ancestors didn’t seem to think those names through very well. Basically, there is no fundamental difference between any of the Elements, perhaps baring Magic, except for what they represent. As far as I know, they were only grouped as such because that’s what the Elements’ original guardians thought those traits would create if society exhibited them excessively.” Aumean paused to breath and think of how best to explain it to the young creature. “But...once again, they did not think it through very well. Harmony, in excess, can be just as bad as Chaos. Too much order deprives freedom, halts progress. Likewise, too much Chaos is bad. It would only bring destruction and madness. Do you understand? It all revolves around balance and a concept known as ‘the Golden Mean.’”

Discord nodded slowly, taking some time to absorb the wave of information, but he still wanted more. “Golden Mean?”

“Yes, it was originally thought of long ago by a very wise stallion called Ariscolte. He stated that in order for there to be true peace and happiness, ponies and every other species have to find just the right balance, the golden mean, between an excess or a lack of a personal trait. Let’s take Generosity as an example. Were there too little generosity, then everypony

would lack something they need from somepony else. Too *much* generosity, and a pony would forget their own needs, they would give away everything they required and desired and would be left miserable and even sick.”

The alicorns lecture began to make sense in the draconequus’ still growing mind, but there were still some things that bothered him about the Elements. Hovering over to the pedestal, Discord gave one of the orbiting gems a light tap with a talon, causing a sharp note to echo around the chamber. “I get that they’re very powerful, but... they look a bit fragile, is it possible to...?” he trailed off, looking back to the alicorn expectantly.

“Destroy them?” she finished his sentence and stopped to think about it. “...I honestly do not know. It isn’t something I’ve ever dared to find out. Were I to accidentally break one, I would have no idea how to restore it, or even if it *could* be restored. That...” she hesitated as she mulled the scenario over in her head “...and it would be a dark day for the world if somepony *did* try to destroy them.”

“Why? Would something bad happen...?” the draconequus asked as he imagined the quaint Canterlot Valley consumed in a huge magical explosion. The thought made him shudder slightly. If that was how dangerous the Elements could be, then he was beginning to understand why Aumean or Celestia did not want knowledge of the Elements to be made widespread.

“Like what? Some sort of devastation?” she accurately guessed at Discord’s own imaginings. “I wouldn’t think so. No, it would be a tragedy simply because somepony may have been *willing* to destroy them,” mused Aumean, pondering the thought herself.

“But you said that any being could potentially wield the Elements! They could be used for evil, couldn’t they?”

Aumean shook her head. “*Could. Could* be used for evil. Equally, they could be used for great good. For somepony to destroy them purely because they *could* be used for evil would show that that pony, and maybe other ponies, held great fear in their hearts. And fear like that is a terrible, terrible thing, Discord.” The chamber fell silent as the two thought deeply about such an awful scenario.

“One more question...” Discord broke the stillness. “What happened to the Elements’ guardians? To the alicorns? Your ancestors? You, Celestia and Luna are the first I’ve ever seen in all my life! Did they die out like... my...my people...?” Discord stung himself with the question, but he genuinely wanted to know. Before a few days ago, he thought only three kinds of pony existed: earth, pegasi and unicorn.

Aumean smiled warmly at the draconequus. So few could sit through her lectures and still drink up more. “To put it simply, the alicorns changed. Through the generations, they *became* the ponies of today. What you must understand about alicorns is that though we are

very long lived, we aren't immortal. Not only that, but we can only have children during a very small window of opportunity in our lives, normally around ten to twenty years, depending on the individual," schooled Aumean a little sadly. The alicorns were fortunate really; though their descendants were physically different, they did at least have them. The draconequus lifespan and reproductive methods were very similar to that of the ancient pony race, yet they had not changed and had now been almost totally swallowed up in the murky depths of history.

"Unlike the ponies of today, we alicorns were never truly united in friendship. Some, like me, liked to devote their time to magic and research. Often, they felt their mastery of the arcane made them the superior of the 'clans' that had formed, you could say. They were the ones who eventually became the unicorns," Aumean was now pacing around the chamber, occasionally creating starry drawings of what she spoke of in the air. "There were those alicorns who loved to live among the clouds and the freedom of the air. Much like the sorcerers, some believed that without their weather-controlling expertise, the rest of pony society could not function. Their children were the pegasi," with another spark from her horn, the magical images morphed into a far-shot of Canterlot Valley. "And then there were those alicorns who were happy with simple farming and connecting with the earth. Perhaps ironically, a number of them thought their basic lives were above the arrogance and pride of others and that they were the better ones because of it. As you might have guessed, they became the earth ponies." Aumean finally stopped her pacing and drew a simple picture of an earth pony, pegasus and unicorn holding hoofs together and smiling. "Perhaps for all their natural power and abilities, the alicorns were always destined to be triumphed by their descendants. After all, it is thought that it was their friendship that thawed the blizzard that had plagued this land for countless years, something alicorn kind had never successfully achieved."

Discord nodded with unending interest and cursed his body for not being able to muster the same intrigue when he let out a long yawn. "I-I'm sorry, it's not..."

Aumean herself yawned as well. "No, we've been talking for hours now! I think we should leave the lessons there for today, yes?" the ivory mare asked, but before Discord could reply, a loud gurgle echoed from Aumean's stomach causing her to blush. "...and let's see if there are any leftovers from lunch."

"...Thanks again for putting Luna to sleep Surprisena, she can be such a terror sometimes," the white foal thanked her pegasus friend. The two had gotten sick of waiting for Aumean and the new arrival and simply eaten lunch without them, then spent the next hour or so trying to get Luna, who had thrown a tantrum at not being able to play with her mother more, to take her nap. The winged ponies had then simply lain around the library patio, recovering from the exhausting battle with the midnight-filly before it was time for Surprise to return home to Cloudsdale.

“No problemo, Tia! I’ll call around again tomorrow if it’s okay with your mom,” replied Surprise while saluting.

“I’m sure she won’t mind, unless she gets too distracted with the lodger or...whatever he is.” The alicorn rolled her eyes. She wasn’t particularly thrilled with the idea of Discord staying with them, but she trusted her mother had made the right decision in letting the patchwork being take up residence in the library.

“Discord? He seems a swell guy! Anyway, gotta jet, later Tia!” the gold-maned pegasus waved as she ascended further into the sky. Celestia returned the wave smiling before closing the large wooden doors and trotting casually back to the kitchen, levitating her mother’s saddlebags and other items left in the entrance hall, including a large gâteau and an old iron teapot. The gâteau was to be expected, really. Celestia had known her mother would get *something* like it as an apology. She had no idea why she had brought a teapot home though, they didn’t need a new one and even if they did, this one wasn’t new. The white-foal shrugged and simply decided to leave the teapot with the saddlebags on the table in the centre of the library hall while she took the cake to the kitchen with her.

‘I suppose I can make a start on dinner, even if just for me and Luna,’ she told herself with a sigh. It was always a bother when mother went into the Elements’ chamber. Only she could unlock the seal on the door to them and there was no way Celestia could contact her once the large stone portal closed again. Of course the worst part was that Discord was in there with her. If he was *truly* going to be staying with them, then there was no doubt that mother had entered her teacher mode and was telling him all about them, which in turn meant they could be in there for who knows how long.

The kitchen’s only noise was that of the rhythmic thud of a knife against a chopping board, but Celestia’s mind was whirring with thought. There *must* be something about Discord, other than his odd appearance, that mother could see if she trusted him enough to both show and tell him about the Elements this quickly. Could she want him as a student? A tiny pang of jealousy resounded in the alicorn’s stomach. Up until now, Celestia had been the only one to have been taught of the Elements and she was also the only one that was learning how to use them, should she ever need to. Luna would also naturally receive such tutelage, once she was old enough. But Discord? He wasn’t even a pony, let alone a part of the family. She didn’t like it, but she would have to learn to live with it. Hopefully, sooner rather than later, her mother would inform Celestia of the reasons behind her unusual decisions.

“My, that looks good!” The sudden voice caused Celestia to leap with fright, she was so startled. “And I see you found the gâteau. It was supposed to be a surprise!” Turning around, Celestia was met by the sight of her mother chuckling at her and Discord struggling to hold back his snickering. The pastel-maned alicorn shot them both an annoyed glare and held a wooden spoon in the air threateningly. That was the second time in the same day she had been caught

like that.

“Don’t scare me like that, I might have-” Celestia stalled and looked around, unwilling to reveal the thoughts which had muffled her senses to the chortling duo’s presence “...spilled the stew...?” she said with no great confidence. There bubbling on the stove was a pot of potato and leek stew that she couldn’t actually recall making, so lost she had been in her mental far lands.

“Mama...” an angelic voice squeaked from the other corridor leading to the bedrooms. Peering over the table, Aumean discovered her youngest wobbling into the kitchen, stopping every few steps to rub her eyes of sleep.

“Luna, just in time! Look, your big sister has made us all dinner!” the ivory mare spoke as she scooped Luna up in a golden aura into her outstretched hooves. “What do we say when somepony makes us something?” coddled the elder alicorn as she held her in the direction of the stove.

“T...Th...Zankyu!”

“Th-ank you,” gently corrected the mare, spinning her daughter around before putting her down in one of the simple wooden seats next to Discord, who had taken the liberty to sit down himself.

“Dis-...Discord!” playfully giggled the filly, stretching her stubby hooves to try and reach her knew friend.

“That’s right!” Discord replied cheerily, snaking his tail around the chair and dangling it just above Luna’s reach so she would try and catch it. He had only met her hours ago but Luna’s very presence already made his heart melt a little.

“Oh, mother, I forgot to say, Luna used magic!” said Celestia excitedly, turning her head from the stew to her mother who beamed at her youngest proudly.

“She did? Oh, Luna! I’m so sorry I wasn’t there to see it!” she apologised while spinning her filly around again. “I’ll have to start teaching you! Let me guess, there was a mess?” grinned Aumean back to her oldest. First time magic use *always* made a mess.

“Only a little, but I don’t think she’ll be trying it again when food’s about. Speaking of which, the stew’s done,” Celestia remarked, quickly turning off the stove to stop the piping hot soup from boiling over. After leaving it to cool for a few seconds, she levitated the pot onto a folded cloth in the middle of the table while Aumean arranged cutlery and bowls for four. An additional chair normally reserved for guests was also put into place so there were enough seats around the table that would normally only see three.

Once they were all seated, Aumean turned to Discord and smiled. "This is your first meal with us, but please, don't feel you can't act casually. You're probably going to have many more experiences like this and, well... I hope you feel welcome."

"I do! But I should really be thanking you, Aumean, you've done so much for me," replied the draconequus as he took a small bow of gratitude towards not just Aumean, but Celestia as well.

"Now Discord, there's really no need for that! This is your new home and I hope you'll come to see it as such. Now, let's dig in," happily proclaimed the red-maned equine before taking a spoonful of soup. Discord smiled and did likewise. He was pleased his assumption that the stew would be delicious turned out to be correct. After all, food always tasted better with family.