

Chapter 3

Understanding

Dreams: A Psychological Understanding

Sea Ponies: Fact or Fiction?

Long Distance Communication Theories and Ideas

A Modern History of Thumbtacks

Twilight felt her face hit the table hard, prompting Luna to look up quickly from her reading. The paper next to Twilight was filled with many crossed out scribbles that once had been notes on what she had THOUGHT were important aspects of each book in an effort to learn more about the author. But no, each note taken was very easily contradicted in the next book which had some other bit of info that would then be destroyed by the next.

There were only four books he had written and each one told the story of a completely different author.

“Is everything well Twilight?” Luna asked blinking curiously.

“I’m just frustrated is all.” Twilight said lifting her head and flipping through the next page of ‘Sea Ponies: Fact or Fiction?’ “These books are almost like they were written by a completely different author. However, I know they weren’t because despite the contexts being different, the writing style is almost exactly the same. Quick, to the point yet nonsensical dialogue. Listen to this for instance.” Twilight said clearing her throat and putting a hoof to the page as she read.

“Early research said that the possible existence of ‘Sea Ponies’ would be a biological impossibility even amongst the fields that studied the biology of the dubbed ‘mythical’ class creatures. However, the recent discovery of a new species of fish with an elongated body with similar structure to that of a pony has given way to the possibility of life developing in such a way under the sea. The fish known as ‘Sardina Equus’ has come in various sizes and has shown a level of increased intelligence in comparison to other fish in the same genus.”

“He then goes on to talk about the various research trials the fish have undergone and how this relates to intelligent life developing under the sea.” Twilight said rubbing her forehead in discomfort, “This whole book is just one big nonsense rant. An equine fish would NEVER be classified under the ‘sardine’ family.”

“We... thought thou were researching dreams not... Sea Ponies?” Luna asked a little

confused.

“Well... I am and I’m not.” Twilight said pointing to the book Luna was reading, “See, in that book your reading there’s a spell that’s different from all the others called The Mind Delve.” Luna looked at her book carefully, she hadn’t gotten there yet but she flipped through the pages quickly till it fell onto the page Twilight mentioned. “The author who created the spell also wrote these books... yet these books haven’t been useful at all.” Twilight sighed closing the book that dared try to say that if Sea Ponies were real that they’d be classified as ‘sardines’.

Luna was still reading over the mind delve spell carefully, much the same way Celestia had. Her brow furrowed as she seemed to suddenly become concerned about the spell.

“Well, I guess this lead was a bust.” Twilight sighed as she moved the three books over to the side, “I don’t know what I was expecting from ‘A Modern History of Thumbtacks’ that would tell me more about the Mind Delve.” She groaned, “Guess I’ll just have to go find some books on psychology and the mind and see if I can’t get any answers from here.” Twilight said standing up from the table.

“I pray thee wait Twilight.” Luna said stopping the purple mare who was just about to head out, “This spell thou hast shown me... I know of it from elsewhere”

“What? Really?” Twilight asked a little shocked, turning to look at the princess curiously.

“Well... this spell is not the same by any means... however it does seem to have taken thine roots from a spell we had read just recently and... well we know how THAT spell came into being.” Luna said putting the book down and turning to look at her pendant her horn glowing, “We require Spirits and Deities of Ages Past.” Luna spoke clearly.

The pendant gave a quickly glow of confirmation before streaking off into the depths of the archives. Luna waited a moment or two, before the pendant came streaking back, this time carrying a book wrapped in the strings that hung loosely from it. The pendant stopped before Luna and laid the book down on the table before her.

“Spirits and Deities of Ages Past?” Twilight asked curiously walking up to the table and looking at the book. Luna nodded before opening the book, flipping through several of the pages.

“It is a book that speaks of the old myths and legends of Equestria’s past. Legends even older than either of us royal sisters... it even has myths from before Equestria was born.” Twilight looked up at Luna curiously, “Most of these myths and legends even we are not too sure hold truth to them. Honestly, most of it sounds like nonsense a foal would dream up. However other sections of it are filled with truth we have seen with our own eyes.” Luna didn’t dwell too long on any particular old myth or legend, before stopping on the page she was looking for.

“Ah, here we are. In this section, where it does talk about myths related to the deities of dreams, it brings up a spell that grants restful sleep to the restless.” Luna said pushing the book over to Twilight, her looking it over and reading out loud.

“For the restless and the weary, thine chance to probe into dreams is very real, allowing rest and relaxation from that which ails you. With the blessing of the Ruler of Dreams this spell shall cleanse the mind of worries and doubts and grant peaceful sleep once more. Caution is to be had, as the mind of others can be a vexing and daunting place to behold. The mind is tied to the soul and the soul will protect itself from what it deems an attacker. Ensure safety of both involved before casting this spell.”

“This... this sounds a lot like the Mind Delve.” Twilight said surprised, reading how to cast the spell. It was similar no doubt, but the instructions on how to cast the spell... they were much harder to follow than the Mind Delve’s instructions. The flow of the spell was all over the place, not to mention even she could tell that the spell wasn’t intended to do the exact same thing.

“Precisely.” Luna said bringing the other book back over to her looking upon the Mind Delve spell’s page once more, “It is of our opinion that whoever wrote this spell to delve the mind found its origins during the research of that spell. They then manipulated it until it fit their needs. And truthfully...thine researcher must have been a genius. They wove the spell so well... even we would take a long time weaving it into this...”

Twilight chuckled softly, making Luna look up curiously, “Oh, sorry.” Twilight apologized quickly with a smile, “It’s just Princess Celestia said something very similar.” This brought a small smile to Luna’s face.

“Yes, well, as we were saying.” Luna said clearing her throat quickly, “The book *Spirits and Deities of Ages Past* is very old. This copy is a newer one and we doubt we’d find but a few copies of it floating around Equestria anymore, after all this book is at least a thousand years old.”

“A thousand years?” Twilight said in mild surprise. No doubt that books that old had to be reprinted or else their contents would be lost to the ages. The book was written in an older style but she hadn’t suspected it to be a thousand years old. But as she thought about it more other legends had to be at least that old, after all the Legend of the Mare in the Moon must’ve been at least a thousand years old in order to know what happened back then...

“Yes. We remember meeting the author who wrote that book. He was doing his research at the time.” Luna explained, causing Twilight to close the book and read the cover again, “A wise old Unicorn who was known for his powerful magic abilities and his sense of prophecy. He was simply known as-“

“Merlin.” Twilight said blinking at the front of the book. Now that was an old name of legend she knew. He was one of the original studiers of magic in ponies. Sure there had been researchers before him, but he went beyond what other ponies had thought of in spells before. Most of the modern day spells were built off of the research he originally made. He even tried, from what she had heard, to do research into the Elements of Harmony though the results of that research was never published.

Not only was his research known as legend, but there were legends about him. It was once said he gained control of the most powerful dragon Equestria ever knew, the dragon of Apocalypse. It was once said that he commanded the stars themselves to fall to save Equestria from an invasion of mythical creatures. It was once said that he created the most powerful sword ever known, a sword made out of pure light, from the very essence of magic itself.

“Yes. Merlin was quite an eccentric unicorn... unfortunate that we never knew what became of him. However he came to us while doing his research into the deities of dreams. As the ruler of the night he had many questions for us. We never did get to see this book get published though...” Luna sighed softly looking at the book. “This was one of the first books we found whilst researching dreams... we were planning to look into more of Merlin’s later works after our study into dreams.”

Twilight felt a small pang of guilt rise in her chest. She felt guilty knowing more about Merlin than Luna did, even though she had known him personally in the past. She looked at the book before her, than at the book before Luna and a thought popped up in her head.

“Hey Luna, I think a better idea would be for us to start researching Merlin’s works.” Twilight suggested.

“Huh?” Luna blinked confused, “What has brought this on? Is our research not on dreams?”

“Well, it is... but in a different way now.” Twilight smiled, “Whoever this Magus v. Darkarts is, he obviously took his inspiration from Merlin here; meaning that he must’ve studied Merlin’s work in order to figure out to manipulate his spells. If we follow his method I’m sure that we’ll not only figure out how to make a safer version of the Mind Delve, but we’ll also get my studying done for the evaluation!” Twilight explained, proud of herself.

“Thou are trying to make a safe version of the mind delve?” Luna asked curiously, this being the first time she’s heard of this.

“O-Oh...” Twilight said having forgot, “Sorry, I guess I should’ve mentioned it... see...” Twilight quickly retold the story she had told Celestia, about her friends experiences with the Mind Delve spell. Luna listened intently, not speaking up till Twilight was finished.

“...And they made me promise never to use the spell again because of their experiences.” Twilight sighed softly, “So, in case something like this happens again I wanted to create a safe version of the spell. However, since I don’t know a Magus V. Darkarts or how he came up with the spell, I’ve basically had to do research from scratch.” Twilight said before looking at the spell in Spirits and Deities of Ages Past. “However, now that I have a starting and ending point, finding out the steps in the middle will be much easier!”

Luna tapped her chin in thought.

“Very well Twilight, we understand. We shall help you with your research.” Luna smiled.

“Oh thank you! This’ll make life so much easier.” Twilight sighed happily before turning to her pendant, “We need the works of Merlin.” Twilight smiled as her horn glowed, the pendant lighting up to lead the way.

The next week seemed to go by in an instance. Twilight could honestly admit to it being one of the hardest sessions of studying she’d ever taken part in. The spells of Merlin were vast and seemed to affect every part of Pony society. His legends stretched far and wide, Luna was amazed to learn of everything the unicorn had accomplished since her time trapped away.

The research didn’t only reveal more clues about the Mind Delve spell, it also was teaching Twilight new spells she hadn’t thought to try and learn before. She made sure to make time for learning new spells for her evaluation as well as making sure the spells she already knew were mastered to every detail.

By the day of her evaluation Twilight wasn’t that much closer to figuring out a new spell to use for her friends should they have a problem like they did before.

“Ugh... Magus you really are a genius.” Twilight grumbled softly walking down the halls of Canterlot, heading for the testing room where her evaluation would take place. “Even WITH Luna’s help we didn’t get that far in cracking your spell.” She sighed softly.

It didn’t take long to reach the big double doors that would lead to the evaluation room. She took a deep breath and calmed her mind.

“Alright Twilight, Luna promised to continue helping you from Canterlot, you can’t ask for much more right now. Focus on passing the evaluation.” She said putting a smile to her face and pushing the doors open.

The large class room opened before her, set up specifically for her evaluation. A small box of a stage was set up with various materials she could use for her spells. In front of the stage was a long wooden desk, behind of which sat several of the head teachers from Celestia's School for Gifted Unicorns, two of the unicorn royal guards and Celestia herself.

Celestia gave a smile looking at her faithful student walk in and take her place on the stage, Twilight looking back and smiling as well, before a throat clearing cough caught her attention and she looked towards them.

"Alright Ms. Sparkle, welcome to your Evaluation." The stuffy teacher with a bright yellow cut and curly light purple hair spoke up, Twilight recognized her as Lonsdaleite, one of her old homeroom teachers. "You've been through this before so you know the drill. You also know that just because Princess Celestia choose you as her personal student doesn't mean you can simply neglect our grading standards... however we also cannot expel you due to this either." Lonsdaleite adjusted her glasses, "So present to us the spells you have learned over the last year."

"Certainly." Twilight said smiling confidently. She used to be nervous over these evaluations, but she'd long since gotten over that fear. She turned to face the table before her, placed on top of it were things like rocks, cloth, a hat, an apple and some string. Twilight smiled in amusement thinking about the various things she could do with all of it.

With ease she began to show off her abilities. The rocks were soon turned into rather fashionable clothes, the apple was turned into a rather sizeable chariot able to fit up to six, the strings formed together creating a complex diagram with ease, the cloth rubbed and wove together as it began to play a rather soothing song from the folds somehow.

The teachers were quickly scribbling down notes as they watched, Twilight continuing to sneak smirks at Celestia who happily smiled back, happy to see her student performing so well. Despite the time spent in Ponyville she was happy to see her student's talents growing with her own eyes.

Twilight looked at the hat on the table for a moment, pondering what to do with it. However, an idea popped into her head as she smiled, floating the hat over to her.

"And here's a more recent one I learned." Twilight said floating the hat up and presenting it, "Now you see it..." then the hat just simply disappeared into thin air, "Now you don't." She grinned. "But where did it go?" Twilight tapped her chin while pondering. "Oh, I know!" She said lowering her head, the hat suddenly appearing on her head, "It was on my head the whole time!" She laughed.

The teachers murmured amongst themselves. Twilight had a hard time knowing if that

meant they were impressed or not, but it often mean they were wanted to know more about what she'd done.

"It's a rather interesting yet simple spell I found." She made the hat disappear from her head and then summoned it before her, "By creating a pocket inside of my magic I can create a space in which I can put a limited amount of small items." She put the hat back down on the table, "Of course it's more practical for short travel and hiding private things quickly than it is for long travel, as it can be exhausting to hide the items for too long. But it does allow for quick surprises."

"Very impressive Ms. Sparkle." Lonsdaleite said writing something down, "It seems you have been learning a lot and you've learned it exceptionally."

"That's my student for you." Celestia smiled proudly.

"Before we finish the Evaluation, is there anything else you'd like to show us?" Lonsdaleite asked curiously.

Twilight suddenly hesitated. She did in-fact have a spell she hadn't shown off yet, one she had spent the last week studying... would it be right for her to use it here? Celestia already proved the spell was fine... but she still had a promise to keep to her friends... what should she do?

"Well Ms. Sparkle?" Lonsdaleite asked again. Twilight stood at attention.

"Ugh... w-well I do have another spell... but I need a volunteer for it." Twilight spoke hesitantly, causing Celestia to raise an eyebrow in surprise.

"Very well." Lonsdaleite commented putting down her clipboard and walking onto the stage quickly. Twilight hesitated looking at the teacher before her, before quickly glancing a look at Celestia who seemed curious as to what Twilight was going to do. Twilight let down a quick gulp and smiled awkwardly. She then concentrated as her horn glowed. Lonsdaleite looked curiously at what was happening.

Lonsdaleite felt a little weird as Twilight worked her magic. She wriggled her nose for a moment before suddenly she felt something appear on her upper lip.

"Tada~ Mustache magic!" Twilight laughed a little awkwardly. The teachers looked at her a little awkwardly as Celestia put a hoof up to her chin quietly chuckling.

"...Yes... well." Lonsdaleite wriggled her nose before her horn lit up and the mustache disappeared, "Thank you Ms. Sparkle, we've seen everything we need to for your evaluation." She said simply going back to her Clipboard, "You are free to do as you like until we have

completed assessing your progress.”

“Thank you.” Twilight said giving a short bow before walking out of the room. Once the door was closed behind her she let out a soft sigh. “Well... not my best evaluation...I mean, normally I have a lot more to show off than that but...” she thought it over, “Well... I did spend most of my study time on that ridiculous spell... well, it was worth it, I’ve found a whole slew of new spells to learn from Merlin.” She grinned to herself, walking away from the evaluation room.

“A B+ huh?” Twilight chuckled as she placed her suitcase onto the chariot, before turning to face Celestia, “Well it certainly could’ve been worse.”

“I’m surprised you held back on using the Mind Delve spell my student.” Celestia smiled, “That probably would’ve earned you a perfect score.”

“Well... I did promise my friends Princess.” Twilight smiled, “And losing a friends trust is the fastest way to lose a friend forever.”

Somehow, somehow, through the miles between Canterlot and Ponyville, despite the difference in height and no way for that sentence to have been heard, an echo of Pinkie’s voice was heard clearly across Canterlot.

“FOOORRREEEEEEVVVEEEEEEEER.”

Twilight put a hoof to her face as Celestia thought the oddity curious.

“Anyway Princess, don’t worry, thanks to my time down in the archives I’ve found a whole new set of spells I can start learning.” Twilight smiled, “Princess Luna said she would help me borrow copies of Merlin’s books for me to learn from. He had a lot of interesting spells I’d like to learn.”

“So you’re going to study Merlin’s work?” Celestia said surprised, “Well I know you’ll learn a great deal from him. I would dare say he was one of the greatest Unicorn’s I’ve ever seen during my days.” Twilight smiled, “It was an honor to know him.”

“I can imagine Princess.” Twilight smiled, “Though I suppose I should be heading back to Ponyville now. I can’t wait for the next time I get to see you Princess.”

“Likewise Twilight. Have a safe trip.” Celestia gave Twilight a quick nuzzle, Twilight returning it happily.

As the chariot took off towards Ponyville, Twilight felt elated at her trip. Though she hadn't learned enough about the Mind Delve to satisfy her interest, she had come out richer for the trip. Luna promised she'd continue the research and keep her informed as well as supply her with good books from Merlin.

And though she didn't know it now, the spells she would learn would prove useful in her coming future...

"It is impossible to ever answer every question in the world. At one point you will answer so many, that the question remaining will be, is there any question left to answer? So seeking understanding means nothing more than to go after the eternal questions." - Magus V. Darkarts

-The End-