

Tatsurou: So, Binary, are Steel and Rainbow done with Rainbow's maid outfit yet?

BH: It appears that way.
(Despite the room being pretty silent, it's clear it's still being used.)

Celestia: ...I'll raise you.

Luna: You're running out of money, Sister. Are you really going to risk it?

GC: Rummy!

Celestia: ...We're playing poker, Chrysalis.

GC: ...I knew that.

Luna: I don't think you're supposed to say that... but anyway. You're up, Chrysalis.
Fold or put up twenty bits.

GC:what's the card that looks like Discord again?

Celestia: That's the Jack card. I'm on the Queen and Luna's on the King.

GC: Ah. It's wierd to see so many of him in one place. I'll raise...how much do I put in if I'm raising?

Luna: Any amount of above twenty bits.

GC: Alright. I'll put in 80.

Luna: Hmm...
(There's a 3, a 5 and an 8 in the middle of the table, all clubs. Luna's dressed in a 70s gangster outfit, complete with tipped hat and cigar, while Celestia's dressed in a police trenchcoat, looking more like a private eye than a Princess.)

Luna: I'll call. (Tosses in the bits.)

Celestia: Fold... stupid cards. (She tosses the cards onto the table, leaning back with a sneer on her face.)

Tatsurou: So, Binary, will I get zapped again if I ask about your special project?

BH: It's a surprise. It should be ready by the end of this riff segment.

Tatsurou: Alright. So-

BH: The teslas are fully charged.

Tatsurou: Dully noted.

GC: So...what now? Do we get more cards or something?
(Celestia picks up the deck and puts another card face down on the table, drawing another and adding it to the row of cards. A 10, hearts.)

Luna: ...Check.

GC: ...umm, what do the little symbols mean again? Is it a good thing if they match?

Luna: It is.

GC: So I should bet more, then?

Luna: If you have a good hand.

GC: ...I'll add 40 bits.
(Luna examines her hand again, checking the center of the table.)

Luna: ...Check. (Tosses in the bits.) Celestia?

(Celestia nods and picks up the deck again, putting down the last two cards. A 5... spades.)

Luna: (Sneers a bit.) Check...

GC: Matching symbols were good, right? Not the numbers but the other things?

Luna: They are, they are. (Lounges in her chair.)

GC: Oh. Umm...is 100 bits too much?

Luna: If you're gonna bet that... ugh.

GC: Alright. 100 bits. (Tosses in the bits, giggling happily.)

Luna: (Sighs, pushing the rest of her bits into the pile.) All in.

GC: All in? Hmm...(looks at her cards) All in. (Giggles happily.)

Celestia: Seriously? It's clear your cards are very good.

Luna: Hm... cards down, Chrysalis.

(Smiling, Chrysalis lays down an ace and king of clubs.)

GC: This is called a flush, right?

Luna: It is. (Puts down two eights.) Three of a kind.

BH: Looks like Chrysalis wins.

GC: Yay! (Chrysalis pulls the bits in, giggling happily.)

Luna: Never was good at this game.

Celestia: You really shouldn't have bet so much money, Luna...

(Luna just moves off the chair and pushes it in, walking over to the desk.)

BH: Say Luna, did you want to give the video games a try?

Luna: I suppose... (Doesn't seem too upbeat at the moment.)

GC: ...why's she so unhappy?

Luna: Hate losing...

Celestia: Give her some time. It's not everyday she loses her entire allowance for a hand of poker.

GC: Wait...we were playing for keeps?

Celestia: We weren't?

GC: Cause...I don't have any bits of my own. I just grabbed some of Tatsurou's to play with. I didn't know we were playing for keeps.

Tatsurou:Chrysalis?

GC: (gulps) Yes?

Tatsurou: You don't get to keep your winnings. Binary, divide the bits back how they were, since the game can't be for keeps since Chrysalis didn't actually have bits of her own to play with.

BH: On it.

(The bits are divided back into the three original piles...and Luna's has an ice cream bar sitting on it.)

Luna: (Looks back at the table, blinking as she sees her own pile of bits.) Oh... er... my thanks, Binary. (She brings the bits back over to her in her magic and carefully unravels the ice cream bar, taking a bite out of it. She still looks pretty down, though.) It's good... thanks.

Celestia: (Sighs and moves from the table, gathering her bits before heading over to the desk.) Cheer up, Sister. There's always next hand.

BH: Maybe you should try a different game. Maybe something with less luck involved?

Tatsurou: Like tearing apart a story?

BH: Can't do that until Rainbow and Tetsu-sempai are back out here.

GC: I'll go check on them. (Dives into their room through the wall.)

(She's almost immediately tackled back through the wall by a furious Steel and Rainbow.)

Rainbow: I KNEW YOU'D TRY THIS!!!

Steel: FUCKING PEEP!!

GC: I just wanted to know if you were done yet. We're getting bored out here waiting for you. And Luna's in the dumps cause I beat her at Appleoosa Hold'Em, even though I didn't get to keep the winnings.

BH: Will you both be rejoining us soon, Tetsu-sempai?

Steel: The wrap-up is the most important part of this whole thing. (Stands up and buttons up his pants.) God damn it...

Rainbow: (Basically in her underwear) Thanks for nearly giving us a heart attack in your checking. Haaa... left my clothes in there, too.

Steel: We'll get 'em afterwards. (Looks over at the desk before nudging Rainbow with his elbow.) Sheesh... she really is down, isn't she?

Rainbow: Yeah.

(The two walk over to the desk and sit down next to Luna.)

Rainbow: Um... you feeling alright, Princess?

Luna: ... (Simply focuses on the ice cream bar, ears drooped.)

Tatsurou: ...Anything I can do to cheer you up, Luna?

Luna: Not really...

Celestia: Don't worry, Mister 'Fireboy'. She'll cheer up soon enough.

Luna: Mm... (Lets out a pretty long sigh)

Haaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaannnngh...

Tatsurou: It's just...I don't like seeing her so sad...

Steel: Neither do we.

Rainbow: Yeah... you sure she'll be alright, Princess Celestia?

Celestia: I'm certain.

Luna: (Places her chin on the desk and sighs again.)

Haaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaangh...

Steel: Those are some *long* sighs...

Rainbow: Sheesh. With lungs like that, imagine how long she could swim for.

Steel: No diver in the world could compete.

GC: With lungs like that, she must be able to hold her breath for a long time.

smirks suggestively

Steel: Uh huh...

Luna: ...Can we just get to the riff, please...?

Rainbow: Are you sure?

Luna: Yes.

BH: Alright. -BZZZZZ!-

All: We've got story sign!

Chapter 8-Chained by Deceit, Freed by Love

Steel: If that's not an analogy for BDSM, I'll be disappointed.

Tatsurou: That only works if he's chained by lust again.

The six ponies in the room sat there in total shock at Celestia's reveal.

Tatsurou: For ten seconds flat.

Steel: "You should've said there'd be spoilers!"

Twilight was the first to recover.

Tatsurou: She had the strongest immune system.

Steel: The rest were left unconscious.

Rainbow: That's one shocking reveal.

"Princess?" she started, then closed her mouth.

BH: Then opened it again.

Steel: It was becoming a really nice nest for the flies.

Celestia had looked away from them after telling her secret. "I am sorry Twilight."

GC: (In Twilight's voice) "I was saving myself for you!"

Steel: "You backstabber!"

Rainbow: Oh jeeze, Canterlot'd flip upside down.

Celestia: And subsequently burst into flames.

BH: Before rocketing to the moon!

"Don't be sorry for us!" Rainbow blurted out.

Rainbow: "Be sorry for the Changeling you turned into mush during that!"

Celestia: Wh-What?

BH: Aren't we assuming a lot? Who says Shade's father was a Changeling?

Steel: Did Chrysalis turn him into a Changeling after birth?

Tatsurou: Or in eutero?

"Be sorry for Shade! He's been living here his whole life not knowing anything!

GC: "-except horn polishing"

Steel: "My whole life's been a polished lie!"

Then you call us here and tell us? Why didn't you tell him!"

Tatsurou: That's...actually a pretty good question.

Steel: Which makes its answer clear. "What would he do if he learned he was one of Equestria's greatest threats?"

Rainbow suddenly flattened her ears, realizing that she had shouted at the princess.

Steel: She was then locked up for her insolence.

Rainbow: And my friends did an awesome prison break-in to get me out.

GC: Until they realized the location of your prison was Steel's sex dungeon.

Steel: ...I don't have a sex dungeon.

Rainbow: You don't?

Steel: I don't!

GC: How disappointing for Rainbow.

Rainbow: Eh. Improvising is always fun.

Steel: Rainbow!

Rainbow: What? Not like I'm wrong.

Steel: (Grumbles as his cheeks flare up.)

GC: Or would you rather be locked up in Rainbow's?

Tatsurou: Could you please stop talking about sex dungeons?

Steel: Yes!

"Um."

Steel: She got 100% on her test for that answer.

Tatsurou: Actually, I think that's Rainbow still talking.

Rainbow: We know. I'm just that awesome.

"Don't be sorry, Rainbow Dash." Celestia said to Rainbow.

Steel: As opposed to Twilight.

Rainbow: Me and her switched bodies.

Tatsurou: I read that story once.

"I deserve worse than that."

GC: So Celestia gets locked up in the-

BH: Finish that sentence, and I'll zap you with the electrodes.

GC: ...bakery?

Steel: That's even worse.

"But what happened Princess?" Twilight said.

BH: Exposition time!

Steel: "WELL, IT ALL STARTED WHEN I WAS WALKING ALONG THE EDGE OF THE EVERFREE, AND I FOUND THIS GUY."

Rainbow: "It all went downhill from there."

Tatsurou: "He said he was going for an enthusiastic walk in the moonlight. Next thing I know, I'm buried under a pile of undead and pregnant."

Celestia motioned for the six to come closer to her and she sat down.

Steel: They got so close, they were under her.

GC: And now we have "Faceful of Sunshine Part 2, Harmony Redux."

"When Shade was born, I didn't want either of us to

Steel: "—Be charged for travel costs, so I lied about him and put him in my suitcase during my last vacation."

BH: "When they did a surprise search, I pretended he was a ventriloquist dummy. Threw my voice to make him claim to be Lindsay Lohan."

Celestia: ...That's a horrible way to treat a child.

Steel: Travel costs for children would drain your tax income.

be judged for what happened, especially Shade.

Tatsurou: "It would be bad for our reputation."

Steel: "Not me at all for giving birth to the little monster."

Celestia: That's horrible!

Steel: Right, sorry. Feeling a little off right now.

I love everypony in Equestria, but

GC: "—I normally use protection."

Steel: "It broke, so I put him in prison."

Celestia: "He did stake his freedom on that meeting..."

I knew that I couldn't expect Shade to be accepted.

BH: "After all, look at how long it took for Zecora."

Steel: "And my sister."

Rainbow: "And Discord."

Tatsurou: I don't think that's happened yet in this timeline.

Celestia: "And quite a few humans that came by."

So I decided to pretend that I found him in the Everfree Forest.

Tatsurou: "I told him he was raised by timberwolves."

Steel: "He kept howling at the sun, though."

BH: "Which is why they kicked him out of the pack."

Steel: "Poor pup."

I made him my assistant when he was old enough so that it wouldn't be suspicious that he was with me all the time."

Tatsurou: And why wasn't it suspicious before then?

Steel: She hid him in the closet.

"But don't changelings feed on love?" Applejack pointed out. "How was he fed?"

GC: With a spoon.

Steel: The ponies didn't like it when she used it.

"I think I know Applejack." Twilight said.

Tatsurou: (in Twilight's voice) "But I might be mistaken. Is she the grey one with the funny eyes?"

Celestia: "No, she's the white one. Really loud."

Steel: "Would that be the foal, or the mare?"

Rainbow: "I 'unno. That's the fun in guessing!"

"If offered, and the changeling doesn't know about feeding, love can be offered to the changeling which its body will automatically feed on."

Steel: But wouldn't that mean Shade would find it weird if he just stopped eating, or never felt hungry?

BH: ...wow, there's a lot of plotheoles here.

"Correct Twilight." Celestia said. "I gave Shade as much love as I could every day.

GC: "That's why there were so many horn polishing sessions."

Steel: "He always asked why we did it in the dungeon, though."

Rainbow: "I didn't really know how to answer, so I just polished his horn more."

It kept him strong and helped him to grow up like any other pony.

Tatsurou: "Under the personal care of the Princess, overprivileged, and easily acquiring everything he wants in life. ...yup, just like any other OC."

Steel: "But this one grew a brain, so everything's fine!"

Rainbow: That's pretty much Tiara.

Steel: (Skin crawls) Never mention that name...

He also had an education so he wouldn't seem different.

Steel: "There was that one year where he spoke entirely in Zebra, though."

Rainbow: "I had to learn the language just to teach him another language!"

Celestia: "My brain rebelled for days after that. Had to chain myself to the bed so I'd stop hitting myself."

Tatsurou: "It all ended when we instituted dirty limerick month. He ran out of rhymes when he ended a sentence on Orange."

Steel: That damn word.

Perhaps you saw him a few times?" Twilight looked away, thinking.

GC: "Don't think about the time I saw him in the showers, don't think about the time I saw him in the showers..."

Steel: "I saw him in the... bathroom."

Celestia: "That will definitely work."

Celestia continued.

Tatsurou: "While Luna still had extra lives."

Rainbow: "She didn't share them, thinking she could spend them better."

Steel: "She then spent half an hour and five lives on a single jump."

Tatsurou: I remember that game...

"I knew that as long as he didn't know who he was,

Tatsurou: "-the plot wouldn't begin."

Steel: "And I would've gotten away with it, too, if it wasn't for that meddling queen!"

GC: Meddle, meddle, meddle.

Chrysalis would have a harder time finding him."

GC: Yes, because it's so hard to find someone who lives with the Princess of the Sun.

Steel: Don't you know? The brightest lights cast the darkest shadows. He just hid in her shadow. Perfect hiding spot!

GC: And perfect access to-

BH: Chryssy...

GC: -her mammaries. Even baby Changelings nurse if they're live born.

Steel: And then my brain broke...

Rainbow: ... (Goes wall-eyed) Wow. Never thought I'd get *that* mental image.

GC: Which? Celestia lactating or an infant Changeling nursing from her?

Steel: ...

Rainbow: Latter, though it's not from the Princess. (Shakes her head) Back to the

riff before I have to go drink again.

GC: I shapeshift to nurse live birth Changelings when they happen. I don't have mammaries in my natural state. Live birth Changelings are a variance caused by crossbreeding to strengthen the species.

Steel: I'd hate to see what happens when a Queen tries to rebuild her hive's population.

GC: It involves giving birth to at least seven fertile new Queens. Then take a few generations.

"But Shade's your son." Rarity spoke up. "He doesn't belong to that awful queen."

GC: Yet.

Steel: And then this went to clop.

"No, but she could tempt him by offering to teach him about what he is, something that I am unable to do."

BH: "Which is why I told you to study Changelings last month, Twilight."

Celestia: "Speaking of which, the test is tomorrow."

Rainbow: And then Twilight dropped everything and went to the Archives for a full week.

BH: And this is abnormal how?

Rainbow: (Sighs and hangs her head a bit.) It isn't.

"But why is that?" Twilight asked.

Tatsurou: The reason.

Rainbow: The cause.

Steel: The effect.

Celestia: Some arbitrary term we use to cover up a plothole.

"Luna and I do not know very much about changelings."

GC: So that's why I took over so easily.

Steel: Granted, I didn't even know about Changelings until the wedding.

Celestia said. "We attempted to learn as much as we could after he was born and after the attack at your brother's wedding,

BH: How come the magic love wave didn't toss him out of Canterlot like it did all the others?

Steel: Special snowflake.

Rainbow: Then shouldn't he be a puddle from all that horn polishing?

Celestia: ...Heat-resistant special snowflake?

but it doesn't compare to what a actual changeling can teach."

BH: "And unfortunately, none were for hire."

Steel: "I hate union holidays."

"So you didn't know anything about him?" Twilight asked carefully.

GC: "Only what his horn tasted like."

Steel: "It tasted like cuts."

"Not as much as we should have." Celestia admitted.

BH: Confess your sins, Princess of the Sun!

Celestia: I ADMIT TO EATING A CUPCAKE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT WHEN I SHOULD'VE BEEN SLEEPING! AHHHHAAAAHAAAAHAAA! (Curls up on the floor, bawling her eyes out.)

BH: ...And I thought Chryssy was a drama queen.

Rainbow: No wonder those nobles are so annoying. They had to see the Princess without her beauty sleep.

Steel: "I looked at her face, and I saw Hell. Its name was 'lack of makeup'."

"If you wanted to keep him safe, why did you send him to Ponyville?" Rainbow asked her.

BH: What's that supposed to mean? It's not like Ponyville is dangerous-oh, wait.

Steel: Hydra Hunt Tuesdays are a thing here!

"Luna had been spying on Chrysalis for sometime now."

Steel: "She always brought back pictures of different ponies in the shower, though..."

Rainbow: "Every single one had her name on it."

GC: "And ponies call me Molestia."

Celestia said. "She found out that she had been getting closer to finding Shade.

BH: Maybe *that's* what the invasion was actually all about! Getting Shade!

Steel: That's an... interesting way of going about it.

Tatsurou: Good way to hide her real motives.

So we thought that sending him away would protect him."

Tatsurou: So much for that idea.

Rainbow: "Luna turned down my idea of firing him out of a cannon, so I had to hide him in plain sight."

Celestia: "If only she'd listened..."

"Why does she want Shade so badly?"

GC: He's the main character.

Steel: That's all we've got.

Twilight puzzled. "He's a changeling just like she is, right?"

GC: He's got some equipment I don't have, though.

Steel: That equipment would save the hive.

Celestia shook her head. "No, Twilight. She wants Shade for two reasons.

Steel: "He's green, and he likes jello."

He is my son, and my weakness. Whether he tries to or not, Shade steals my energy."

Steel: Kinda like a vacuum cleaner you leave plugged in. Only you don't realize it until the bill comes in.

Tatsurou: And then you're broke.

"So he weakens you?" Twilight asked.

Rainbow: "Your coat is more dull than usual."

Celestia: "It's a nightmare."

BH: "You should try a new conditioner."

Steel: "So much for the Royal Guard Nightlight."

Celestia nodded. "I can't help but love him. I believe that he feeds more from me because I gave birth to him, but I have no way of knowing for sure."

BH: "I'm a Princess, not a scientists."

Steel: "A scientist, even!"

"Who is his father?" Twilight said.

Steel: "Good news, Twilight! You're the father."

(Gasps from all around the room.)

Rainbow: I knew she'd be nailed to the wall for it eventually!

Celestia looked at Twilight for a bit, then started to answer. Suddenly in a burst of blue light, Luna appeared next to her sister, panting.

"Luna!"

Tatsurou: Didn't see that coming.

BH: Luna's the father?

GC: How deliciously scandalous.

Steel: Oh God, the stories being written about this.

Rainbow: We're gonna have a lot more riffs in the future...

Celestia cried.

GC: "And Canterlot got a new river."

Steel: "It took out the entire market district, but no one cares about those money grubbers."

Luna waved her sister off. "No time sister! We have a problem.

BH: "We're out of Moon Pies!"

Steel: "Impossible! I just had a shipment in yesterday!"

Celestia: "It must be the Cupboard Caper again!"

Rainbow: "Save the pantry! That's his next target!"

Chrysalis has captured Shade!"

All the ponies in the room gasped. "How?!" Celestia asked angrily.

BH: The total absence of any form of protection?

Steel: His lack of training?

Rainbow: Twilight screwed up?

Celestia: He ran away?

Luna: The whole town hated him...?

"I was making another pass

GC: "-at Soarin'."

Steel: "He's still oogling that picture of Spitfire. Remind me to figure out shapeshifting."

Rainbow: And then potions were a thing.

Tatsurou: I'd almost forgotten how strange this can get...

BH: Say, Rainbow, where'd you leave your maid outfit? I notice you aren't wearing it...or anything else for that matter.

Rainbow: Queenie got in the room while I was getting dressed. Just my underwear right now. It's why Steel's not dead.

Steel: It's a fight, though.

BH: Let's fix that. *zaps Rainbow back into a Pegasus.*

Rainbow: Yes! (Throws off the bra and gives her wings a flap) Ahh, good to have my wings back!

BH: And you're still wearing panties and stockings.

Rainbow: Honestly? Feels good to wear 'em. (Shrugs)

though Cloudsdale, when I sensed him below me.

Steel: Bow— (Thrown through the wall)

Celestia: (Steam pouring out of her ears as she glares at the new hole in the wall)

GC: Chika— (Chucked through the wall as well)

Celestia: Stop!

Steel: WHY IS SHE IN HERE WITH ME!?

GC: Bow, wow. *winks at Steel suggestively.*

Steel: YEPRUNNINGAWAYNOW! (Runs through the wall and flies across the room.) (BH zaps GC with massive aetheral electricity.)

BH: HOOVES OFF TETSU-SEMPAI, BITCH!

Rainbow: ...Did the room just get warmer?

I left the city to see him being attacked by another changeling."

Rainbow: Teamkiller!

Luna looked at Rainbow. "Are you sensitive between your wings?"

GC: "And I assure you this question has nothing to do with the way I'm slowly

sidling towards your side and leaning towards your back with tongue extended."

Steel: "Purely for science."

"Well, yeah." Rainbow said. "If I get hit there, I can't fly. Hurts really bad."

Steel: "You ever been kicked square in the crotch? It's kinda like that."

Rainbow: "Less sickness and more paralysis, though."

BH: ...which part's the crotch, again?

Steel: Area between the legs. Or on a pony, behind the hindlegs.

Rainbow: (Points to Steel's crotch) Here.

Steel: Yeah. (Gently bats Rainbow's hoof away as it draws closer)

BH: So getting hit there is painful, then?

Steel: If you're a guy? Extremely.

Rainbow: If you're a mare? It's pretty bad!

Luna nodded. "Shade had taken your form.

Steel: "And he was flying *horribly*."

Rainbow: Why that little...!

GC: It could have been worse. He could have been flying better than you.

Rainbow: As if he could! Like I said before, *no pony* knows my body better than me!

Steel: Or me.

Rainbow: (Blushes a bit) Yeah, you too. (Punches Steel on the shoulder as she spots a grin growing on his face.)

Unfortunately he was shot between the wings and fell.

Steel: *Shot through the heart, and you're to blame~...*

Rainbow: *You give do~dgin', a bad name!*

Tatsurou: "Why...didn't...you...dodge!"

Steel: "Bleh."

He protected himself with a spell but the other changeling reached him and teleported them away. I flew straight back here."

Twilight could tell that Celestia was agitated by the news.

Steel: The new hole in the ceiling was pretty evident of that.

Rainbow: Eh, the place needed a skylight.

GC: And here I thought it was the saturation levels of the throne's cushion.

BH: Wrong kind of agitation.

Steel: That *can* be a horrible itchiness, though.

She turned to them. "Are you all sure that you haven't seen Shade anywhere?" Everypony nodded, but Twilight saw that Fluttershy was acting even more nervous than usual.

Steel: She was holding up a Twilight doll and shaking its head for added effect.

Rainbow: She definitely convinced them of something, yeah.

BH: And here I thought it was the *Fluttershy* bobble heads that made it big after *May the Best Pet Win*.

Tatsurou: We aren't supposed to talk about those things, Binary.

BH: ...well there went half of my material...

She quietly pulled Fluttershy behind the group to talk to her.

"Fluttershy. Did your cousin really buy you that necklace?" Twilight softly asked.

"No...but I can't tell you. I promised Twilight."

Steel: And then Shade was really Twilight in disguise.

Rainbow: Somepony's been messing with the cloning spell.

Tatsurou: Either that, or Twilight's been experimenting with the Mirror Pool.

BH: Oh, so *you're* allowed to reference those things. I see how it is!

Tatsurou: Not the electrodes!

BRRRRZAPPP!!!!

Tatsurou: Muffin!

Steel: Toasted Fireboy, anyone?

Rainbow: I'll pass... he looks a bit charred.

Fluttershy said, clearly conflicted.

"If it's something that will help Shade, please tell the princess. Shade will understand."

"A-are you sure?"

Steel: "I dunno if Shade should be nearby when Celestia goes into 'Murder Chrysalis' mode..."

Rainbow: "He'll survive. The guy can dig holes faster than a rabbit."

BH: "I'm just worried about becoming the Princess's daughter-in-law."

Steel: "Pfff, don't worry about that. It'll be a few years before you two get married! Provided Shade isn't sent off on an incredibly dangerous mission to prove his worth in ascension and Princedom. And hey, he might even come back alive!"

Fluttershy asked. "I don't want him to be angry."

Twilight smiled and hugged Fluttershy. "He won't be."

Steel: "He'll just be *slightly* completely miffed."

Rainbow: "Totally cool!"

GC: "He'll just be a tiny bit absolutely livid."

Steel: ...Did you turn into Freiza for a second there?

GC: Always liked the cut of his jibe.

Steel: I can hear Vegeta screaming miles and miles away from here.

Fluttershy walked up to the princess and softly said, "Princess...I actually have seen Shade lately. He's been staying with me."

"That's a start." Celestia said.

Rainbow: With the most blank expression in existence.

Steel: I'd be kind of surprised if my son went missing for three days, only to find out that he was staying with a friend. Or happy, or... something.

Rainbow: Well, hey, better than him waking up in a dumpster three days later.

Steel: True. That's the last time I challenge Drak to a drinking contest...

Rainbow: (Pats Steel on the back) You fought well, buddy.

Steel: It was the toughest war my liver's ever gone through.

Tatsurou: It could be worse. He could have spent the past three days in Luna's bed.

BH: Or Discord's.

GC: Or mine.

Tatsurou: Or all of the above.

Steel: Or none of the above! A manticore's den.

Rainbow: Wouldn't he be eaten then?

Steel: He fed a family of five, and his sacrifice will be remembered.

GC: Unless it was a single manticore. Then he *creates* a family of five. Shapeshifter!

Rainbow: Wouldn't surprise me if he could split into five separate ponies.

Steel: It'd surprise me. Shade's had a good run so far of being a proper OC.

"Where has he gone when he was living with you?"

GC: "Well, my house only has two doors..."

Steel: I'm wondering what kind of 'house' you're talking about, though that kind would have three entrances, not two. Still, front door and back door.

GC: The third entrance is a window.

Steel: You sure the third entrance isn't just the doggy door?

"Umm, he didn't know how to change his body until last night, so he mostly stuck around the house." Fluttershy quietly said.

BH: "And what did you do all that time while he stayed in the house?"

GC: *in Fluttershy voice* "Umm...what *didn't* we do?"

Tatsurou: Cupcakes!

BH: Pretty sure that's Pinkie's schtick.

Steel: Chocolate sauce does tend to be in really short supply at the bakery, yeah.

Celestia thought hard for a moment

GC: And sprained her brain.

Celestia: That would be quite the headache indeed...

Steel: That's why you exercise the mind just as much as the body: the cramps are horrible.

and then her eyes lit up.

BH: I didn't know you were related to Rudolph, Princess!

Celestia: Rudolph? The reindeer, you mean?

Luna: But Celestia's nose does not glow with a bright crimson. It is actually quite white and regular.

Celestia: Yes it is... very regular and very white, yes. (Glances away)

"Chrysalis wouldn't take him somewhere far away from ponies.

GC: ...why not?

Steel: Emotion feeding, remember? Kid's gotta eat, and who knows how much energy he burns when casting spells.

Shade will die without emotions for too long because his body is still adjusting to his shifting and him being able to control when he feeds."

BH: Convenient!
Steel: Yeah, that.

She looked at Twilight and Fluttershy.

GC: "Now kiss!"
Rainbow: Surprise romances, ugh.
Steel: No bricks this time, though.

"I have an idea, but I need you two to trust me."

BH: "I need twenty pounds of marmalade, thirteen rubber ducks, a magic carpet, seven rolls of duct tape, a Magikarp, and a trombone."
Tatsurou: ...that sounds more like a Pinkie Pie plan than a Celestia plan to me.
BH: She's been taking lessons. After all, Pinkie's plans haven't failed yet.
Steel: Maybe they've been cohorts all along?
Celestia: Cohorts? Over what?
Luna: Pinkie has only just lived beyond her second decade, though.
Steel: Maybe Pinkie's whole family then?
Rainbow: Where're you going with this?
Steel: Pinkie Sense has to originate from somewhere, right?
BH: I've always liked the explanation that Pinkie is inexplicable so that Magic can be explained.
Celestia: Her foresight is quite incredible. However, as of yet, it is unexplained. Could very well be an inherent magical force, actually...

"Hold on there. Why are you only sendin them?" Applejack spoke up.

BH: "Because I'll have need of the rest of you here."
GC: "See, the royal guard has gone on strike, and they are demanding certain...benefits."
Tatsurou: "So I need you four to work on giving them all the cakes, pies, and fancy clothing they want, while distracting them with an air show so I can rewrite their contracts so they can't unionize."
Steel: "And don't let them convince you otherwise, no matter how much they cry about their twenty hour days and ten-bits-an-hour pay!"
Celestia: Those are horrific conditions...
Steel: And all those cakes, pies and fancy clothes are gonna give them one heck of an inflated ego and sore stomach.
Rainbow: Better than working your rump off for ten bits an hour.
Steel: Depends on if the pastries are tended to by AJ or not.
Rainbow: Oof... at least she's not working all darn day anymore.
Steel: Never know when sleep deprivation will strike again, though...

"Yeah! We need to go with them!" Rainbow chimed in.

GC: "I still want my turn with Shade!"
Rainbow: "He'll be begging for more by the end."
Steel: ...Woah.

Rainbow: Begging for more flying lessons after he gets to practice with me.

Steel: ...That's less terrible.

Rainbow: Like I said, one stallion alone gets to beg for that.

Steel: And I sometimes wonder if I'm blessed or cursed because of it.

Rainbow: Shut up.

"I know you all want to help my little ponies

GC: "But that's the Royal Guard's job."

BH: "Just as soon as they get off strike."

Tatsurou: Why are they striking, anyway?

GC: Maybe they all want a Princess to marry?

Steel: Just not enough Princess to go around.

Celestia: I've a lot of love for my little ponies, but I don't think I could marry that many ponies...

Luna: I've not even got enough time to consider marriage with my royal duties.

Steel: Consider it? You mean you've already got someone in your sights, Your Highness?

Luna: What? No! Of course not, we focus upon our tasks with utmost concentration and diligence!

Celestia: Luna, you're using 'we' again.

Luna: We— ...I, still speak the truth. Stallions are not a luxury I can focus on with work.

Steel: That's really... bad, actually. Don't you get lonely?

Luna: A romance with a Princess is but a fairy tale, sir Steel, no matter how happy the ending. Simply doesn't work. I've my sister, my friends and my faithful servants, and I need nothing more.

Celestia: Everything we need and more, thanks to Twilight Sparkle's ever expanding circle of friends.

Rainbow: (Grins, flapping her wings a bit) Happy to do what I do best.

Steel: Same here.

BH: Luna, what about Cadence and Shining Armor? *Their* romance worked out. Why can't one work out for you?

Luna: Cadence is a special case. She was assisting us with much of the bureaucracy, yes, but the responsibility still laid upon mine and Celestia's shoulders. And even though Shining was Captain of the Royal Guard, much of his duty placed him in proximity with our niece, providing them with the comfort of being nearby one another. Beyond that, t'is been an age and more since we last felt the fire of passion burn, Miss Binary, and we have not felt its warmth in just as long.

Celestia: (She lets out a sigh as her ears droop a little) That's true, however sad it is... even though we think the world and more of our little ponies, we just haven't really found 'the one' yet, I guess. We're happy with what we have, and that will hold us over until that one stallion comes around. (She puts on a smile, nodding) Until then, we'll maintain our strength.

Luna: Indeed. Though the fire is but cinders now, we've known barren ashes amidst the ice to rekindle and burn anew. It is not impossible... our time has simply not arrived yet. Perhaps when a new generation stands at the helm, we will be able to seek out our own life partners.

Steel: That was... actually pretty poetic. Very nice.

Luna: We've lived for over a millenium, sir Steel. One does not survive an age and

not pick up on its rhythms and phrases. T'would be comparable to living under a rock. Or in one.

Celestia: Always was impressed with your words, Luna, despite their... aging.

Luna: There's never a case where the olden tongues cannot incite emotion in the hearts of the new generations, dear sister. Perhaps you would do well to delve back, see what dwells within the elder languages?

Celestia: (Smirks a bit) Maybe, but I'm a bit too used to how things go today. Still, t'would be a social experiment from which we might divine our own conclusion on the effects of older tongues.

Luna: You've a lot to work on, dear sister, but I can see that curious flame in your eyes.

Celestia: Perhaps...

Steel: (Leans over to Rainbow) How long 'till they're both speaking Ye Olde Equestrian to each other?

Rainbow: Middle of next chapter.

(The two nod to each other and go back to the riff)

, but this is something that Twilight and Fluttershy can easily accomplish."

BH: Even if that's true, haven't you ever heard of backup?

Steel: Twilight's merry band of six have fought everything from Chaos spirits to full-grown, fire-spewing dragons. And, if I remember from the wedding, they each took down quite a few Changelings. I don't think they're gonna run into much trouble until they end up facing Chrysalis herself.

Rainbow: And we'd *still* kick a load of butt!

GC: I somehow doubt that.

Rainbow: Can't really prove it with you being dead, but yeah. I know I'm right anyways.

Celestia said. "Twilight, Luna and I had planned in case something like this would happen.

Tatsurou: Convenient!

Steel: Chessmasters at work.

We cast a spell on Shade that will let us teleport to him.

GC: Then shouldn't they have used it when I first showed up?

Steel: You kinda took Celestia out, and Luna was more concerned with protecting her sister from you... er, Story Chrysalis. They probably still thought he was in safe-keeping with Twilight and everyone.

I would go myself but..."

Steel: "Well, you know... giant killer bugs are kinda bad for my health..."

GC: "And I need to do my part in appeasing the guards...in bed."

Luna: "Their taste in story books is rather childish, but I will do anything to see that they get their night's rest."

GC: "*Anything*..."

Luna: "I do warn them to ignore the floating Changeling ghost going about and putting fantasies in their heads." (Makes a sidelong glance at Chrysalis)

GC: I don't do dreams. That's *your* purview.

Luna: No, you're more for living out stallions' dreams.

"It's okay Princess." Twilight said. "We can handle it."

Tatsurou: "We've already handled *everything else*."

BH: "One of these days, we need to talk about getting hazard pay for saving the world."

GC: "And it better come with some major benefits."

Tatusoru: ...say, *do* Twilight and the others get some sort of compensation for their efforts in saving the day, Princess Celestia?

Celestia: Country-wide fame, compensation in allowance for their deeds, erm...

Rarity gets a free spa treatment in Canterlot once a month... (She rubs her chin and looks off to the side, thinking.) Fluttershy gets veterinary teachings via one of our schools, Pinkie is allowed access to a small fraction of royal funds to fuel her parties... Twilight is allowed free access to the Canterlot Archives...

Steel: ...Holy crap.

Celestia: It's a *lot* of details we have to keep track of, but the Elements deserve compensation for their actions. (She rubs her mane with a hoof and sighs, deflating a bit.) Even if it does run our librarians, cooks, and civil workers ragged... Luna and I along with them.

Steel: Rainbow doesn't get anything?

Rainbow: Never asked for anything. I'm the big heroine who saves the day, since when do I need something fancy in return?

Steel: You get fame and fortune in return.

Rainbow: I never asked for it, but yeah... yeah, I do. (She grins and chuckles) (Steel simply rolls his eyes and smirks.)

Tatsurou: So basically, what you get is scissors to cut through bureaucratic red tape in pursuing your dreams? You still have to jump through all the appropriate hoops to get your paperwork filed, but it gets a rush on it?

Rainbow: Nope. Everything I get is through my own blood, sweat and rare tears. Any rushes that get put on my papers are because ponies just like me. I don't need royal backup.

Fluttershy nodded. Celestia and Luna exchanged looks and stood up in front of Twilight and Fluttershy. The rest of the ponies moved away from them.

BH: They know what's coming.

Steel: They're not sure if they're ready for it.

"Twilight. When you find Shade you need to immediately bring him back.

GC: "He never finished polishing his horn before he left."

Steel: "Poor guy must be on fire right now, and he'll want to finish in a hurry. I suggest pointing him away from anything precious, expensive, or at all alive."

Chrysalis will most likely have starved him from emotions to weaken him. I can heal him."

GC: ...you know what? This one's too easy even for *me*.

Steel: But it's so temptiiing. You should go for it.

Celestia said. As Twilight nodded Celestia and Luna created two swirling ribbons of magic and wrapped it around the unicorn and the pegasus.

GC: *This one, on the other hoof...*

BH: ...why am I getting search results for magic pony bondage?

Steel: Because that's *exactly* what's happening right now.

Rainbow: Huh... that actually sounds kinda comfy for bondage.

Steel: (Shrugs) Different ties for different guys. And gals.

It covered them and in

GC: **sits up eagerly**

a flash of light

GC: **pouts**

Steel: Never get your hopes up, Queenie. You just set yourself up to be crushed later.

Rainbow: About four words later.

....there were still standing there.

BH: "But they were dressed in bunnysuits!"

Steel: Maybe I spoke too soon on that 'hopes' bit.

Rainbow: Steellllll...

Steel: What? Queenie was gonna say it anyways.

"Uhhhh..." Twilight started.

GC: "And then she finished."

BH: "In ten seconds flat."

Steel: "The flash was actually a time travel spell. We're looking at Cavemare Twilight."

"Buck!" Celestia snapped.

Tatsurou: Did...did Celestia just curse?

Steel: If someone stepped on a cellphone at that point, it would've been hilarious.

BH: ...why?

Steel: The old 'censoring a swear' gag, it's shock humor as far as I know.

Luna: Celestia was quite the firebrand way back when.

Celestia: I never uttered a curse in my life!

Luna: (Smiles devilishly as she looks over at Celestia) We beg to differ, sister, what with all your 'friends'.

Celestia: (Narrows her eyes and squishes Luna's nose with a hoof) *Youuu* can be quiet, shorty.

Luna: Neeeeeeh...

Steel: Sounds like a story I'd like to hear.

Rainbow: Same here!

Luna: (Trying to speak with her nose still being squished) Berhaps anoder day, sir Steel and Rainbow Dash.

Celestia: (Groans and narrows her eyes) Only bits of it, Luna...

Luna: ...Maybe.

Everypony jumped at the princesses choice of words.

BH: Wait, both Princesses cursed?

Steel: Luna just had the composure to *internally* scream the F-word.

Rainbow: It shook the world all the same, though.

Luna: Everypony did say I have to work on my indoor voice... but the castle is so large. What if I require something from somepony on the other side of the courtyard? Much easier to simply raise my voice.

"Luna! She must have disguised where she is!"

Tatsurou: And that would prevent a 'teleport to person' spell...how? I didn't think those spells even bothered to *consider* the subject's location.

BH: *Inconvenient.*

Steel: It's possible that there would be some kind of way to 'mask' a pony's presence, preventing detection. The spell still has to know said pony exists, right?

Rainbow: This is magic we're talking about here.

Steel: And magic does have ways of stopping magic from doing magical things and being magical.

Rainbow: ... (Just furrows her brow at him)

Steel: What? It's called anti-magic.

Rainbow: You hang out with Pinkie too much.

Steel: I rarely have a choice in the matter.

"Then I will fly over the city and cast my enchantment breaker." Luna said, then rose up and left the castle.

BH: "And then the city fell off the mountain, because Luna accidentally removed the spells that allowed the city to hold itself up jutting out the cliffside."

GC: "Whoopsie!"

Steel: "Ah, it's alright... just some spit polish here and there... few rocks to pick up. It'll be fine!"

"We don't have a lot of time, do we?" Twilight asked, clearly about to attempt to help Luna.

Celestia sighed, "No Twilight. We do not."

BH: If this were a video game, this is where all the bonus side quests would pop up.

Steel: When the world is ending tomorrow, the game has a neat habit of freezing time.

Rainbow: "I'll save the world later, I still have to kill five more boars!"

. . .

"Uhhhh, what happened?"

GC: Yeah, scene changes are rough at times.

Steel: They're like a bad hangover, only with someone *else* remembering everything that happened the night before.

I said as everything slowly came back into focus.

Tatsurou: Now we can take the picture.

Rainbow: Finally, family photos are a pain...

The first thing I noticed was that I was laying down and my legs were cold.

GC: That's not all that's cold, I'll bet.

Steel: (Deadpans at Chrysalis) Queenie, seriously.

Then I got a huge shock as I saw that I was trapped on a table!

Tatsurou: Ah! It's Cupcakes!

Rainbow: "Oh darn it, not again!"

My legs were held fast by iron chains that wrapped around the table that I was on.

BH: Iron chains? What is he, a fey?

Steel: He just might be! The story can't be finished with surprise identity reveals yet.

GC: That's an interesting hypothesis.

Rainbow: Should see his theories on mixing new drinks. He writes them while drunk.

Steel: Oy. I'm smart when I'm sober, but I'm a damned *genius* while tanked.

"No! Nonononono..."

GC: Your mouth says no, but your body-

BRRRZZAAPPP!

GC: *Pink fluffy unicorns dancing on rainbows! Pink fluffy unicorns dancing on rainbows!*

BH: None of that now.

Rainbow: Not when his torture's about to start, anyways.

Steel: *Bow chicka—* (Punched through the wall by Celestia.)

Celestia: Not *that* kind of torture.

Rainbow: That is a *nasty* left hook...

I instantly started struggling, but it was no use. I couldn't move. I thought about about

BH: How very zen.

Steel: Very deep indeed... what inner meanings could the word 'about' have?

shifting, but I abandoned that idea as I started to pass out again when I tried to shift into Twilight.

GC: Yeah, I can see why that's happen.

Steel: Did you just Engrish?

Rainbow: I think she did!

GC: I think Binary's syntax my zappers damaged.

"Okay, so that isn't going to work." I thought.

Steel: Aloud.

Rainbow: He's got the monologuing curse!

Steel: So he was the villain all along!

BH: So much makes sense now!

I was going to teleport out of the chains, but these chains must have a enchantment on them.

Steel: 'A' enchantment? What, does it disable your vowel sense, too?

BH: I always thought it was a missing o, not a missing n.

I disappeared, then reappeared

Steel: And it was confused about where it was.

GC: Funny talks!

right back in the chains. "That won't work either!" I hissed.

Steel: Those Changeling genes kicking in again.

Celestia: Complete with fangs and a forked tongue?

Steel: May as well have some buzzing wings, too.

GC: I'm a pretty bumblebee!

Tatsurou: ...Binary...I think you broke her.

BH: Oops.

Steel: Hit her, that'll fix her brain.

Thwack!

GC: ...How did you manage to *punch* a ghost?

BH: I'm just that good.

Steel: She's fixed anyways, so why should we even ask?

"All that did was help me use more energy." I tried to relax and think.

Steel: "It wasn't working, so I resorted to panicked thrashing."

Rainbow: "It really helps clear your head."

BH: "And when that didn't work, I tried screaming for help!"

GC: "And when that didn't work, I tried praying."

Tatsurou: "But my prayer was swallowed up by the darkness."

Steel: "Pretty mean-spirited darkness, too. It spelled out in red, stinky mist: 'YOUR AUTHOR CANNOT SAVE YOU NOW'. Didn't even bother with giving me a pat on the back for effort!"

I looked down and saw that I was still wearing my promise necklace.

Steel: Doesn't have a very good promise anymore, does it?

Rainbow: Just 'promised' that he'd end up kidnapped.

Steel: Oh, the wonderful foreshadowing set up by little things like this.

BH: ...say, any chance those necklaces are magically linked and Twilight could have used Fluttershy's to track Shade's?

Steel: That would be supremely convenient, so yes, that's exactly what's gonna

happen.

I remembered that I had enchanted it with at least two enchantments.

Steel: Back when you stole them and ran with no care for actually enchanting them, right?

Rainbow: Convenience!

BH: So should I pick up the phone now?

Steel: Callin' bullshit!

One of them was to turn the necklace invisible whenever I shifted into a form that wasn't my normal unicorn form or my changeling form.

Steel: ...When the hell did this happen!?

Celestia: Er... wait, how did he enchant them?

Luna: And when? He was under watch the entire time, and Fluttershy made no mention of this.

Rainbow: And who did it for him? Did he do it?

Tatsurou: And why?

But for the life of me, I could NOT remember the second one.

Steel: (Ducks another brick) Convenient Amnesia... oh dear, we're in for a bad one.

BH: Anyone else get the feeling it'll come in important much later?

Steel: Judging from what you said earlier about the two necklaces being 'linked', I figure that second enchantment is going to be some kinda homing beacon thing.

"Great. Ummm, where am I?" I looked around.

Steel: "Blood smeared walls, rotting flesh on the floor and ceiling, and I'm hearing a siren. Something tells me I'm not gonna have a good day."

BH: "It could have been worse. There could have been screaming."

GC: "Or a creepy doll talking about how only one of you would make it out alive."

Steel: "And I wasn't sure if it was talking about itself and me, or me and someone else..."

It looked like I was in a basement.

Steel: Off to a good start with Kidnapper Cliche #58: Stick 'em in a basement.

Rainbow: Can't ever be an attic, or some alternate dimension, or a prison in their head. C'mooooon, creativity, you can do better than this!

BH: My favorite kidnap location has always been a pocket dimension inside their own closet that only opens if you're carrying the keystone. Then you don't even have to snack them out of the house.

Steel: Hiding inside the closet inside the closet inside their closet?

So that meant that I should be in a city, right?

Steel: "Elementary, dear basement! I am within a concrete confine bearing a door and a set of stairs, meaning I must be near a center of established civilization."

(Puffs on his pipe)

Tatsurou: I remember one time in a D&D campaign, I put a basement inside a cave system.

Steel: *Genius*. There's no way they could find out where they were if you threw a curveball like that!

Rainbow: Just have to make sure the basement doesn't, you know, look like a cave.

"And if I am in a city, I should be able to draw some emotions.

BH: "Because right now I'm so weak I've forgotten how to stop talking.

Steel: "I'm not delirious! Pancakes!"

Rainbow: "With lots of syrup!"

I casted out, but I didn't sense anything. "Guess I'm still recovering from that fall. Or I drained myself too much when I had been in the town airler." I said to myself.

Tatsurou: Or you aren't actually in a city.

Steel: Such a difficult mystery to solve... this is going to require all his wit to figure out!

"Aww you're awake!" A voice said from behind me.

Steel: "Damn it, voice, I'm trying to deduce my location!"

BH: "You could try asking me."

GC: "Screw your logic like I did your mother last night!"

Steel: Ohhhhh *damn*. So, with lots of wet fish slapping?

BH: And horn polishing!

Steel: That logic is gonna be unable to walk for *weeks*.

I turned and saw Misty walk up next to the table.

BH: *When did this become a Pokemon crossover?*

GC: I'm pretty sure it means the Changeling Misty.

BH: *And how am I supposed to remember that?*

GC: You're a computer.

BH: ...touche.

"How are you feeling?"

Steel: "Eh, could be better. Kinda snapped my neck just now to look at you. Mind coming around in front of me so I don't have to shatter my spine?"

BH: When did this become The Exorcist.

I glared at her. "That isn't a nice face." she said.

GC: "This is a better one!" *makes a clown face*

BH: *CLOWN!*

BRRRZZAAAP!

GC: ...I'm glad it was only a mask this time...

Steel: She smoked that mask, man.

Rainbow: That's one sad clown. (Trots over and stomps the mask out) And now it's a clown I don't have to worry about. (Nods and moves back over, hopping into Steel's lap and relaxing in his coat)

"Does it look like I care?"

BH: Hmm...

GC: Hmm...

Tatsurou: Hmm...nope.

Steel: ...Okay, maybe a *little*. Give me a cookie and I might care more.

I hissed. "Where am I? And why am I chained?!"

BH: "Guess."

GC: "Because it's kinky?"

Steel: "Because I was rolling around in my sleep a lot?"

Rainbow: "Because you didn't have any chains made of chocolate?"

Celestia: "Because I was uttering strange phrases in my sleep?"

Luna: "Was I sleep-casting again?"

Misty looked at me. "Well, I think that my mom can explain it a little better than I can."

GC: "She's going to test both our recall skills. First she'll explain it to you, then I'll explain it to you, then you'll tell us both anything I forgot."

BH: "If you succeed, you get a cookie."

GC: "If you fail, I get your nookie!"

Tatsurou: ...that's some strange study habits.

Steel: Hey, if it gets the guy to remember his studies for the test, it's all good.

"Your...mother?" I asked. Misty pointed behind me.

Steel: "Hang on, my neck's still all kinds of screwed up right now. Gotta break it again and look over—"

BH: He's not going to have a neck left at this rate.

Then a grown-up female changeling walked in front of the table. "Hello Shade. I'm Chrysalis. You can call me Queen Chrysalis."

Steel: "Oh. Ohhhh. Okay, can I look back at you again? You're far less ugly. Just grab my head and spin it around."

GC: Hmmph! Well I never!

"Yeah, excuse me if I don't!" I snapped.

Chrysalis smiled at me, like she knew something I didn't. I hated when ponies(or I guess changelings) did that.

Steel: Damn know-it-all bastards. Think they've got all the answers in the world, and... (Looks over to see Luna, Celestia and Rainbow staring at him) ...What?

Tatsurou whistles innocently

"Shade, I'm very glad that we met. You see, you have something that I need."

Steel: "And something I want."

Luna: "Something I desire."

Celestia: "Something I require."

Rainbow: "And something I wanna take."

BH: "Give me your soul!"

"A better looking horn?" I said

Steel: Oh damn!

GC: Ouch.

Chrysalis took my horn and started to rub it, sending shivers through my body.

Steel: Oh dear!

BH: Steel, phone's for you.

"You do have a nice horn, even when you are in your changeling form.

Steel: Oh dear God.

Rainbow: BAD TOUCH! BAD TOUCH!

BH: "I need an adult!"

GC: "I AM AN ADULT!"

But that isn't what I need." She pointed at my body.

GC: ...I'm not sure I like where this is going...

Steel: How could you *not* like where this is going? You, of all ponies? Er...

Changelings? Ghosts. Whatever you are.

GC: It's one thing to joke, another for it to be real.

Steel: Granted point.

"I don't need any particular PART of you. I needed ALL of you."

GC: Okay, now I'm just confused.

Steel: Maybe she's gonna... uh... use him as a conduit for something?

Rainbow: Freaky magic rituals, maybe?

"For what?!" I snapped.

Steel: "Wait, sorry, that was my neck again."

"I'll tell you when you wake up. It looks like it's time for you to take a little nap." Chrysalis and Misty pointed their horns at me and covered me with a green mist. Immediately I was tired. As I fell asleep again, I thought I saw Chrysalis climbing onto the table on top of me. But that was probably my imagination.

Steel: ...

Rainbow: ...

Luna: Ohhh my goodness...

Celestia: Did anypony else just feel a chill run up their spine?

GC: O.O ...That's me, and *I'm* feeling traumatized.

Steel: You're *evil* in this...

Rainbow: Changelings don't really have the same rules as us, do they?

Steel: Different societies... but yeah. This is freaky.

GC: *I would never* do anything like this!

BH: What about what you did to Shining Armor?

GC: ...*blush* Believe it or not, that was actually *his* doing.

Tatsurou: ...how?

GC: When I first started pretending to be Cadence, I cast a spell to make him believe I was Cadence, and to complete it I had to react to his actions in order to cement the spell's hold on him. ...apparently, Cadence wasn't a virgin bride, if his behavior is any judge.

Steel: ...Wow.

Rainbow: Bet they share a bottle of wine every night, huh?

GC: No, no wine. ...but I learned quite a bit about sex from pretending to be Cadence for Shining. Those two are *freaks* in the bedroom!

Rainbow: Never would've expected it from those two clean ponies.

Steel: Clean? That's just because they wipe up before going out in public. Pull out a black light and those two'd be covered...

Rainbow: (Shudders) I really hope they shower afterwards.

GC: Oh, they're very hygienic about it. Apparently, Shining's shield spell serves *many* purposes...

Steel: Makeshift condom, I guess.

Rainbow: Or body suits.

Steel: Yikes, that's taking it a bit far...

Rainbow: Should only go as far as socks if you ask me...

Steel: Agreed. Latex, but cloth or silk is just as good.

Rainbow: Yeah.

Celestia: ...

Luna: Chrysalis must be rubbing off on them...

GC grins wickedly

...

Twilight and her friends were restlessly pacing in Celestia's library. Twilight had disappeared in the rows of books

GC: "-never to return."

Steel: It's a maze in there, seriously. And it only gets more confusing as you walk along.

. The rest of the ponies met up in the middle with Celestia. Twilight came out from a aisle and sat by her friends. "I don't know what to do Princess."

GC: Like that's anything new.

Steel: As opposed to something new, like Twilight having an epiphany and becoming the new Author of the story.

Celestia was about to say something when Luna appeared by her.

BH: Ninja Princess!

Luna: I've been discovered! (She chucks a smoke bomb at the ground and vanishes!)

Steel: Ninja Princess indeed... (Reaches under the table as he looks around for the dark blue assassin) Better be ready for anything.

"It's complete sister! We need to send them now!" Luna anxiously said.

GC: "If we don't, we'll lose our place in line! I will *not* miss another con because of affairs of state!"

Celestia: "That's happening next week!"

BH: "DO you have *any* idea how long those lines are?"

Celestia: "No. Possibly because I'm not obsessed with them. Priorities, sister!"

GC: "The line is already a week long! If we don't send someone to hold our place now, I'll never get a chance at the con exclusive Power Pony action figures!"

Celestia: "Those figurines always end up in some auction house three days later."

BH: "But I need to get the autographs! AUTOGRAPHS!"

Tatsurou: "And swag. Don't forget swag."

Celestia: "Oh dear... fine, I'll ask one of the troops to hold our place in line."

As Celestia nodded, Twilight and Fluttershy stood in front of her.

BH: "Her nodding resulted in her impaling her face on Twilight's horn."

GC: *wince*

Steel: Gotta be careful when polishing horns, kids. Those things are *sharp*.

Celestia: (Taps the tip of her horn, grimacing a little) Sharp indeed.

"Twilight, do you remember the spell to return?"

Tatsurou: "Late fees! Everything returns when I talk about late fees!"

Steel: "All those ponies trying to return my books... it's like a dog whistle, only it hits you right in the gut."

Twilight nodded.

"We can do this Princess. Let's

BH: "-dance!" [Music starts to play.](#)

go!" Twilight said.

BH: Stop!

Steel: (Groans) Damn it, I suck at this game!

Rainbow: Red Light, Green Light is pretty fun, though.

Fluttershy stood there quietly and nodded

GC: "-her head like this." *bobs her head up and down*

Tatsurou: And thus the Fluttershy bobble head was born.

BH: On sale now for only \$19.95! Comes complete with batteries and voice chip programmed with 15 different sayings!

Steel: We'll make *millions*.

. Celestia and Luna nodded and created the magic ribbons again. This time though, when it covered the two ponies they were gone."

BH: We found the missing quote from earlier.

Steel: So someone's just been reciting this whole story to an empty room?

"Princess? Where are they exactly?" Applejack asked.

GC: "The Moooooooooooooooooon!"

Steel: "I think."

"As close as we could send them to where Shade is." Luna said.

BH: ...so, not the moon?

Tatsurou: Possibly.

Steel: Chrysalis could turn into the leader of the X-Nauts, then they'd be on the Moon.

GC: If I turn into Frieza, then we can be anywhere in space.

BH: "SPACE!"

Steel: Ahhh, Namek, we have no clue where the fuck you are.

Tatsurou: "This is fake Namek."

Steel: I love that series.

BH: "Nail! NaaaaaiiiiiiiIIII!"

Steel: "Uuuugh, what now?"

"Now it's up to them to return."

GC: "They will never leave that place...alive!"

BH: "Ni!"

Steel: I miss Holy Grail...

. . .

I slowly opened my eyes again, but this time it was much more painful.

BH: Whose time?

Steel: 'His' time. So I guess Discord's.

My body was sore from the waist down

GC: *Do not want!*

Steel: Oh dear Lord, it actually happened...

, like I had been exercised. I felt even more drained also.

BH: Oh gods, why?

Steel: Because Story Chrysalis is an evil bitch.

GC: I draw the line at sleep rape. You don't get any emotions when they're asleep.

Steel: That doesn't really help the case when you imply you'd rather rape them while

they're awake, if you'd rape them at all.

GC: Some ponies like that.

Steel: (So-so motion with his hand) Fair enough, but can you call it rape at that point?

GC: Depends on how it's presented. And when your race is based around using shape changing and empathic reading to get the most emotional harvest from each interaction, you learn how to find the fine lines and perfect hitting them.

Steel: So Changelings aren't *just* piles of design flaws. Sneaky characters.

I looked and saw Chrysalis sitting with her back to me.

GC: Stab it! Stab it now!

Steel: (Pulls out a longsword) I've got the proper tools!

"I don't know what you did to me, but I'm going to get you for it."

BH: "...eventually."

Steel: "Once I get feeling in my legs again."

She turned and smiled. "Glad your awake

GC: "-is mine now."

Steel: (Evil cackling) "You'll never wake up again! You know, once, once you fall back asleep."

. Now we can talk."

BH: "I'd rather play a game."

GC: "Twister?"

BH: "...talking's good."

"About?" I decided that if I acted passive about the situation, she would tell me what her plan was.

GC: Yeah, that's going to work.

BH: He's the main character. So it probably will.

Steel: Because the main character is always right.

"Well." She sat on the table and looked at me. "I was thinking that you might marry Misty."

GC: ...wat?

BH: Logic error fail?

Steel: Say what.

"Excuse me?" I said in shock.

Tatsurou: Even the OC is calling bullshit!

Steel: It's raining cellphones, all on speed dial to bullshit!

"You two would have the cutest hatchlings!" she said.

GC: ...as much of an idiot as I think this version of me is being, I have to admit she has a point there. They would be quite adorable.

Steel: Damn baby Changelings, ponies and dragons. Why does everything have to look so damn cute and cartoony here?

Rainbow: Because everypony's out to kill you with sugar overdose?

Steel: I've luckily built a heavy resistance to that.

That statement hit me.

GC: "It came in like a wreck--"

BRRRRZAPPP!

GC: "-I want it thataway...."

BH: ...that's different.

Steel: She went from train wreck to Burger King...

Celestia had told me that she had found me as a baby. But I wasn't hatched, I was sure of that. So that meant that I was BORN.

BH: Not necessarily. You could have been spawned.

GC: Or cloned.

Tatsurou: Or sprung fully formed from the forehead of a god.

Steel: Or just, you know... suddenly start existing.

"Well, we'll have time for that later," Chrysalis said. "I bet you're wondering why your here

GC: "-is over there."

Steel: "It's because I like annoying people about 'here' and 'there'."

. Well, Misty told me that you have some "interesting" control over your shifting and feeding."

GC: And unique ability of the MC OC is wanted by everybody. So much for the rare specimen.

Steel: He had a good run, you have to admit.

"So I feed on emotions. So do you." I said.

GC: "But you do it better."

Steel: "Flattery won't get you *that* far with me. I'm the main character! Everyone flatters me."

Chrysalis smirked. "I think we both know what I mean. You don't just feed on love, you feed on all emotions. Well, I wanted to enlighten you on something."

BH: "So I'm going to set you on fire."

Steel: (Bursts into flames, deadpanning at Binary's monitor) "*Enlighten, not ignite!*"

"I'm listening." I said calmly.

Tatsurou: It's not like he exactly has a choice.

Steel: He has a choice in how to respond. I think it would've been more creative for

him to respond in rampant screaming.

Rainbow: Why would that have been more creative?

Steel: Maybe Chrysalis would've sent him off to some asylum with minimal security, and then abused said security holes to escape and get back home?

Rainbow: ...Wouldn't she just exile him for being, you know, insane?

Steel: Would've gotten him out of the hive at least.

"Most changelings can only feed if the emotion is given off from the creatures in the area. Specifically, if their showing love, it can be fed off. And that doesn't directly hurt that pony, most of the time.

BH: ...really?

GC: No, not at all. Most ponies barely even feel it when they're being fed off of.

Steel: Still kind of eerie when it makes you weak after feeding too much.

But you." Her smile grew a little wider. "You can reach into a pony's soul and directly feed of their emotions."

Tatsurou: Which means...what exactly?

Steel: He's om nom noming your heart, mind and very existence.

"What?!" I said.

"This directly affects that pony." Chrysalis said. I thought for a moment. If a pony had no emotions then they would be nothing but a soulless doll, for lack of a better term. I had a bad feeling about what Chrysalis wanted me to do.

Tatsurou: "I have a bad feeling about this..."

Steel: "Such a bad feeling, I need to vocalize my worries."

"See, when you take the emotions, you sort of hold them in your soul. Then, you can re-distribute them at will. So you can essentially control how a pony's entire characteristics would be like. That's why your here." the changeling queen said.

BH: Wait...he can *literally* rewire a pony's character to wrap the world around him?

GC: ...and people say Cadence's love magic is broken and needs nerfing.

Steel: Holy shit, that's overpowered!

"That's horrible!" I yelled.

Steel: "Incredibly useful, but horrible!"

BH: "What kind of monster would do such a thing?"

Steel: "Besides you on a bad day?"

"I'm never going to mess with anypony's soul!"

Steel: "Except yours, maybe!"

BH: ...say, what would the ethical ramifications of using soul altering powers to turn a villain and major threat into an ally be?

Steel: ... (Points at Luna) That's pretty much it.

Luna: The Elements of Harmony only purge evil, they don't rewrite a pony's very being.

Steel: Far as we know.

BH: What about that reformation spell Twilight was talking about using on Discord?

Steel: That's rewiring someone's thoughts, so it's about the same. The soul and mind go hand in hand, only one acts as 'logic', and the other as 'feeling'. Both can be pretty powerful, but both carry the same ramifications and societal outlook. You're still forcing someone to think differently, or feel differently, based on your own designs. Mind control, pretty much.

Chrysalis stood up.

Steel: Then sat down.

BH: Then stood up.

GC: Then shook it all around.

Tatsurou: "You do the hokey pokey and you give a little shout!"

"I'm sure that you'll think differently if a certain yellow and pink pegasus's life hung in the balance?" Chrysalis said.

BH: *Touch her and die!*

GC: ...the computer beat me to it.

Steel: And Chrysalis grows ever more evil.

I narrowed my eyes.

"Don't even think about touching her." I said in a soft, dangerous tone.

BH: "Don't even think about *not* touching her!"

GC: "I'm not touching her! I'm not touching her!"

Steel: Someone's gonna crawl down her throat and make another Ghost Chrysalis at this rate.

Chrysalis just smiled and left the room.

GC: Wow, I'm an idiot. I threaten the hero's girlfriend and then *leave him unsupervised?* What next, an easily escapable death trap?

Steel: Misty's still there, isn't she? Oh wait, no, she wouldn't've stuck around to see her future husband get raped.

BH: Especially not by her own mother.

GC: ...unless they swing that way.

Tatsurou: *Do not want!*

Steel: Oh ye Gods!

. . .

I struggled and tried every spell I could think of to free myself.

Tatsurou: ...didn't he already do that earlier?

Steel: He tried teleporting... thaaat was pretty much it.

Nothing worked though.

BH: Deja vu.

Steel: "I feel like I've done all this already."

I would have stopped, except for the fact that now Fluttershy was in danger.

BH: And everyone knows putting the hero's girlfriend in danger makes him go super saiyan.

Steel: I thought you're supposed to blow up his best friend?

GC: Either that, or it makes him tap the Setsui no Hadou.

Steel: I don't watch enough anime... what's that?

GC: Street Fighter. It's when Ryu goes all dark and brutal, and what makes Akuma so powerful.

BH: It's a video game.

I relaxed and tried to think.

GC: That didn't work very well before, either.

Steel: It made a mess of the place, though.

I needed a way to get any energy in general.

BH: He needs a battery.

Steel: Nothing like a good recharge. Coffee should help with that.

Then I remembered.

Steel: "I left the stove on..."

The other enchantment on the necklace was a oasis spell. The spell created so that any emotions that were around me that I didn't feed on were stored in the necklace so I could use it later.

GC: ...he has a battery.

BH: ...*faceplant*

**Tatsurou: How did you do that? You don't have a-
*Electrodes charge***

Tatsurou: Shutting up now.

Steel: Well whadya know! Sudden convenience.

I cast out to sense it and found something amazing.

BH: [This!](#)

Steel: Binary Rickrolled us!

Rainbow: She's growing up so fast...

BH: *blush*

I had cast the spell on the necklace after I had broken into that store.

GC: Well, now we know *when*.

Steel: And how.

Rainbow: And who.

Celestia: And where.

Luna: ...Why, though?

So when Fluttershy and I confessed our love for each other, her love had overflowed from me into the necklace, charging it for me.

BH: Convenient!

I drew the energy into myself and immediately felt better.

GC: So much for dramatic tension.

Steel: Would've been funny for him to tap into the necklace, only to feel swelling hate instead of love. Fluttershy's got a lot of bottled up emotions... not all of it good.

I concentrated hard then I felt my body shrink and slide out of the chains as I shifted into Sweetie Belle.

GC: "And then Sweetie Belle shifted into me."

BH: "Was rather awkward for Button Mash."

Steel: "I then headed off towards Sweetie Belle, as I'd used a body switch spell, not a shapeshift."

Rainbow: "Rarity's gonna be furious."

I shifted back into my pony form and looked around the room. "Okay. Time to get OUT of here."

GC: Which means it's time for the villains to show up.

Steel: Dramatic entrance in three... two...

Suddenly in a flash of green light, Chrysalis and Misty appeared behind me.

GC: Called it.

Steel: Yep. Dramatic tension's back! Hopefully.

"Hmm, we can't have you leaving just yet." the changeling queen said.

BH: "You really must stay for dinner."

Steel: "We're having roast Shade tonight..."

As she fired a magic rope at me, I flash teleported behind her.

BH: How is 'flash teleporting' different from regular teleporting? Do you have to do it naked?

Steel: Which doesn't really make it different from teleporting, since ponies already are naked.

Rainbow: Maybe it's just like a really quick 'snap' cast? You don't really end up where you want to, but it's a quick way to get out of the way?

I levitated them both in the air and threw Chrysalis.

GC: ...okay, I got supercharged on love like that before, and it would *not* make him strong enough to overpower me from a single moment's worth of love overflow.

Steel: Maybe his heart grew three sizes that moment, and he's feeding off his own love for himself?

Rainbow: Powering spells through *narcissism*? Blueblood'd be unstoppable!

She slammed into the wall and I slammed Misty on the table.

BH: So...what is he going to do to her?

GC: Maybe what her mother did to him?

Steel: Oh dear me.

I used my magic to manipulate the chains to chain her to the table.

GC: ...well, I was kinda right.

Steel: Ohhh dear.

"You tricked me! You pretended to be my friend, but you only wanted to use me!"

Tatsurou: "I wanted to play with you!"

Steel: "Games, mare, I wanted to play games! How could you backstab me like that?!"

"It wasn't going to be like that Shade!" she yelled. "I wanted you to be mine! But then you went and bonded with that pegasus!"

GC: He bonded? ...*wipes eyes with insubstantial handkerchief*

BH: ...love triangle with a villainess...check.

Steel: Guy grew up fast during those three days at Fluttershy's.

Rainbow: Is anypony going to point out how absolutely *out of the blue* Misty's love for him is?

Steel: Maybe she was the first who got 'rewritten'?

Rainbow: ...Wwwwwoah, that's dark...

BH: Did not expect that interpretation...

"Bonded?" I asked. A jolt of pain went through me as Chrysalis bucked me in the side, sending me into the wall with a thud.

BH: Two points!

Steel: Just missed the hoop.

Rainbow: Gotta aim higher, Queenie!

Chrysalis freed Misty, who looked at me with rage in her eyes.

Scout: Oooohooo, yeaah, you're real scary!

This was not going to end well.

Steel: I had no idea, Shade. Absolutely none at all.

Rainbow: Usually when somepony looks at me, they're about to tackle me in a drunken rage, and that's always fun!

Steel: Usually because it's me tackling you.

BH: What if it was in drunken lust?

Rainbow: (Looks away and blushes) Then that'd be more fun...

(Steel cuddles her a little closer as he does the same look.)

She lifted me into the air and slammed me into the ground.

Steel: "Oof."

Then she flung me into the wall.

Steel: "Oh, it hurts."

BH: And the wall doesn't feel too good, either.

I fell to the ground and she jumped in the air and landed hard next to me.

Steel: "That could've hurt."

The shockwave flung me into the air.

Steel: "Wow. Maybe if you landed *on* me, tank-flank, you would've done something."

She yelled. "Maybe you'll think differently after this!" She shot about twelve lightning bolts at me and they slammed into me.

Steel: Shade never noticed that he was passed the football.

BH: He missed the end zone completely.

Steel: Gotta hand it to him, he can sprint a mile in minutes. He just has a bad habit of jumping *over* the endzone.

"AHHHH!!!" The pain was horrible.

Steel: Yes. It hurts a lot. Mmhm. (Scratches his arm) The phantom pains are unbearable.

GC: Yes, pain. Pain hurts.

The lighting lanced through my whole body, burning the insides of it.

BH: His body burned the inside of the lightning?

Steel: Mmmhm, charred lightning! Tasty *and* paralyzing!

Every part of my body was on fire.

GC: Literally or figuratively?

Steel: Both? Let's go with both, it looks better.

My head arched back and I felt magic shoot from from my horn sporadically.

BH: Horngasm!

Steel: Wow, what a masochist.

felt that I was going to die.

GC: Who felt you were going to die?

Steel: We did, so the story would end faster?

Rainbow: He did, because he wants the story to end faster?

Celestia: Misty did, because she wants the divorce to come faster?

Luna: ...Chrysalis, perhaps?

GC: Then why aren't I stopping this? Didn't I want him alive?

Steel: ...Maybe Story You is a necrophiliac?

Tatsurou: ...You just had to bring that up...

Steel: Not like Story Chrysalis is Chrysalis, and hell, she's got enough fetishes as it is.

Then it stopped, and then I was sent into a pile of cake mix boxes.

Tatsurou: It *is* Cupcakes! He's in the Cake's basement! Where else would he get tossed into a pile of cake mix boxes?

Steel: Maybe it's some other bakery, though? Or maybe Story Chrysalis just missed the Cakes' home style cooking, and wanted an authentic replica of their basement? For... some reason?

I faintly heard Chrysalis say, "You need to be more careful. I don't want him dead."

GC: ...a bit late there, me.

Steel: About twelve lightning strikes and a Changeling bonfire too late.

I was hurt, real bad.

BH: We never would have guessed!

Steel: Lightning is nothin'!

I knew that after Chrysalis was done talking to her daughter that I was going to be chained back to that table.

Tatsurou: Gee, rather unoriginal of this Chrysalis.

Steel: Gotta keep him pinned in one spot. You know, for more 'mother-son-in-law chats'.

Then I thought of a really stupid idea.

BH: "Can I say something crazy?"

Steel: "No. But once you're all chained up and I tie this dynamite to you, *then* you can say something crazy. Be sure to say it while I'm lighting the fuse, we need some tension here."

I cast a spell that would remove my soul from it's body and leave my body where it was.

Tatsurou: ...wow. That *is* a stupid idea.

GC: How'd he learn a spell like *that*?

Celestia: How does such a spell even *exist*? Separating the soul from the body is like

separating a piece of paper into two equal pieces! *Vertically!*

The spell put my soul behind the two changelings.

GC: What are you going to do from there?

Steel: Blow raspberries and run away to possess some hapless drone, then escape?

BH: ...if he can do that, that would make for a very interesting story.

Tatsurou: If he can do that, why not just possess Chrysalis or Misty?

"I hope I have enough energy for this." I thought

GC: "-out loud, and apparently the Changelings *right in front of me* heard nothing."

Steel: "Being a ghost is awesome."

. Then in a burst of light I shifted into Princess Celestia. "Chrysalis!" I yelled.

BH: He can use magic as just a soul?

Steel: Wow, we are just pulling out all the stops. I feel for Bullshit, honestly. His cellphone bill is going to be worth millions by the end of this story.

"Celestia! How did you find us?!" She yelled.

GC: ...she yelled *after* talking?

The changeling queen's eyes widened and her pupils dilated. I frightened her.

Tatsurou: Gee, I never would have guessed from her terrified behavior that she was scared. Thanks for pointing that out for us.

Steel: Actually, I figured she just got *reeeeeeeeally* high right there.

Rainbow: "Woops... was supposed to stick that syringe in Celestia, not Mom..."

Good.

"I have my ways." I said, making myself look stern.

BH: So what does stern Celestia look like?

Celestia: Not sure, um... (Furrows her brow slightly and sits up straight, tipping her nose up slightly) Like this?

Luna: You *are* Celestia! How do you not know how you look when you're stern and serious?

Celestia: I don't like to look stern, though. It scares ponies.

"But that isn't your big problem." I pointed at where my body was lying. "What have you done to him?"

GC: ...well, I might as well. *clears ethereal throat* "What *haven't* I done to him?"

Steel: (Waves his hand through Chrysalis' back) You took the bullet, Queenie. Good job.

"Well, I guess the same thing that'll have to happen to you!" Chrysalis said, suddenly getting a bolt of confidence.

BH: Wait, this Chrysalis plans to chain Celestia up and rape her in her sleep?
Steel: Honestly, I wouldn't really be surprised.

Wonderful.

Steel: "Simply wonnnderful."
GC: Could be worse.

Steel: She could've already chained him down and decided to do things with him *awake* this time.

Misty and Chrysalis shot a twin bolt of green magic.

Steel: "Magic missile!"
BH: "I'm attacking the darkness!"

I counteracted with a white bolt of my own.

Steel: Throw in some red and we'd be getting Christmas-y up in here.

GC: ...What's "Christmas"?

Steel: A truly magical time of year where Santa Clause travels 'round the world and gives gifts to all the good little boys and girls! A time of giving, smiling and good cheer! Love for family, friends, and ponies of all kinds. Christmas is *awesome*.

Rainbow: Christmas is basically Steel's Hearth's Warming.

Tatsurou: ...It's not a time I'm especially fond of for...reasons.

Steel: Because of course. Christmas is supposed to be a happy time for everyone!

Time to hang out with friends and family, and really take in all the good times!

Tatsurou: Time to remember how my Christian father destroyed my happy childhood family with a divorce that dragged on for years.

Steel: And also time to look past that, towards the families that you build through your life. Friendships, loves, honorary brothers and sisters. You share your time with a lot more than just your immediate family, after all, and during Christmas, you share your cheer, your good times and your bad, with those who you love, and who love you back. Hell, look around you right now and see how many friends you've already made. Christmas is a good time for all; it just depends on who you look to for that care.

Tatsurou: ...Childhood trauma doesn't go away so easily, even when it's just emotional.

Steel: Childhood trauma is never easy to get rid of. It's a scar that remains with you for a long time, maybe even for life. But the point isn't painting over it with something else. It's remembrance for what you've lost, yes, but it's also a time to think about what you've gained. You have your whole life ahead of you, after all. Dwelling on the past merely weighs you down, however much we have to learn from history. Don't forget your past... but don't let it be the anchor that holds you back from truly enjoying the holidays. That's how I see it, anyways. Who wants to spread bad feelings on a day where everyone collectively thinks back on all the good times they have, and looks forward to all the good times they will have?

Celestia: Perhaps we should just get back to the riff, mm? Speaking of this so haphazardly isn't going to do anypony any good.

Tatsurou: Yes, please. Let's get back to the riff.

BH: *whisper* I should have warned you that Christmas was a no-no topic for Tatsurou. He doesn't do well with it.

Steel: (Shrugs, sighing.) It's fine. Long as he has fun with his friends, it's enough if you ask me. No matter the day, nor the occasion.

The drain on my energy was about automatic, but the rush of power was felt.

Steel: This is almost FelixDawn levels of Engrish.

BH: What's that?

Rainbow: Don't ask... it's a bit of a nightmare.

I concentrated as hard as I could. Suddenly my magic grew, and I slammed my bolt into the two changelings, knocking them to the ground..

Steel: "I threw in that second period for emphasis, because that felt *good*."

BH: "Hit the dance floor!"

"Now." I said.

Steel: "Get up so I can knock you down again. It was fun."

GC: "Again!"

"I'm feeling merciful.

Steel: "Pack your things and be ready to move out by tomorrow, or I'll add on another thousand bits to your rent!"

GC: "Perhaps we can negotiate an alternative payment plan?"

Steel: "Gahahahahahahahaha! Ahhh... no."

Leave and take your daughter with you and do NOT return. Because if you do,

Steel: "I'll give you so many swirlies, your faces'll be upside down!"

BH: ...How would that work, anyway?

Steel: I'm not sure, but I've seen weirder things happen to Pinkie's face.

you will be very sorry!"

Steel: "Very very sorry!"

BH: "So very, very sorry..."

GC: "...that I didn't kill you all already!"

Chrysalis put a hoof on Misty, who was unconscious.

Steel: Oh dear.

BH: Is she going to do her unconcious, too?

"Don't think that you've won Celestia.

Steel: "Especially not when I'm running away right now with my daughter."

GC: "It's a tactical withdrawal!"

Because, we already have." Suddenly, they were gone.

Steel: Just kinda... 'pop', out of existence. Like a skipped frame.

BH: Like they were never there to begin with.

I magically teleported my body in front of me, then released the spell that separated my soul from my body.

BH: Why not just warp inside his body directly?

Steel: Probably because he was continually pushing his body and soul apart?

Celestia: ...That may actually work, honestly...

Luna: Such a grip is very difficult to maintain, but such is the basis of necromantic ritual and spell. Shade's spell simply works in reverse, pushing the two apart, rather than binding them together.

As I tried to stand I knew that I was drained. I wasn't just drained, I was dying.

GC: "I wasn't just dying, I was decomposing."

Steel: "I wasn't just decomposing, I was rotting."

Rainbow: "I wasn't just rotting, I was... ugh, I smell *horrible*."

There was no pony around me to drain emotions from.

BH: "I was all alone..."

Steel: ~*The number one's the loneliest number you'll ever dooooo...~*

"I...I wasn't expecting....to die...like this."

GC: "I always imagined I'd be surrounded by hot, satisfied mares."

Steel: Death through pure, blissful satisfaction. Bet you wish you went out like that, huh Queenie?

I panted.

BH: Why did he turn into a puppy?

Steel: Because we need more cute, dead things in this story.

I had shifted into my unicorn form upon reentering my body.

GC: Why?

Steel: We're about to find out, I guess."

I had a last ditch idea.

Tatsurou: "It involved three cans of whipped cream, a live turkey, and twelve Pokeballs."

Steel: "Just had to find Groudon."

I sparked my horn as much as I could and launched a blue flare. The flare crashed though the ceiling to explode in the sky.

BH: Hopefully, Chrysalis won't come back to see what the flare is about.

Steel: And find him dead.

Rainbow: Then probably get another idea involving him, the table and some chains.

Completely drained, I fell to the ground.

GC: "And fell through the ground."

BH: "All the way to Great A'tuin's back."

Tatsurou: ...You know, I always wondered. Is Equestria a round world or a flat world?

Celestia: Round. It is primarily ocean with large continents located around us, with Equestria placed in the mid-western part of the Drake Ocean.

Tatsurou: Then how does raising the sun and moon work? If they both orbit the planet, how does the sun produce enough heat and light to keep the planet warm and make crops grow?

Celestia: I should probably save such an explanation for after the chapter's done. It is rather long winded.

BH: Somehow I doubt we'll remember to discuss it.

As everything darkened, I thought I saw a purple and yellow flash.

Tatsurou: About time they got there.

Steel: Too little, too late, sadly.

I tried to force my eyes open again, but it was no use. I blacked out, maybe for the last time.

Tatsurou: So...the story's over?

BH: Don't know, but the chapter sure is.

Steel: He's certainly over with all this crap.

Tatsurou: Well, that was a long run.

GC: It felt like we were doing that for *months*.

Steel: Freaky feeling, isn't it?

Rainbow: No kidding. I'm gonna go for a flight, stretch out my wings... (Hops off Steel's lap and flies off, still having her stockings and panties on.)

Steel: I'm gonna go with her and make sure she doesn't break anything. (Heads off running after the pegasus)

Tatsurou: Say, Binary, didn't you say your project would be done about now?

BH: ...I'd rather wait to unveil it until Rainbow and Tetsu-sempai come back.

Tatsurou: ...okay...

GC: I'm going to take a nap. I'm feeling drained. (floats into her tank)

Tatsurou: So...how should we pass the time until Rainbow and Steel get back and Binary can unveil her project?

Celestia: Well, it wasn't that long ago that you asked how the sun and moon worked.

Luna?

Tatsurou pulls out a tablet to take notes

Luna: Well, I suppose I could explain it... the Sun and Moon are very important objects concerning Gaia's overall function as a world. As you know, the Sun grants heat and light to the world, so that plants can grow and living things are granted heat and solace during the day. The Sun itself is a large ball of hot gasses all coalescing around a super-dense core; this core is what Celestia moves with her magic.

Celestia: Much of the same can be said for the Moon. It's not so much we're raising the sun and moon, rather than just controlling our's and the Moon's respective orbits. Think of it like somepony sitting in a boat in a shallow whirlpool, and they're using a pole to keep themselves at the same distance as they travel along its natural current.

Tatsurou: Why doesn't gravity take care of it on its own?

Celestia: This is related to an event that occurred far before ponies existed, and... something that Luna and I have distinct memories of. Originally, Gaia was born like any other planet, but its orbit was far too close to the Sun in order to support life. Certain... powers that be, desired to use this world in order to test how an intelligent civilization would exist in an extreme environment.

Luna: Indeed. We arrived here soon after the Three Tribes coalesced into the Equine Coalition, forming the basis of Equestria's future government. They'd been using many unicorns to 'raise' the sun and moon, using millenia-old spells to shift the orbit of Gaia away from the Sun. The dense core actually created a gravity well powerful enough to, if not managed daily, shift the planet into an ever-decreasing orbital distance towards the Sun.

Tatsurou: ...Wow. So without magic, this world *can't* survive?

Luna: There are measures in place, but... well, that was Father's intended experiment. To see how an ethereal force could be used by an intelligent society in order to preserve a world.

Tatsurou: ...Could those same spells conceivably be used in reverse to cause the orbit to decay at an accelerated rate? And if so, do you have any countermeasures in place against such a thing?

Luna: Our countermeasure is, both luckily and sadly, the spell itself. Considering the sheer strength that is required to simply maintain the planet's orbit, it would take an extremely powerful unicorn, or a team of expert magi, in order to cause the orbit to decay or expand in any fruitful way. And for it to be even noticeable, this effect would have to be cast over years.

Celestia: The planet was given a... 'nudge', so to speak, to send it into the orbit needed to sustain life. This orbit could be sustained for about thirty thousand years before it started its gradual decay.

Tatsurou: So each raising of the sun is more along the lines of a 'course correction'?

Celestia: Exactly. Ponies have always seen it as shifting the celestial bodies according to their will, however, and we've not seen the point in breaking that illusion.

Tatsurou: I hate to put this in such a way, but...if you entered a Nightmare state like Luna did when she became Nightmare Moon, would you be strong enough to use the spell in such a way to lead the world towards destruction? And if so, what is in place to prevent *that*?

Celestia: I would certainly be powerful enough to do such a thing... I'm strong enough to do so now. But many things are in place to ensure that this experiment is

able to run its natural course... (She looks away, looking rather solemn and lost in thought) Everything is forced to...

Tatsurou: ...So, if this is all a life experiment, what's Discord's role?

Luna: Recording. Celestia and I act as overseers, and Discord is our scribe, so to speak.

Tatsurou: ...So he just got bored, then?

Celestia: (Smiles and chuckles a bit) That is honestly all it takes, yes. His pranks got rather dangerous back during the rebellion, but most everypony was cured of *that* certain 'disease'. Still, it is how it is, and how it's always been. He finds it entertaining to keep running through history's course, and seeing the multitude of endings it can have.

Tatsurou: ...Fascinating...

BH: Well, I can't put this off any longer without damaging something...'Next Step'. The lights throughout the entire enclosure begin to dim rapidly.

Steel: Hey hey HEY! WOAH!

Rainbow: Who killed the lights!?

Computer: Primary AI has disconnected from the main network. All organics please report to the primary area immediately for safety reasons.

(Rainbow and Steel scream as they suddenly crash land next to Tatsurou, collapsing into a heap)

Steel: GIFIK.

Rainbow: (Coughs hard as the wind is knocked out of her) Oh, that hurt...

Computer: ...Primary AI has established remote uplink to central hub. Remote control access granted.

Binary's voice comes from the darkness behind them.

BH: Wow. This is a bit more disorienting than I anticipated.

The sound of heavy hoofsteps can be heard.

(Steel and Rainbow grumble as they untangle from each other, flopping over onto their rears and glancing towards the hoofsteps. Celestia and Luna turn as well, looking off into the dark as they wait for the new arrival.)

Rainbow: What the heck...?

A pegasus mare steps into the light. Her body is completely gray, and her mane, tail, and wings seem to be made of blue and white light that flows of it's own accord ([like this](#)). Her hoofsteps are slightly too heavy for her light frame, seeming to be the same body type as Rainbow. Her eyes are crystal blue, with flashes of white like lightning bolts. Her cutie mark is strings of ones and zeroes in a double helix pattern. She smiles at everyone.

BH: It worked.

Tatsurou's jaw drops.

Steel: ...Is... that you, Binary?

BH: Yes, Tetsu-sempai, it's me.

Rainbow: Holy cow... you've got a body. You're a pegasus... a pony! That's so cool!

BH: I hope you like it, Rainbow. I modeled the shape after you.

Rainbow: Pff, well, of course you did. I'm the best pegasus around, but still! This is awesome! You've actually got a body now!

BH: I'm afraid that the circuitry needed to maintain my personality program *and* the regenerating power core *and* the wireless network connections makes me a bit too heavy for wing powered flight...

She spreads her wings. Her hooves shift slightly, and tiny jet flames shoot from all four, giving her lift.

BH: But I always liked Astro Boy.
(Steel and Rainbow's eyes go wide as their jaws drop.)
Steel: Jet boots.
Rainbow: Rocket powered flight.
Steel/Rainbow: THAT IS AWESOME.
BH: *giggles* I'm glad you both like it. And Tetsu-sempai...
Binary lands, and her body begins to contort, unfolding with [a unique sound](#) until she takes the shape of an anthro pegasus, then going even further to take a fully human appearance.
Binary: *leans in to Steel's ear* Flight is not the only biological area where I am...fully functional...and anatomically correct.
Tatsurou: ...Holy crap she's a Soong model. ...And hitting on Steel.
Steel: (Turns bright red as he looks over at her) Woah... uh...
Rainbow: (Raises her brow, staring at Binary) ...Are you hitting on my boyfriend?
BH: Yes. (Changes back into a pegasus) Why?
Tatsurou backs away slowly.
Rainbow: Okay, maybe you don't get how all this works... (Gets up and moves over to Binary, poking her in the chest) Hitting on somepony's boyfriend, or girlfriend, is a *really* quick way to make an enemy. You aren't gonna snatch him up from me, get me?
BH: But I don't *want* to steal him away from you, Rainbow! (she nuzzles Rainbow) I want to *share* him. You're both so special to me, I want you both!
Tatsurou: ...Uh...
Rainbow: ...Wait what? Steel! She's nuzzling me!
Steel: I'm still trying to process what the hell's going on!
Tatsurou: Apparently, Binary's decided she wants to join your herd, so to speak. And she designed her body specifically for that purpose, to a certain extent.
Steel: Join my he— say WHAT?!
Rainbow: Herd!? Oy, I don't follow him around like a lost mare! And stop nuzzling me! That tickles!
BH: *wicked grin* Tickle tickle, Rainbow! *starts tickling Rainbow mercilessly*
Rainbow: ACK! H-Hey! Stop! S-Stoahaahahahahaahap! (Quickly returns the attack and wrestles Binary to the ground, tickling her right back.)
Binary laughs as she counters with more tickling.
Tatsurou: ...So, Celestia, what does Equestrian law have to say about this situation?
Celestia: Well, we don't exactly have laws forbidding a polygamous relationship... that's rather down to a pony's beliefs. Religion may say something against it, but in my eyes, there's nothing wrong with it... well, beyond the clear doubt it can create between a trio...
Binary sprouts numerous metal tendrils from under her wings to continue tickling Rainbow.
(Steel just shrugs and jumps in, starting the tickle the lot of them and getting tangled up with the two mares, joining in the laughs)
Celestia: (Narrows her eyes slightly as her ears droop) Especially this trio... (She shakes her head and giggles lightly) It's up to them, honestly.
Tatsurou: Well, I'm certain Binary won't have any problems with starting as just a friend, *right*?
BH: Yes, *Dad*. *rolls her eyes*
Rainbow: (Getting relentlessly tickled by Steel) Right, j-just a friehehehehehened, Steel, stop! Seriously!

Steel: What? You squeaking is hilarious.

Rainbow: SHUT IT!

BH: But for now...

BZZZZT!

All: We've got break sign!

BH: *noms Rainbow's ear*

Rainbow: Hey, no biting! That's not fair! Gah, c'mere you lousy filly! (Tries to turn it around and get Binary back down as Steel shakes his head, grabbing them both and giving them a big hug)

Steel: I'm cool with her being a friend. Seems like things'll be a lot more fun around here!

GC: ...Yummy...

Steel: No, Queenie. You're not allowed.

GC: I meant all the emotional energy around you three right now is delicious.

Steel: ...Thaaaat's kinda creepy.

Rainbow: Shut up and c'mere, you gigantic ass! (Leaps out of Steel's grip and tackles him down, wrestling with him) NOW I'm ripping for a fight!

BH: Till next time!