

Author's Note: This story takes place after Study of the Mind Delve and [The Rainbow's Surprise](#). Reading those stories prior to this is recommended, but not required. They add context to the story, however it can be enjoyed on its own.

Prologue

A soft chill blew through the brisk winter's day. A blanket of snow covered the ground far below, as Celestia's chariot soared through the sky.

'What a beautiful day for a wedding.' Celestia thought with a smile sprawled across her face. It had been far too long since she had last been able to attend a wedding, her royal duties always coming first. However, with Luna back she could afford to take time off on such short notice. Plus no one would blame her for going to a wedding where the two being wed each wielded one of the Elements of Harmony.

As Celestia's chariot grew closer to the quaint town of Ponyville, her regal eyes scanned the snow banked town, easily catching sight of the pacing lavender unicorn that stood out from the white backdrop around her. Celestia let out a soft chuckle to herself, knowing exactly how her student fussed and worried over every little detail, and no doubt a wedding between her friends was going to have her nerves on end even more than usual.

The unicorn quickly looked into the sky as a smile formed on her face, the chariot quickly came to a landing and the unicorn was upon the chariot in an instant.

"Princess! Oh thank goodness you're here! And only ten minutes and forty-two seconds late, BUT THAT'S OKAY!" Twilight laughed a hair seeming to split out of place, "We can make up for lost time! If we just move the flower girl ceremony to here-" the unicorn hastily made scribbles on a clipboard, "And move the buffet preparations to here and-"

"Twilight." Celestia spoke clearly, interrupting her star pupil who looked up quickly, "You must calm down. If you're too high strung the whole affair will be ruined." Celestia laughed at the look of horror that appeared on Twilight's face, "Besides, ten minutes won't harm the wedding. In fact, it might make it better. Just think about it, the anticipation in the air, everypony waiting eagerly for the event to take place, the slow reveal for the audience of everything happening." Celestia winked at her student.

"...With the music and the atmosphere the tension will be high," Twilight spoke as the spark went off in her mind, her hair returning to normal as she smiled, "with bated breath they'll wait on the edges of their seat, anticipating the arrival of the bride. Every moment longer they must wait drives them further to the edge until those regal doors open revealing the heavenly

body behind them.”

“Now you’re thinking like a writer.” Celestia grinned happily, as Twilight chuckled herself, the joke shared silently between the two of them. “Well, I promise I won’t keep the ceremony waiting any long-” The moment Celestia’s hoof touched the ground she instantly pulled it back, stopping her thoughts and staring at the ground with her mouth agape.

“...What’s the matter Princess?” Twilight asked, confused at the Princess’s sudden behavior.

“...Twilight... you don’t...” Celestia blinked confused looking at her student standing as if nothing was wrong. Twilight just seemed to return the confused glance, before Celestia looked back the earth she had just touched. Carefully, the princess lowered her hoof back to the ground. Then almost as immediately she pulled it back, as if the ground was trying to bite her hoof.

“...Celestia, what’s going on?” Twilight asked, confused, not sure if she should be worried or not now.

Celestia didn’t speak a word now, but simply narrowed her eyes. Through her years of hardship as ruler of the land she steeled her nerves tightly and planted her hoof down upon the earth of Ponyville. A bolt of electricity ran down her spine as she felt the hair on the back of her neck stand on end. This wasn’t a natural sensation, it was unlike anything she’d felt before.

The ground had a pulse. A slow, gradual pulse that felt like something was trying to break free of the ground. The ground didn’t move, it didn’t show any sign that something was wrong with it. To the normal observer Ponyville was the same as it was every day. But the pulsations of the earth sent shivers down her spine; they felt menacing and vile, like they wanted her as far away from the town as possible.

“You don’t feel that Twilight?” Celestia asked curiously, looking over at her student.

“Am I supposed to be feeling something?” Twilight looked down at her hooves, picking it up to look at the bottom of it, before a wind blew through sending a chill down her spine, “Well I feel a little cold if that’s what you mean.”

Celestia just looked at her star pupil for a few moments, before turning her attention back to the ground. The pulse was steady and even, she could count about four seconds between each wave of the feeling. But if her student wasn’t feel anything, perhaps whatever was causing it could wait till after the wedding.

“Well... don’t worry about it for now Twilight. Let’s focus on the wedding.” Celestia nodded.

"Oh... well alright Princess, if you say so." Twilight said quickly looking back to her clipboard with her checklist on it, "Alright, let's get things rolling before we delay things even more!" Twilight then quickly turned back to town hall and raced over to it, wanting to keep things on track.

"I'll have a chat with her after the wedding." Celestia spoke softly, following after her student.

The wedding ceremony had went off without a hitch, much to Twilight's relief. Celestia had watched each moment and guest carefully, smiling the whole time. It really did seem that all of Ponyville could not feel the strange pulsations like Celestia could. That was not a sign that boded well inside the regal princess's heart. If she was the only one that could feel it, that must mean it was something involving powerful magic and that gave her cause for concern.

At the reception she watched the ponies dance and eat to their hearts content, happy over the celebration of the newest happy couple in their town. She was happy for the ponies of the town as well, even with the strange sensation constantly pulsing at her hooves, giving her an uneasy feeling. Next to her stood her faithful student, the only one who had seen her even flinch at the sensation of the town.

Celestia looked at her student from the corner of her eyes, watching her looking around amazed at everything happening. This was likely the first wedding Twilight had ever attended, Celestia could see the curious look in her eye, taking notes of the whole affair.

"They truly do make a lovely couple." Celestia spoke up to her student before chuckling softly, "Though I must admit my surprise. I had no idea two of the bearers of the Elements of Harmony would take their lives together a step further like this."

"Yeah, I didn't see it coming either." Twilight smiled, watching them. "Honestly... I don't know much about love, but even I can see that they truly love each other."

"Have you learned anything from all this?" Celestia asked, curious and amused at her student's involvement with the wedding. It was likely Twilight had learned an important lesson through it all and she was curious to hear about it.

"...I think I have Princess." Twilight smiled, Celestia listened carefully, "I've learned that love is truly a beautiful thing. It brings out the most joyful times in a pony's life and can let them have some truly amazing journeys in their future. Both of them are going to help each other to

achieve their dreams because of their love."

Celestia couldn't help but smile at her student's words. It warmed her heart to know her student was learning so much since her stay in Ponyville. A curious thought crossed her mind that she just had to ask.

"Does this mean I'm going to see my student with a new colt or marefriend?" Celestia laughed softly, causing Twilight to break out in a blush.

"Ugh... I-If you need me to for my advanced studies C-Celestia... b-but that's awfully embarrassing." Twilight looked around unsettled, suddenly very nervous at the idea that she'd be forced to go on dates. Celestia couldn't help but find this behavior both cute and hilarious. She always found it curious how serious Twilight took her studies. It was a constant delight and a slight frustration on her part, but today she found it amusing.

"No worries my student, I would never force you to find love." Twilight let out a sigh of relief, "Love is something you should find on your own to make you happy. Never forget that."

"I won't princess." Twilight smiled happily now, going back to watching her friends dance. "It's a shame Princess Luna couldn't come."

"Well, she had to remain behind to continue royal duties in my absence." Celestia nodded slowly. It was true that Luna had to stay behind, and for the moment she wished she had come along. A second opinion on the pulsations would be very helpful right now.

Celestia's face grew serious as she felt the pulsing waves continue to strike at her feet. They hadn't stopped for even a moment during the entire wedding. Something was wrong with the town, and now seemed as good a time as any to let Twilight know about it.

"Twilight, there is a serious matter that I need to discuss with you." Celestia spoke slowly.

"What is it princess?" Twilight looked up at her teacher, blinking a little confused at the shift of tone.

"Well, the truth is... is that since my arrival, something has felt off. Like something is wrong with Ponyville." Celestia spoke quietly and gravely. She could see a small shiver go down her student's back.

"What is it?" Twilight asked cautiously.

"I'm not sure... and honestly, that is what scares me right now." Celestia's words were heavy. "However, whatever is wrong with Ponyville it seems that only I can feel it."

"What... what are you feeling princess?" Twilight asked confused. Celestia thought it over, wondering just how much she should tell Twilight. She looked down at her hooves, feeling another wave pulse through, the constant sensation of the town having a heartbeat.

An idea sparked in Celestia's head.

"It's too hard to explain at the moment Twilight. But I need you to trust me that something is wrong with Ponyville and tonight I'm going to try and fix it." Celestia turned to look at the dancing ponies, "I wanted you to know so that if you see anything strange, you'll be prepared."

"But, what should I prepare for Princess?" Twilight asked still worried.

"I'm... not sure." Celestia spoke truthfully, "But I have a feeling that when I do fix this, it'll be noticeable. Right now I don't want to panic the citizens of Ponyville, but if something does happen I want you to be ready to keep them calm, alright?"

"Well... alright Princess, I'll do my best." Twilight nodded with enthusiasm.

"I knew I could count on you." Celestia smiled to her faithful student, "Now why don't you have some cake? I'm not going to do anything till nightfall anyway."

"Alright, I think I will." Twilight smiled, though Celestia could still see the worry etched onto her face. She quickly trotted over to the refreshments table to get some cake.

"I think I know what's going on..." Celestia murmured to herself quietly, "I should be able to fix this." She looked down at the floor as it pulsed once more.

Celestia's warm breath washed past her face as she walked through Ponyville. Night had fallen and the moon was glowing brilliantly overhead. Most of the town was sleeping peacefully in their homes now, many were hung over, a few just tired from the partying, the rest just eager to get to work in the morning. To their knowledge the regal Princess had left after the wedding to return to Canterlot.

However, she currently found herself walking to the center of Ponyville, just a few yards away from Ponyville town square. Each stepped seemed to echo loudly in her mind, though she knew very well she wasn't walking as loudly as it sounded. A cold breeze blew through the town sending a small shiver down her spine.

The pulsing hadn't stopped, not for a moment. In fact, now that night had fallen it felt like the pulsing had intensified. It was as if the sleeping ponies gave the strange sensation strength, a fact that disturbed her. She came to a stop at what she knew to be the center of Ponyville and looked at the ground, her wings spreading regally into the night air. Her body was surrounded by the moon's glow as she straightened her stance.

"Alright, I'm not sure what's going on, but I'm going to put an end to it." Celestia spoke to no one in particular. Her horn began to glow a vibrant yellow as she began to weave her magic, picturing the images of the spells in her head and readying their execution. Waves of magic began to gently flow from her body and into the ground of Ponyville. The spell wove into the ground, reaching for the source of the pulsations, trying to discern its identity.

Suddenly, it was as if the town silently roared up at the intrusion of magic, pushing the magic out of the ground and sending a new, terrifying wave of energy into the streets of Ponyville.

Celestia gagged at the overwhelming sensation of this invisible fog that seemed to be choking her senses. Her horn quickly lit up once more and a bubble of energy quickly surrounded her, pushing out the seemingly toxic energy away from her body. Celestia took several deep breaths, looking at the strange air surrounding her. The air itself seemed to be deforming, changing and shifting the look of the town as the pulsation no longer felt like a pulse, but a constant wave of unreal feelings.

"I don't know what you are, but you're not welcome in Ponyville. Leave immediately." Celestia's eyes began to glow white as her horn began to glow brighter, more vividly. The crushing air seemed to hesitate and back up as the Princess began to weave her magic.

Celestia unleashed a wave of magic out from her body, bathing the strange energy in her raw unhindered magic. The air seemed to scream and wail as it was assaulted by her power, unable to stand up to it.

As Celestia's attack ended she looked around her surroundings, it seemed that the air had returned to normal and the ground had stopped its assault.

"No, that was too easy." She murmured to herself, her horn glowing once more. She reached her magic back into the ground, weaving through the dirt. It had to still be there, trying to hide from her reach. But she would drag it out and force it to stop.

Celestia gasped as something seemed to grab hold of her magic and yank on it, breaking the connection to her horn. The remaining magic dissipated into the air as she grit her teeth, a new wave of powerful energy bursting up from the ground around her. Her shield struggled against the massive onslaught of energy attacking her. She lit her horn to strengthen it, but it seemed to be too late. Large cracks formed in the shield, stretching over the entire

surface before it finally broke.

Unrestrained by the shield, the energy hit Celestia like a bag of bricks, knocking her away from the center of Ponyville and sending her several meters back. She grunted and groaned as she quickly got to her feet, ready to strike back and take down this strange force. However, once she stood, she found herself unable to move.

She forced commands down to her legs but they wouldn't lift. She instinctually lit her horn to surround herself in magic to yank her free from the spot, but to no avail. Baffled she forced as much magical energy she could to surround her head. With all of her force concentrated she was able to move her head to look down at what was trapping her in place.

Celestia's eyes dilated, as she stared in horror.

A blood red seal had appeared below her. It was made of up of two large circles filled with cryptic and ancient runic lettering. Inside these two large circles were three smaller circles, also surrounded by ancient runic lettering. Celestia tried to cry out, to scream, to retaliate with her magic against the force binding her, but the force did not budge.

The energy of the symbol began to wrap itself around her, surrounding her very being. Her magic sparked and flared from her horn, but no form came to it. Her mind screamed and rebelled against the force attacking her, but she could not fight back or resist. The strange energy was reaching into her mind, grating at her sanity. Her eyes began to flash in and out of their magical state, as the probing energy distorted her perceptions and reality.

With her very last ounce of ability, she concentrated the last of her magic into a single point to save her sanity. With a soft grunt the last of her magic burst, erupting into an explosion in the middle of Ponyville. For a moment fire billowed up into the sky, but was silenced just as quickly as it came.

The town was quiet once more. The struggle between Celestia and the invisible force was over. It seemed the town hadn't wakened from the sound of a struggle, deaf to what had just occurred.

Ponyville fell deathly silent that night, the residents unaware of the battle for their lives that had occurred. For after the fight, there was only one clue left over from what occurred.

A thick fog had rolled through the town of Ponyville.